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Democratic Voices Speaking Loudly: Does Public Participation Yield Accountability In Special Purpose Governments?

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**DEMOCRATIC VOICES SPEAKING LOUDLY:
DOES PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
YIELD ACCOUNTABILITY IN
SPECIAL PURPOSE GOVERNMENTS?**

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

The American system of governance includes a network of state and local units identified as either general purpose or special purpose governments. The latter are often aligned with, but operate independently of, general purpose governments. Even as these special purpose or special district governments have shown extraordinary growth relative to their general purpose counterparts, there has been little interest in them or the structural characteristics that distinguish their systems for maintaining order and assuring accountable behaviors. In the meanwhile, the literature regarding accountability has been expanded materially in the last several years leading to debates about its form, component parts, objectives, and the preferred means for achieving accountability as an end state. While these concepts may have application to special districts, inquiry has yet to extend to the particular devices required to monitor or control these governments.

This research effort closes the knowledge gap by linking this little studied form of government with recent ideas about accountability and the role that citizen participation plays in developing or advancing accountable behaviors. The analysis applies an adaptation of the well known model developed by Romzek and Dubnick (1987) to create an accountability framework and documents the role that public participation plays in influencing accountable behaviors. The analysis culminates in a multivariate model that examines the role of public participation in the context of competing influences that might also force accountable behaviors.

The research concludes that participation can be an important influence in shaping specific forms of accountable behavior but that other factors are also essential to sustaining accountability. Most notable among these other factors is the role of the workplace environment, defined here in terms of employee interaction, ethics training, purpose, overall sense of commitment and other attributes.

This paper and its contents are dedicated to my wife Terry Travis. None of this would have been possible without her patience, encouragement, and support. Absolutely, more than any single person, she shared the burdens of this time consuming, sometimes frustrating, and always demanding effort.

Terry, I cannot thank you enough for your love and selflessness during this very stressful period of our marriage. You always seem to be there for me. Now it's my turn.

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Returning to graduate school at my age was difficult in itself and required extreme adjustments in my personal and well established professional life. Learning to cope with interlibrary loans, electronic journals, and systems seemingly designed for undergraduates were continuing challenges to me, my family, friends, professional colleagues and other students in the program. These challenges, however, created bonds, and together these people helped me navigate a maze of study, classes, talk and paper work to achieve this goal.

As a member of the first public affairs cohort, I am especially aware of the support and friendship that comes from my other classmates with varied interests and backgrounds. The students from this group who have already graduated have set a standard that has to be maintained or exceeded. Several of them will be good friends through life. I have to thank Mike Neidhart and Jorge Figueredo in particular because we pushed or prodded each other through seven years. I have a special thank you for Margaret Mlachak, the department's assistant, who has always managed to make things work as presumably they were intended.

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I hesitate to call this dissertation a labor of love but I'm proud of the result.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The American system of governance includes a network of state and local units identified as either general purpose or special purpose governments. The latter are often aligned with, but operate independently of, general purpose governments. Even as these special purpose or special district governments have shown extraordinary growth relative to their general purpose counterparts, there has been little interest in them or the structural characteristics that distinguish their systems for maintaining order and assuring accountable behaviors. In the meanwhile, the literature regarding accountability has been expanded materially in the last several years leading to debates about its form, component parts, objectives, and the preferred means for achieving accountability as an end state. While these concepts may have application to the special districts, inquiry has yet to extend to the particular devices required to monitor or control these governments.

This dissertation seeks to close this knowledge gap by linking this little studied form of government with recent ideas about accountability and the role that citizen participation plays in developing or advancing accountable behaviors. By providing a defined analytical structure, the research offers a model that may have application to forms of government other than the special district or special purpose unit.

The research indicates that participation is a key variable in shaping an organization's commitment to accountability but it also indicates that the work environment can be nurtured to enhance accountability. Taken together, these findings suggest strategies or approaches that administrators can take simultaneously to engage their constituents and to cultivate an ethos that is itself based on a standard of accountable behavior.

1.1 Overview and General Perspective

In 1967, there were fewer than 22,000 independent special district and special purpose governments in the United States. By 2002, exclusive of elected school boards, there were an estimated 35,000 of these units engaged in the direct production or provision of varied public services including those associated with public safety, libraries, environmental concerns, conservation practices, water and waste water collection and distribution, healthcare, housing, power generation, recreation and other activities (U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau [USDC], 1997). These numbers compare with approximately 35,000 local governments in 1967 (USDC, 1997), up to about 36,000 of these units in 2002 (Turk, 2002), which in many cases are providing similar services.

In contrast to the number of local municipalities which actually declined from 1997 to 2002, the steady growth of special district governments hints at their attractiveness for certain kinds of activities. Their utility as a vehicle for delivering

or implementing services, however, is not without controversy (Bollens, 1961; Bottomley, 2000; Foster, 1997; Henriques, 1986; Mitchell, 1992, 1999; Moe, 2001; Walsh, 1978).

Easily perceived as extensions of the general purpose governments that may have played a role in creating them, it is reasonable to assume that special district governments will act in the broader public interest (Bottomley, 2000). Implicitly, however, the relationship between citizen and government carries an obligation to give affected constituencies a voice in policy and implementation (Box, 1992, 1999; Hirschman, 1970; Innes, 1992; Paul, 1991; Walters, Aydelotte, & Miller, 2000). It is not clear that these special district governments provide an opportunity for that voice to be heard. Further, it remains unclear how powerful that voice may be when intended to encourage accountable behavior or influence program priorities.

The existing literature argues that the *independence* of special districts removes the structural devices that might otherwise assure the most democratic schemes of accountable behavior (Foster, 1997; Moe, 1994, 2001; Moe & Gilmour, 1995). Operating in a zone that places them between conventional governments and private organizations, special districts appear insulated from the discipline and accountability imposed by overhead systems, citizen engagement or the marketplace in which they frequently function.

Public participation now has a wide range of advocates who see civic engagement as possibly the most powerful means of achieving public accountability (Ashford & Rest, 1999; Balla, 2000; Gardner, 1998). Implicit then in claims about flagging accountability is the belief that virtually any instrumentality that distances itself from active public engagement is inherently flawed (Arnstein, 1969).

1.2 Research Questions

This dissertation discusses key theoretical concepts and dimensions of accountability and their linkages to the public participation activities of independent special districts, considering three research questions. These questions relate to the perceptions about the procedural form of accountability as it might be influenced by public participation and practiced by special purpose governments.

- RESEARCH QUESTION 1: What is the importance of accountability in the administration of special districts?
- RESEARCH QUESTION 2: In what ways, if at all, does public participation affect accountability and does its influence vary by operational or program focus?
- RESEARCH QUESTION 3: Are there observable differences in the way that public participation affects the various forms of accountability?

These questions are explored using a modification of the Romzek and Dubnick model first posited in 1987 and applied in varying forms by DeLeon (1998), Kearns (1994), and Dicke (2000) to a number of diverse situations that appear to validate its utility for understanding the ways in which accountability functions. Although

preserving the basic integrity of the Romzek and Dubnick (1987) model, several modifications proposed in this paper also capture the market and operational situations that characterize many special district governments.

Intuitively, whatever role public participation may play in accountability, there are moral and democratic reasons to assure open and continued communication (DeSario & Langton, 1987a, 1987b; Koontz, 1999a, 1999b; Lando, 1999; Langton, 1987a, 1987b; Warren, 1996). Public participation is likely to be useful in defining organizational priorities for resource allocation and for ranking the preferred strategies for achieving policy implementation (Boaden, Goldsmith, Hampton, & Stringer, 1982; Simon, 1999). The literature offers hopeful promise that public participation is a trust building mechanism that elevates the value of content through continuing interaction (Bockmeyer, 2000; Cole, 1972, 1974, 1975; Langbein & Kerwin, 2001; Lindstrom & Nie, 2000; Lowndes, Pratchett, & Stoker, 2001).

If electoral based controls are the most strident measure of accountability, then special district governments may not be accountable since decisions made by these bodies are often made on the basis of market actions or technical demands occurring *outside* of the political process as that process is experienced in the special district setting. If, in fact, controls in special districts are not politically centered, public participation, even if legislatively imposed, may have little meaningful role in achieving accountability.

1.3 Contributions to the Literature

The many perspectives associated with public participation and its potential impact on dimensions of trust, legitimacy, program effectiveness and accountability point to its instrumental role in shaping policy if only to confirm an agenda advocated by bureaucrats or other interests (Cole, 1972, 1974, 1975; Haque, 2001; King, Feltey and Susel, 1998 ; King and Stivers, 1998; Koontz, 1999a, 1999b).

Given the wide support for public participation, however defined or operationalized, its function as something more than a vehicle for exchanging information is just being explored beyond an instinctive level. Traditional views hold that the electorate is involved legally and practically through representative forums (Adsera & Boix, 2001). That which has been written about public participation, however, is mostly concerned with the administrative processes that are available for managing and controlling citizen input (Bens, 1994; Box, 1992; Koontz, 1999a, 1999b).

Although discussed in varied contexts, accountability remains something of a loosely defined term. Frequently invoked rhetorically, the content of accountability varies widely with the context and the problem (Behn, 2001; Johnston and Romzek, 1999; March & Olsen, 1995; Romzek, 2000; Romzek & Dubnick, 1987; Romzek & Ingraham, 1996), pointing to the difficulties in establishing a system or metric on which to judge its relevance or its application. Romzek and Dubnick (1987) have broadened our understanding of the conflicts that elected leaders and bureaucrats

must manage as they deal with a range of expectations perceived to be associated with behavioral control. In explorations of accountability, their model and its derivatives have been applied to an executive agency (Romzek & Dubnick, 1987), a network of affiliated intergovernmental agencies, (Radin & Romzek, 1996) congressional staff functions (Romzek, 2000), military operations (Romzek & Ingraham, 1996), government managed personnel systems (Romzek & Dubnick, 1994) and a number of third sector organizations (Dicke, 2000, 2002; Dicke & Ott, 1999).

While the efforts of Romzek and Dubnick (1987) remain relevant, particularly as a classification scheme, the basic framework of their model can be bolstered by amplifying certain dimensions that are the underpinnings of accountable behavior as they seem to define it, specifically public participation. In effect, the proposed construct is a modest revision of their model that addresses the role of public participation and its impacts on the accountability behaviors within their typology.

As for the matter of special district governments themselves, the growth in both the demand for public participation and the number of special district governments suggests a divergence between normative democratic values and the consolidation of political power in these multiple units that must be better understood (Campbell & Marshall, 2000; Musolf & Seidman, 1980). Bollens recognized these governments in 1961 as worthy of study because of their unusual structure and

behavior. Almost inexplicably, scholarly interest in these units has remained dormant for a period of about 30 years, even as the special district has become a preferred device for achieving certain goals of local governance (Bottomley, 2000; Foster, 1997).

Within the academic community, contracting and privatization have increased the awareness of third sector organizations, primarily non-profit organizations engaged in a certain kind of activity (Dicke, 2000, 2002; Dicke & Ott, 1999; Kearns, 1995; Mulgan, 2001). While special district governments may assume some of the attributes of these non-profit or non-governmental organizations, the former are distinguished by their creation exclusively in the public realm. Unlike non-profits that may have similar objectives, special districts take their form, budgeting procedures, *and* mission specifically in the public's name. Their entitlement and their subsequent empowerment signal a pact between the governed and those acting on behalf of the governed (Wettenhall, 1999; Wilson, 1995). The literature on the third sector, primarily developed to address emerging issues in organizations outside the United States (Bottomley, 2000; Hirst, 1995; Mulgan, 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2001; Uhr, 1999; Wettenhall, 1999; Wilson, 1995), may offer lessons regarding moral or mutual obligations but it would be a mistake to impute the same means of assuring accountability.

The ways in which our governmental institutions practice have become increasingly complex and we can no longer anticipate that traditional systems of control or systems designed to control certain bodies are forms that have universal application (Deleon, 1998). The traditional views seem insufficiently developed to manage the diverse problems and constituencies that are a part of the democratic process as it now exists and will continue to evolve (Koontz, 1999a, 1999b). The challenge for public administration will be to preserve the independence that remains the foundation of special district work while simultaneously assuring that the initiatives they pursue are consistent with broader public objectives (Bonut, 1996; Bottomley, 2000; Deleon, 1998; Mitchell, 1992).

Answers to the proposed research questions could identify the major influences connected with the relative effectiveness of public participation at a broad level. This effectiveness has a practical as well theoretical significance to administrators involved with both general and special purpose governments seeking to enhance their own performance or that of their respective governmental units, regardless of the underlying motivation.

1.4 The Research Effort

This research effort represents an assessment of the operating characteristics and practices in special district governments as they relate to public participation and accountability.

Of the estimated 35,000 special districts, less than five percent generate approximately eighty percent of the revenues attributable to all special districts and about ninety percent of long term debt (USDC, 1997). Within this group of about 1,400 governments, approximately 500 special districts were identified for the sampling frame. Each of these specifically targeted bodies employed at least seventy-five people at the time of the 1997 *U.S. Census of Governments* (USDC). Collectively, these units represent the full complement of social, physical and technical services available through these units.

Each special district in the sampling frame received a self-administered survey questionnaire addressing issues related to structure, legal standing, electoral procedures, board construction, routine operations, and procedures involving public participation activities. The survey was directed toward the senior management of these bodies because they are the principal coordinators of institutional policy within each respective organization. Approximately forty percent of the surveys were returned for inclusion in the analysis.

Issues of accountability are dependent primarily upon the framework offered by Romzek and Dubnick (1987) modified to accommodate market behaviors, public participation, and other complexities not addressed in their model. The work of Arnstein (1969), Cole (1972, 1974, 1975), Rowe and Frewer (2000), International Association for Public Participation [IAPP] (nd), Koontz (1999a, 1999b), Wang

(2001) and many others is instructive regarding the choice of variables, form of measurement, and emphasis on the environmental or organizational conditions that might influence participation and its relationship to accountability and legitimacy.

The research explores the relative effectiveness of the public's participation in the decision making process as it is managed or perceived to be managed by these special purpose governments. Data from the survey instrument were assembled into a multivariate model that tests the influence of public participation on practices of organizational accountability. The relationships among special purpose governments, public participation, and accountability are further probed in unstructured interviews conducted with executives at selected districts.

1.5 Organization of the Study

The following chapter establishes the theoretical framework for this analysis, describing the operating characteristics of special district governments in this country and the claims regarding their avoidance of organizational accountability. Public participation's role in shaping a democratic ethos is also documented in this chapter as are its perceived value for advancing decision making and influencing policy outcomes. Finally, *Chapter 2* offers a structure for examining the various dimensions of organizational accountability and explains the ways in which public participation and accountability are linked. In effect, Chapter 2 is an introduction both to the special district form of government and to recent thinking on broad

issues associated with democratic accountability and institutional devices available to maintain control.

Chapter 3 describes the procedures deployed in the research including the choice of sampling frame, the process of constructing and distributing a survey instrument, the choice of variables considered for analysis, and operationalization of measures and their relationship to the specific research questions posed at the organizational level. The suggested control variables are revisited and justified as possible sources of rival explanation.

Chapter 4 is a discussion of the univariate, bivariate, and multivariate procedures introduced into the analysis. The relationship between public participation and accountability is probed statistically and anecdotally in the context of the framework outlined in *Chapter 2*. The analysis confirms the importance of participation as a substantial factor in the variation of an organization's commitment to accountability.

Finally, *Chapter 5* provides further insights into the value of this research from the perspective of agency or administrative management. This chapter explains how the current findings compare with other, potentially related concepts and demonstrates the utility and generalizability of the modified Romzek and Dubnick model. *Chapter 5* includes suggestions for further research that focus on the need to

compare and contrast attitudes between special purpose and general purpose governments so that their respective impacts on organizational accountability may be better understood.

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This dissertation probes the characteristics of special purpose governments that distinguish this form from general purpose governments, identifying aspects of its structure that may be most troubling for those concerned with issues of accountability as the concept has come to be defined in the literature. While the broader dimensions of accountability are important to analyzing the behavior of these governments in varying situations, this analysis is most concerned with accountability and its linkages to the public participation activities of these special districts.

Chapter 2 chronicles the evolution of special district governments, their particular institutional form, their function as fiscal and service vehicles in the broader system of governance, and claims about their disregard for accountable behavior. Public participation is described in terms of its theoretical value for directing policy discussions to a diverse range of issues including accountability generally. Accountability is also discussed in terms of its relative complexities and the frequent conflicts between objectives and the means to exercise control. Finally, the Romzek and Dubnick (1987) model is offered with modifications as a possible structure for evaluating the accountability of special purpose governments. These modest changes to the Romzek and Dubnick model are proposed to recognize the explicit role of participation in their typology and to capture certain market oriented functions of special district or special purpose governments.

2.1 Special Districts and Their Role in the System of Governance

Reflecting the classification scheme articulated in the *U.S. Census of Governments*, this analysis focuses exclusively on those units of government that exist as entities separate from general purpose governments with substantial administrative and fiscal independence. To be recognized by the U.S. Census Bureau as a special district with independent powers, rather than a subordinate or dependent unit, these governments must exist as an *organized entity, possess governmental character, and operate with substantial autonomy beyond the control of a designated general purpose body* (USDC, 1997)¹. Regarding these criteria, the U.S. Census Bureau standard for a determination converges on the protocols for oversight and regulation, noting that budgetary processes, financial resources, staffing and administrative controls are *exclusively* the legal purview of the special district government itself (USDC, 1997). Subordinate entities, by contrast, may be *designated* as a district or an authority for identification purposes but these units are subject by law to *some* level of administrative or fiscal control of the state or of other independent local governments (USDC, 1997)².

2.1.1 The History and Growth of Special Districts

From 1967 to 1997, the number of municipalities and towns remained relatively flat. Preliminary data from the current *U.S. Census of Governments* indicates a potential decline in these local general purpose bodies during 2002 (USDC, 2002). Over the same 35 year period, their special district counterparts increased from

approximately 21,000 units to more than 35,000 units as shown in Table 1, excerpted from *Volume 4, Government Finances, Part 2, Finances of Special District Governments* (USDC, 1997) and *Preliminary Report No. 1 The 2002 Census of Governments* (USDC, 2002). Today, there are almost an equal number of special district and local general purpose governments.

Table 2.1: Historical Growth in Special Districts and Local General Purpose Governments

Census Year	Number of Special Districts	Number of Municipalities and Townships
2002	35,356	35,937
1997	34,683	36,001
1992	31,555	35,935
1987	29,427	35,891
1982	28,078	35,810
1977	25,962	35,684
1972	23,885	35,508
1967	21,264	35,153

The number of special purpose governments varies widely by state and the relationship to population is weak (USDC, 1997). . Eleven states have more than 1,000 of these governments, including Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska, all states with modest concentrations of population (USDC). Three states have fewer than fifty of these governments, while Florida, among the four largest states in terms of population, had 528 special district governments in 1997 (USDC).

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that more than 92 per cent of the special districts perform a single function (USDC, 1997). The largest share of governments is engaged in activities tied to the management or control of a natural resource, including drainage and flood control, irrigation, or soil and water conservation (USDC). Those districts engaged in fire protection services comprise the second largest activity (USDC). The third and fourth most reported functions involve respectively community development activities and the maintenance of water supplies (USDC).

The limited literature offers some explanations for growth in the number of special district governments. The reason cited most frequently is the need for added financial resources. With their legal independence, special districts provide access to capital and debt not reflected as liabilities on the balance sheets of existing general purpose governments with which they may be aligned. Since this debt is unlikely to be a general obligation, it will rarely require a referendum for approval. With the boundaries of about one-third of the special districts matching those of another local government, it is compelling to view these districts as partners combining their financial resources to pursue a common service objective. While this analysis does not deal with the particular motivations for creating these governments, financial independence emerges as a troubling attribute of these governments that may not be subject to adequate oversight or controls.

2.1.2 The New Public Management (NPM) and its Relationship to Special Districts

Setting aside definitional problems, the principles prescribed by the New Public Management (NPM) may have strained whatever systems exist for assuring accountability (Lynn, 2001). In effect, there is a developing opinion that values of governance more appropriately centered on process and equity have instead yielded to market and technical forces exclusively concerned with outcomes and efficiency (Barberies, 1998; Hirst, 1995, Kettl, 1988; Moe, 1994; Mulgan, 1997, 2000), areas in which special districts ostensibly excel. In the NPM perspective, citizens cede their power to determine priorities and allocations, opting to leave those decisions to others with certain education or expertise (Barber, 1983; Haque, 2001; Hirst, 1995). Programs driven by efficiency and outcome create principal and agent relationships with extraordinary asymmetries of information (Riccucci, 2001).

The relationship between government and the electorate takes a new urgency because the NPM values of efficiency and effectiveness implicitly encourage more diverse approaches to the delivery of traditional government services (Bonut, 1996; Kettl, 1988). Such approaches include, among others, an increased reliance on third parties to produce or provide services, raising questions about their publicness (Antonsen and Jorgensen, 1997), lines of authority (Gilmour & Jensen, 1998; Haque, 2001), and the means of oversight (Moe, 1994; Moe & Gilmour, 1995). These third parties take many forms, including conventional private concerns as well as a variety of non-profit and quasi- governmental entities. As the variety of

partnerships and vehicles has increased, so has awareness that systems must be implemented to control the providers or their output, sometimes both (Kettl, 1988).

Except for a few notable exceptions, the special district has been virtually ignored even as the numbers sustain it as the preferred device for achieving certain goals of local governance. Foster's *The Political Economy of Special Purpose Governments* (1997) remains the most comprehensive study of these independent governments, explaining their dominance in the federal system as the result of many competing forces, including political and financial insularity. Her analysis points to the potential for abuses inherent in this system of autonomous governments but it does not investigate the more specific issues of accountability. Moe and Gilmour (1995) have written about the power of federal enterprises, and their work documents the potential for abuse in these bodies which have a structural kinship to the thousands of state and locally created special district governments. Bozeman and Bretschneider (1994), Perry and Rainey (1988), Rainey, and Bozeman (2000), as well as Rainey, Backoff, and Levine. (1976), have labored to distinguish public organizations from private organizations. Their various typologies hint at the existence of instrumentalities that are neither public nor private but the subject of special districts is never addressed. Mitchell (1992, 1999), Mitchell and Miller (1992), Walsh (1978), and Henriques (1986) provide perspective on the operations of government agencies identified specifically as public authorities. Mitchell (1992), for example, references about 6,400 state, local and national *authorities* compared

with a reported count of 31,000 *special districts* in approximately the same time period. The governments Mitchell critiques might be classified as special districts according to the criteria or definitions applied here but these bodies are far fewer than the total number of special districts cited in the *Census of Governments* (USDC, 1997, 2002). Their informative evaluations are the product of deliberate, but narrowly construed, definitions that may diminish the scale of financial and political power that stems from these many governments operating collectively.

While third party agents have attracted attention and stimulated disagreement regarding their legitimacy, appropriate role in governance, and relationship to other forms of government, special districts have been ignored by all but a handful of academics. Given their numbers and the rancor regarding the social and political changes induced by NPM reforms and the agents assigned to conduct its mission, the neglect is all the more remarkable.

Governments at every level now commonly promote engagement as a means of achieving public accountability through information exchange (Bonut, 1996; Buckwalter, Parsons & Wright, 1993; Committee on Public Involvement in Transportation [CPIT], 1998; Department of Environmental Protection, Pennsylvania [DEP], 1996; Helsey & Strange, 2000; U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Environmental Management [USDE], 1994; U.S. Department of Interior [USDI], 1998). Regardless of its form, proponents argue that public participation

promotes accountability through heightened awareness of public needs and priorities. Participation processes that give much of the role of policy development and implementation to the public are advocated as those most likely to assure accountable behaviors (Berman, 1997; Boaden, Goldsmith, Hampton & Stringer; 1982; Chopyak, 2001; Cole, 1972, 1974, 1975; Cvetkovich & Earle, 1994; Elfin 1993; Evans, 1999; Irwin & Repko, nd; King, Feltey & Susel, 1998; Kramer, Pommerenke & Newton, 1993; Lowndes, Pratchett & Stoker, 2001; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1980; Payne & Skelcher, 2001; Spady, 1995). In some state and federal processes, public participation is codified in legislation to assure equity and procedural fairness (CPIT, 1998; DEP, 1996; USDE, 1994; USDI). Critics charge that special districts are immune from these standards of behavior, negating the power of civic engagement (Bottomley, 2000; Henriques, 1986; Kettl, 1988, 1996; Leazes, 1997; Paul, 1991; Spence, 1999; Wettenhall, 1999).

Implicit links among public policy, administration, and law (Moe, 1994; Moe and Gilmour, 1995) advance the concept of overhead democracy (Redford, 1969) that extends control and accountability through the chief executive officer to the electorate that has empowered that chief executive. Overhead democracy is largely a hierarchal construction with the chain of both accountability and control well defined backward and upward to the highest ranking elected office holder (Moe and Gilmour; Durant, White, Wolf, Hajj, Kets de Vries & Miller, 1995). Its idea as a means of control perfectly comports with the Romzek and Dubnick (1987) model

that relies on a hierarchical structure. Overhead democracy is a blatantly political construction, highly dependent upon the role of the electorate engaged in democratic institutions. Special districts, it is argued, are free of the conventional hierarchical chains or overhead devices linking this form of government to other responsible parties (Durant et al; Moe, 2001), that is, those elected and their electors.

Rational economic behavior, specifically public choice theory, offers another vehicle for maintaining the accountability of certain government activities. For those services or products that might be otherwise secured in the private marketplace, there may be an opportunity to secure alternative providers, possibly at a more satisfactory price (Haque, 2001). One argument that sustains special districts, however, is that they are a means to correct perceived market failures (Barberries, 1998; Henriques, 1986; Walsh, 1978). By design or by chance, special districts may be monopolistic suppliers, presumably of a largely public good (Barberries). If so, accountability is difficult to achieve through an exit strategy (Barberries; Box, 1999; Kettl, 1993).

2.1.3 Features of Special Districts that Influence Their Responses to Public Participation and Accountability

Special districts draw their mandates from legislative action, usually at the state level (Foster, 1997; Henriques, 1986; Mitchell, 1992, 1999). In practice, special districts retain the attributes of a government body but they exercise wide

discretionary powers that have premised concerns about their commitments to public action and public responsibility (Henriques, 1986; Wettenhall, 1999). Not altogether public or private, special districts are intermediaries between traditional government and the private sector with the specific model adapted to a particular set of program goals or operating needs (Mitchell, 1999; Walsh, 1978).

Given the proliferation of third sector organizations in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand as vehicles for delivering largely social services, it is inviting to borrow from the literature (Auditor General of Canada, 1998; Bottomley, 2000; Brennan, 1999; Choudhury, 2002; Cragg & Dyck, 1998; Evans, 1999; Hirst, 1995; Kearns, 1994; Mulgan, 1997, 2001; Payne & Skelcher, 2001; Ryan, 2002; Wilson, 1995; Winston, Burwick, McDonnell & Roper, 2002 to cite several examples) that explores the independent relationship of third sector organizations with respective levels of general purpose government. Indeed, there appear to be some similarities that tie these groups to special districts but it is not altogether clear how the altruistic character of socially focused organizations influences accountable behavior. While special district governments may assume some of the structural attributes of these non profit or non-governmental organizations, the former are distinguished principally by their creation in the public realm (Bottomley, 2000; Mitchell, 1992, 1999; Henriques, 1986).

For the most part, legislation in the fifty states allowing these governments has been cobbled together, in response to the circumstances of a particular time and place (Leigland, 1992). Walsh (1978) made similar observations several years ago, adding that their varied form of origin and operation generate moral or administrative behaviors that would otherwise be unacceptable in the public domain. If so, then the differences in style and programmatic content of special districts also make it difficult to implement a uniform series of controls should it be determined that more rigid oversight is desirable .

Some states have recognized the need to impose order and consistency to channel the energy of these governments. In Florida for example, special districts appear in the 1979 statutes initially but a series of amendments passed through 1990 attempt to impose uniform criteria for organizing, approving and implementing these governments (Mitchell, 1992).

Over the next several pages, these and other issues are discussed in more detail. What emerges is a structure, pattern of behavior, and focus which seem, certainly at an intuitive level, to be at odds with most concepts of democratization and accountable behavior.

Overview: The Structure and Activities of Special Purpose Governments To understand the growing and unusual roles filled by these governments, it is useful to explore the character and structure of these bodies and compare them with their general purpose counterparts that may have actually created them.

General purpose governments are normally associated with broad ruling and regulatory powers specified in law and the typical state constitution. These governments provide broadly distributed services commensurate with their broad policy and social objectives. The costs for these services are also broadly distributed. There is an obvious separation of powers between the legislative and executive branches. Most activities function together to create an overhead system where authority, and ostensibly responsibility for decisions and actions, vests in officials at increasingly higher levels of position. Decisions are largely made through visible electoral processes and are frequently debated in a highly public forum. Even in the control of a powerful chief executive, power can be dispersed because of the electoral system.

In the main, special districts are narrowly engaged. They are usually service specific even if the service is itself concentrated in a particular geographic area. Of the approximately 35,000 districts identified in 1997, almost 32,000 were engaged in a single activity (USDC, 1997), for example, transportation, drainage, flood control, parks and recreation, power, housing, sewer and waste collection among others. They normally exercise specific powers defined in discretely written legislation (Leigland, 1992; Walsh, 1978)

and are usually overseen by a board that is often appointed rather than elected (Bollens, 1961). Costs are applied across a narrow constituency and rarely involve general obligation debt. In some instances, board seats are prescriptively filled by designated interest groups or constituencies. Where elections or plebiscites do occur, they may be linked directly to property ownership (Bollens, 1961) or some special qualification as they are in Florida (F.S. § 190.006).

In effect, special districts may have highly centralized decision making power, exercised over a very limited area of expertise or influence. The degree of power or its concentration varies by setting and activity because enabling legislation from state to state is also varied. So, while it is not clear which vehicles and structures may be more permissive or restrictive, there is an impression that the framework and foundation that govern these units are intuitively misaligned with democratic ethos and decision making.

Policy, formulated in such a context, logically appears disconnected from what might otherwise be the transparency anticipated in a public setting dependent upon civic involvement. Fiscal practices, absent a well identified overhead system, seem to invite discretion, abuse or an abdication of responsibility. At the very least, the accountability practices expected from general purpose governments seem less developed or more compromised in these special purpose units.

Tables 2.2 and 2.3 profile the many similarities and differences noted in special district and general purpose governments, providing further perspective on the above as well as other issues discussed in this paper, particularly their independent structure, legal powers, relationship(s) with affected constituencies that form the basis for claims that special districts are not accountable. Table 2.2 considers the general powers, processes for decision making, the distributional nature of their respective services, definitions of the public they serve, and fiscal powers. Table 2.3 summarizes issues and structures for achieving accountability respective to both types of government. Further detail on the information provided in Tables 2.2 and 2.3 is also available in the Appendix within Tables A.1 through A.5.

Table 2.2: Features Distinguishing Special Districts from General Purpose Governments, Operations and Structure

General Purpose Governments	Special District Governments	Presumed Issue or Concern for Special Districts
<u>General Powers</u>		
Geographically specific	May be geographically specific but more likely to be service specific	Constituencies are narrowly defined
Powers most likely to originate with State	Powers defined by enabling legislation but may not be discrete	Wide variability in structure and powers
Obvious separation of powers between executive and legislative functions	Board involvement (legislative) but management vested in administrative authority (executive)	Structure contrary to convention and expectations
Broad taxing and revenue powers	Specific taxing and revenue powers	Financial powers deeply vested
Broad objectives but no specific mission	Stipulated objectives and presumably specified mission	Insularity

General Purpose Governments	Special District Governments	Presumed Issue or Concern
<u>Decision Making</u>		
Representative based on broad constituency demands	Board members may come from specified interest groups or specified constituencies	Community interest not addressed
Wide range of issues debated in public forums	Agenda tends to be narrowly construed	Issues considered out of context
A specific type of public participation not typically mandated	In some cases, public participation of a certain type is legislated	Requirements should not be confused with effectiveness
<u>Public Services</u>		
Broadly distributed, based on widest possible concept of public interest	Distributed or provided to a specific constituency	Can be construed as a private good
Keyed to vague quality of life considerations	Keyed to specific considerations about efficiency and effectiveness	Process and quality of life are secondary but likely to be invoked
<u>Public Interest</u>		
Multi-dimensional constituencies but geographically defined	Issues may be multi dimensional but constituencies are small and the mission is defined	Narrow constituencies define agenda, using public resources
Governmental responsibilities extend to all citizens	Responsibilities focus on a specific constituency	Activities appear largely private
<u>Fiscal Powers</u>		
Relatively broad financial power and spending authority	Focus primarily on enterprise activities	Self sustaining actions become priority
Varied financial resources available	Broad financial tools available but resources are relatively limited	Self sustaining actions become priority
Subject to legislative and executive discussions and debate	Insular budgetary authority	Financial independence
Subject to extensive public disclosure	Public disclosure not systematically employed	Non-transparency

Table 2.3: Features Distinguishing Special Districts from General Purpose Governments, Accountability Structures

General Purpose Governments	Special District Governments	Presumed Issue or Concern
Obvious legislative/executive avenues available	Weak hierarchal in terms of external interface	Violates principles of public law.
Strongly hierarchal and linked to external interface	Board participation in controls widely mixed and influenced by represented interests	Responds to privatized or narrow interests
Electoral based	Strongly professional	Focused on outputs not process
Tools available for recall or impeachment	Appointments or board positions typically long term	Weakened span of electoral control
	Controls focus on procedures for financial reporting	Controls are ex ante, not anticipatory. Controls construed as accountability systems.
Use of informal channels becoming more common	Channels largely formalized	Processes not culturally instituted
Activities largely open to public scrutiny	Generally resistant to public participation	Participation not deemed necessary for management's goals
Public participation recognized vehicle for purposes of information, education and trust building	Certain forms of public participation accepted as necessary to model accountable behavior	Participation legislated for certain forms of activities. Not consistent with community centered initiatives
Goals and expectations broad and varied may be broad	Goals specific	Internally and goal focused
Inherently complex issues		

Thematically, the issues identified in the literature and summarized in these tables relate to the center of controls (Kettl, 1988, 1996; Moe, 1994, 2001), accountability structures (Moe & Gilmour, 1995), the means of financial management (Doig & Mitchell, 1992;

Eger, 2000; Leigland, 1992; Nunn & Schoedel, 1997; Henriques, 1986; Mitchell, 1992,), emphasis on outcomes rather than process (Moe, 1994, 2001), and possible constraints on public participation (Henriques, 1986; Walsh, 1978).

The impressions about behaviors of special districts and their implications stem primarily from case study observations, many on the most powerful special district governments (Bollens, 1961; Bottomley, 2000; Finn, 1992; Henriques, 1986; Koppell, 2000, 2001; Mitchell, 1992, 1999; Mitchell & Miller, 1992; Walsh, 1978). As a result, the claims remain untested in a form that allows generalization, and they reflect a biased or rhetorical quality.

Like general purpose governments, special purpose governments may be involved in either the provision or actual production of services. The leadership of these bodies, as well as the boards that provide oversight and set policy direction, may be elected although the majority of boards are appointed (Bollens, 1961; Bottomley, 2000; Foster, 1997; Henriques, 1986; Koppell, 2000, 2001; Mitchell, 1992, 1997, 1999; Mitchell & Miller, 1992; Walsh, 1978). Many have the power to tax while others depend on user fees or assessments (Bollens; Bottomley; Foster; Henriques; Koppell; Mitchell; Perry, 1992b; Walsh).

Enabling legislation typically allows special districts the right to develop, implement and finance programs through tax levies or assessments (Bollens, 1961; Douglas, 2000; Foster, 1997; Henriques, 1986; Koppell, 2000, 2001; Leigland,

1994, 1995; Mitchell, 1992, 1999; Doig & Mitchell, 1992; Perry, 1992b; Walsh, 1978). In theory, the assessments provide benefits defined in case and administrative law, but there is discretion in the means by which the benefits are captured or assigned (Uniform Community Development Act of 1980; Uniform Special District Accountability Act of 1989). Under such circumstances, the financial powers of these special purpose governments appear unilateral.

Some special purpose governments have all their powers delegated to them specifically. In other cases, unless expressly prohibited, the external controls may be insufficient to preclude like powers from being implemented through administrative procedures (Walsh, 1978). Critics claim that the oversight functions of these governments are simply inadequate in the context of such powers (Henriques, 1986; Leigland, 1992; Mitchell, 1999; Moe, 1994, 2001; Moe & Gilmour, 1995; Perry, 1992b). Moe (2001) wryly notes that laws which may exist are nothing more than the quasi-management of quasigovernments.

Concerns Focused on Independence The many possible responsibilities, financial resources, and legal configurations assumed by these special purpose governments prompts some disagreement regarding the form of entity that is often identified as a special purpose government³. Leigland (1992, 1994, 1995) and Mitchell (1992, 1999) focus on the size and scope of special district mandates while Foster (1997) observes that census definitions are precise in meaning although potentially more

exclusionary. Antonsen and Jorgensen (1997) suggest that the degree of *publicness*, more than particular structure, influences the content of processes.

It is the legally independent status of special purpose governments, however, that ultimately distinguishes these bodies from general purpose governments and remains their primary source of power (Henriques, 1986; Koppell, 2000, 2001; Moe, 2001). Independence elevates their utility to related governments, allowing greater freedom, flexibility, and elasticity in the provision and financing of many public services (Doig & Mitchell, 1992).

At the same time, the literature's reference to independence extends to many observed criticisms. Among these are problems or criticisms are board construction (Berkley & Fox, 1978; Bollens, 1961; Mitchell, 1997; Payne, & Skelcher, 2001; Wilson, 1995; Stewart, 1995), coordination and fragmentation of functions (Berkley & Fox), staffing, management, and procurement procedures (Henriques, 1986; Moe, 2001), the responsiveness of the organization itself (Haque, 2001; Moe and Gilmour, 1995), and the form of oversight systems in place (Berkley & Fox; Boschken, 2000). Independence through this lens hints at gross abuse of authority and a pattern of repeated misconduct that otherwise has no control (Henriques, 1986).

Nowhere is the independence of special districts more evident than in the practice of their financial affairs (Berkley & Fox, 1978). In his seminal work *Special District Governments*, Bollens (1961) observed that the 1955 operating receipts and debt of some 12,000 special districts were greater than the collective expenses of all counties, townships and towns. The debt of special districts has increased. It is now approximately that of the nation's incorporated cities and counties (USDC, 1997) and evidences the importance of special districts as vehicles for achieving certain programmatic objectives (Nunn and Schoedel, 1997; Foster 1997). In a recent year, forty-one percent of the total public debt in California was attributable to the actions of special districts (Douglas, 2000). Such enormous financial power magnifies concerns of possible permissiveness and public control.

The typical district can contract and incur debt outside of the appropriations and hearing processes normally required of the general purpose government (Berkley & Fox, 1978). Even where meetings are noticed, the actions that commit the organization to long term financial obligations may involve only a few board members and key staff (Henriques, 1986). Unless the government faces a sunset provision, it is assured a minimal life that remains concurrent with any outstanding debt (Bollens, 1961).

If both the appropriations and administrative processes indicate an absence of traditional public controls, then the typical special purpose government may operate

under a structure more characteristically enjoyed by private organizations (Bollens, 1961; Mitchell, 1992, 1999; Leigland, 1992). In the corporate model, for example, oversight occurs through a well defined class of regulators or interest groups concerned only with the performance of that single entity. Official actions are left primarily to a group of carefully feted board members (Koppell, 2000, 2001). Stockholders may be entitled to elect these board members but voting tends to be a function of large ownership interests. In any case, management operates with some level of discretion and the mission of the organization takes precedence over the process for achieving the mission.

Simply through their independent status and largely internal program focus, special districts may have little practical or legal motivation to engage in highly interactive and encompassing participation activities that are the more visible and accepted approach to policy development and program implementation used by general purpose governments (Walsh, 1978). Independence, in this context, alludes to social and political disconnection.

Legal Isolation Independence breeds behaviors that might otherwise be contained through a formalized system of checks and balances (Berkley & Fox, 1978; Koppell, 2000, 2001). Decisions may not require either the resources or cooperation of multiple governmental units. At the same time, the interest groups associated with or working on the behalf of special districts tend to be narrowly defined (Campbell

and Marshall, 2000; Walsh, 1978). Acting beyond the legal and political reach of related jurisdictions, special districts are relieved of the challenging electoral responsibilities and demands imposed by broadly based public constituencies (Bollens, 1961; Henriques, 1986; Hitchcock, 1992; Hudson, 1996; Mitchell, 1999).

General purpose governments may retain, in some instances, the right to appoint board members of special district governments, but the evidence indicates that both distance and time are likely to diminish the oversight value of appointments (Berkley & Fox, 1978; Davies, 2000; Leigland, 1992; Mitchell, 1992; Stewart, 1995; Wilson, 1995). Changing political ideology, shifts in technology, and competing demands on the time of constitutional officers often inserted into board roles, compromise the value of an appointment. The overhead system, that is the electoral mechanism envisioned as linking board appointees to office holders and citizens, simply does not provide an adequate span of control over special purpose governments (Berkley & Fox; Wilson, 1995). Almost by default, the political power and financial resources that come with independent status relieve special districts of the need to curry political favor from competing interests and competing priorities (Walsh, 1978).

Absent a political or legal need for public debate to actuate key decisions, special districts are in a position to check or eliminate constituent power (Henriques, 1986). Even if actions to control civic involvement are not overt, channels that might

otherwise aid participation may be sufficiently narrow that special districts are effectively encouraged to pursue their priorities with little subsequent public accountability (Box, 1992, 1999; Burns, 1994; Cummins, 2000; Foster, 1997; Gilmour & Jensen, 1998; Kettl, 1988; 1996; Koppell, 2000, 2001). Access to these special purpose entities, Walsh (1978) says, is closed to all but the most knowledgeable insiders.

The Public's Role in Special District Governance The forms of accountability practiced by special district governments as well as the need or desirability of implementing controls that purposefully insert civic involvement into their regime raise obvious questions about their role in a broader system of public governance (Henriques, 1986; Mitchell, 1992, 1999; Mitchell & Miller, 1992, Moe, 2001). While similar criticisms, of course, also apply to general purpose governments which have experienced their own documented decline in trust (Inglehart, 1997; King, 1997; Mansbridge, 1997 Neustadt, 1997; Nye, 1997), general purpose governments and their policies are implemented through direct electoral participation. Such participation, even if rarely exercised, is a product of direct public action (Aberbach & Rockman, 1988; Adsera & Boix, 2001).

Setting aside questions about both the role and the adequacy of *appointed* office holders in the constitutional system, the chain of accountability ties the chief elected official in a general purpose government to a certain constituency (Downs, 1999;

Moe, 1994, 2001; Moe & Gilmour, 1995). Intermediaries -- staff or professional manages for example -- may act on the behalf of that official but the *electorate* provides consent within a given operating structure. The principle of public law does not suggest the perfection of the balloting system but it does underscore the fundamental relationship that exists between the elected and the electorate (Moe & Gilmour). While technical and professional skills may be important in choosing among resources or policy options, democratic methods activate decisions (Kweit & Kweit, 1987).

Presumably, balloting and direct empanelment of controlling boards then would mitigate many of the concerns stemming from an inadequate linkage between the special district and its constituents. Since balloting for board elections and policy matters is often confined exclusively to property owners within the jurisdictional area of the special district, it is not clear that electoral institutions operate as accountability systems in the sense implied by general purpose governments (Bollens, 1961). At best, there is a de facto disenfranchisement of certain individuals (Bollens; Burns, 1994). While apparently case law validates voting procedures based on property or position, they would seem to obviate legitimacy and undermine systems of trust that are associated with better understood democratic institutions (Bollens)⁴.

By instilling behavioral or economic efficiencies, the marketplace is assumed to provide much of the accountability that conventional participation, balloting, oversight, and regulation may be unable to achieve (Boschken, 2000; Bottomley, 2000; Bozec , Breton & Cote, 2002; Burns, 1994; Casile, 2001; Cragg & Dyck, 1998; Cummins, 2000; Gillette, 1994; Hawley, 2000; Kettl, 1988; Nutt, 1999; Robert, 1993; Walsh, 1978). The metaphor of citizen as consumer focuses attention on public goods and services as commodities that are interchangeable on the basis of price and content. That construct may not always be appropriate. Gillette, Bottomley, and Koppell (2000, 2001) argue that market discipline has largely failed to control special districts except at the most basic level. Special districts claim to be efficient but the regulations that create these bodies serve at the same time to create artificial price supports or other anomalies that make it difficult for competitors to enter the market freely (Gillette, 1994). Such barriers to entry forestall consumers from supporting alternative service providers even where demand may warrant. If market discipline is inadequate to exercise control over those services that might otherwise be available through private initiatives, then it should be assumed that exit strategies are even more limiting in those settings where public goods constitute the entire inventory of product (Box, 1999; Simon, 1999). It would, for example be difficult if not impossible for the customer of an independently functioning electric utility to seek an alterative service provider.

Amidst concerns that the nation's citizens have become more cynical (Berman, 1997) in large measure because government institutions are neither trustworthy nor responsive to the demands of their citizens (Behn, 2000; Berman, 1997; Bockmeyer, 2000; King, 1997; King & Stivers, 1998; McTigue, 2000; Nye, 1997, Orren, 1997; Thomas, 1998), special district governments are an especially curious instrumentality. These special purpose units appear to mimic the activities of general purpose governments (Henriques, 1986; Mitchell, 1992,1999; Mitchell & Miller, 1992; Moe, 2001, Walsh, 1978) which have themselves been roundly criticized for their lack of focus (Bok, 1997; Inglehart, 1997; King, 1997; May, 1997, Neustadt, 1997). At the same time, an emphasis on efficiency raises charges that special purpose governments trample or ignore civic centered processes (Gilmour & Jensen, 1998; Moe, 2001; Robert, 1993). That is, economic and fiscal values are implicitly given greater weight in policy and service decisions than social or civic values.

Underlying these seemingly irreconcilable positions is an ideological duality that blurs rather than distinguishes their public and private roles as potential vehicles for service delivery (Box, 1999; Burns, 1994; Cragg & Dyck, 1998; Haque, 2001; Kettl, 1988; Musolf & Seidman, 1980; Rainey & Bozeman, 2000; Robert). As Moe and Gilmour (1995) observe specifically, it is not clear whether these legal entities have served to privatize government or to enhance the publicness of the private sector. At the very least, special districts maintain the *appearance* of independence

from the duly elected general purpose governments that may have sponsored them (Foster, 1997).

Though the *complete* autonomy that defines the powers of the fully independent district may be a legal fiction, the distinction between *independent* and *dependent* government units, measured in terms useful to affected citizens, can be very hazy (Burns, 1994; Foster, 1997; Mitchell, 1999; Walsh, 1978). Whatever the reality of their status, even an implied break in the chain of command that extends from the organization to a legislatively enabled authority leaves special districts and special purpose governments vulnerable to charges that their agenda is beyond the meaningful control of the public they are chartered to serve. Indeed, their focus and separation from politics and the political process are cited as reasons that special districts and special purpose governments are assigned their particular tasks and financial responsibilities (Berkley & Fox, 1978; Burns, 1994; Foster, 1997; Mitchell, 1992, 1999; Moe, 2001). Assuming that the electorate's disaffection with government might be countered with enhanced public involvement, as suggested by the participatory model of democratic behavior, special districts loom as an obvious exception to recent thinking.

Alternative Interpretations of the Issues A more limited body of literature offers some evidence that the criticisms of special districts are ideological not structural. These competing viewpoints acknowledge some of the obvious deficiencies while

arguing the importance of the structure to achieve certain types of objectives. The issue may not be the structure but instead its misapplication.

Sam Nunn and Carl Schoedel (1997), for example, examine the patterns of total spending in the largest metropolitan areas that are dependent on special districts for service delivery using data from the 1987 *Census of Governments*, Foster's (1997) same source of financial information. Applying their methodology for weighing the role of these governments in the political economy, they concede that special districts and area governments overall may spend higher per capita sums for operations but conclude that total debt per capita is no higher in these areas than in metropolitan areas with materially less dependence on special purpose units. Unlike Foster, they find no evidence that social programs are underrepresented in the mix of total spending. Their analysis, if correct, may weaken claims that civic engagement is needed to counter financial irresponsibility and to raise social awareness. As for public involvement itself, they are silent on the matter.

While desirable as a normative state, the demands for enhanced participation may be of greater or lesser importance if the nature of the services or goods provided by a particular special purpose government adopts a social (human services and healthcare for example) or physical form (water, sewer or transportation services for example). Social tasks are reasonably expected to respond to their moral or ethical foundations with responsibility and accountability emerging through stewardship

(Bundt, 1992; Davis, Schoorman, & Donaldson, 2002. Dicke, 2000, 2002). Even when technically based, these social disciplines are inherently more responsive to their constituencies because of an implied ethos in which profitable behavior is also moral behavior. For example, a community profits -- that is, it benefits -- when all its citizens are provided access to healthcare. As for special district governments engaged in the delivery of physical services, demands for engagement may not originate with citizens but rather activists. Despite being criticized by some elected officials and planners that oversee the regulation of the state's land use practices, Florida's development districts are popular with their residents because of their concept of order, efficiency, and professional maintenance of an inviolate community standard (Leusner & Holton, 2000).

Further, there may be distinctions to be drawn among the vehicles available to achieve accountability and to impose accountable behavior. Romzek and Dubnick (1987) as well as many others that either use or borrow from their typology (see, for example, Dicke, 2000, 2001; Dicke & Ott, 1999; Kearns, 1994; Klinger, D., Albanian, J. & Romzek, 2002; Radin & Romzek, 1996), describe the evolving nature and context of accountability and suggest that certain devices are relevant only to specific circumstances (Deleon, 1998; Downs, 1999; Thomas, 1990, 1993). Confounding the many possibilities, conditions favorable to the creation of trust appear to be highly dependent upon interaction and participation (Bockmeyer, 2000; Carnevale, 1995; Cole, 1972, 1974, 1975; Craig, 1998; Lindstrom & Nie, 2000;

Thomas, 1998). In situations where trust is institutionalized in the cultural practices of an organization's staff and leadership, it has been posited that formalized systems of accountability may be less beneficial than approaches based upon less rigid principles and rules (Franklin, 2001; Gardner, 1998). If that observation is true, the value of a rigid overhead system may be overstated, and content of the workplace must then be considered as a potential influence on accountable behaviors.

Even Walsh (1978), among the strongest critics of special purpose entities, observes that more and more is being done to control this form of government as evidenced by the few states that have opted to activate comprehensive regulatory control over these governments. Arizona, sufficiently concerned about the role in of special districts, invoked a moratorium on their creation in 1984 (Leigland, 1992) that was subsequently suspended. Walsh cites New York and Pennsylvania as among the leaders in developing new systems of accountability. It is Florida, however, that has made some of the most sweeping reforms with adoption of the Uniform Community Development Act (1980) and the subsequent Uniform Special District Accountability Act (1989). These combined acts prescribe a single procedure for implementing such special districts in Florida, and they stipulate certain operating and reporting requirements associated with accounting, creation, dissolution, elections and other matters for both dependent and independent special purpose units. Though the emphasis is on financial accountability, rather than program content, the 1989 law does bring actions of these governments into a centralized system where certain

behaviors can be examined. Administrative practices associated with the 1989 law are addressed in the *Florida Special District Handbook* (1999). As well, this volume highlights Florida's tradition of open meetings and open records which together acknowledge the importance of an informed citizenry (Fla. Const. Art. I, § 24, 2003). If there is a trend, it is toward increased, not less, control with a considerable emphasis placed on activities that would inform citizens about the functions of these units.

2.1.4 Summary: Special Districts and Their Problems

In the aggregate, there are enough criticisms to (re)evaluate the role that special districts play in the larger system of governance. While some of the dissatisfaction with special districts may be ideological, previous work available points to at least isolated situations in which special districts may not have sufficiently advanced the interest of the constituents they are mandated to serve, either by design or by circumstance. Informal controls, rooted in workplace culture or dependent upon personal or ethical standards of fairness, may be a mitigating or controlling influence on accountability (Behn, 2001) but the strength of these devices is speculative. States such as Florida, Arizona, New York and Pennsylvania, motivated to act affirmatively in the wake of abuses, have introduced legislation that attempts to make these units more responsive through formalized means comprised of financial, legal, and organizational accountability. However, on the basis of existing empirical accounts, the attitudes inherent to the special district

form of government provide no promise that the formalized methods alone are likely to be adequate.

The growth in numbers and financial and financial power of special districts speaks to their apparent desirability to accomplish certain service objectives even as many constituents remain unaware of their structure and the avenues available to assert opinions on policy. If fiscal and performance effectiveness are themselves the principal reasons to create these governments, then it might be inferred that the democratic processes normally associated with America's system of governance have been casually ignored in favor of service outcomes.

Still, it is not altogether clear in what ways these governments may fail to be accountable. Without that understanding, it is difficult to posit what forms or safeguards might achieve the desired or practical level of control.

2.2 Foundations and Principles of Accountability

In the public administration literature, allusions to accountability often tender vague sentiments about political integrity and administrative responsibility achieved through the electoral process (Schacter, 2001). The term carries strongly expressive messages usually precipitated by or associated with undesirable behaviors in politically charged environments (Schacter). In its complexity, accountability is simultaneously ambiguous and expansive (Downs, 1999 March and Olsen, 1995

Mulgan, 2000b; Romzek and Dubnick, 1987; Klinger, Albanian, & Romzek, 2002; Weber, 1999b) invoked by policy makers, claimants, activists, and politicians alike to exercise control, fashion an ideology or simply seize power (Downs; March and Olsen; Romzek and Dubnick; Schacter; Weber).

Given the wide variation in structure, mission, and form of control relevant to special districts, it is only reasonable to speculate that the narrowest interpretation of accountability will certainly find fault with this form of government. Seen exclusively in terms of *control*, for instance, the legal *independence* of special districts is itself sufficient to determine these units may be ill-suited to implement the public's business. Mulgan (2000a, 2000b, 2002) cautions that definitions extend the prospect of accountability to virtually any organization. If idiomatic constructs convey that power, then it has to be assumed that they also have the capacity to strip virtually any organization of accountable behaviors.

The importance of accountability has always been a tenet of public administration (Finer, 1941). Its dimensions and subsystems, however, form a different strain of literature much of which has emerged only in the last 12-15 years, raising uncertainties about its measurement and the means by which it might be achieved. Although many third sector organizations domestically and overseas are exploring notions of accountability that suit these and similar forms of government, nothing

specifically exists in the literature that links accountability processes with special districts.

2.2.1 Normative Interpretations of Accountability

Accountability is suggestive of an ideal conditional state that has links to responsibility (Gilmour & Jensen, 1998), controls (Romzek & Dubnick, 1987), oversight systems (Haque, 2001; March and Olsen, 1995), performance (Behn, 2001), lines of authority (Moe & Gilmour, 1995; Payne & Skelcher, 2001), workplace culture (Burke, 1994, 1995) and methods of recourse (McTigue, 2000; Schacter, 2001). Without regard to its structure or form, the vehicle itself is concerned with one or more matters associated with processes, programs, or fiscal responsibilities and their management or implementation. Because so many special districts are providers of very discrete and easily defined services, these various aspects become intricately tied with satisfactory or successful program outcomes. Although accountability may be its own reward because of its implied connections to many democratic values, there is at least an implied thread to program performance (Barberries, 1998; Berman & Wang, 2000; Downs, 1999; Schacter). Behn (2001) argues that it is not implied but direct.

As it is often characterized, accountability carries a largely prerogative connotation such that retribution and punishment emerge as constant threats to careers and goals (Behn, 2001; Schacter, 2001; Uhr, 1999). Conceived this way, corrective actions

logically occur only *after* dissatisfaction or disappointment (March and Olsen, 1995). To enhance the value of accountability as a device premised on affirmative intervention, other approaches might be considered as part of the prescriptive process for invoking desirable or worthwhile behaviors (Behn, 2002; O'Loughlin, 1990). If thought of as answerability, accountability may involve nothing more than the confirmation, clarification, or justification of a specific position. The notion of a dialogue that exchanges information about competing positions seems in concert with broader concepts of democratic institutions as it furthers the theoretical advantages of an accountability system based on public participation (IAPP, (nd); Lindstrom & Nye, 2000)

The mix and emphasis of the devices or protocols associated with accountability vary by situation, including the level or form of government (Klinger, Albanian, & Romzek, 2002; March and Olsen, 1995; Romzek, 2000; Romzek and Dubnick, 1987; Romzek & Ingraham, 1996). Ultimately, however, the concept is about the nature of performance and the channels available to guide, modify, or correct that performance through suasion, rules, or recompense (March and Olsen, 1995; McKinney, 1981; Day & Klein, 1987; O'Loughlin, 1990).

The ability to alter or reinforce behaviors speaks to a standard or benchmark by which behaviors or actions might be measured. Like the behaviors which they gauge, the criteria that comprise these benchmarks, as well as the systems in place

for responding to performance, vary widely by the content and the context of the activity being scrutinized.

In a democratically codified system of accountability, setting the standard by which accountable behavior is measured may be a logical role for citizen participation (Furlong, 1998; IAPP, nd; King, Feltey & Susel, 1998; Koontz, 19991, 1999b; Lando, 1999; Payne & Skelcher, 2001; Thomas, 1990, 1993, 1995). Such engagement may occur through dialogue, ballot actions, or other individual or group processes. A failure to perform in accordance with expectations or responsibilities, however these have been determined, may result in the need for subsequent discourse. If trust or transgressions are deemed inviolate, they may result in removal from office through action of law or action of the electorate or in the imposition of other social or legal sanctions. The premise is that all governments must be accountable for their actions within a given structure of responsibility and expectations.

2.2.2 The Social Justification for Public Participation as a Tool for Achieving Accountability

America's belief in fundamental freedoms, including the right to self expression, has its origins in the liberal constructions provided by Locke, Rousseau, and Mills. Contemporary interpretations embrace most of their principles. Bellamy and Castiglione (1997), for example, specifically reaffirm Locke's canons of equality, liberty, individuality, and rationality as the foundation of a democratic philosophy.

In effect, the collective teachings of classicists and current theorists pay homage to the primacy of the individual in the context of a collective society where varying points of view can be debated openly without prejudice or presupposition.

While the value of participatory exchange becomes an essential means of achieving both self-expression and collective decision making in western society, an idealized conceptualization of its content invites competing models for its implementation. In turn, these models nurture competing ideas about democratization itself and the role that democratic principles rightfully play in systems of accountability. Should the conceptualization of democracy be somewhat untidy, it follows that accountability within the public realm upon which it is highly dependent is untidier still. If engagement is fundamental to each of the competing views, variation in the form, channels of communication, tools utilized, and points of access present opportunities for greater or lesser civic expression (Ashford and Rest, 1999; Balla, 2000; Boaden, Goldsmith, Hampton, & Stringer, 1982; Gardner, 1998). By extension, their relative availability and structure may be indicative of greater or lesser degrees of accountability.

At least two of these competing views of democratization offer an ideological basis for framing the current analysis. These are the representative and participatory models of democracy, each providing an ideological justification for differing perspectives on accountability⁵. These competing views are not altogether

dichotomous in that their rationalization is the pursuit of societal empowerment through citizen involvement (Braithwaite and Levi, 1998; Benveniste, 1989; Boaden, Goldsmith, Hampton and Stringer, 1982; Checkoway, 1978; Wilson, 1997). In their most basic forms, both allow for the systematic evaluation of ideas targeted by democratic institutions (Warner, 2001). Nonetheless, they emphasize distinctly different means for decision-making. Through their differing outlooks on the role of participation in the system of democratic governance and their parallel rules for implementing it, these models provide an enhanced understanding regarding varying approaches to achieving and sustaining accountability in the political framework.

The Representative Model In the *representative model*, citizens oversee the behavior and actions of their elected officials through groups organized around themes or interests. Such groups in this context include virtually any individual or body working at the specific bequest of another. The presumption in the representative model is that each group negotiating its role in the distribution or assignment of power is uniformly open to membership. Through free association, these groups extend their influence or control over the electorate in some proportion to the collective concerns of many individuals. Mobilized in their aggregate form, interest groups function as a mechanism that controls or monitors the behavior of elected agents.

This model is dependent upon special interest politics for pursuing policy goals and objectives. Faced with competing demands for time, and absent the skills or even the willingness to become engaged in the affairs of state, individual citizens solicit the help of interest groups to intercede with elected agents or bodies (Overdevest, 2000). In this frame, accountability will be largely a function of identifying those groups with standing or resources. One might posit that this is the form of participation most consistent with the premise that special districts serve only narrowly defined interests and fulfill largely private functions.

The Participatory Model Alternatively, the *participatory model* of democracy emphasizes broad participation to protect individual rights and liberties. Citizens, not groups, are the primary unit in the public policy decision-making process (Overdevest, 2000). In this conceptualization, it is obligatory to involve all citizens in the public decision-making process (Overdevest) rather than to engage those who might speak on their behalf.

Although not inconsistent with a representative form of government, the political system is centered on the demands of citizens not institutions. For this model to work, citizens must take responsibility for engaging in dialogue, exercising public judgment, and acting on those issues of public concern (Morse, 1993). So defined, a system that fails to induce participation at virtually any policy level might be less than fully accountable (Ashford & Rest, 1999). If that presumption is correct, the

tests of accountability stand more rigorous scrutiny because there is a reduced tolerance for the *least* exclusionary actions.

The participatory model is the foundation for Arnstein's classic ladder of public participation (1969) that argues that citizens are co-producers of democratization, a concept embraced by a number of theorists and recently resurrected by Thomas (1990, 1993). Active engagement stands at the apex of Arnstein's ladder. She insists that government fails if it cannot fully partner with its constituents. Based exclusively on their electoral practices, special districts seem unlikely to pass Arnstein's litmus test.

Conflicting Values in Accountability While accountability's role in governance seems self evident, its conceptualization avoids uniform interpretation. If the literature has identified many of its principles, the application of the concept or its dimensions is a product of those in a position to determine what may or may not be accountable behavior at certain times and under particular circumstances (Ashford & Rest, 1999; Koppell, 2005; O'Loughlin, 1990; Romzek and Dubnick, 1987; Sinclair, 1995; Warren, 1996). Efficiency and effectiveness, for example, can impose competing perspectives on accountable behaviors (Miller, 1998). These differing viewpoints increase the likelihood of sparring between those responsible for administrative activities and the citizens that are affected by these administrative actions. The dynamic tension among budgets, efficiencies, and program objectives

was the subject of some analysis following the *Challenger* explosion in 1986. The prospect of continuing conflicts among these values has already been cited in the opening weeks of the *Columbia* investigation.

Several conflicting themes appear in the discussion of accountability, attempting both to define and explain the concept. These themes offer some insight into the dimensions of accountability but are limited in advancing our understanding of the competing perspectives and processes that often occur simultaneously (Weber, 1999a). They offer little knowledge about their relative power and influence.

Dwivedi and Jabbra (1989), Thynne and Goldring (1987), Virtanen (1997) and Uhr (1999) focus on the role of moral reasonability at the organizational and individual level. Accountability then becomes a personal and organizational commitment to a specific value system tied to standards of conscionable conduct. The standard might be based on codes of technical performance but they might also reflect social norms for a community or a narrow interest group that maintains a certain behavioral pattern. Cultural variations among classes and political orders, however, strongly influence personal behavior (Miller, 1998; Weber, 1999a, 1999b). Consequently, there are obvious limitations in a system that is exclusively dependent on achieving ethical performance through self enlightenment.

The bureaucracy is itself a system of assuring accountability, primarily through consistency and practice of behaviors. Mulgan (2000b) observes that moral conduct might be a dimension of the bureaucratic system but only if moral behaviors have been institutionalized as an organizational norm. Regardless, in the bureaucratic setting accountable behavior is predictable behavior according to certain adopted rules. To the degree that behaviors conform to the rules set by the organization, the behavior cannot be deemed *unaccountable*. Behavior which fails to conform is noted by exception.

Bureaucracy is largely an overhead system of democratic behavior in which the lines of responsibility and accountability extend up or back to the most senior elected officer (Downs, 1999). It is a codified system of rules that is largely hierarchical and parties in the chain of hierarchy answer to their superiors or peers with whom they interact (Durant et al, 1995; Moe and Gilmour, 1995).

Bureaucracy is tethered to administrative attributes of individuals and organizations and probably perceived as the primary source of political accountability by those most critical of decentralized authority (Furlong, 1998; Moe, 1994, 2001; Moe & Gilmour, 1995; O'Loughlin, 1990; Warner, 2001). The bureaucratic structure has certainly been the center piece of general purpose governments in most western countries at all levels of government. In the United States, bureaucracy defines most functions of governance at the local, state and federal levels. It is, according

to Moe and Gilmour (1995), the single system acceptable under principles of public law because these ostensibly define the chain of responsibility and accountability.

Koppel (2005) argues that accountability is about transparency but that it is also involves liability, controllability, responsibility and responsiveness. He posits that these are measured in terms of performance, possible consequences for malfeasance, conformance to rules, commitment to duty, and satisfaction of expectations.

Kramer, Pommerenke and Newton (1993) and Mulgan (2000b) draw distinctions between ethical and professional behavior, in their interpretations of accountability, suggesting that professional behavior is primarily a technical construction defined by the metrics of a specific discipline. Because it is a largely technical construction, the moral aspects influence the nature of a decision or a behavior but not necessarily the way in which the behavior or decision is made (Miller, 1998). The party accountable in this sense is accountable to that metric first and to moral discipline second.

The literature dealing with accountability has a very definitive historical form that begins with the Friedrich (1940) – Finer (1941) debates and the role of the administrative state in its management and policy formulation role. According to Friedrich, administrative functions are largely technical and are performed free of

political bias. The more recent literature, though not specifically targeted toward special purpose governments, seems to affirm the political and technical distinction.

The legal system remains a perceptually potent means of achieving accountability primarily because it is specific in terms of its behavioral focus and stipulations for redress (Leazes, 1997; Moe, 1994, 2001; Moe and Gilmour, 1995). The legal system may also be the most visible given a growing reliance in the United States to seek civil remedies for a range of offenses. The proliferation in legislation evidences electoral interest and concern in mandated controls. As of August, 2002 there were almost fifty pieces of federal legislation dealing with accountability introduced to the 107th Congress with about a dozen of these intended to impose fiscal controls. The text of the 1993 federal *Government Performance and Results Act* (H.R. 826) articulates improved public accountability as two of its six objectives.

The political process is fundamentally a legal construction that empowers many to exercise control of behaviors. Although the process is electoral centered, its mechanics are far more complex, allowing a range of competing interests to interact with their officials and representatives. It is a process of claims and negotiations that allows individuals and groups to advance and debate priorities and policies. Though engagement is clearly an encouraged form of expression that may accomplish a desired end state, the means of achieving accountability through the

political process is most often assumed to be electoral control (Kweit & Kweit, 1987). Responsive political agents will be reelected. Non-responsiveness results in removal from office.

The proponents of NPM see much greater opportunity for organizational centered control of accountability necessitating, in their scheme, reduced bureaucracy and greater discretion (Kelly, 1998; Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). From this prospective, the desired outcome, achieved through rigorous technical management of the product or service, is itself the most telling measure of accountability. Inferentially, if vigorous electoral controls thwart performance and discretion, special districts have a distinct operating advantage that will be reflected in their popularity and pricing (Gillette, 1994; March & Olsen, 1995). On the other hand, the principles of public law virtually require an extension of control that leads to the highest elected official, effectively externalizing the oversight system through the bureaucracy directly or through a deliberative political process (Moe, 1994, 2001; Moe & Gilmour, 1995).

What these contrasting notions suggest is that a single perspective is not adequate for understanding how the appropriate mechanisms emerge in varying institutional and organizational settings (Bonut, 1996; Deleon & Deleon, 2002). Special districts may occupy their own legal space but the boundaries of that space are in conflict ideologically (Bottomley, 2000).

2.2.3 How Accountability Occurs: The Romzek and Dubnick Model

Among the most widely utilized models describing the dimensions or processes of accountability as a composite construct is that created by Romzek and Dubnick (1987) shown in Figure 2.1, on the following page, introduced to explain the sequence of actions that resulted in the Challenger accident in 1986. Their four part model, really more of a classification scheme, explains accountability in terms of the forces that influence it, the methods of implementing it and the systems in place to assure controls.

The Romzek and Dubnick (1987) model recognizes that the typical organization faces multiple systems of accountability based on the varying relationships between primary interests, the issues at hand, and the source of control. As it becomes apparent that there are flaws in existing systems, new ones are added rather than the old forms being improved or removed. According to Romzek and Dubnick, the means of exercising control are sometimes in conflict, sometimes complementary and an organization must manage these multiple means in accordance with the expectations that are imposed.

The Romzek and Dubnick (1987) scheme centers on the locus of control, distinguishing internal and external forces that shape the forces and processes of accountability. Further, they observe, the means by which accountable behavior is

achieved can be distinguished by the level of discretionary powers extended to certain groups and institutions.

Figure 2.1: Basic Accountability Framework

		Source of Control	
		Internal	External
Level of Discretion	Low	Hierarchal	Legal
	High	Professional	Political

Romzek and Dubnick (1987) assume that there are four processes or dimensions associated with accountability. These processes or dimensions are competing and layered, not necessarily complementary. They classify these as hierarchical (internally directed with minimal discretion), professional (internally directed with greater discretion), legal (externally directed with minimal discretion), political (externally directed with greater discretion). Presumably, any or all the above, approaches yield accountable behaviors although each works in discrete ways.

- The hierarchal system is based on a bureaucratic structure. Accountability results from a narrowly construed code of administrative behaviors imposed from the leadership in power or negotiated informally through social relationships and peers⁶.
- Like the bureaucratic structure within the organization, legal controls are narrowly construed as strictly coded standards of right and wrong. Behaviors are both prohibited and/or mandates must be implemented.
- Professional forms of accountability take their structure from the technical codes of their respective disciplines. A large percentage of special purpose governments, through their emphasis on technical disciplines, are likely to realize their accountability through professional codes of behavior.
- Political forms of accountability, like legal systems, influence and regulate behaviors externally. The battery of devices that comprise the system of political accountability is highly varied and discretionary, presumably controlled only by the legal system and societal norms desired from conceptualizations of democratic principles. As they have generally applied it to their previous case studies, political accountability is broadly interpreted to represent the complex web that comprises the political process including interest group mobilization, electoral activity, referenda, individual lobbying, and citizen dialogues, among others

2.3 Alternative Perspectives on Accountability: A Revised Foundation for Examining Accountability in Special Districts

Kearns (1994) and Deleon (1998) have adapted the Romzek and Dubnick (1987) model to different situations, evidencing its utility for evaluating issues of accountability in diverse settings. The Kearns adaptation centers on third sector non-profits and similar organizations engaged to deliver certain government services as out source providers. In the sense that these similarly independent or non-aligned entities may be offering or developing programs of the type also implemented or sponsored by special districts, the Kearns modifications focusing on

administrative and political controls are instructive. Deleon acknowledges the linkages and conflicts among the competing perspectives but observes the scheme does not adequately address the uncertainties associated with complex decision making.

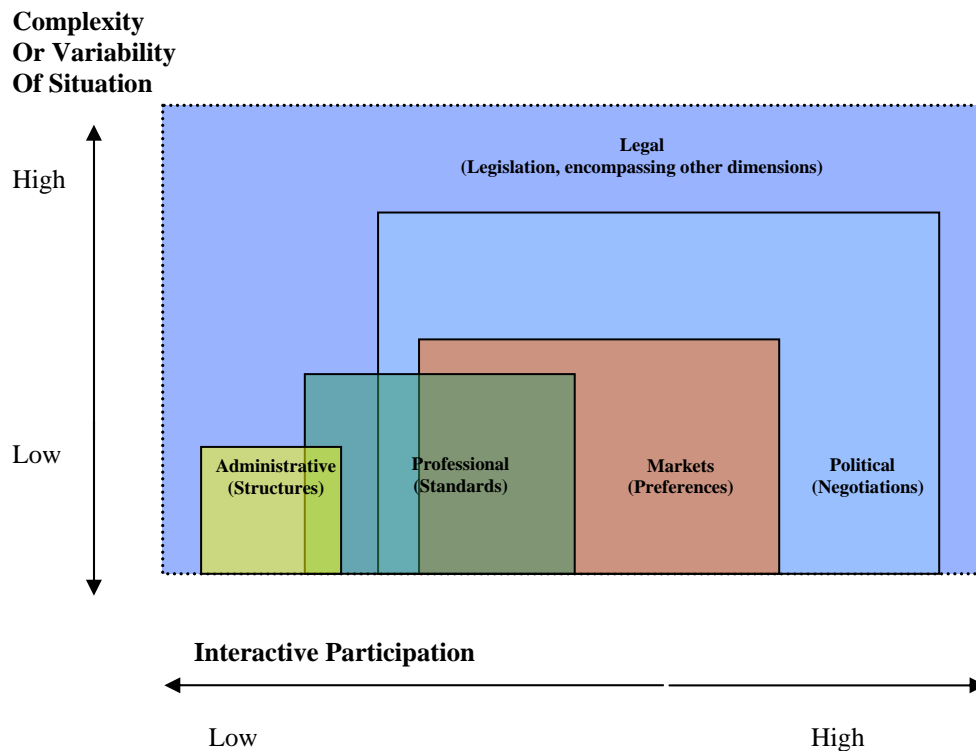
Both Deleon (1998) and Kearns (1994) agree that the model's classification structure is useful but it may not deal sufficiently with relationships among the four systems themselves. In effect, the Romzek and Dubnick (1987) model does not adequately address movement across the systems or dimensions of accountability, suggesting that forces are simply internal or external to the organization which exercises varying degrees of discretion in its behavior.

Deleon (1998) observes that the political process poses special difficulties when resources or means to accomplish outcomes are uncertain or untested. In these situations, control and accountability quickly assume a political character. With extreme cases, the process can lapse into anarchy where virtually any outcome, favorable or unfavorable, is possible. The quadrants in the Romzek and Dubnick (1987) conceptualization imply clear distinctions among variants in accountability systems that may not exist as power and responsibilities move across a continuum of competing ideas and interests. More plausibly, any distinctions that might exist are likely to blur rapidly as the issues grow in difficulty and the expectations for

managing them begin to drift from clearly agreed upon procedures or previously negotiated agreements.

The modified model shown in Figure 2.2 offers several recommended changes to the basic structure of the Romzek and Dubnick (1987) model. The changes create a model responsive in particular to the features of special districts by recognizing the discrete market and non-hierarchical structure that often characterize their diverse function(s) and which are not addressed in the Romzek and Dubnick classification scheme.

Figure 2.2: Form and Content of Accountability in Response to Situation



While acknowledging the importance of a basic taxonomy for describing accountability and their respective subsystems, the proposed changes enhance the model's application to more diverse forms of governance by elaborating on relationships that exist between and among the layered or competing forces that Romzek and Dubnick (1987) and others (Romzek & Ingraham, 1996; Romzek, 2000) have described.. In sum, it is a more robust description of the many dimensions that interact together in shaping the content of accountability.

In the Romzek and Dubnick (1987) model, fixed quadrants illustrate a static relationship among the alternatives that is inconsistent with the cross pressures of accountability as they describe them. Instead, the proposed model suggests a varying range of control exercised by each of the individual systems according to the nature, (un)certainty and complexity of the circumstances integral to a problem or its perceived solution, consistent with the DeLeon (1998) interpretation.

As the model has been modified, administrative controls occur within a narrowly constructed space to manage highly routinized acts or procedures, political controls, by contrast, extend to a wider range of matters, and may supersede other dimensions of accountability should circumstances warrant or the public demand. Professional dimensions of accountability allow more discretionary action than administrative dimension but much less than political dimensions, even given the same set of problems or circumstances. Taken together, the revised model posits that complexity, discretion, and the span of control associated with each dimension

of accountability are in a continuous state of repositioning to deal with the circumstances at hand. Consequently, all actions -- even basic administrative functions -- require certain discretionary practices and invite some level of external scrutiny.⁷

Within the sphere of administrative functions and tight controls, outcomes are likely to be certain or expectant. As discretion and controls extend, they also introduce greater uncertainty or variability in outcome simply because of rapidly evolving circumstances that eclipse normal reporting, standards of practice or functional channels (O'Loughlin, 1990).

2.3.1 Five Dimensions of Accountability

Table 2.4, beginning on the next page, summarizes the content associated with each of the four dimensions of accountability described originally by Romzek and Dubnick (1987) as well as the indicators the literature has associated with each. An additional column introduces a fifth dimension for market accountability that addresses the role of the economic system (preferences) as a tool for controlling the behavior of special district governments in particular. As suggested by Romzek and Dubnick's original typology (1987), these dimensions can be thought of as discrete processes even though practice suggests they overlap and interact.

Table 2.4: Form and Content of Accountability

Administrative Accountability	Professional Accountability	Political Accountability	Legal Accountability	Market Accountability
<u>Description and Content</u>				
Emphasis on vertically integrated supervisory relationships...high degree of control...very formalized	Emphasis on technical conduct and judgment	Emphasis on meeting expectations	Emphasis on specified actions and procedures	Emphasis on efficiency
Focus is largely internal but can be considered external to the degree it involves electoral based political actors	Focus largely on demonstrated technical expertise	Focus is largely in engaging participants with vested interests	Focus is largely financial but is tied to communications	Focus is on public choice
Effectiveness of management and team outlook reflects style, philosophy, or political outlook of senior management or board	Regulated through accepted standards of practice	Regulated through normative behavior typically expressed through the electorate	Presumed to be free of outside influences	Regulated through consumer behavior
Indicators	Effectiveness measured in terms of industry norms	Effectiveness measured in terms of perceived outcomes	Regulated through ordinance or statute	Exit strategy ultimate strategy
			Effectiveness measured in terms of compliance reports	
<u>Primary Implementation Vehicle</u>				
Structured behaviors	Standards set behaviors	Negotiated behaviors	Legislatively mandated behaviors	Preferences set behaviors
<u>Indicators or Devices Associated with Vehicle</u>				
Mission sets policies	Education and certifications	Acknowledgement of ethical behaviors desirable	Audits performed	Fair pricing
Clear channels for reporting	Tenure in like organizations	Conflict of interest reports filed	Certain information posted or routinely available	Easy entry to market
Single group or individual responsible for policy and action	Peer recognition	Wide voter participation	Certain meetings regularly scheduled	Substitutable commodities
	Publications		Activities "noticed"	Not public goods

Administrative Accountability	Professional Accountability	Political Accountability	Legal Accountability	Market Accountability
Project priorities	Experience of technical and leadership staff	Information widely and aggressively disseminated	Routine voting procedures and requirements	Conforms to consumer requirements
Administrative rules are highly codified	Demonstrated experience in like circumstances or venues	Acknowledged importance of public participation	Comments maintained for the record	Buying or purchasing of services is equivalent to public participation
Bureaucratic structure internally	Stated effectiveness measures	Competition for office	Financial disclosures and reporting	
Frequency of evaluations for task performance	Information on outputs may be disseminated in technical reports	Perception, if not reality, of hierarchal structure	Elections regularly held and terms of office stipulated	
			Sunset provisions	

Romzek and Dubnick argue that discretionary actions are embedded in a specific form of accountability. Although the revised model acknowledges that the form of accountability influences those occasions in which discretionary action will occur, it also posits that the level of discretion is a function of *both* the form and the difficulty of a particular problem. At the same time, it also suggests that the controls generally attached to each form of accountability is fluid, not fixed, precluding absolute assurance of a particular outcome. While agreeing that the political dimensions of accountability allow the widest degree of discretionary behavior, even patently administrative behaviors possess license to act with latitude within the space of a specifically assigned list of responsibilities or activities.

The revised model asserts that the dimensions or forms of accountability are ordered along a continuum. The essential premise of the model is that the need or opportunities for participation occur in conjunction with the need for progressively greater levels of accountability (Thomas, 1990, 1993, 1995). Although the avenues of participation remain available to interact with any dimension of accountability, the model suggests that it is invigorated primarily through the political process. In the proposed model, participation is a constant external force even if it varies across dimensions.

The current model deletes references to hierarchical controls, substituting administrative controls in their place. This terminology is a more encompassing description of organizational centered controls that may or may not be hierarchal or bureaucratic as Romzek and Dubnick (1987) define these managerial arrangements. DeLeon (1998) suggests a similar change.

The Romzek and Dubnick (1987) model assumes that legal controls originate exclusively outside of the organization but its role within their model portrays it as both an equal and a separate dimension at the same time. The current model proffers that there are legal constraints that exist across all accountability systems, including even those based upon blatantly political considerations. While the legal system is intended to set outside boundaries for behaviors, the current model reasons that it is not the locus of control that is important but rather the means by which legal

devices interact with all other systems or dimensions of accountability. Laws and regulations do not comprise an unconnected system of accountability, operating with complete independence from other systems (Franklin, 2001). Instead, laws and regulations act in conjunction with all systems, potentially manifested as the norm of the organization.

The proposed model incorporates a separate dimension recognizing the opportunity for the market to maintain controls. The addition of market systems is a specific concession to the organizational character of many special districts that operate in competitive settings where discipline of the market ostensibly regulates pricing and distribution (Gillette, 1994; Wettenhall, 1999). Conceivably, the functioning market is captured in the political dimension of the Romzek and Dubnick (1987) interpretation through the combined actions of the participating public. This line of reasoning, however, skirts the controls that the political process can impose on markets when they fail (Lawrence, 2000; Paul, 1991).

The addition of a market dimension is an important and fundamental modification that acknowledges the increasing importance of both privatization and market induced reforms in achieving accountable performance. The assumption is that rational economic behavior imposed through market pricing will control, at least nominally, the content and value of services delivered. Public transit (Boschken, 2000; Mo, 2001) and certain utilities (Hawley, 2000), for example, are conceivably

ordered according to the market's ability to function efficiently. The degree to which this means of enhancing accountable behavior is relevant or useful is highly dependent on the assumption that market transactions occur without failures. While special districts may be engaged in market activities, their existence is usually the result of a market failure, posing some limitation on the efficacy of this approach.

A significant modification to the model is embedded in the dimension associated with political accountability. As indicated by its position in the model, it is most responsive to public participation. While consistent with the Romzek and Dubnick (1987) construct, it is more compatible with Deleon's adapted model (1998) that describes the threats to achieving consensus when solutions and/or resources are vague or unspecified.

Deleon (1998) argues that problems of identifiable content lend themselves more readily to the means needed to initiate action, needing only the least discretionary procedures within the confines of administrative structure. Because these problems are themselves characterized by less uncertainty, the means of achieving accountability and control are also less speculative. In effect, the need for public participation is reduced commensurately although channels might exist for civic forums to become actuated.

Where neither the solutions nor the resources are clear, political processes will inevitably emerge to gain control and to assert oversight of accountability, potentially stimulating highly discretionary or arbitrary responses. At their most extreme, discretionary actions have the prospect of arbitrariness, consistent with DeLeon's notion of anarchy (1998). Challenging and discomforting as they may be, the most complex problems are likely to be resolved only through extensive debate that explores all options and opportunities on the merits of equity and technical efficacy. Such debate, however balanced or open, does not lend certainty to outcomes. Even the legal process, if invoked, does not promise a certain outcome but rather only the means to air differences.

While certain bureaucratic issues may invite public participation, the model contemplates that its use will be rare and the dimension itself will control only the most specific and procedural situations (Thomas, 1990, 1993, 1995). While the power of political accountability extends over a span of situations wider than that exerted by competing dimensions of accountability, participation and negotiations inject variable solutions or actions.

2.3.2 Role of Public Participation in Context of Revised Model

Arnstein (1969), King, Feltey and Susel (1998), Lando (1999), Box (191,1999) and Thomas (1990,1993,1995), among many others (for other examples, see also Ashford & Rest, 1999; Bennett, 1997; Berman, 1997; Brennan, 1999; Campbell &

Marshall, 2000; Cole, 1972,1974, 1975; Ebdon, 2000; Elgin, 1993; Helsley & Strange, 2000; Lawrence & Deagen, 2001; Lindstrom & Nie, 2000; Tauxe, 1995) argue the importance of participation as a tool for political accountability. It has been declared fundamental to political accountability and the most potent device by which political accountability is achieved. As the foundation of political accountability, it is integral to establishing priorities (Lando, 1999), defining the focus of policy debates (Aydelotte & Miller; Farazmand, 1997; Walters, 2000), and choosing among options (Kweit & Kweit, 1987).

The importance of civic participation is implied in the Romzek and Dubnick model (1987) but its function is not elaborated. In the DeLeon interpretation of accountability structures (1998), civic debate would dominate the political process and would be the primary device used to assert control of situations that are of uncertain composition. By extension, the DeLeon interpretation offers the expectation that uncertain circumstances pose the greatest promise for public participation while it might yield only limited benefit to systems dependent on administrative devices. That value *might not* be added should not be construed as meaning public participation is neither necessary nor warranted (Simon, 1999). It *does* mean that demands for citizen participation will and should vary according to the circumstance (Campbell & Marshall, 2000; Thomas, 1990, 1993). Simple administrative decisions do not appear to warrant public participation routinely but

decisions about where to locate a road may. Other policy matters lying between these extremes may or may not.

Complexity of Accountability Effectively, the varying dimensions present in accountability exist in a dynamic state. Those most directly involved and engaged are continuously redefining the content of these processes (Radin & Romzek, 1996; Romzek, 2000; Romzek & Dubnick, 1987; Romzek & Ingraham, 2000). Interaction between the party or the organization held accountable and those in the oversight role is the fulcrum on which the concept pivots (March and Olsen, 1995).

If accountability fails to result in a reconciliation of expected or negotiated behaviors, there necessarily must be a settlement of accounts (McTigue, 2000). As the discussion intimates, the means of ultimate resolution may take many forms but it must be appropriate to the degree of circumstance, ill performance or misbehavior.

Where special districts are concerned, it is apparent that many perform in highly technical settings. Others operate almost exclusively as administrative organizations. Because accountability exists in a dynamic state, any of the devices to assure that it is achieved or maintained may be appropriate at various points in time and in different stages of problem discussion or resolution.. According to Romzek and Dubnick (1987) and many following, (Thomas, 1990, 1993; Radin &

Romzek, 1996; Romzek & Ingraham, 1996; Deleon, 1998; Weber, 1999a, 1999b; Romzek, 2000) the structure of accountability is continuously being redefined, shifting from formal to informal controls and from external to internal forces. In some situations, the literal interpretation of accountability may be concerned with transparency while in another the concept might be concerned only with matters of liability (Koppell, 2005).

While this analysis studies the systems or devices in place in special purpose governments, its principal objective is to understand how, if at all, special district executives perceive their systems of accountability, the importance or role they assign to accountability, and the role of public participation in shaping approaches to accountability. The intent of the current research is to examine participation specifically to see if it functions as a viable control mechanism for these forms of governance.

2.4 Public Participation and Its Role in Accountability

Debates may have yet to answer whether participatory or representative systems are more appropriate institutions for governance. Still, it has long been established that democratically created institutions have a duty to respond to the electorate. In the proposed model of accountability, public participation looms as an important source of control. The value of such control as a tool for accountability has been suggested by Ashford and Rest (1999), Balla (2000), Box (1991, 1999) Lando, and Paul (1991)

among others (for other examples, see also Bennett, 1997; Berman, 1997; Brennan, 1999; Campbell & Marshall, 2000; Cole, 1972,1974, 1975; Ebdon, 2000; Elgin, 1993; Helsley & Strange, 2000; Lawrence & Deagen, 2001; Lindstrom & Nie, 2000; Tauxe, 1995), but that value has not been explored with specific reference to special district governments. Public participation, while recognized as a political device, is acknowledged primarily in its instrumental role.

As used in this analysis, public participation includes virtually any form of public involvement through an organized and legitimate political process (Cole, 1974, 1975; Kuhn, 1998; Langton, 1987b; N. Rosenbaum, 1987, W. Rosenbaum 1987; Rowe and Frewer, 2000; IAPP, nd; Lawrence, & Deagen 2001; Lowndes, Pratchett & Stoker, 2001; Maloff, Bilan & Thurston, 2001). Instrumentally, involvement of this kind has come to be identified with public meetings, information exchanges, small meetings, focus groups, referenda and a wide range of formal devices associated with citizen interaction whether based on individual or collective group action (Hampton, IAPP, Kuhn, 1998; Langton, 1987a; Rowe and Frewer, 2000). Presumably all these devices, in some mix or degree, should be available to citizens through special districts governments, regardless of their legally independent status.

For accountability to be achieved through public participation, action must result in some specific outcome (Adsera & Boix, 2001; Ammons, 1997; Ben, 1994; Berman, & Wang 2000; Bok, 1997; Cole, 1974; CPIT, 1998 ; Epstein, Solomon, & Grifel, (nd);

Ethridge, 1987; Franklin, 2001; Langbein & Kerwin, 2001; Swindell, & Kell, 2000; Wang, 2001). This outcome may be experienced in the guise of an electoral action, but it may also be experienced through a shift in or a confirmation of a policy direction or program content.

The complexities of a changing social order are bringing calls to engage citizens more resolutely in policy formulation (Putnam, 1993, 1995). The recent movement for enhanced public participation revives historic debates about preferred means of accomplishing governance. Now, the concerns may be less centered on personal skills or knowledge, given the resources of the information age, but rather on the nature of an increasingly diverse society where the distractions of popular culture may be a constraint to citizen involvement at every level of government (Putnam, 1993; Putnam, 1995; Vigoda, 2000). A growing body of literature across disciplines seems to be in agreement on both the need for enhanced participation and the difficulty of achieving individually driven action in an era with growing personal and ideological conflicts.

If accountability is dependent upon participation, reduced participation would presumably yield less accountable behaviors. Langton (1987a, 1987b) observes that participation can be interpreted as either an alternative to or a necessary means of improving democratic governance, implying, at the very least, its symbolic importance as a device of political accountability. According to some observers of

political culture, America's social capital will continue to ebb as once familiar alternatives for community interaction are de-emphasized and public decisions appear only prescriptive or bereft of citizen input (King and Stivers, 1998; Putnam, 1995). The loss of social capital is a precursor to increased citizen isolation that leads to growing frustration and distrust in the larger system of governance (Berman, 1997; Bourne, 1998; Kelly, 1994; Putnam, 1995). One way in which the public's cynicism with government might be countered, they believe, is to improve the process in which citizens contribute to public decision making. Active public participation is touted by Putnam (1995), Berman (1997), and King and Stivers (1998) as an important means of curbing the erosion of America's social capital, the conceptual bundle of selfless civic acts that collectively build community networks and institutions.

What we are experiencing is an apparent advocacy for the participatory model that seeks to raise the threshold requirements of accountability. Whether democratic or participatory, the objective is to remove autonomous actions by opening all activities to public exposure (Ashford & Rest, 1999; Balla, 2000; Gardner, 1998; Kelly, 1994; Kelly, 1998). Less autonomy reduces the need for rigid accountability systems because the insulating processes that might otherwise shield behavior stand transparent to even limited scrutiny. Presumably, a need exists for both increased participation and enhanced accountability but the arguments advancing these

concepts make their claims without the benefit of broadly generalizable evidence that voluntary or prescriptive processes involving interaction enhance outcomes.

2.4.1 Concerns about Public Participation

Various ideas regarding public participation have been explored in the context of general purpose governments at the local (Boaden, Goldsmith, Hampton, & Stringer, 1982; Bockmeyer, 2000; Carr & Halvorsen, 2001), state (DEP, 1996; Innes, 1992) and federal (CPIT, 1998; DOE, 1994) levels but special districts -- as these units have now been defined by Bollens (1961), Foster (1997), Walsh (1978) and others (Mitchell, 1992, 1999; Leigland, 1992, 1994, 1995) -- are largely neglected. Federal legislation and, in some situations, state legislation, appears to have advanced citizen participation in conventional government settings while overlooking their special district counterparts (Henriques, 1978; Moe, 2001; Walsh, 1986).

Literature from the urban planning and political science perspectives is well developed and describes the dynamics attendant to public participation applied to land use planning (Innes, 1992; O'Doherty, 1996; Simon, 1999), transportation (CPIT, 1998; Lindstrom and Nie, 2000), and natural resource management (Cvetkovich & Earle, 1994; Lawrence, & Deagen, 2001) as well as other issues of societal concern (Ashford & Rest, 1999; Kuhn, 1998; Linder, 2001; Maloff, Bilan, & Thurston, 2001). As a process, public participation has been cited for its laudable

contributions in the resolution of environmental centered issues (Koontz, 1999a; Shepherd and Bowler 1997) and roundly condemned when applied to transportation related projects (Kirtley, 1999). Both the merits and the criticisms focus on participation's value to achieve prescriptive ends but the arguments are constructed almost exclusively on ethical and democratic grounds (Ashford & Rest, 1999; Benveniste, 1989; Boaden, Goldsmith, Hampton, & Stringer, 1982; Hobbing & Theiss-Morse, 2001; Koontz, 1999a, 1999b, Kuhn, 1998; Kweit & Kweit, 1987; Warren, 1996; Webler & Tuler, 2000).

There is at least an impression that public participation is more beneficial when applied to social welfare functions rather than functions keyed to development or provision of infrastructure (Ashford & Rest, 1999; Kuhn, 1998; Linder, 2001; Maloff, Bilan, & Thurston, 2001). Maintenance functions, including fire, police, and parking for example, do not appear to be addressed. The reasons for the varied responses have been tied to the highly technical nature of development and infrastructure based activities and their extraordinary capital costs that can only increase with unanticipated delays (Foster, 1997). The justification for participation in these settings is that it may expedite or facilitate an action. In a situation involving societal concerns, by contrast, the goals for participation extend from the perceived importance of individual rights and equity in addressing community issues.

Both case studies and commentaries capture the difficulties in engaging public participation or civic involvement (Buckwalter, Parsons & Wright 1993). The literature points specifically to concerns about the populations included in forums for public participation (Langton, 1987b; Wilson, 1997), its form (Cvetkovich, 1994), its thematic content (Creighton, 1999; King & Stivers, 1998; Verba, 1993), its procedural implementation (Lindstrom and Nie, 2000; W. Rosenbaum, 1987), its timing (DOE, Walters, 2000) and accessibility to critical information (Walsh, 1978). Ultimately, the biggest challenge is evaluating the overall value of public participation (Wang, 2001; Rowe and Frewer; IAPP, 2001).

The richest form of public participation requires that citizens go beyond the role of disinterested observers. Instead, public participation must vigorously involve citizens in the formulation of issues, the setting of priorities and the development of strategies or approaches to implementation (King and Stivers, 1998). What Lando (1999) calls meaningful participation yields measured impact on resulting policy decisions. King, Feltey and Susel maintain (1998) that the outcomes, while important, are secondary to that part of the public participation process that yields an identification of the problems themselves. In their framework, policy emerges as importance is assigned to competing priorities by those most affected.

Whatever the weaknesses or flaws in the process -- functional, political, cultural or normative-- there are many observers that conclude public participation yields

increased satisfaction with outcomes while strengthening perceptions that administrative and elected leaders are accountable for their decisions (Braithwaite and Levi, 1998; Cole, 1972, 1974, 1975; King and Stivers, 1998; Lando, 1999). Decisions made in an active forum resonate more favorably than those that are simply ratified. Public participation generates personal as well as political equity. According to Marshall (1990), favorable action is dependent upon bi-directional participation between the state and the citizen that demands some measure of self-responsibility and active involvement. The issue for the current generation of the politically active, claims Bentley (2001), is not policy content but process (Hobbing et al, 2001).

The dominant theme continues to be that citizens have a responsibility to engage in participation (Bourne, 1998). Only through an enhanced level of interaction can it be assumed that the desired results will be achieved or that the tools for modifying behavior will remain available. Control of both results and behavior are the bedrock on which systems of accountability involving public participation will be constructed (March & Olsen, 1995).

2.5 Implications of the Framework for the Proposed Research Hypotheses

Accountability is a complex, multi dimensional concept. Its application is highly dependent upon its perceived value to achieve certain goals, the form and content of the issues involved, the parties engaged in oversight and implementation roles, the

vehicles available to exercise control, and the symbolic value of control or punishment. Certain dimensions of accountability, as learned in the Challenger and Columbia investigations, tend to be evoked only in time of crisis. If not proven effective, another form of control or oversight might be added leading to the layered, possibly contradictory mechanisms described by Romzek and Dubnick (1987).

It would seem that the most effective structure or system would be one that manages expectations and behavior while it simultaneously anticipates possible failings so these can be avoided. The literature places emphasis on financial controls (Wang, 2002), management reports (Dunn & Legge, 2001) and benchmarking (Berman & Wang, 2000; Kelly, 1998) as various means of managing behavior. Using this line of reasoning, codified or institutionalized *reporting systems* are themselves adequate tools for achieving accountability. Others persist that measures and like controls may augur efficiency but alone are not a system of achieving accountability but rather a system for gauging individual or organizational effectiveness (March and Olsen, 1995; Miller, 1998). Through the lens of those advocating such codified controls, effectiveness and efficiency, achieved through administrative (Thomas, 1990, 1993), professional (Dunn and Legge, 2001) or market based practices (Boschken, 2000; Gillette, 1994; Schachter, 1997) are themselves commensurate with accountable behavior. Alternatively, the belief in democratic institutions and the availability of enhanced public participation

offer the promise that engagement in the political process will assure political order and desirable behavior. The literature presents these divergent possibilities as relatively in conflict. The proposed model offers an opportunity to elaborate on these opposing normative positions by exploring relationships between participation and various dimensions of accountability.

Romzek and Dubnick (1987) and others (Radin & Cooper, 1989; Romzek & Ingraham, 2000) have used their recognized scheme as a screen for accountability in a variety of governmental settings. Consequently, the apparent conflicts and inconsistencies present in a situation dependent on structured devices are now better understood. Nonetheless, it remains difficult to generalize about the case studies that have raised many insights about organizational and personal responses to behavior under scrutiny. What appears more certain is that the nature of formalized systems has not been examined in a way that allows us to understand organizational perceptions regarding various dimensions of accountability, nor is it really transparent how public participation might function in that context to achieve improved accountability.

2.6 Summary

Public participation lies at the bedrock of our democratic institutions and its role in planning, implementation and policy have been documented in a number of different settings. Beyond its obvious ethical appeal, it may encumber some deliberations and

processes. If so, these shortcomings need to be weighed against the perceived societal values that are realized through an engaged citizenry. It is the possible absence of an engaged or involved citizenry that raises many questions about the accountability of special district governments and their suitability to manage the public's business affairs.

While the value of accountability has long been accepted conceptually as a foundation of public administration, its construction and dimensions are less clearly defined. The literature links public participation and accountability, noting its particular influence on political accountability. If, however, the effectiveness of participation is somehow obviated in the special district setting, it stands to reason that its usefulness as a control or influence on accountability may be compromised leading to the possible expectation that these forms of government are not fully accountable or committed to accountable behaviors.

The following chapter outlines a methodological approach to evaluate the causal relationship(s) between participation and accountability in the special district setting. This approach includes the construction and distribution of a survey instrument focused on variables that stem from the literature and interpretation presented in *Chapter 2*, operationalization and measurement of these variables, and a discussion of their relationship to the specific research questions posed at the organizational level.

¹ Florida provides a test case for these definitions. In this state, independent units file an annual report that addresses certain required financial information. As a result, the data maintained on Florida's special district governments is unusually comprehensive compared with that archived in many other states. Florida's Department of Community Affairs reports about 500 independent districts existed in this state in 1997. These 500 governments constitute a virtual match with the governments identified in Florida by the U.S. Census Bureau as special districts in 1997.

² In Orange County, Florida, for example, the library *district*, with its own millage for operation, is deemed a *dependent* district because its board must submit its agency generated budget to the County Commission for approval. Once the budget is accepted, the organization operates with relative autonomy. The Greater Orlando Aviation Authority (GOAA), however, is an *independent* agency even though it receives some funds from another level of government. GOAA has no dedicated millage but it does derive revenue from extensive operations and landing fees.

³ Henriques and Walsh speak of special districts and authorities as though they are interchangeable units of government. In reality, some special district governments are identified as authorities. Mitchell speaks primarily of authorities and estimates there are about 7,000 of these governments defined primarily on the basis of independence. Foster and Bollens believe the number is much higher, using the count and definitions provided by the U.S. Census and described in this analysis.

⁴ Because the voting schemes within many special districts are actually based on proportionate ownership, the process may be more perverse than Bollens initially recognized. Ballots controlled as a block, in effect, implement a corporate (private) model of accountability rather than a democratic (public) one. Proportionate voting is used by the special districts in California and Florida where a profusion of these governments enable the financing and operation of road, water and sewer facilities supporting large-scale community development. In the case of Florida, these districts have been scrutinized for a range of electoral abuses but still they constitute the largest forming segment of government in this fast growing state.

⁵ In the United States, the distinctive forms of public participation emerge in the *Federalist Papers*, the collection of essays by Hamilton and Madison that presage the American constitution (Kramnick, 1987). In their respective articles, Hamilton and Madison argue the merits of centralized and decentralized government authority and their varying forms of public involvement. Madison advocates the most representative principles of democratic thought while Hamilton remains an advocate of strong centralized governmental controls, largely because of concerns that the electorate was neither sufficiently informed, educated, or skilled to conduct affairs of state. While it is Hamilton's views that are more reflective of the existing constitutional order, Madison may yet be vindicated.

⁶ The nature of the behaviors and structures varies according to the technical skills employed and status of the work involved. Organizations with more highly educated work forces will assume a less rigid protocol for reporting but the organization's structure dictates the broader limits of acceptable behaviors. Acceptable in this context means the behaviors are largely repetitive and predictable within agreed upon limits. The effectiveness of management and team outlook reflect the style, philosophy or political sensitivity of senior management.

⁷ The example of a small electrical utility operating as a special district unit demonstrates the altered model's intended function over a range of related activities and strategic decisions.

- Billing and collection procedures follow very specific procedures. Errors, in billing, if any, are handled systematically according to established practices. The organization is responsive to its subscribers and responsible for righting mistakes. By making the adjustment, the organization is deemed to be accountable. Expectations and performance are managed through procedures implemented in accord with the administrative structure of the organization. There is fixed process for dealing with the problem, and there is no uncertainty of outcome. The organization or the person involved have little discretion in dealing with the matter and only narrowly defined billing problems

can be corrected this way. The necessary corrective actions are *internalized* through codified accounting practices. *External* auditors may have assisted in implementing these practices.

- Technicians determine that service interruptions exceed industry standards and that one of three means are available to assure continued service. The variation in solutions is the outcome of professionally implemented planning and analysis. Many alternatives may have been possible but professional standards of practice largely dictate those most practical or achievable. Given the relatively clear objective, the means to upgrade or maintain service levels are also clear. The analysis, possibly completed by staff, is dependent on industry and professional norms and certified by regulators to meet requirements. The technical staff is responsible for implementing these plans, and the organization is deemed accountable by meeting these standards or norms. To not do so would be deemed *unaccountable*. Unlike administrative controls, technical discretion extends across a larger continuum of problems. .
- The most costly of the three alternatives would likely assure electrical service even during the worst storm season. The customer does not care which of the two least expensive options will be implemented because they vary only by capacity of the line such that the change does not affect service at a specific address. Because any of the possibilities satisfy a desired level of utility at approximate an equal cost, the customer operates at a point of indifference regarding this specific decision and the devices to implement it. As a specific action is addressed, the zone of indifference diminishes.
- The more expensive alternative, however, will cause power costs to surge so the broader market is unlikely to support the more costly scheme. Market discipline imposes efficiency on the organization, encouraging the less expensive service decision. The more expensive strategy, whether accepted or rejected, is speculative in its potential cost and value but the anticipated results can be projected within a tolerable range. Ideas and products generated with some discretionary judgment *internally* are ultimately controlled by *externalized* conditions realized in terms of preferences.
- Should the third alternative be deemed more desirable, the franchise area will have to be expanded to defray costs. Expanding this area infringes on the franchise of another utility district but that utility's license is expiring and may not be renewed. The decision to expand or deny an application for the expansion is a political issue of regional concern and involves substantial investments to acquire needed easements. These costs will be passed to subscribers but potentially recovered. Given the many interests, accountability for decisions is subsumed by a largely political process where the alternatives and their impacts are debated and weighed. They are the product of negotiations among affected parties. The outcome of the measure is uncertain, and the arrangements needed to achieve the alternative are very complex. Deliberations will draw on the *internal* expertise of the organization but delegated authority vests in parties or processes *external* to the organization. Defining accountability in this context is somewhat more difficult but it is likely to be reflected in terms of an achieved consensus derived from multiple sources of input.
- All the above must occur within some legally defined boundaries.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

At the center of the proposed research effort are three principal research questions and a group of related hypotheses that query the importance of accountability and its relationship or dependence upon public participation activities. The analysis explores the benefits of accountability in terms of its impacts on behavior and performance within the context of the special district form of government.

Chapter 3 describes the research questions, relates them to the theoretical framework proposed in *Chapter 2*, and outlines in detail the methodology that underlies the analysis. The content of the chapter includes a description of the survey instrument assembled, the logic and justification for the information solicited in the context of theory, a description of the variables and their construction as well as a detailed discussion of the subsystems comprising the dimensions of participation and the five dimensions of accountability that are the focus of the current research. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the research questions in the context of the procedures that are proposed.

3.1 Model Overview and Description of Key Variable Relationships

The model proposed in *Chapter 2*, Figure 2.2 illustrates and tests several aspects of the relationship thought to exist between public participation and accountability.

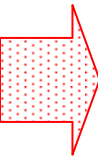
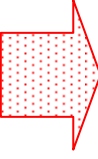
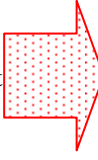
These include:

- The ordering of each dimension relative to the perceived organizational commitment to accountability and its relationship with public participation.
- The expectation that organizational accountability increases with participation.
- The expectation that participation is most influential in its power to shape the dimensions of political accountability.

In the proposed research, *public participation* functions as the independent variable. The analysis tests its impacts and influences on *accountability* defined here in terms of the total organizational commitment to specific devices or protocols intended to monitor, control or redirect behaviors (Auditor General of Canada, 1998). The relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, along with their description and suggested measurement scheme are reflected in figure 3.1.

The literature offers the prospect that increased participation will yield increasingly accountable government by providing opportunities for citizens to guide, persuade, or dissent (Kramer, 1999; Braithwaite & Levi, 1998;). Such participation occurs through broadly inclusive activities and unrestricted access to information and staff during all phases of policy analysis and program implementation beginning with some identification of the problems and priorities that should be of concern.

Figure 3.1: Relationship and Interaction Among Key Variables

	Variables		
	Independent	Controls	Dependent
Description or Definition	Public Participation The process of interactive involvement in the affairs or actions of government beyond that associated with voting or elections	Contextual Influences Organizational (Internal) and Environmental (External) influences that might otherwise impact the role of public participation	 Accountability The presence of systems or devices which, through their structural content, manage behavior according to some standard or expectation of outcomes
Major Dimensions or Themes	Accessibility Focus: paths to information and resources used in interactions Permeability Focus: the level of engagement and the means used to distill interactions Transparency Focus: attitudes toward open governance	Organizational Focus: operating structure and resources Environmental Focus: influences of setting	 Administrative Focus: routine command and control Professional Focus: standards for practice Market directed Focus: consumer oriented actions and preferences Political Focus: Stewardship and integrity Legal Focus: specified conduct
Measurement Operationalized (Examples)	Accessibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical access Information access Venues and locale Frequency of deliberation Permeability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation at multiple process stages Information creation Apparent influence Transparency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defined structure Representativeness Openness Consistency 	Organizational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attitudes in the workplace setting Staff attitudes about accountability Organization type Emphasis on regulation Controls specific to the organization involved Dependence on tax collections Environmental <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation vehicle Service area Political volatility Special interests represented on board Political dominance Electoral controls Other controls 	 Legal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence of rules and regulations Administrative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence of management controls Professional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry guidelines and procedures Market directed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsiveness and service Political <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behavioral conduct

Proponents of participation argue that continued interaction with affected constituencies builds democratic consciousness while it also raises the community awareness necessary to monitor and direct policy makers (Ashford & Rest, 1999; Innes, 1992; Kweit & Kweit 1987; Kramer, 1999; Lando, 1999; Walters, Aydelotte & Miller, 2000; Warren, 1996). Such sentiments aptly describe interaction with general purpose institutions, but it is not certain how the citizen's role is best realized in the special district setting. The expectation is that levels of participation are likely to vary across organizations, depending on the specific function, the dimension of accountability that is invoked, and the balance to be achieved between complexity and uncertainty.

Correspondingly, accountability, as measured by both the willingness to provide key information and the behavioral emphasis on a battery of administrative, professional, market, political and legally codified practices is expected to be greater as the influence or presence of public participation increases. On balance, the analysis anticipates that public participation will have its strongest influence where dimensions of political accountability are invoked. The presumed value in improved accountability, using participation as a vehicle to develop accepted behaviors, is improved outcomes (Barberries, 1998; Behn, 2001; Berman & Wang, 2000; Downs, 1999). The emphasis on outcomes derives from the strong programmatic focus that is the frequent justification for the special district form of government. Given that political accountability is also associated with increased levels of discretionary behavior,

participation, while leading to enhanced accountability, may also be associated with less certain solutions and outcomes (Deleon, 1998).

Controls in this model consider the possible impact or influence of organizational culture and the environmental context in which decision making occurs because the special district operating and political structure may themselves be the impetus for accountable behavior rather than public participation. In effect, the character of the organization and the setting in which it operates loom as possible alternative explanations for variations in accountable behavior and must be considered in testing the present model (Ruscio, 1999).

As this model is conceived, organizational variables center on each district's operating structure, and service orientation. Considine (1975) and Putnam (1995, 2000) hold out the prospect that informal networks involving highly trusted organizations may, in effect, negate the need for public participation. Environmental variables center on each district government's context and setting, specifically the size of its service area, legislative origin, board construction, and electoral controls over that board.

3.2 Research Strategy

The research uses a survey instrument distributed to a specifically defined population of about 500 special district governments and their chief operating or executive officers. The survey incorporates Dillman's (2000) design principles and was implemented according to his strict methods of monitoring and follow-up.

These special districts and their addresses were culled from electronic archives provided by the United States Department of Commerce and represent the districts and their 1997 operating characteristics. The analysis is concerned only with those districts designated as large districts -- defined and explained below-- in 1997. In these archives, 1382 special districts are enumerated but the data base provided records for 1370. This group was used and in many cases contact information was updated.

The survey instrument inquires extensively about public participation and accountability practices, the principal issues of concern in this dissertation. In terms of accountability, the survey probes about the professional practices, legal requirements, market context, and other devices used to control organizational and administrative behaviors. To evaluate the context in which participation and accountability occur, the survey inquires about the organization's mission, political stability, reporting systems, program content, program objectives, financial performance, legislative environment, electoral practices, size of service area, and dependence upon taxes among other organizational and environmental factors. These attributes together are, in effect, the social and demographic characteristics of the organization's being investigated and together represent the control functions or possible rival influences shaping accountability.

There were no known questionnaires addressing the substance of the research questions of interest here. However, the scope of the questionnaire parallels the issues and concepts discussed at length in the framework developed from the literature and summarized in *Chapter 2*. That literature focused on the structural and management issues of special districts perceived as reducing their accountability, the democratic importance of public participation and its role in shaping accountability, and finally the ways in which accountability might be measured or evaluated. Based on this literature, three specific research questions were posed.

The questionnaire combines a series of statements and questions intended to identify specific devices or mechanisms extant or planned within these governments and management's perceptions of their utility or effectiveness in certain kinds of situations. Where appropriate, various measures that capture the specific dimensions of many related activities, were summed to create multiple indices. These index variables focus largely on the multiple dimensions of public participation and the various schemes for implementing accountable behaviors described in the modification to the Romzek and Dubnick (1987) model.

The data, once summarized, was exposed to a series of statistical tests, including univariate, bivariate and multivariate procedures. The process builds to a multivariate model that tests the variation in an organization's commitment to accountability stemming from public participation when controlled for other possible influences. In that

model, participation emerges as a statistically significant factor in shaping organizational accountability as that term is defined in this research.

The concepts explored through the questionnaire and then statistically tested were discussed in series of brief interviews with selected district executives. These interviews confirmed the reasonableness of the theoretical approach to the research problem and provided perspective on the application of the research findings.

3.3 Survey Development

As noted above, the concepts and dimensions of the analysis are materially dependent on the themes and framework described in *Chapter 2*. While there is a substantial body of literature on public participation and a growing body of knowledge on accountability, many of the conceptions applied have to be considered exploratory. There are, for example, no known existing scales or questionnaires that loan themselves to the current research purpose. As the survey was assembled, it was reviewed by several executives engaged in special district activities and others who have expressed an interest in discrete elements of the larger analysis. A group of twenty surveys was mailed to administration professionals for testing. Several modifications were made following receipt of comments from the peer reviewers and a return of the pilot survey.

3.4 Population and Sampling Frame

The sampling frame is drawn from approximately 1,400 special district or special purpose units in the country identified categorically as large special districts by the United States Department of Commerce (USDC, 1997). These units represent about four percent of the total estimated 35,000 special districts and special purpose governments reported in operation (USDC). As shown in Table 3.1, this group of special purpose governments is engaged in various transportation, recreational, resource management, fire control, community development, community health, and environmental activities that are otherwise performed by departments contained within general purpose governments.

These larger special district governments are distinguished by the resources and fulltime or permanent staff available to implement policy internally. The present analysis and model are concerned only with the discretely drawn lines of authority and institutional systems that exist in these larger hierarchical organizations, at least in part because hierarchical leadership rests at the foundation of the Romzek and Dubnick (1987) typology. The survey was directed toward the senior management of these special districts because they are the principal coordinators of institutional policy within each respective organization. Ultimately, 489 units were targeted as the sampling frame. As shown in Tables 3.2A -3.2C, this group of governments includes all those units with at least 75 employees other than hospital authorities.

Table 3.1: Inventory of Large Special Districts, Their Function(s) and Relationship to Sampling Frame

Function or Activity	Total, All Large Districts	% of Large Districts	Number of Districts in Sampling Frame	% of Sampling Frame
Air transportation (airports)	26	2%	18	4%
Cemeteries	1	0%	0	0%
Drainage	1	0%	0	0%
Education	30	2%	0	0%
Electric power	78	6%	27	6%
Fire protection	16	1%	13	3%
Fire protection and water supply	1	0%	0	0%
Flood control	8	1%	0	0%
Gas supply	17	1%	5	1%
Highways	8	1%	5	1%
Hospitals	241	18%	0	0%
Housing and community development	191	14%	105	22%
Industrial development	27	2%	0	0%
Irrigation	20	1%	5	1%
Libraries	21	2%	21	4%
Mortgage credit	8	1%	0	0%
Natural resources and water supply	14	1%	8	2%
Other and unallocable	77	6%	4	1%
Other health	46	3%	38	8%
Other multifunction districts	93	7%	43	9%
Other natural resources	1	0%	0	0%
Parking facilities	5	0%	1	0%
Parks and recreation	54	4%	44	9%
Public mass transit systems	78	6%	64	13%
Public nursing homes	3	0%	0	0%
Sea and inland port facilities	21	2%	7	2%
Sewerage	76	6%	28	6%
Sewerage and water supply	70	5%	24	5%
Soil and water conservation	2	0%	1	0%
Solid waste management	26	2%	3	1%
Water supply	110	8%	29	6%
Totals	1370	100%	489	100%

**Table 3.2A: Construction of the Sampling Frame
Used in the Analysis**

Districts Included/Excluded		Totals
All large special districts		1370
Less:		
Hospital districts with 0 employees	59	
Hospital districts with 1-74 employees	3	
Other districts with 0 employees	182	
Other districts with 1-74 employees	458	
Subtotal:	<u>702</u>	
Large special districts with at least 75 employees		668
Less:		
Hospital districts with at least 75 employees	<u>179</u>	
Total in sampling frame		489

Table 3.2B: Sampling Frame, By Type of Special District

Type or Function	Number of Districts in Sampling Frame	% of Sampling Frame	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Air transportation	18	4%	12	5%
Electric Power	27	6%	15	7%
Fire Protection	13	3%	4	2%
Gas Supply	5	1%	0	0%
Highways	5	1%	0	0%
Housing and Community Development	105	21%	34	15%
Irrigation	5	1%	2	1%
Libraries	21	4%	12	5%
Mass Transit	64	13%	32	14%
Natural Resources and Water	8	2%	7	3%
Other and unallocable	4	1%	1	0%
Other Health	38	8%	5	2%
Other Multifunction	43	9%	12	5%
Parking	1	0%	0	0%
Parks and Recreation	40	8%	33	15%
Sea and Inland Ports	7	1%	4	2%
Sewerage	28	6%	11	5%
Sewerage and Water	24	5%	14	6%
Soil and Water Conservation	1	0%	1	0%
Solid Waste	3	1%	3	1%
Water Supply	29	6%	22	10%
No Response	N/A	0%	2	1%
Totals	489	100%	226	100%

Table 3.2C: Sampling Frame, By Total Employment

Number of Employees	Number of Districts in Sampling Frame	% of Sampling Frame	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
75-100	73	15%	30	13%
101-200	152	31%	66	29%
201-300	68	14%	33	15%
301-400	48	10%	19	8%
401-500	35	7%	10	4%
501-600	25	5%	15	7%
601-700	14	3%	11	5%
701-800	16	3%	5	2%
801-900	3	1%	4	2%
901-1,000	8	2%	4	2%
1,001-2,000	19	4%	18	8%
2,001-3,000	15	3%	5	2%
3,001-4,000	5	1%	3	1%
More than 4,000	8	2%	1	1%
Totals	489	100%	¹224	100%

¹Excludes No Responses

Although the 489 governments that comprise the sampling frame provide or manage a variety of services, the specific activity may be less critical than the relationships among staff, the organization, and the organization's affected constituency. As noted, each of the units in the sampling frame employs at least seventy-five persons under the direct supervision of the chief executive officer. The governments include a variety of local health care organizations but not those linked to hospitals. The respective size and budgets suggest that these 489 governments are themselves the proprietary source of the goods or service in question. From informal discussions with some of these groups, it appears that these units do not contract the goods or services they provide nor do they oversee facilities that are managed or leased on behalf of others for purposes of production or implementation.

Overall, the total number of special purpose governments continues to grow, increasing from about 22,000 governments in 1967. However, many of these governments exist simply to satisfy the legal requirements of an independent structure while their actual functions are fulfilled by staff assigned to or operating within another entity. Such staffing may be administrative or technical. In some cases, there is simply no staff and reporting is the responsibility of another agency altogether. Because they are often vehicles for a single initiative, these governments may be relatively inactive, abandoned, or tabled but not actually dissolved. In effect, they are not really functional units (Nunn and Schoedel, 1997). Expectedly they would have small operating budgets or limited debt commensurate with their focus and their authorizing legislation.

In contrast to the very small or relatively inactive bodies, another group of special purpose governments employs substantial personnel and carries significant indebtedness. These *large special district governments*, as they have been defined by the U.S. Department of Commerce (USDC, 1997), have annual revenues or expenditures of at least \$10,000,000 and/or carry debt greater than \$20,000,000. For the most part, they maintain large bureaucracies and may have multiple facilities or work stations under their control. The largest of the special districts within this sampling frame employs almost 13,000 people.

Although the 1370 units constitute only about four percent of the total number of special districts, they collectively represent almost eighty percent of the operating revenues and 88.2 percent of the outstanding indebtedness incurred by all special purpose governments (USDC, 1997). Because of their scale and impact, these large special districts are, in effect, a window into the particular behaviors that nuance this form of government.

Even among these large special purpose governments, however, there are bodies that have no staffs or very small staffs. As a result, they have significant indebtedness but limited operating budgets. A reported 702 of these governments have fewer than 75 employees. In 1997, 241 units within this group had no employees whatsoever. With limited or non-existent manpower, these units may not have the capacity to implement the full battery of accountability controls suggested by the model nor to sustain the intensive program of public participation as it is defined here.

Among the 1370 large special district governments, there are 241 hospital authorities or hospital districts, including fifty-nine with no employees or about twenty-five percent. These authorities are the biggest group within this strata of special purpose governments. By virtue of their apparent lines of accountability, they pose a special case that do not make them well suited for inclusion in this analysis. Given that these hospital districts represent about eighteen percent of the total number of large special districts, there is some concern that their presence in the sampling frame might mask outcomes that the analysis seeks to investigate.

Hospital districts are a notable departure from the other large special districts, including even local healthcare groups and counseling agencies. These local healthcare groups and counseling agencies, unlike hospital districts, have an apparent preference for hierarchical organizations and dedicated staff that provide services, implement programs, and cultivate public participation. In contrast, hospital districts typically oversee large facilities that are dependent on loose contractual arrangements with the physicians that are not in their employ or under their exclusive control. Viewed in this way, the hospital is only a conduit for a service delivered by a network of attending physicians and specialists. In most cases, the attending physicians will have their own practices which assure financial independence from the hospitals with which they partner. Some physicians will have an affiliation with multiple hospitals that may have different standards or systems in place. Further, these physicians are accountable to other agents outside of the hospital system including the state, their respective accreditation bodies, peers, insurers, and their patients. These are multiple forms of control that have little in common with the systems integral to the model being tested.

This group of 489 governments comprising the sampling frame is a substantial part of the total number of *large special districts* and, from a functional standpoint, appears to represent the larger group of governments quite well. An examination of the data and their distributions shown in Tables 3.2A-3.2C indicates there is no obvious bias within the example itself stemming from the activity of the special district or from its size as measured by the total number of persons employed.

In the aggregate, the sampling frame represents about thirty-six percent of the total 1370 large special districts. It represents about forty-three percent of the 1129 large districts with fulltime or permanent staff. Net of hospital districts and districts with no employees, the sampling frame represents about fifty-two percent of the remaining 947 large special districts.

The literature asserts that highly technical disciplines will be more resistant to public participation, relying instead on professional standards of practice, markets and administrative procedures. To address this distinction in program perspectives and outlook, each organization in the sampling frame is ultimately assigned to a classification indicative of its relative technical or social orientation.

3.5 Distribution of Survey and Data Collection

Methods for preparing and administering the survey reflect the Dillman (2000) design and process. Special districts in the sampling frame received and cover letter. The survey instrument itself could be returned either via self addressed, postage paid envelop or toll free fax.

One week after the initial mailing, each non-respondent received a reminder notice, followed by a second survey instruments to those still not responding. Finally, after three weeks, non-respondents were contacted by telephone and encouraged to return the survey instrument.

Dillman offers the expectation that approximately forty percent of the targeted respondents will reply if the methods described are followed. In the present case, 226 potentially usable replies from an identifiable 489 special districts were received, representing a 46.2 percent response rate. After reviewing the replies received, 206 surveys provided sufficient and complete data for developing the various models described in Chapter 5. The suitable replies represent about a forty-two percent response rate.

3.6 Instrumentation and Measurement

As the analysis is structured, public participation is the independent variable and accountability is the dependent variable. Control variables are comprised of factors that consider other environmental or organizational influences on operating culture and context and which, individually or collectively, might be construed as potential rival explanations for variations in organizational accountability.

3.6.1 Public Participation

Public participation is a process of interactive involvement in the affairs or actions of government beyond that associated with voting or elections. Defined in this way, public participation is measured in terms of processes associated with three discrete dimensions. These processes speak to the context or manner in which a specific activity occurs. In the case of public participation process is related to the way in which interactions are managed, the vehicles used to facilitate interaction and its frequency.

The literature is rich with instrumental interpretations of meaningful public participation described in terms of its process functions (Boaden, Goldsmith, Hampton, & Stringer, 1982; Bockmeyer, 2000; DOE, 1994; Ebdon, 2000; Rowe and Frewer, 2000; Warren, 1991). The most participatory forms of involvement require deep immersion in the broadest possible range of interactions. Questions and/or responses examined the reported benefit and the relative desirability or benefit of participation in the context of agenda setting, policy development, resource priority, budget analysis, budget confirmation, problem identification, program development, program confirmation, general information exchanges, routine dialogues and other activities.

As well, the literature identifies many vehicles for the implementation of participation with the explicit declaration that open houses and informational meetings rate as the least beneficial forma of community dialogue. Questions in the survey examined the frequency and relative desirability of information exchanges, open houses, citizen review or advisory boards, standing committees, ad hoc committees, individual meetings and other devices.

The research strategy treats public participation as a continuous variable using the following Likert scale.

<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u> <u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Don't Know,</u> <u>Can't Say</u>	<u>Agree</u> <u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Not</u> <u>Applicable</u>
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)

Individual scores to thirty questions listed in Tables 3.3A-3.3C were aggregated and averaged to create a composite measure indicating the apparent weighted importance or desirability of public participation and its various process functions.

3.6.2 Accountability

Accountability is defined in this analysis as the total organizational commitment to manage or control expectations or behaviors using the full battery of devices or protocols available to that organization (Romzek and Dubnick, 1987; Kearns, 1994; March and Olsen, 1995; Miller, 1998; Mulgan, 2000b). It is characterized by the presence of highly structured or controlled systems or devices in place to manage behavior or practices according to some standard or expectations of outcomes.

**Table 3.3A: Public Participation, Accessibility,
Paths to Information,
Staff and System Resources**

Survey Question	
• Staff typically initiate citizen participation activities.	Q1-59
• Citizen participation activities occur in a variety of venues and settings.	Q1-60
• Citizen participation activities occur at widely varying times of day	Q1-61
• Citizen participation activities are supported by wide distribution of information.	Q1-62
• Informal citizen contact with staff is encouraged.	Q1-63
• We maintain a web site that allows direct communication.	Q1-64
• Staff from many different levels of the organization have a role in citizen participation activities.	Q1-65
• Citizen participation activities involve the use of committees, individual meetings, and advisory boards.	Q1-66
• Our citizen participation activities rarely involve the use of large public meetings.	Q1-67
• Citizen participation activities occur regularly and frequently.	Q1-68

**Table 3.3B: Public Participation, Permeability:
Opportunities to Engage the Organization
At Specific Task Levels**

Survey Question	
• We encourage our clients or constituents to suggest new ideas for programs or services.	Q1-48
• We ask our constituents to suggest what kind of staffing or skills are needed to implement these new programs.	Q1-49
• We ask our constituents to tell us what the results of our programs should be.	Q1-50
• Every proposed, new, or continuing program uses public participation in some way.	Q1-51
• As a result of our citizen participation activities, there have been several new programs initiated in the last two years	Q1-52
• As a result of citizen participation activities, there have been changes in the way our organization budgets, staffs, or manages its programs.	Q1-53
• Citizen participation activities are used to evaluate and/or critique our existing programs.	Q1-54
• Public participation activities influence our proposed, new, and continuing programs equally.	Q1-55
• The organization distributes minutes of its citizen participation proceedings.	Q1-56
• The organization's performance evaluation criteria place an emphasis on citizen participation activities.	Q1-57
• We work hard to assure that citizen input. is reflected in the way our programs are created, planned and managed.	Q1-58

**Table 3.3C: Public Participation, Transparency:
Embedded Attitudes Toward
Open Governance**

Survey Question	
• Citizen participation activities are emphasized more today than they were two years ago.	Q1-69
• Our citizen participation activities generate public trust.	Q1-70
• Our citizen participation activities can be described as a candid exchange of ideas.	Q1-71
• The staff people responsible for public participation have been involved in such activities for many years.	Q1-72
• These people are comprised of senior staff or they report directly to senior management.	Q1-73
• Our participation activities can be described as polite or civil.	Q1-74
• We set clear goals for our participation activities.	Q1-75
• Our citizen participation activities are open to all parties.	Q1-76
• Even when the results of citizen participation are different than expected, it is our practice to schedule the remaining events as they were originally planned.	Q1-77
• We aggressively seek participants for our citizen input.	Q1-78

The intention in the present case is to define accountability in terms of the content shaping the form of expectations or outcomes that will be realized. It is worth repeating again that, like participation, accountability is also multi-dimensional but substantially more complex in its composition (Romzek and Dubnick, 1987; March and Olsen, 1995).

Heretofore, five dimensions have been identified, each with its own process and content measures as described below. Together, they offer a composite glimpse of accountability. Tables 3.4A-3.4E identify the various questions used as summed scale for organizational accountability.

**Table 3.4A: Accountability, the Administrative Dimension:
Presence of Management Controls
Intended to Assure Routine Command and Control**

Survey Question	
• This organization has a mission statement.	Q1.1
• Staff evaluations occur regularly and frequently.	Q1.2
• The organization has an administrative manual that describes procedures for all routine tasks.	Q1.3
• The organization uses the most current information technology.	Q1.4
• The organization has a clear chain of command.	Q1.6
• We complete an independent financial audit annually.	Q1.7
• Our mission statement has been revised or modified in the last two years.	Q1.8
• The organization maintains a detailed job description for each staff position.	Q1.9

Table 3.4B: Accountability, the Professional Dimension: Presence of Industry Guidelines, and Procedures Intended to Create Standards of Practice

Survey Question	
• Most of our professional staff exceed the minimum qualifications stipulated for their jobs.	Q1.27
• We use external inspections or peer review processes.	Q1.28
• We require staff to participate in continuing educational activities.	Q1.29
• Performance measurement is used to direct the professional staff.	Q1.30
• Our organization is subject to the rules of a professional association or regulatory body.	Q1.31
• We encourage our key staff to contribute to professional publications.	Q1.32
• The organization and staff maintain licensures and/or certifications at least comparable to those of similar organizations.	Q1.33
• We have a recognized industry or institutional standard for almost every service we provide.	Q1.34

Table 3.4C: Accountability, the Political Dimension: Behavioral Conduct That Suggests Stewardship and Presence of Leadership Integrity

Survey Question	
• Complex or controversial policy matters are always discussed during regular board meetings.	Q1.11
• It is our practice to seek out the opinions of related or nearby governments to keep them informed of our plans or activities.	Q1.14
• Many people tend to compete for our board seats.	Q1.16
• Our board typically supports proposals advanced by staff.	Q1.17
• Nearby or related governments have trust in our actions	Q1.18
• This organization is more likely to encourage citizen participation than other nearby or local governments.	Q1.20
• Staff are encouraged to express their opinions to board members.	Q1.45

**Table 3.4D: Accountability, the Market Dimension:
Responsive Service Practices Institutionalized
by Consumer Oriented Demands**

Survey Question	
• We have been successful in adapting our services and pricing to the demands of our customers.	Q1.21
• It is our practice to anticipate the needs of users or constituents in advance of their demands.	Q1.22
• Any service problems, deficiencies, or outages are promptly corrected.	Q1.23
• We achieve our financial goals while maintaining the quality of our services.	Q1.26

**Table 3.4E: Accountability, the Legal Dimension:
The Presence of Rules and Regulations
That Assure a Minimum Standard of Conduct**

Survey Question	
• Annual audits are required.	Q1.88
• Other reports must be completed or filed annually.	Q1.90

Administrative Accountability The importance of administrative accountability is embedded in management and organizational style and outlook (Hirst, 1995). Its related measures, described by Romzek and Dubnick (1987), focus primarily on the organization's structure and its relationship with staff (internal) and other organizations (external). Questions will consider the availability or presence of clear mission statements, charters, or by laws, procedure manuals, the nature of the administrative structure and reporting systems, official acknowledgement of participatory processes, the frequency of staff or task evaluations, and the role of benchmarking tools that guide or redirect program activity or staff functions. This

analysis treats administrative accountability as a continuous variable using the following Likert scale.

<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u> <u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Don't Know,</u> <u>Can't Say</u>	<u>Agree</u> <u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Not</u> <u>Applicable</u>
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)

Individual scores were summed and averaged by the total number of answered questions, creating a composite measure indicating the apparent weighted importance or desirability of each individual tool or device associated with administrative structure. The highest scoring response will be indicative of those organizations centered on routine practices or procedures to achieve administrative accountability.

Professional Accountability Professional accountability reflects an organizational commitment to a rigorous code of technical effectiveness (Dunn & Legge, 2001; Durant et al, 1995; Dwivedi and Jabbra, 1989 ; Hirst, 1995; March and Olsen, 1995; Romzek and Dubnick, 1987). The principle underlying this dimension of accountability is the trained specialist's willingness to subvert self or professional interest to public interest (Bundt, 1992). Its related measures focus on the organization's use of standards of professional practice and competence. Questions and responses in the survey consider the availability or presence of educational standards, staffing relative mission, years of service, peer recognition, licensures, publications, application of benchmarking or performance measurement,

availability of technical documentation supporting decisions or actions, and internal peer reviews. The research strategy treats professional accountability as a continuous variable using the following Likert scale.

<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree Somewhat</u>	<u>Don't Know, Can't Say</u>	<u>Agree Somewhat</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Not Applicable</u>
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)

Individual scores were summed and averaged by the total number of answered questions, creating a composite measure indicating the apparent weighted importance or desirability of each individual dimension associated with professional accountability. The highest scoring responses will be indicative of those organizations centered on professionally imposed means to achieve accountable behaviors.

Political Accountability In both the Romzek and Dubnick (1987) and the models that have borrowed from their typology (Deleon, 1998; Dicke & Ott, 1999; Kearns, 1994), political accountability involves negotiations between and among the organization itself and participation among individuals citizens, groups, lobbyists, elected interests, related political interests, and others needing to create, advance or respond to an agenda. Public participation assumes a pivotal role in political accountability. The primary measures or indicators implicit in the role of political accountability reflect the circumstances in which it is invoked and its perceived strength as an influence over organizational effectiveness and mission (Dwivedi &

Jabbra, 1989; March and Olsen, 1995; Mulgan, 1997, 2000b, 2002; Payne is Skelcher, 2001; Sinclair, 1995). The survey instrument explores the nature of the electoral process, the competition for office, terms, interaction with constituencies, ethic standards, conflict of interests statements, aggressive information dissemination, clear commitments to wide forms of participation, and a symbolic commitment to other layers or organizations of government. This research treats political accountability as a continuous variable using the following Likert scale

<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u> <u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Don't Know,</u> <u>Can't Say</u>	<u>Agree</u> <u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Not</u> <u>Applicable</u>
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)

Individual scores were summed and averaged by the number of questions answered, creating a composite measure indicating the apparent weighted importance or desirability of each individual dimension associated with political accountability. The highest scoring responses are indicative of those organizations centered on participation and other interactions that induce accountable behaviors through politically negotiated processes.

Legal Accountability Legal accountability assumes certain minimal reporting procedures codified or mandated through law with the expectation that organizations and/or individuals will comply or reply accordingly. Laws, observe Romzek and Dubnick (1987), are at the foundation of the administratively governed state.. The literature suggests that legal structures are the most common form of

control and potentially the most in conflict with other systems or devices to exercise oversight (Dubnick, 1998; Franklin, 2001; Hirst, 1995; Leazes, 1997; Moe & Gilmour, 1995). Legal accountability may arise from within the organization but it is distinguished from internally maintained administrative procedures in that legal controls may apply across all forms of accountability as an expectation of a minimum standard of behavior. As characterized in the modified model, legal accountability and its battery of controls or rules exist simultaneously within and outside of the organization. Measures related to legal accountability derive from legislation and orders. Questions in the survey consider the requirements for audits, conformance to accounting standards, notices for meetings, routine voting procedures, public participation codified in terms of specific notice or vehicles, record maintenance, financial disclosures, and sunset provisions. The present strategy treats legal accountability as a continuous variable using the following Likert scale.

<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u> <u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Don't Know,</u> <u>Can't Say</u>	<u>Agree</u> <u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Not</u> <u>Applicable</u>
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)

Individual scores were summed and averaged by the number of questions answered, creating a composite measure indicating the apparent weighted importance or desirability of each individual dimensions associated with legal accountability. The highest scoring responses are indicative of those organizations centered on mandated controls to achieve accountable behaviors.

Market Accountability The clearest departure from the Romzek and Dubnick (1987) model considers the role and importance of market based controls to achieve accountable behavior. In concept, the market assumes that appropriate behaviors should be induced through efficiency and pricing (Boschken, 2000; Coats, 2002; Cummins, 2000; Gillette, 1994; Hawley, 2000; Mo, 2001; Robert, 1993; Wilson, 1995). The competitive market model assumes the existence of alternative services systems but these are not likely to be available within the jurisdiction of most special districts. More likely, the market based model for special districts will reflect issues of reasonable pricing rather than competitive pricing, reported consumer (dis)satisfaction, perceptions about alternative service providers or substitute commodities, vehicles to acknowledge public needs, system upgrades, systems failures, systems for customer service, financial reports, annual reports, and aggressive marketing or outreach. The research strategy treats market accountability as a continuous variable subject to the following Likert type scaling.

<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u> <u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Don't Know,</u> <u>Can't Say</u>	<u>Agree</u> <u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Not</u> <u>Applicable</u>
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)

Individual scores were summed and averaged by the number of questions answered, creating, a composite measure indicating the apparent weighted importance or desirability of each individual dimensions in achieving a market based from of accountability. The highest scoring response are indicative of those organizations centered on efficiency imposed through the behavior of markets.

3.6.3 Control Variables

Control variables are imputed into the analysis as a means of addressing other internal or external considerations that might otherwise impact the emphasis and role of public participation in the model. The model incorporates a series of organizational and environmental variables that provide some description of both the organization's composition and structure as well as the context in which the organization functions. As shown in tables 3.5A and 3.5B some of these controls are index or composite measures, and their construction is discussed in the following chapter. The remaining controls are non-index variables.

Table 3.5A: Internal Controls: Organizational Attributes That Influence the Manner in Which Deliberations and Policies Are Shaped

Survey Question	
• Industry emphasis and program orientation	Q2.4
• General attitudes and sensitivity to accountability issues. Index comprised of the following	
▫ By being accountable, the public takes a more favorable view of this organization.	Q1.79
▫ By being accountable, the actual quality of our work is improved.	Q1.80
▫ By being accountable, our programs are implemented more efficiently.	Q1.81
▫ A formal accountability system creates a positive work environment for the staff.	Q1.82
▫ Accountability is important to maintaining public trust.	Q1.83
▫ Our system of accountability is important to maintaining our financial and political independence.	Q1.84
• There are controls that are unique to this organization	Q1.95
• This organization views itself primarily as a regulatory body.	Q1.97
• Assessments, dedicated millages, or other taxes are this organization's primary source of funds.	Q1.100
• Perceived quality of the work environment work environment. Index comprised of the following	
▫ This organization is effective.	Q1.39
▫ Our constituents or clients appreciate our services and accomplishments.	Q1.43
▫ Our staff is highly committed to their work.	Q1.46
▫ Overall, this is considered an excellent place to work.	Q1.47

Table 3.5B: External Controls: Environmental Attributes That Influence the Manner in Which Deliberations and Policies Are Shaped

Survey Question		
•	Organization faces other controls not specified	Q1.94
•	The number of board seats representing a specific interest group or industry.	Q2.7
•	The service area extends beyond the boundaries of a single county or municipality.	Q1.96
•	The organization was created by a special act	Q1.101
•	It is our belief that we operate in a stable political environment.	Q1.13
•	Nearby or related governments see us as powerful or dominant in setting policy.	Q1.19
•	Most board members are elected.	Q1.102

Internal controls These internal controls or organizational attributes include the quality of the workplace setting, attitudes or perceptions regarding the importance of accountability, dependence on taxes as a source of revenue, and the form of product or service. This group of variables is comprised of composite and non index variables.

The most obviously distinguishing variable stems from the ostensible differences in the services provided and their industry orientation. These differences, in turn, yield plausible differences in the way accountability is managed, attitudes and systems in place for achieving accountable behaviors. For example, the literature cites the potential impact of formal and informal means of control, emphasis on ethical behaviors through centralized management practices, and the general workplace environment as affecting worker morale and productivity, and potentially their responsiveness to accountability practices.

Those districts that benefit from dedicated millages or tax levies are reasonably expected to respond to constituents wanting to control those dollars. If a unit perceives itself as a regulatory body, more than a service provider, it also seems reasonable that such a district would approach accountability with greater passivity than a district with frequent constituent interaction.

External controls These external or environmental variables consider the legal form of implementation, the form of its leadership and the size of the service area. This group of variables is comprised of composite and non index variables. The composite variables are drawn from various questions that are summed and averaged by the number of questions.

As the literature indicates, many of these districts are created by special acts of the legislature as they were in Florida until passage of the Uniform Community Development Act in 1980. Such legislation articulates procedures for filing and reporting that constitute rigid, deterministic controls. Board seats may be the product of special interest groups or industry segments that direct organizational policy in directions that result in greater or lesser accountability. Frequently, special industry representatives are required to fill board seats, hardly a means of linking a broad constituency to the actions of a special district. A basic premise of our democratic structure is that direct electoral control is an essential form of accountability but many board seats – particularly those with an industry or special interest focus -- are not elected but appointed. Deleon's

(1998) interpretation of complex settings and issues would suggest that politically dominant organizations or those operating in a stable political environment might respond differently to perceived requirements for accountability. Those districts that operate across multiple jurisdictions have many competing layers of political and appointed leadership through which they must maneuver. The need to curry support among these jurisdictions can enhance accountability by inserting greater controls or lead to a reduction in accountability because power or control is bifurcated.

3.7 Construction of Accountability Criteria

While this research is concerned about the role of public participation as a tool for improving the accountability practices of these special district governments, the useful measurement of accountability is itself an important objective. Using the variables as they have been described for the administrative, professional, market, political, and legal dimensions of accountability, a measurement scheme is devised that weighs overall commitments to accountability. These schemes consider varying levels of criteria connected to increasing or decreasing average scores derived from these five dimensions and identify each organization as *highly* accountable, *generally* accountable, *moderately* accountable, and *generally not* accountable. These measurement schemes provide a structured approach, absent in the Romzek and Dubnick (1987) typology, for assessing at least a relative level of accountability.

3.8 Follow Up and Interpretation

The quantitative analysis in this research is complemented by a focused series of comments, gleaned from open ended questions within the survey and subsequent discussions with a select number of executives associated with districts of varied levels or forms of accountability. These comments act to validate the constructs that are incorporated in the theoretical framework and provide added perspective to the analysis.

3.9 Anticipated Outcomes Based on Model

The analysis posed three questions associated with the perceived value of accountability and the role in which public participation can influence the various dimensions of accountability. Together they bring focus to certain aspects of the dimensions themselves, their perceived value, ordering, and variation relative to public participation.

3.9.1 Research Question 1: What Is the Importance of Accountability in the Administration of Special Districts?

The initial question, reflected in the following hypothesis, probes the level of commitment special districts evidence toward accountability and specific behaviors that might deem them accountable.

H_{1.1}: Perceptions about the awareness or importance of accountability will substantially effect the overall organizational commitment to accountably and accountable behaviors.

Such perceptions as referenced are largely value driven assessments to establish a frame of reference for the interest and support of various accountability protocols implemented by special purpose governments.

3.9.2 Research Question 2: In What Ways, if at all, Does Public Participation Affect Organizational Accountability And Does Its Influence Vary by Operational or Program Focus?

The second research question, also reflected in one hypothesis, is the pivotal issue on which the research rests. It examines the specific relationships thought to exist between public participation and the many dimensions of accountability. The emphasis here is the variability in an organization's commitment to accountability, controlled for other forces that inferentially are rival explanations in explaining the formation of accountability.

- H_{2.1}:** Public participation, when controlled for other internal and external factors, is a material influence in encouraging accountable behaviors and overall organizational accountability.
- H_{2.2}:** The programs and operating focus of special district governments, when controlled for other internal and external factors, are a material influence in encouraging accountable behaviors and overall organizational accountability.

3.9.3 Research Question 3: Are There Observable Differences in the Way That Public Participation Affects Each System or Dimension of Accountability?

The third research question, also reflected in one hypothesis, deals with the relative impact of public participation on each of the various dimensions of accountability. As shown in the suggested model in Chapter that revises the Romzek and Dubnick typology,

participation is likely to have its greatest impacts on the political dimension and commensurately lower impacts on the legal dimension.

H_{3.1}: As a means of inducing accountable behaviors, public participation is strongly associated with the political dimension of accountability.

H_{3.2}: As a means of inducing accountable behaviors, public participation is weakly associated with the legal dimension of accountability.

3.10 Summary

This chapter has described the procedures associated with exploring the three research questions and their related hypotheses. The research strategy included the selection of key variables appropriate for testing in the context of the problem; the construction, testing and distribution of a survey questionnaire; grouping and evaluation of variables; operationalization of concepts; completion of statistical tasks; and confirmation of concepts through interviews.

The following chapter describes the statistical and analytical procedures applied in the context of the theoretical framework outlined in *Chapter 2* and the research questions posed in *Chapter 3*.

CHAPTER 4. DATA AND ANALYSIS

At the center of this analysis is the relationship presumed to exist between public participation and alternative forms of accountability, focusing on overall organizational accountability. The premise underlying the research is that enhanced commitments to public participation yield accountable behaviors and an improved means of exacting those behaviors. Much more generally, there is the expectation that special district governments assign an explicit value to accountability even if the currency of that system is not fully understood.

Building on the value and importance of accountability as a conceptual construct, *Chapter 4* describes the analytical procedures leading to the development of a multivariate model used to explore the relationship between public participation and accountability, the statistical significance of varied inputs and assumptions incorporated in that model, potential rival hypotheses that were necessarily considered in explaining the relationships involved, and specifications supporting the preferred model.

4.1 Organizational Profile of Respondents: Perceptions and Realities of Accountability

An estimated 489 special district governments, engaged in a variety of technical or social services at multiple jurisdictional levels, were targeted for this research effort. These 489 units represent about one-third of the largest special district

governments operating in the United States as these were identified in 1997 (USDC). After reviewing the replies received from these units, 206 surveys yielded sufficient data, representing about a forty-two percent response rate.

Those replying to the survey were almost exclusively the highest high level staff. General managers, presidents, chief executives and those with similar titles represented about 65.5 percent of the respondents. Deputy directors, chief financial officers, and department directors represented an additional 22.3 percent of the respondents, bringing the total senior staff to about eighty-eight percent of the respondents.

The special district governments responding to the survey were placed in one of two groups according to their orientation to health, education and welfare activities or their orientation to broad community development activities, primarily those related to the provision or management of infrastructure. Some sixty-three percent of the 226 special districts returning the survey are involved in community development and technical support functions (air transportation, fire protection, solid waste, mass transit, power, irrigation and similarly oriented activities) while the balance have a distinct association with health, education or welfare functions (miscellaneous healthcare activities, housing, libraries, and recreation or similar functions).

The smallest governments within this target group have at least seventy-five employees with the largest reporting approximately 4,400 people. On average, these organizations employ about 500 people. Annual budgets for these units range from some \$4,000,000 to \$808,000,000 with a mean of approximately \$69,000,000. Of those special districts reporting the number of board members representing a specific industry or group, the range extends from zero to twenty-four with the mean board comprised of 1.5 officials from within a particular industry or interest group.

4.1.1 Perceptions of Accountability

Table 4.1 summarizes selected descriptive statistics relating to a series of questions that were posed to these special districts regarding their perceptions about the role and importance of accountability in the management of their respective organization and the provision of their programs. The model building procedures, including the univariate and bivariate analysis that are described, do not depend on the statistical form of this data but the responses and information reflected in these responses offer evidence of a value system that might be construed complementary to the relationship between public participation and accountability.

Among these respondents, without reference to their programmatic orientation, there is an obvious commitment to the concept of accountability. Queried about the importance of accountability -- expressed in terms of the public's perception of the organization (Q1.79), its work quality (Q1.80), program efficiency (Q1.81), the

**Table 4.1: Frequencies Associated with Survey Questions
Probing Accountability and its Role in Governance**

Survey Question		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Don't Know,	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable	Total
Q1.79	By being accountable, the public takes a more favorable view of this organization	0.0%	0.9%	2.7%	0.9%	15.6%	42.7%	37.3%	0.0%	100%
Q1.80	By being accountable, the actual quality of our work is improved.	0.0%	0.4%	1.8%	2.2%	12.9%	46.2%	36.4%	0.0%	100%
Q1.81	By being accountable, our programs are implemented more efficiently.	0.0%	0.9%	4.0%	3.1%	15.1%	48.0%	28.9%	0.0%	100%
Q1.82	A formal accountability system creates a positive work environment for the staff.	0.0%	1.3%	4.9%	5.4%	25.0%	39.7%	23.7%	0.0%	100%
Q1.83	Accountability is important to maintaining public trust.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.4%	36.0%	55.6%	0.0%	100%
Q1.84	Our system of accountability is important to maintaining our financial and political independence.	3.2%	0.5%	3.2%	3.2%	15.3%	36.9%	37.8%	0.0%	100%
Q1.85	All the various rules and regulations that govern our organization's accountability or conduct are easy to follow.	4.0%	7.2%	16.1%	3.1%	30.5%	24.2%	14.8%	0.0%	100%

work environment (Q1.82), trust generation (Q1.83), and political independence (Q1.85) -- at least 63.4 percent agree or strongly agree that accountability is essential to achieving each of these functional or practical objectives. Almost ninety-two percent of the respondents see accountability as important to maintaining public trust (Q1.83).

4.1.2 Realities of Accountability

Inevitably the analysis rightfully focuses on the degree to which these various districts might be deemed accountable according to some scale or metric. The *perceptions* of special district personnel, discussed just above, provide a benchmark by which the *actual* accountability practices of these governmental units can be judged.

Three alternative levels of scoring were tested and compared for reasonableness -- a *rigorous, medium* or *low* standard -- each involving an increasingly higher mean value imputed for the dimensions of accountability described in *Chapters 2* and *3*. Criteria establish the basis for four discrete categories that comprise the rigorous, medium or low standard and exhibit increasing commitments to organizational accountability as it has been defined in the current research. The alternative scoring schemes elaborated in Tables 4.2 A- 4.2C act as a sensitivity analysis which, when viewed together, are suggestive of the most appropriate and rational to use.

In effect, four categorical variables common to the rigorous, medium and low standards invite an assessment of the numeric differences in response for each variable across the three schemes. For purposes of comparison, each organization is identified as *highly accountable*, *generally accountable*, *moderately accountable*, or *generally not accountable* depending upon the average score achieved in each of the dimensions that operationalize organizational accountability.

The scoring for each standard is described in terms of the original Likert scale applied to each question administered in the survey.

<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree Somewhat</u>	<u>Don't Know, Can't Say</u>	<u>Agree Somewhat</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Not Applicable</u>
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)

That is, a higher score suggests a broader commitment to the many subsystems and devices that comprise the full battery of controls fundamental to the highest level of accountability and the highest standard of discriminating behaviors. The average scores are drawn from the variables ADMACT (administrative accountability), POLACT (political accountability), MKTACT (market accountability), PROFACT (professional accountability), and LEGACT (legal accountability) as these are further defined and explained in Tables 4.4 A and 4.5.

Table 4.2A: Criteria for Assessing a RIGOROUS Standard of Accountability

Level of Accountability	Numerical Cutoffs	Operationalization
Highly Accountable	6.80 or higher average score for each of the five dimensions	A minimum response from a point closer to strongly agree than to agree
Generally Accountable	From 6.40 to 6.79 average score for each of the five dimensions	A minimum response beyond agree to a point just below strongly agree
Moderately Accountable	From 5.50 to 6.39 average score for each of the five dimensions	A response that is not quite strongly agree but at least better than somewhat agree
Generally not Accountable	5.0 or less average score for each of the five dimensions	A response is at least somewhat agree

Table 4.2B: Criteria for Assessing a MEDIUM Standard of Accountability

Level of Accountability	Numerical Cutoffs	Operationalization
Highly Accountable	6.50 or higher average score for each of the five dimensions	A minimum response from less than a midpoint between strongly agree and agree in all dimensions
Generally Accountable	From 6.00 to 6.49 average score for each of the five dimensions	A minimum response of agree to just below the midpoint of somewhat agree and agree
Moderately Accountable	From 5.00 to 5.99 average score for each of the five dimensions	A response that is not quite agree but at least somewhat agree
Generally not Accountable	4.99 average score for each of the five dimensions	A response is not even somewhat agree

Table 4.2C: Criteria for Assessing a LOW Standard of Accountability

Level of Accountability	Numerical Cutoffs	Operationalization
Highly Accountable	6.0 or higher average score for each of the five dimensions	A minimum response that is agree or better in all dimensions
Generally Accountable	From 5.50 to 5.99 average score for each of the five dimensions	A minimum response between somewhat agree and agree but not quite agree
Moderately Accountable	From 4.50 to 5.49 average score for each of the five dimensions	A response that is from a midpoint between agree and somewhat agree to a midpoint between somewhat agree and don't know
Generally not Accountable	4.49 average score for each of the five dimensions	A response is just less than a midpoint between don't know and somewhat agree

Table 4.3 summarizes descriptive statistics from the application of these criteria to the special districts responding to the survey. Expectedly, as the standards by which a district is judged are lowered, the number of districts that ostensibly function at the highest levels of accountability grow commensurately.

Table 4.3: Comparisons in Standards of Accountability

	Rigorous Standard		Medium Standard		Low Standard	
	Number of Districts Achieving	Percentage	Number of Districts Achieving	Percentage	Number of Districts Achieving	Percentage
Highly Accountable	4	1.8%	27	12.4%	93	41.9%
Generally Accountable	35	15.8%	66	29.7%	80	36.0%
Moderately Accountable	134	60.4%	115	51.8%	44	19.8%
Generally Not accountable	<u>49</u>	<u>22.1%</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>6.3%</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>2.3%</u>
Totals	222	100%	222	100%	222	100%

The rigorous, or most stringent of the three measurement schemes, indicates that only 1.8 percent of the districts would be highly accountable, compared with a medium measure of 12.4 percent and a low measure of 41.9 percent. In effect, the number of special districts that are either highly or generally accountable under the most stringent of the three measurement schemes doubles, then doubles again, as the thresholds by which accountability is deemed appropriate begin to decrease. The rigorous standard indicates that almost a quarter of the special districts would be

considered as generally not accountable while a reduced or low standard indicates that the only 2.3 percent would generally not be accountable.

Applying the medium standard, of the twenty-seven units identified as being highly accountable, nineteen show an orientation to multiple dimensions of accountability. Only one of the fourteen districts identified as generally not accountable has multiple systems of accountability.

Each of these standards yields a Chi Square value of $p < .01$, indicating the results are not likely the product of a chance distribution. Having made this statistical observation, however, the low standard offers the prospect that an unreasonably large number of special districts embrace the full battery of practices necessary to achieve full organizational accountability while the rigorous standard seems to indict all their practices. The middle standard indicates the most balanced results with 51.8 percent of the special districts embracing practices that would be deemed at least moderately accountable. On face value alone, the medium standard seems the most valid.

Reflecting on the questions raised about the perceptions of accountability, approximately about forty percent of the respondents, on average, indicated they agreed or strongly agreed on the importance of accountability and its function in supporting organizational objectives. This figure compares well to the 42.7 percent

of the districts identified as generally or highly accountable in the medium standard of measurement. The rigorous standard yields only 17.6 percent and the low scheme yields an implausible 77.9 percent.

4.2 The Initial Stages of Model Building: Description of Key Variables Considered

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical justification and linkages for the variables incorporated into the preliminary and final multivariate models developed in the current research. Within that framework, several internal and external environmental factors, operating in conjunction with public participation, were deemed as potential rival influences for their effects on accountability.

The dependent variable *accountability* and the key independent variable *public participation* are each comprised of attributes or responses that capture their multiple dimensions as these have been described in this paper. These are the study's most complex variables, comprised of five and three dimensions respectively. Administrative accountability, professional accountability, political accountability, market accountability, and legal accountability are individual concepts that collectively represent or characterize the broader idea of accountability as it is interpreted in this research. Accessibility, transparency, and permeability together evidence public participation as the term is defined in the present context.

The survey yielded a total of twenty variables for analysis and specification in three different multivariate models, including the multi-dimensional measures for public participation and accountability. These several variables were based on both individual and multiple responses to the questions posed in the survey. Tables 4.4A through 4.4B on the following page summarize the descriptive statistics associated for each variable analyzed or subsequently included in the various models that were tested. These variables are grouped according to the general role(s) they satisfy in the analysis.

As detailed in Chapter 3, the study relies largely on the use of a Likert scale that assigns a value to each question that ranges from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). A score of 8 indicates a respondent considered a question Not Applicable to the respondent's organization or set of circumstances. The Likert scale is the basis for a series of subsequent analyses that generally treat each variable as a continuous form of measure.

**Table 4.4A: Descriptive Statistics, Variables
Associated With Dimensions of Accountability**

Variable	Description	N	MIN	MAX	Mean	SD	Skew	Kur
ADMACT	Orientation to administrative or management forms of behavioral control.	223	3.00	7.00	6.19	.65	-1.18	2.22
POLACT	Orientation to openness and engagement as a form of behavioral control.	224	2.75	6.88	5.25	.74	-.65	.59
MKTACT	Orientation to efficiency as a form of behavioral control.	223	1.25	7.00	5.70	.95	-1.44	3.24
PROFACT	Orientation to excellence in technical proficiency as a form of behavioral control.	223	2.50	7.00	5.52	.86	-.59	.25
LEGACT	Emphasis on specified actions and procedures as a form of behavioral control.	226	1.00	7.00	6.61	.76	-3.96	21.86

Table 4.4B: Descriptive Statistics, Variables Associated with Public Participation and its Role in Accountability

Variable	Description	N	MIN	MAX	Mean	SD	Skew	Kur
Accountability (Dependent)								
ORGACT	Overall or institutional commitment to sustain a system of controls that maintains organizational behaviors.	226	2.70	6.70	5.60	.53	-.861	3.03
Public participation (Independent)								
PUBPART	Use of and dependence upon certain content and processes associated with public participation.	226	1.19	6.81	5.00	.99	-.89	1.13
Other variables (Control)								
WRKENV	A measure of the quality and satisfaction of the organizational workplace.	225	2.00	7.00	6.11	.71	-1.70	5.44
ACTPRCPT	Perceived importance about accountability and its role in organizational wellbeing.	225	3.67	7.00	6.02	.77	-.71	.19
STABILITY	Relative political volatility in which the organization functions	223	1.00	7.00	5.09	1.59	-.99	.09
REGDOM	Political context in which the organization functions	222	1.00	7.00	4.97	1.45	-.70	.10
OTHCON	Other controls or devices not specified	224	1.00	7.00	5.82	.16	2.21	.32
LEGUNIQ	Uniquely targeted legislative devices or controls	224	1.00	7.00	4.97	2.10	-.78	-.81
SERVAREA	Organization's perceived role as a multi-jurisdictional body.	222	1.00	7.00	5.56	2.17	-1.27	-.08
REGBOD	Organization's perceived role as a regulatory body.	223	1.00	7.00	1.95	1.19	1.92	4.33
REVTAX	Dependence upon taxes	224	1.00	7.00	3.18	2.39	.63	-1.31
SPECLEG	The legislative vehicle that created the organization.	224	1.00	7.00	6.04	1.83	-1.93	2.24
ELECBOD	Perceived role of elected board members perceived role of elected board members	223	1.00	7.00	3.78	2.76	.188	-1.88
ORGTTYPE	Organization's orientation to technical or social forms of programming (Dummy).	224	0.00	1.00				
SPECINT	The number of board seats assigned to special interest groups or industry segments	214	0.00	24.00	1.49	3.65	3.22	11.8

Given the study's use of the seven point scale for all but two questions from the survey instrument, the minimum and maximum range of most responses is narrow. This limited

range results in a correspondingly narrow minimum and maximum range in the key variables subsequently analyzed and/or transformed into index values. Both the skewness and kurtosis statistics are broadly indicative of poorly distributed data. These poor distributions are confirmed graphically.

4.2.1 Reliability Analysis: Construction of Index Variables Used in Multivariate Models

Of the potential twenty variables considered in this analysis, nine are composite or index measures while the remainder are drawn from individual questions in the survey. The nine index variables are used to test certain assumptions, or they are incorporated as controls in the final multivariate model. Table 4.5 identifies those that are index values, references the question(s) within the survey associated with each variable, and briefly describes its operationalization.

All of the composite measures are a product of multiple questions explicitly described or implied by the literature. As a group, these multiple questions or responses were subjected to a form of reliability analysis. Cronbach Alpha can be used to estimate a proportion of variance consistent in a set of scores, providing a tool that enables the construction and systematic evaluation of individual measures treated collectively as a sum scale.

Expectedly, some items in the anticipated scale were eliminated from further consideration since these did not enhance the Cronbach Alpha statistic. Those

questions or measures that remained after completion of the scaling procedures were then summed and averaged by the number of responses. Each index variable used in the subsequent analysis represents an average response value calculated for the particular group of questions or responses listed and described in the table.

Table 4.5: Attributes and Questions Associated with Key Index Variables, Models 1,2, and 3

Variable	Operationalized Definition	Survey Questions	Cronbach Alpha
ADMACT	An index calculated from the response value of eight items, summed and averaged. The variable measures the organization's orientation or commitment to administrative or management forms of behavioral control.	Q1.1; Q1.2; Q1.3; Q1.4; Q1.6; Q1.7; Q1.8; Q1.9	0.703
POLACT	An index calculated from the response value of eight items, summed and averaged. The variable measures the organization's orientation or commitment to openness and engagement as a form of behavioral control.	Q1.11 Q1.14; Q1.15; Q1.16; Q1.17; Q1.18; Q1.20; Q1.45	0.649
MKTACT	An index calculated from the response value of four items, summed and averaged. The variable measures the organization's operational efficiency as a form of behavioral control.	Q1.21; Q1.22; Q1.23; Q1.26	0.733
PROFACT	An index calculated from the response value of eight items, summed and averaged. The variable measures the organization's orientation or commitment to excellence in technical proficiency as a form of behavioral control.	Q1.27; Q1.28; Q1.29; Q1.30; Q1.31; Q1.32; Q1.33; Q1.34	0.723
LEGACT	An index calculated from the response value of two items, summed and averaged. The variable measures the organization's emphasis on specified actions and procedures as a form of behavioral control.	Q1.88; Q1.90	0.687

ORGACT	An index calculated from the response value of thirty-five items distributed among five dimensions, summed and averaged. The variable measures the overall or institutional commitment to sustain a system of controls that maintains organizational behaviors.	Q1.1; Q1.2; Q1.3; Q1.4; Q1.5; Q1.6; Q1.7; Q1.8; Q1.9; Q1.14; Q1.15; Q1.16; Q1.17; Q1.18; Q1.20; Q1.21; Q1.22; Q1.23; Q1.24; Q1.25; Q1.26; Q1.27; Q1.28; Q1.29; Q1.30; Q1.31; Q1.32; Q1.33; Q1.34; Q1.86; Q1.87; Q1.88; Q1.90; Q1.91; Q1.93	0.836
PUBPART	An index calculated from the response value of thirty-one items distributed among three dimensions, summed and averaged. The variable measures the organization's use of and dependence upon certain content and processes associated with public participation.	Q1.48; Q1.49; Q1.50; Q1.51 Q1.52; Q1.53; Q1.54; Q1.55 Q1.56; Q1.57; Q1.58; Q1.59 Q1.60; Q1.61; Q1.62; Q1.63 Q1.64; Q1.65; Q1.66; Q1.67 Q1.68; Q1.69; Q1.70; Q1.71; Q1.72; Q1.73; Q1.74; Q1.75; Q1.76; Q1.77; Q1.78;	0.949
WRKENV	An index calculated from the response value of four items, summed and averaged. The variable measures the quality and satisfaction of the organizational workplace.	Q1.39; Q1.43; Q1.46; Q1.47	0.793
ACTPRCPT	An index calculated from the response value of six items, summed and averaged. The variable measures the organization's perceived importance about accountability and its role in organizational wellbeing.	Q1.79; Q1.80; Q1.81; Q1.82 Q1.83; Q1.84	0.848

Accountability (ORGACT) and public participation (PUBPART), as the key variables of concern in the model(s) tested, are the most complex of the many measures evaluated. PUBPART is comprised of thirty-seven questions distributed among its three dimensions. Accountability (ORGACT) is comprised of thirty-one questions distributed among its five dimensions. The remaining index variables are based on two to seven questions each taken from the potential 226 cases or observations in the dataset.

The variables ADMACT, POLACT, MKTACT, PROFACT, and LEGACT represent each of the five dimensions of accountability as it is operationalized and defined in this analysis. These dimensions reflect the Romzek and Dubnick typology, modified to embrace the free market behaviors that may also characterize certain special districts.

These individual variables, based on a total of thirty questions, were created to explore their suitability as indicators of the attributes assumed to be associated with the respective dimensions and subsequently with the more broadly inclusive concept of organizational accountability. As well, these variables are also tested for their discrete association with public participation. In the final model(s), the five individual variables are combined to create the single, multi-dimensional variable ORGACT, regressed against PUBPART and other control variables.

WRKENV is a composite or index variable that captures that organization's relative desirability as a workplace, considering its attitudes toward the content of the work itself, pay scales, general effectiveness and organizational outlook. ACTPRCPT is an index variable that measures overall attitudes toward and awareness of accountability and its importance at a conceptual level. It is comprised of six individual questions that solicit responses about specific aspects of accountability and its perceived importance on the organization's well being.

A target Cronbach Alpha statistic is 0.700. All of the index variables meet or exceed the target rate with the exception of POLACT (0.649) and LEGACT (0.689) two of the five dimensions of accountability. Because the discrete measures comprising these variables are merged with those of the other dimensions to create the more comprehensive and complete index variable ORGACT, their role in the analysis is not material to the model outcome.

4.2.2 Non Index Measures or Variables

The eleven variables listed in Table 4.6 are non-index variables used to test certain assumptions or incorporated as controls in the final multivariate model. With the exception of ORGTYPE and SPECINT, all the variables above are keyed directly to a Likert scale -- already described -- that assigns a value to each question that ranges from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 7 (Strongly Disagree). A score of 8 would indicate a respondent considered a question Not Applicable to the respondent's organization or set of circumstances. However, none of the respondents indicated this option to these particular questions.

ORGTYPE is a dummy variable that characterizes the nature of the special district governments being analyzed. As indicated, approximately sixty-three percent are engaged in the provision of infrastructure and community development services. Such groups are coded with a 1. The remaining thirty-seven percent are engaged in the provision of various social and health care activities and are coded with a 0. SPECINT is the only measure that is a true interval variable. SPECINT corresponds to the

number of board seats assigned to special interest groups or specific industries that are associated with the activity of the responding governmental unit.

Table 4.6: Attributes and Questions Associated with Key non-Index Variables, Models 1, 2, and 3

Variable	Operationalized Definition	Survey Questions
STABILITY	Single item variable describing the relative political volatility in which the organization functions.	Q1.13
REGDOM	Single item variable describing the relative political context in which the organization functions.	Q1.19
OTHCON	Single item variable suggesting controls or devices beyond conventional financial controls or legal mechanisms otherwise mentioned or specified in the survey	Q1.94
LEGUNIQ	Single item variable suggesting that the controls associated with the organization's behavioral systems are specific only to the organization or its particular activities.	Q1.95
SERVAREA	Single item variable measuring perceived role as a multi-jurisdictional body.	Q1.96
REGBOD	Single item variable measuring perceived role as a regulatory body.	Q1.97
REVTAX	Single item variable measuring the organization's dependence upon taxes as the main source of revenue.	Q1.100
SPECLEG	Single item variable describing the legislative vehicle that created the organization.	Q1.101
ELECBOD	Single item variable measuring perceived role of elected board members.	Q1.102
ORGTTYPE	Dummy variable that classifies the organization by its orientation to technical or social forms of programming.	Q2.4
SPECINT	Single item interval variable representing the number of board seats assigned to special interest groups	Q2.7

Table 4.7 provides a frequency distribution for each non-index variable that is a product of the Likert scale employed in this analysis.

**Table 4.7: Frequencies for Likert Scale,
non-Index Variables, Models 1, 2, and 3**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Don't Know,	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable	Total
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	
STABILITY	3.1%	7.2%	10.8%	0.9%	26.9%	36.3%	14.8%	0.0%	100%
REGDOM	2.7%	3.6%	9.5%	16.7%	26.1%	28.4%	13.1%	0.0%	100%
OTHCON	4.9%	3.1%	2.2%	5.8%	7.2%	32.3%	44.4%	0.0%	100%
LEGUNIQ	11.6%	9.4%	4.0%	5.8%	15.6%	21.4%	32.1%	0.0%	100%
SERVAREA	10.8%	9.0%	1.8%	4.5%	17.6%	56.3%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
REGBOD	41.7%	39.9%	9.0%	3.6%	4.0%	0.4%	1.3%	0.0%	100%
REVTAX	37.9%	20.1%	8.0%	7.1%	7.6%	19.2%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
SPECLEG	6.3%	5.8%	0.9%	1.8%	2.2%	16.1%	67.0%	0.0%	100%
ELECBOD	38.1%	14.8%	2.7%	0.4%	7.2%	36.8%	0.0%	0.0%	100%

4.3 Model Building: Univariate and Bivariate Procedures

Several variables of potential interest in the current modeling effort were examined initially at the univariate level for their potential statistical distribution then and at the bivariate level to identify significant relationships between the several independent variables and the dependent as well as relationships among the independent variables suggestive of potential collinearity, heteroscedasticity, or other flaws in the final model(s).

4.3.1 Univariate Analysis

The efforts to evaluate both the perceptions and realities of accountability and its importance in the role of special district administration have been described. Those procedures yield frequencies and distributions of value in exploring relationships among the other variables, in constructing three models to be described, and ultimately in testing the various hypotheses posited for this research.

The variables relevant to the modeling effort were graphed and tested for normal distribution, Appendix B. With the exception of ORGACT, the composite measure for organizational accountability, none of these variables were visually or statistically normally distributed. The remainder were considered in need of a transformation. The change was completed using a natural logarithm scale but the distributions remained poor. The variable transformations ultimately proved unnecessary because the multivariate model(s) do not violate assumptions of normality and heteroscedasticity, problems that can stem from poor distribution of data. The procedures involved with the transformation procedures are not discussed further. Table 4.8 provides statistical confirmation of their apparent poor distribution.

Table 4.8: Tests of Normality, Kolmogorov-Smirnov

	STATISTIC	DF	SIG.
Accountability (Dependent)			
ORGACT	.049	206	.200(*)
Public participation (Independent)			
PUBPART	.085	206	.001
Other variables (Control)			
OTHCON	.323	206	.000
STABILITY	.258	206	.000
REGDOM	.187	206	.000
LEGUNIQ	.226	206	.000
SERVAREA	.314	206	.000
REGBOD	.303	206	.000
REVTAX	.273	206	.000
SPECLEG	.373	206	.000
ELECBOB	.269	206	.000
ORGTYPE	.411	206	.000
WRKENV	.160	206	.000
ACTPRCPT	.115	206	.000
SPECINT	.399	206	.000

4.3.2 Univariate Findings

Findings are discussed in terms of their implications for accountability as a construct and for their potential implications in subsequent stages of model building.

Implications for Accountability As indicated in Table 4.1, the special districts queried for this research report very favorable attitudes toward the value and importance of accountability both as a concept and as a tool for achieving various organizational objectives. Much more than half of the respondents strongly agree

that accountability is importance to building public trust (Q1.83). More than thirty-eight percent agree or strongly agree that the organization's rules for instilling accountability are easy to follow (Q1.85). This question did generate some disagreement, however. A combined total of 27.4 percent disagreed at least somewhat that the rules were manageable. The respondents showed strong disagreement with only one other question, Q1.84 relating to structural freedom (Q1.84). Less than four percent strongly disagreed that the organization's system of accountability furthered their respective organization's political or financial independence, suggesting that accountability may have other intrinsic values.

Recalling that a minimum of four and possibly as many as ninety-three special districts achieve high levels of accountability based on an assessment of their various behaviors within each of the five dimensions, this group of independent governments evidences practices reasonably consistent with perceptions about their relative importance. In conjunction with the replies to specific questions about the importance of accountability to operations, it appears that the medium standard of measurement is the most defensible. The medium standard offers the prospect that at least half the special districts have systems in place that would assure at least moderate accountability. Less than seven percent would be considered unaccountable by the medium standard if applied.

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Implications for Model Building Upon initial inspection, the key variables of interest to the models appear to violate distributional assumptions that may signal later problems. Again, such issues are not evident in tests of the final model, however.

Momentarily setting aside possible issues of normal distribution, the most material findings in the data stem from perceptions about the roles these governments play in their local and regional settings.

- Because it is a dummy variable, ORGTYPE displays a bimodal distribution. Of the 226 groups returning the survey, 142 are engaged in community development and technical support functions while the balance have a distinct orientation to health, education or welfare functions. Groups in the former category are coded 0. Groups in the former category are coded as a 1.
- Among these respondents, without reference to their programmatic orientation, 83.2 percent agree or strongly agree that their organizations have unusual powers because they were created through special legislation (SPECLEG).
- Almost seventy-seven percent of the respondents agree or strongly agree that their organizations may be subject to certain controls that may not have been identified or queried specifically within the survey that they received (OTHCON).
- About forty-one percent of the respondents agree or strongly agree that their organizations occupy some dominant place in the local or regional political environment (REGDOM).
- About fifty-one percent of the respondents agree or strongly agree that their organizations operate in a stable political environment (STABILITY).
- Some fifty-three percent of the respondents agree or strongly agree that their organizations are subject to a battery of controls that are unique to their organization or its structure (LEGUNIQ).

- Very few of the organizations consider themselves as primarily a regulatory body. Only 1.7 percent agree or strongly agree that their organizations fulfill a regulatory role (REGBOD).
- Taxes do not appear to be a important in the operation of these organizations. Less than twenty percent agree or strongly agree that taxes are the primary source of revenue (REVTAX).

Interpretations Answers and frequencies, such as summarized above, appear consistent with the strength of the bivariate relations among key variables and the weights that each of these variables assume in the final model(s). For example, REGDOM, OTHCON and STABILITY are all statistically significant, at least at the 0.05 level, within Model 1 described in Section 4.4.2. By contrast REVTAX, identified as relatively unimportant, has no statistical significance in this model.

These impressions were largely confirmed in interviews with district executives who explained that the services or activities provided through their organizations are something of an exclusive enterprise in their respective settings. Consequently, they wield enormous political influence. Operating in the context of an environment, at least partially stabilized by their own presence, these powerful organizations are also able to avoid the trials and conflicts that might otherwise emerge as competing interests vie to solicit support for their own agendas. Such support, or possibly the absence of opposition, can change in the course of an election occurring in a nearby general purpose government that suddenly raises the visibility of a district. Whatever the apparent power of these special purpose entities, political stability, or the lack, may be only a single vote away.

Overall, the responses suggest a group of administrators in touch with the political conditions in which they function and the powers their districts exercise. While conceding to the possible magnitude of their powers, they also reason that the powers themselves carry a heightened responsibility or burden to maintain a higher standard of accountability. “Setting aside the regulations, we have a responsibility as stewards for the services and programs we provide. At an individual level, we are all responsible and accountable for our organization’s actions”

While the districts seem to be similar in their management structure, there appear to be subtle differences in controls that no survey can capture. Citing the example of an ombudsman, district personnel indicate that rules and regulators vary by organization and state making it difficult, if not impossible, to inventory every control that might be applicable. Such comments are then consistent with the idea that so many respondents would identify the controls regulating their organizations as unique to their set of circumstances or programs.

4.3.3 Bivariate Analysis

Bivariate analysis provides some perspective on the role of accountability as a conceptual form of regulation and control among the survey respondents, establishing a foundation for the basic framework and construction of the multivariate model(s). At least on a preliminary basis, bivariate analysis yields an

initial indication of the relationships among ORGACT, PUBPART and each of the other principal variables that are the central focus of this research.

The measures and tests described provide perspective on the strength of the specific relationship between the key dependent and independent variables while also offering insight into other relationships between selected variables that may support the validity of the final multivariate model(s). Again, on a preliminary basis, the bivariate analysis may also point to possible multiple correlations among the several independents anticipated as control influences in the final model(s). While offering some guidance about potential collinear effects, bivariate techniques yield no insight into the causality of any relationships that might exist.

Spearman's Rho: Results The non-normality of the data suggests some limitations in the reliability of using a symmetrical test to examine relationships between and among variables. Spearman's, and like nonparametric tests, offer a less restrictive tool, assuming that the variables involved are treated as nominal and ordered data.

The outcome of the Spearman's analysis is shown on Tables 4.9A, 4.9B and 4.9C, beginning on the following page.

**Table 4.9A: Spearman Bivariate Correlation Matrix
Key Variables, Models 1, 2, and 3**

Variable	STABILITY	REGDOM	OTHCON	LEGUNIQ	SERVAREA	REGBOD	REVTAX
STABILITY	1.000						
REGDOM	.171(*)	1.000					
OTHCON	-.027	.103	1.000				
LEGUNIQ	.060	.244(**)	.301(**)	1.000			
SERVAREA	.019	.110	.009	.043	1.000		
REGBOD	-.011	-.110	-.099	-.019	.009	1.000	
REVTAX	.019	-.096	-.185(**)	-.122	.047	.208(**)	1.000
SPECLEG	.007	.242(**)	.075	.120	.258(**)	.115	-.003
ELECBOD	.115	.028	.016	-.050	.074	-.016	.144(*)
SPECINT	.017	.120	.152(*)	.040	-.076	.006	-.201(**)
ORGTTYPE	.026	-.063	.095	.093	-.364(**)	-.186(**)	.054
WRKENV	.299(**)	.341(**)	.099	.179(**)	.157(*)	-.226(**)	-.091
PUBPART	.066	.270(**)	.196(**)	.218(**)	-.004	-.079	.123
ADMACT	.199(**)	.309(**)	.197(**)	.248(**)	.134(*)	-.293(**)	-.032
POLACT	.351(**)	.402(**)	.018	.085	.105	.064	-.040
MKTACT	.327(**)	.309(**)	.151(*)	.164(*)	.131	-.128	-.073
PROFACT	.098	.313(**)	.208(**)	.200(**)	.152(*)	-.054	-.177(**)
LEGACT	.105	.230(**)	.356(**)	.241(**)	.121	-.102	-.220(**)
ORGACT	.304(**)	.513(**)	.207(**)	.254(**)	.166(*)	-.162(*)	-.120
ACTPRCPT	.090	.271(**)	.189(**)	.275(**)	.160(*)	-.040	-.023

* p< .05, ** p< .01

**Table 4.9B: Spearman Bivariate Correlation Matrix
Key Variables, Models 1, 2, and 3**

Variable	SPECLEG	ELECBOD	SPECINT	ORGTTYPE	WRKENV	PUBPART	ADMACT
SPECLEG	1.000						
ELECBOD	-.129	1.000					
SPECINT	.101	-.106	1.000				
ORGTTYPE	-.017	-.069	.121	1.000			
WRKENV	.093	.170(*)	-.019	.025	1.000		
PUBPART	.039	.039	.186(**)	.134(*)	.303(**)	1.000	
ADMACT	.045	.223(**)	.029	.173(**)	.484(**)	.360(**)	1.000
POLACT	.101	.124	.122	-.137(*)	.387(**)	.498(**)	.368(**)
MKTACT	.023	.172(*)	-.044	-.050	.664(**)	.231(**)	.473(**)
PROFACT	.205(**)	.009	.134	-.035	.475(**)	.432(**)	.420(**)
LEGACT	.206(**)	.055	.228(**)	.093	.280(**)	.174(**)	.313(**)
ORGACT	.191(**)	.150(*)	.104	-.006	.632(**)	.509(**)	.705(**)
ACTPRCPT	.144(*)	.072	.033	.071	.448(**)	.432(**)	.383(**)

* p< .05, ** p< .01

**Table 4.9C: Spearman Bivariate Correlation Matrix
Key Variables, Models 1, 2, and 3**

Variable	POLACT	MKTACT	PROFACT	LEGACT	ORGACT	ACTPRCPT
POLACT	1.000					
MKTACT	.311(**)	1.000				
PROFACT	.467(**)	.461(**)	1.000			
LEGACT	.165(*)	.252(**)	.341(**)	1.000		
ORGACT	.652(**)	.669(**)	.782(**)	.426(**)	1.000	
ACTPRCPT	.275(**)	.468(**)	.409(**)	.250(**)	.470(**)	1.000

* p< .05, ** p< .01

Of the twenty variables subjected to this bivariate analysis, eight show a positive and statistically significant relationship with the proposed dependent variable ORGACT at the 0.01 level, including STABILITY, REGDOM, OTHCON, LEGUNIQ, SPECLEG, ACTPRCPT, WRKENV and PUBPART. WRKENV (.632), REGDOM (.513), PUBPART (.509) and ACTPRCPT (.470) show the strongest relationships with ORGACT. SERVAREA, REGBOD, AND ELECBOD demonstrate significance at the 0.05 level but the relationship between REGBOD and ORGACT is a modestly negative one. REV TAX, ORGTYPE, AND SPECINT, as potentially other controls or explanatory variables used in the subsequent multivariate model(s), indicate no obvious relationship with ORGACT.

Statistically significant correlations among and between some of the intended independent variables, however, hint at possible multi-collinearity. For example, REGDOM evidences positive and statistically significant values at the 0.01 level with LEGUNIQ (.244), SPECLEG (.242), and WRKENV (.341). STABILITY shows significance at the 0.01 level with WRKENV (.299). Similarly, the relationships between REV TAX and SPECINT and between SERVAREA and ORGTYPE are also statistically significant at the 0.01 level but negative. Though statistically significant, all of these results appear to be only weak to moderately strong. Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998) advise that troublesome correlations of less than .900 are unlikely to be observed without studying their

respective Variance Inflation Factors (VIF). Subsequent VIF analysis confirms that there is virtually no collinearity among the independent variables.

Expectedly, PUBPART evidences statistically significant relationships at the 0.01 level with POLACT (.498), PROFACT (.432), ADMACT (.360), MKTACT (.231) and LEGACT (.174), the variables representing each of the five specific dimensions of accountability. The statistical significance, relative strength, and ordering between PUBPART and the five dimensions of accountability imply that the strongest relationship is between PUBPART AND POLACT, the weakest between PUBPART and LEGACT.

WRKENV, REGDOM, and ACTPRCPT are also strongly related to each of these five variables at the 0.01 level. Several of the remaining independents are also correlated with POLACT, PROFACT, ADMACT, MKTACT, and LEGACT as the five dimensions of accountability. These relationships, however are generally weaker and of a lower statistical significance

Pearson Correlation: Results Although of somewhat lesser reliability because of the data's possible non-normal distribution, Pearson provides another bivariate tool for screening the data initially. While possibly providing evidence of other variables that might be considered in the final multivariate model(s), its principal value in this case is that the output offers a basis for comparisons with the results

achieved using Spearman's rho. The outcome of the Pearson correlation analysis is shown in Tables 4.10A, 4.10B, and 4.10C.

**Table 4.10A: Pearson's Bivariate Correlation Matrix
Key Variables, Models 1, 2, and 3**

Variable	STABILITY	REGDOM	OTHCON	LEGUNIQ	SERVAREA	REGBOD	REVTAX
STABILITY	1.000						
REGDOM	.135(*)	1.000					
OTHCON	-.068	.020	1.000				
LEGUNIQ	.048	.232(**)	.177(**)	1.000			
SERVAREA	-.045	.060	.003	.074	1.000		
REGBOD	.092	-.071	.000	.049	.095	1.000	
REVTAX	.035	-.088	-.174(**)	-.061	.057	.135(*)	1.000
SPECLEG	-.027	.185(**)	-.007	.102	.175(**)	.149(*)	-.026
ELECBOD	.109	.018	.084	-.070	.119	-.065	.054
SPECINT	-.091	.051	.065	-.027	-.006	-.041	-.148(*)
ORGTTYPE	.022	-.065	-.024	.087	-.387(**)	-.201(**)	.011
WRKENV	.344(**)	.357(**)	.058	.121	.105	-.123	-.049
PUBPART	.031	.238(**)	.182(**)	.172(*)	-.044	-.111	.083
ADMACT	.204(**)	.305(**)	.134(*)	.182(**)	.088	-.255(**)	-.037
POLACT	.356(**)	.412(**)	.117	.099	.083	.103	-.065
MKTACT	.280(**)	.319(**)	.077	.079	.072	-.123	-.075
PROFACT	.043	.304(**)	.178(**)	.144(*)	.087	-.009	-.144(*)
LEGACT	.038	.206(**)	.116	.116	.081	-.131	-.116
ORGACT	.311(**)	.497(**)	.183(**)	.185(**)	.111	-.086	-.115
ACTIPRCPT	.055	.227(**)	.128	.178(**)	.120	-.024	.009

* p< .05, ** p< .01

**Table 4.10B: Pearson's Bivariate Correlation Matrix
Key Variables, Models 1, 2, and 3**

Variable	SPECLEG	ELECBOD	SPECINT	ORGYTYPE	WRKENV	PUBPART	ADMACT
SPECLEG	1.000						
ELECBOD	-.129	1.000					
SPECINT	.118	-.076	1.000				
ORGYTYPE	-.023	-.068	-.037	1.000			
WRKENV	.069	.195(**)	.027	.044	1.000		
PUBPART	.008	.018	.074	.147(*)	.249(**)	1.000	
ADMACT	-.058	.248(**)	.005	.190(**)	.539(**)	.317(**)	1.000
POLACT	.077	.135(*)	.092	-.157(*)	.458(**)	.436(**)	.367(**)
MKTACT	-.026	.182(**)	-.018	-.053	.696(**)	.182(**)	.510(**)
PROFACT	.167(*)	.041	.124	-.048	.471(**)	.381(**)	.423(**)
LEGACT	.136(*)	.124	.118	.101	.199(**)	.146(*)	.315(**)
ORGACT	.117	.178(**)	.093	.008	.674(**)	.439(**)	.728(**)
ACTPRCPT	.176(**)	.115	-.055	.078	.482(**)	.368(**)	.374(**)

* p< .05, ** p< .01

**Table 4.10C: Pearson's Bivariate Correlation Matrix
Key Variables, Models 1, 2, and 3**

Variable	POLACT	MKTACT	PROFACT	LEGACT	ORGACT	ACTPRCPT
POLACT	1.000					
MKTACT	.329(**)	1.000				
PROFACT	.476(**)	.485(**)	1.000			
LEGACT	.145(*)	.197(**)	.230(**)	1.000		
ORGACT	.652(**)	.725(**)	.797(**)	.385(**)	1.000	
ACTPRCPT	.281(**)	.423(**)	.378(**)	.227(**)	.469(**)	1.000

* p< .05, ** p< .01

Of the twenty independent and dependent variables considered, the same eight independent variables show a statistically significant relationship with ORGACT at the 0.01 level. WRKENV (.674), REGDOM (.497), PUBPART (.439) and ACTPRCPT (.469) show substantially stronger relationships than the other four, STABILITY (.311), OTHCON (.183), LEGUNIQ (.185), and ELECBOD (.178). The ordering of the three strongest correlations mirrors exactly that found using Spearman's rho.

One departure from Spearman's worth noting is the relationship between ORGACT and the proposed independents SERVAREA and REGBOD. Although only weakly correlated with a statistical significance at the 0.05 level, they lose all significance in the Pearson correlation.

REGDOM is statistically significant at the 0.01 level with WRKENV (.357) and PUBPART (.238). STABILITY is also statistically significant at the 0.01 level with WRKENV (.344), and OTHCON is statistically significant at the 0.01 level with LEGUNIQ (.182). The correlations are similar to those attributed Spearman's rho and are only vaguely suggestive of possible collinearity. VIF analysis evidences no multiple correlations in the final multivariate model(s) using these variables.

PUBPART continues to evidence statistically significant relationships at the 0.01 level with POLACT (.436), PROFACT (.381), ADMACT (.317), and MKTACT (.182), the same ordering found using Spearman's. As well, the Pearson correlation also indicates that the relationship between PUBPART and LEGACT is significant at the 0.05 level.

Using the Pearson correlations, WRKENV, REGDOM, and ACTPRCPT remain strongly related to each of these five variables at the 0.01 level as well. Generally these independents display somewhat stronger relationships than PUBPART and are uniformly related at the 0.01 level to each of the variables standing for the five dimensions. Other independents are also correlated with POLACT, PROFACT, ADMACT, MKTACT and LEGACT as the five dimensions of accountability. These relationships, however, are generally weaker and of lower significance.

4.3.4 Bivariate Findings

Respondent attitudes regarding the importance of accountability and its various subtexts point to the concept as an instrumental force shaping organizational outlook toward programs, their implementation, certain behaviors, and broader policy matters. Such importance, arguably, is the foundation for the bivariate relationships that seem to be present in the data.

While the strength of the relationships are only *implied* by the correlations between PUBPART and ORGACT and between other variables and ORGACT, they are significant statistically. The output generated by Spearman's rho is corroborated by the Pearson correlations which also evidence strongly significant relationships. The non-normal distribution of the data notwithstanding, there is at least the implication of a confirmatory result using the alternative means of analysis.

The statistical interpretations of the data are harmonious with theoretical concepts linking public participation and accountability. The results also show the anticipated ordering between public participation and ADMACT, POLACT, MKTACT, PROFACT, and LEGACT, the five discrete dimensions comprising accountability. That is, PUBPART is more substantively connected to POLACT, the political dimension, than LEGACT or ADMACT, the legal and administrative dimensions of accountability.

The strength of these relationships is consistent with certain frequencies identified in the univariate analysis. Conceptually, STABILITY, REGDOM, and OTHCON show strong statistical significance with ORGACT, hinting that they are potential rival explanations for variability in ORGACT.

Interpretations The bivariate relationships are consistent with the basic framework advanced for the current research and consistent with the themes implied by the univariate analysis. The importance of a stable political environment (STABILITY), the organization's political dominance (REGDOM), and the power or responsibility conferred through special legislation (SPECLEG) or miscellaneous controls (OTHCON) seems confirmed.

Again, conversations with organization executives intimate the importance of an apparent sensitivity to the role and function of accountability (ACTPRCPT), the culture of the workplace (WRKENV), and public participation (PUBPART). Paraphrasing one respondent, "Service and constituent satisfaction are products of worker satisfaction". Another senior executive adds, "It is essential that we raise expectations among our employees about a higher purpose." These remarks speak to the role of organizational culture and mission in shaping accountability as it is defined here.

Of the several variables showing a statistically significant bivariate relationship with ORGACT, REGBOD indicates a negative correlation. If, in fact, an organization's activities are regulatory rather than service oriented, the inverse relationship may stem from a belief that it is the organization's function to assure the accountability of others, possibly those providers that interact with users or constituents on a more direct basis. For example, one special district suggested that

its control of privately implemented water conservation practices rarely generated scrutiny.

At this point, it remains less clear how these and other intervening influences working together may impact or shape accountability. Subsequent analysis, however, demonstrates that public participation remains a potent force in affecting organizational accountability even when other internal or external factors are considered.

4.4 Model Building: Multivariate Procedures

The univariate and bivariate analyses offer a glimpse into the basic framework driving the primary research, the degree to which public participation is capable of enhancing organizational accountability. Together, the univariate and bivariate analyses identify certain concepts of substantive value in exploring this relationship. Over the next several pages, a multivariate model is specified that describes this relationship and the relative influence of other variables that are reasonably perceived as also shaping accountable behaviors.

In terms of sequence, a model incorporating untransformed variables was specified, initiated, tested and rerun after eliminating possible outliers, yielding statistically significant and apparently valid predicted values as described over the next several pages. The potential issues stemming from non-normal distributions at the univariate level

suggested a confirmatory iteration of the model employing natural logarithm transformation of all variables. In the case of the latter, the residuals appear less satisfactorily distributed, key independents fall in significance, and the overall fit of the model degrades. The transformed model is not reported or described in this paper.

4.4.1 Overview of the Preferred Multivariate Model (Model 1)

Although public participation is repeatedly cited for its instrumental role in decision making, it assumes something of a rhetorical quality when invoked in the context of accountability. Our democratic institutions fervently embrace public participation and its variants as essential to orderly, responsive and accountable government. While the relationship between participation and accountability may be intuitively compelling, its value for achieving accountable behaviors remains untested in a setting that controls for other possible influences and their impacts. Given the ostensibly public responsibilities assumed by special district governments, it becomes imperative that their processes for achieving accountability be both evaluated and encouraged.

The literature, derived primarily from Romzek and Dubnick and others that have borrowed from their typology, suggest that many devices are evidence of accountable behaviors, and collectively they are representative of organizational accountability. DeLeon (1998), Kramer (1999), King (1998) and others speak persuasively for the role that public participation plays in advancing these behaviors. Other possibilities must necessarily be considered, including the nature and type of the organization, its cultural

milieu, the moderating structure of any oversight or regulatory board, legislatively inserted controls, and political dominance, among others.

Bivariate analysis suggests that various combinations of variables, in conjunction with public participation, merit further consideration as explanations for the relationship in question. Some variables emerge as potentially less material. Program content, for example, as reflected in the orientation of the special district itself appears to be largely an unimportant variable in assessing the commitment to organizational accountability. Ultimately, the preferred model is comprised of fourteen variables, including thirteen that provide statistical controls intended to isolate the role of public participation as a principal agent in enhancing accountability in these government units.

$$\text{ORGACT} = f (\text{STABILITY, REGDOM, OTHCON, LEGUNIQ, ACTPRCPT, SERVAREA, REGBOD, REV TAX, SPECLEG, ELECBOD, ORGTYPE, WRKENV, PUBPART, and SPECINT}) + e$$

4.4.2 Multivariate Analysis, Preferred Model (Model 1), All Cases Retained

Table 4.11 shows the coefficients from the initial model. As indicated above, the model significantly predicts the variability in an organization's commitment to accountability and related accountable behaviors stemming from public participation and participation activities. The global F statistic (25.679) indicates at least one independent variable in the model is statistically related to ORGACT at

the 0.001 level. The multivariate model yields an adjusted R^2 of .628, evidencing that the variables within the model explain approximately 62.8 percent of variation in an organization's commitment to a scheme of accountable behavior.

Of the fourteen total independent variables in the model, PUBPART, WRKENV, and REGDOM are statistically significant, all at the 0.001 level. Of the thirteen variables functioning within the model as *controls*, STABILITY and OTHCON show significance at the 0.05 level. The remaining control variables evidence no significance at any level.

Most materially, from the standpoint of the primary research question, public participation (PUBPART), while of significance within the model, is of less influence than the favorable setting created by the workplace environment (WRKENV) and comparable in impact with REGDOM. In terms of the standardized (Beta) coefficients, WRKENV (.437) evidences almost twice the explanatory power of PUBPART (.242) and twice the power of REGDOM (.226). The ordered relationships and relative explanatory power of each of these independent variables are generally maintained in subsequent iterations of the model. All variables with the exception of REV TAX and ORGTYPE positively influence ORGACT. These control variables, however, evidence no statistical significance and offer only limited explanatory power in the overall model.

Although it is difficult to think in terms of organizational accountability measured in terms of a specific unit, the unstandardized (B) coefficients offer something of a metric. In the initial model, for example, a unit increase in PUBPART increases the organizational commitment to accountability (ORGACT) by .131 units. Similarly, a unit increase in WRKENV increases the value of ORGACT by .334 units.

Table 4.11: Coefficients, Model 1, ORGACT Dependent

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(CONSTANT)	1.587	.251		6.313	.000
Public participation (Independent)					
PUBPART	.131	.026	.242	4.993	.000
Other independent variables (Controls)					
STABILITY	.041	.017	.113	2.342	.020
REGDOM	.085	.018	.226	4.581	.000
OTHCON	.032	.015	.096	2.122	.035
LEGUNIQ	.006	.012	.024	.521	.603
SERVAREA	.009	.012	.036	.739	.461
REGBOD	.004	.021	.008	.178	.859
REVTAX	-.016	.010	-.069	-1.520	.130
SPECLEG	.010	.014	.034	.723	.471
ELECBOD	.014	.009	.070	1.548	.123
ORGTYPE	-.010	.055	-.009	-.189	.850
WRKENV	.334	.043	.437	7.677	.000
ACTPRCPT	.058	.037	.084	1.594	.113
Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
SPECINT	.008	.007	.053	1.187	.237

$R^2=.653$, Adjusted $R^2=.628$, $F=25.679$, $N=205$

4.4.3 Multivariate Assumptions, Preferred Model (Model 1), All Cases Retained

Multiple regression requires that certain data assumptions *not* be violated if the model is to be validated. Specifically,

- *Normality*. The error terms must be normally distributed.
- *Collinearity*. There should be no linear relationships between or among the independent variables in the regression.
- *Linearity*. The data must be linear in the parameters of the regression.
- *Independence*. The error terms must be independent. Current values should not be associated with preceding values in a series.
- *Homoscedasticity*. The variance must be constant across the error term. That is, the data should not be heteroscedastic.

The analysis relies on histograms, plots, and statistical measures to explore possible deviations from these assumptions.

Normality To satisfy the requirements of this assumption, *the error terms* must be normally distributed with a mean equal to zero. The absence of normality warns that the properties inherent to the normal curve cannot be inferred from the data, limiting generalization. Problems stemming from non-normal distributions are more troubling with small samples.

It is not necessary that the variables themselves be normally distributed (Gujarati, 1988) and, in fact, they are not. As already described, transformation of these variables failed to improve the apparent poor distribution that characterizes the data.

Figure 4.1 on the following page offers a visual indication that the error terms are normally distributed with only modest deviations from the actual normal curve. This distribution is confirmed by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test that is extremely sensitive to deviations from normal distribution.

Multicollinearity This assumption requires that there be minimum correlation among the key independent variables in the regression variate. While some multicollinearity might be inevitable in the course of testing, its presence masks the true effects of key independent variables and their relationship(s) with the dependent variable.

Figure 4.1: Histograms Associated with Key Variables Analyzed

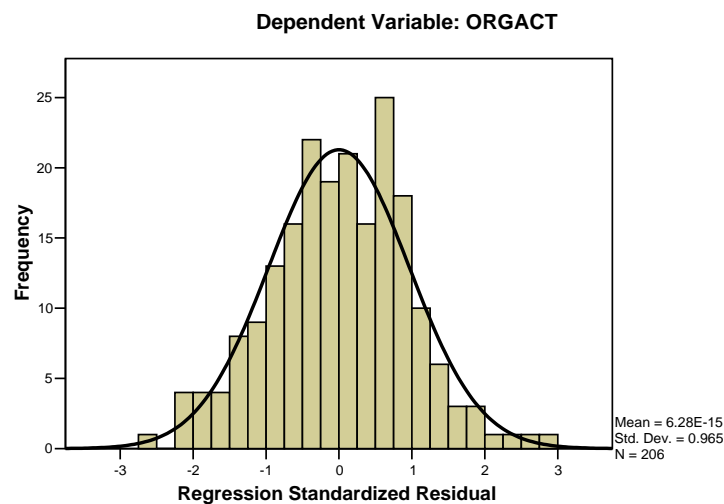


Table 4.12 reports the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) associated with each of the independent variables incorporated in the preferred model. A VIF score greater than 5.0 suggests threshold concerns about multicollinearity. All independents have values well below the hurdle rate. Although not shown, an assessment of the eigenvalues offers additional evidence that conditions of multicollinearity are not violated.

Table 4.12: Variance Inflation Factors, Model 1, ORGACT Dependent

	CORRELATIONS		COLLINEARITY STATISTICS		
	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
Public participation (Independent)					
PUBPART	.443	.340	.213	.771	1.297
Other independent variables (Controls)					
STABILITY	.351	.167	.100	.776	1.288
REGDOM	.505	.315	.195	.748	1.336
OTHCON	.176	.152	.090	.887	1.127
LEGUNIQ	.199	.038	.022	.875	1.143
SERVAREA	.104	.053	.031	.753	1.329
REGBOD	-.079	.013	.008	.858	1.166
REVTAX	-.102	-.109	-.065	.879	1.137
SPECLEG	.116	.052	.031	.827	1.209
ELECBOD	.163	.111	.066	.880	1.137
ORGTTYPE	.016	-.014	-.008	.756	1.323
WRKENV	.689	.486	.327	.561	1.781
ACTPRCPT	.469	.115	.068	.652	1.533
SPECINT	.087	.086	.051	.923	1.083

Linearity Relationships between the independents and the dependent must necessarily be linear within the parameters of the regression itself. To the degree, relationships between the independents and the dependent vary from linearity, conventional regression will understate the overall substance of the relationship. When several independent variables are involved in the analysis, partial regression plots identify those which may need to be reconsidered for their influence in the variate.

In the present case, the partial regression plots shown in Figures 4.2A through 4.2N of the independent variables against the dependent variable indicate no obvious departures from linearity. The plots evidence no curvature in the distribution of points of intersection.

Figure 4.2: Partial Regression Plots Associated with Key Variables, Model 1

Figure 4.2A: STABILITY

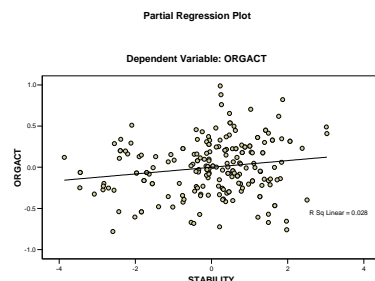


Figure 4.2B: REGDOM

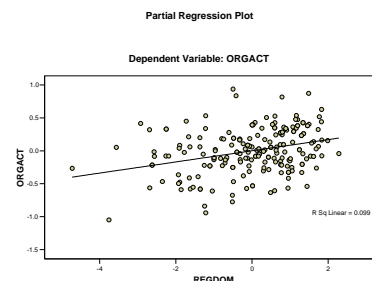


Figure 4.2C: LEGUNIO

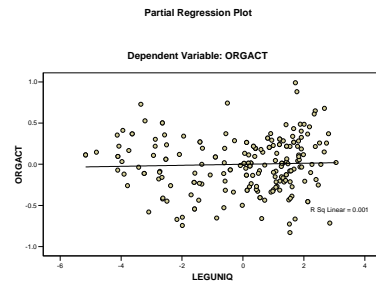


Figure 4.2D: SERVAREA

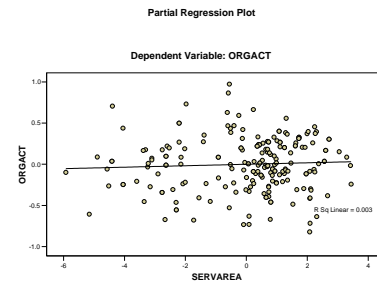


Figure 4.2E: REGBOD

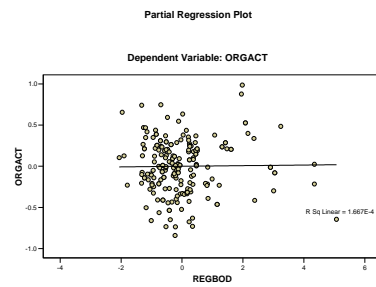


Figure 4.2F: SPECINT

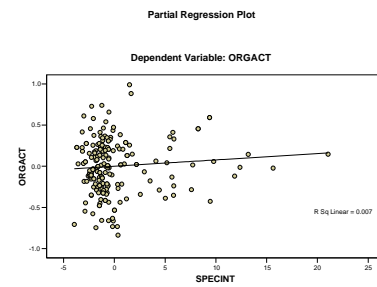


Figure 4.2G: SPECLEG

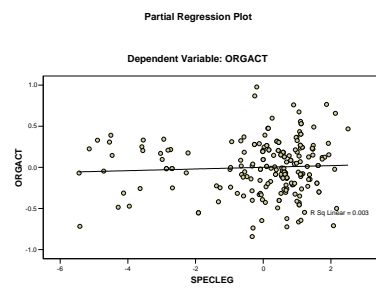


Figure 4.2H: ELECBOD

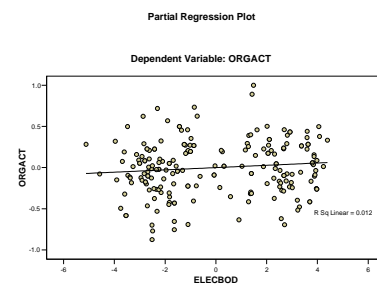


Figure 4.2I: OTHCON

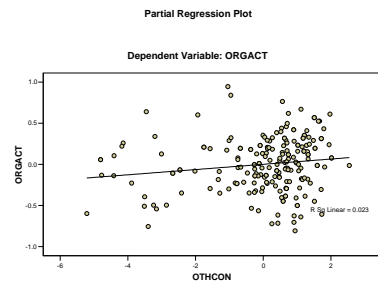


Figure 4.2J: PUBPART

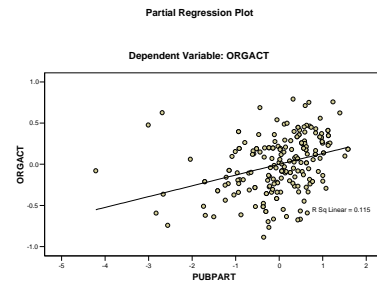


Figure 4.2K: REVTEX

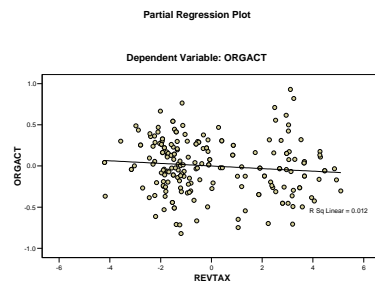


Figure 4.2L: ORGTYPE

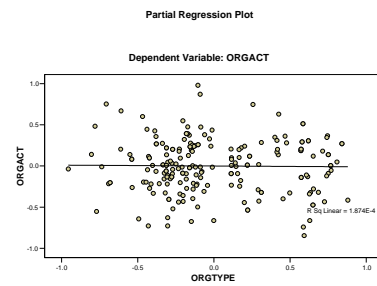


Figure 4.2M: ACTPRCPT

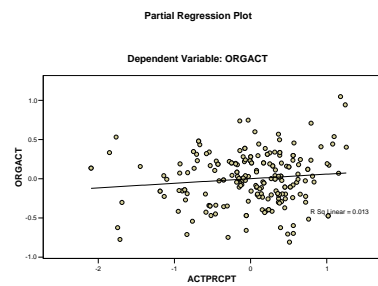
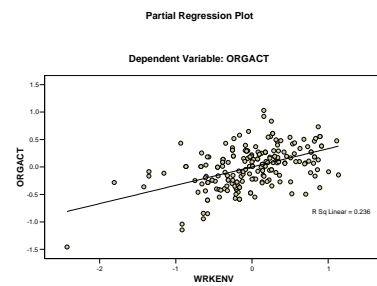


Figure 4.2N: WRKENV



Independence This assumption requires that the error terms *not* be serially correlated with past error terms. A failure to avoid autocorrelation causes subsequent or dependent values to be misstated. This problem is frequently associated with time series data rather than cross sectional data such as that which underlies the present analysis.

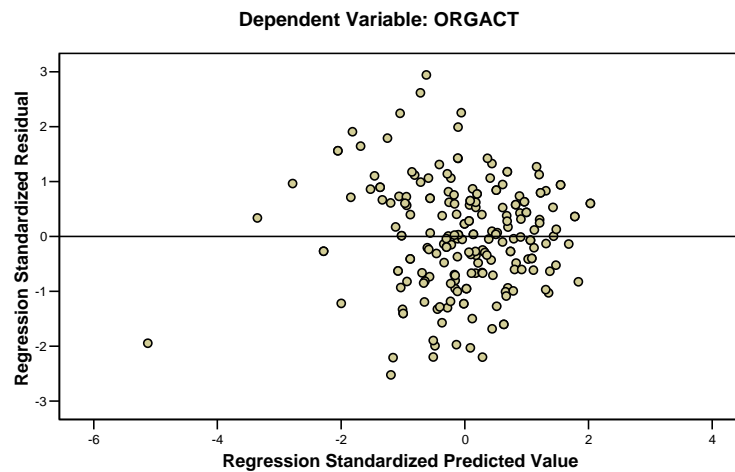
First order autocorrelations can be detected using the Durbin Watson test which compares a benchmark statistic against a general value. A value of 1.5 to 2.5 suggests that observations underlying the model are independent. In the initial model with all observations retained, the Durbin Watson value is 2.100 indicating that autocorrelation is not likely to be present in the preferred model.

Homoscedasticity If data is not homoscedastic -- that is, heteroscedastic -- there will be unequal variance of the error term across the different values of the independent variables. The presence of heteroscedastic data casts doubt on the validity of the F test and the general form of the overall model. The presence of heteroscedastic data can be gleaned from a simple residual plot comparing the standardized residuals (ZRESID) against the standardized predicted value (ZPRED).

Common patterns associated with heteroscedastic data indicate a grossly flaring or trumpet shape distribution of points that evidence increasing dispersion from zero. Hair (1998) describes these as either triangle shaped or diamond shaped patterns. Although very modest departures might be inferred from the residual plot on the

following page, it indicates none of the disturbing patterns that would compromise the analysis.

Figure 4.3: Scatterplot, ZRESID/ZPRED, Model 1



4.4.4 Outlier Analysis, Initial Model (Model 1), All Cases Retained

Outliers are data points that may fall outside the explanatory power of the model. Influentials include any observations that could have a disproportionate impact on the estimated regression output. Certain outliers or leverage points might be considered influentials.

The present analysis uses standardized, studentized and studentized deleted residuals, Cook's Distance (D) and Leverage or hat values to identify observations ostensibly inconsistent with the balance of the dataset. Cases meeting or exceeding

one or more of the following thresholds were identified and considered for possible removal from the dataset subject to another iteration of the model.

- Standardized residuals (ZRESID), 2.0 standard deviations, nine cases
- Studentized residuals (SRESID), 2.0 standard deviations, eleven cases
- Studentized deleted residuals (SDRESID), 2.0 standard deviations, eleven cases
- Cook's Distance (D), .0207, two cases
- Leverage or hat values, 0.5, two cases

Figures 4.4A and 4.4B visually confirm that a *total* of thirteen cases violating one or more above the benchmarks might justify elimination from the dataset as part of the model evaluation process.

Figure 4.4: Outliers and Influentials, Model 1

Figure 4.4A: Outliers

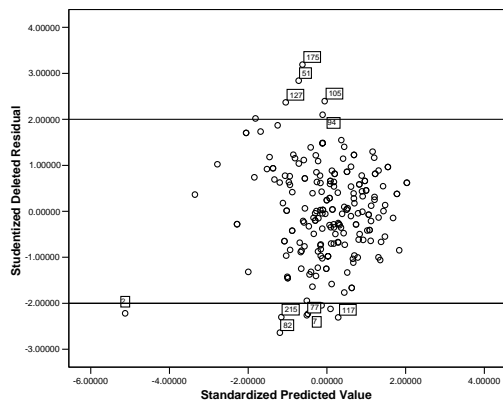
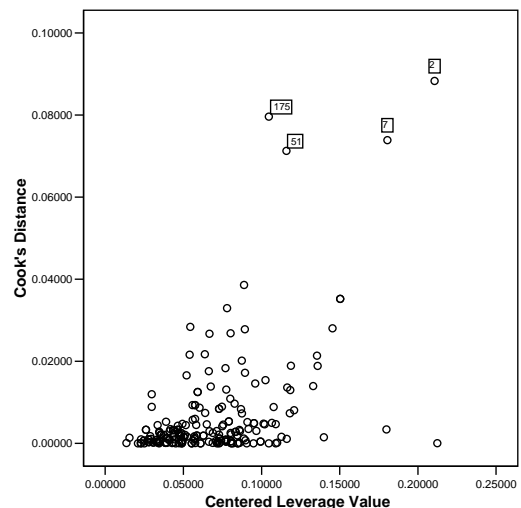


Figure 4.4B: Cook's/Leverage Points



4.4.5 Multivariate Analysis, Revised Model (Model 2), Thirteen Cases Removed

Table 4.13 summarizes the coefficients from the revised model, removing the potentially offending cases from the analysis. On balance, the model remains relatively unchanged in terms of the relative weights and ordering of the standardized coefficients or their significance. The adjusted R^2 shows some improvement, increasing from 0.628 in the initial model to 0.687. The global F statistic (31.121) indicates significance at the 0.001 level.

Table 4.13: Coefficients, Model 2, ORGACT Dependent

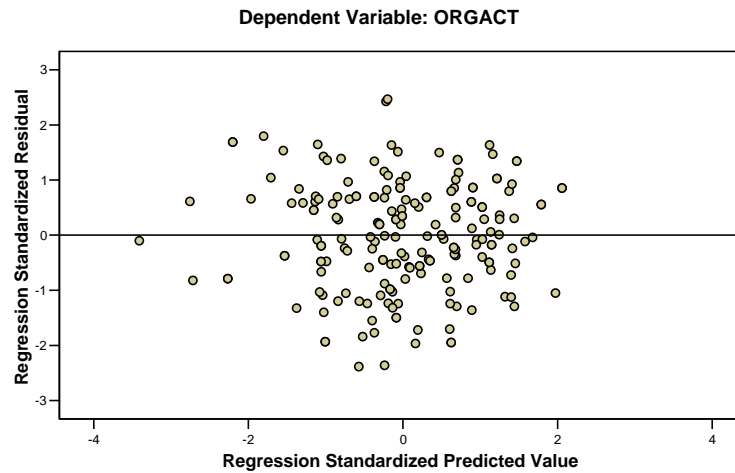
	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(CONSTANT)	1.871	.228		8.195	.000
Public participation (Independent)					
PUBPART	.172	.023	.354	7.604	.000
Other independent variables (Controls)					
STABILITY	.041	.014	.130	2.824	.005
REGDOM	.080	.016	.242	5.084	.000
OTHCON	.050	.013	.167	3.929	.000
LEGUNIQ	.007	.010	.029	.675	.501
SERVAREA	.020	.010	.095	2.024	.044
REGBOD	.006	.019	.015	.342	.733
REVTAX	-.027	.009	-.134	-3.142	.002
SPECLEG	.004	.012	.017	.371	.711
ELECBOD	.012	.007	.069	1.622	.107
ORGTYPE	.029	.046	.029	.619	.536
WRKENV	.286	.039	.391	7.311	.000
ACTPRCPT	.012	.031	.020	.392	.696
SPECINT	.005	.005	.043	1.030	.304

$R^2=.710$, Adjusted $R^2=.687$, $F=31.121$, $N=192$

- WRKENV, PUBPART, and REGDOM remain the three variables offering the greatest explanatory power of the model, still ranking 1, 2, and 3 in terms of their contributions to the model.
- WRKENV, PUBPART, and REGDOM remain significant at the 0.001 level even after the cases have been deleted.
- The relative weighted differences among the three have decreased somewhat based on the value of the beta coefficients. In the initial model, WRKENV assumed 1.8 times the value of PUBPART and 1.93 times the value of REGDOM. These values have decreased to 1.1 and 1.6 respectively.
- Seven variables continue to show no statistical significance at the 0.05 level. LEGUNIQ, SERVAREA, REGBOD, SPECLEG, ELECBOD, ACTPRCPT, SPECINT, and ORGTYPE again evidence little explanatory power of the model.
- REV TAX, of no significance in the initial model, is now significant at the 0.01 level but among the key variables is of only moderate weight in explanatory power.
- The power of STABILITY has lost some of its explanatory power, falling in its importance from 4th to 6th while improving its statistical significance from 0.05 to 0.01.
- In the revised model, OTHCON, increases in importance, moving from 5th to 4th among the key variables, simultaneously improving in statistical significance. In the initial model OTHCON was significant at 0.05. Here, it becomes significant at the 0.001 level.

Visual inspections of histograms and scatterplots evidence no basis for reinterpreting the underlying assumptions essential to multivariate analysis. A scatterplot of the model's standardized residuals and its standardized predicted values provides a reference.

Figure 4.5: Scatterplot, ZRESID/ZPRED, Model 2



4.4.6 Multivariate Analysis, Revised Model (Model 3), Four Cases Removed

Table 4.14 summarizes the coefficients from a further revised model. In this iteration, only the cases with extreme leveraging or distance effects are removed from the dataset. The remainder are retained even as possible outliers so that the discrete effect of the specific extreme cases can be evaluated on overall model fit.

In this iteration of the model, removal of the four extreme cases modestly degrades the model's adjusted R^2 from 0.628 to 0.620 although the model itself remains statistically significant at the 0.001 level with overall F statistic of 24.456. The standardized coefficients show little change from Model 1 or Model 2. As before, WRKENV, PUBPART, and REGDOM evidence the greatest explanatory power of the model with all three remaining significant at the 0.001 level. While WRKENV

sustains a higher standardized coefficient, its importance in Model 3 is 1.2 times that of PUBPART compared with 1.8 times in Model 1 and 1.1 times in Model 2.

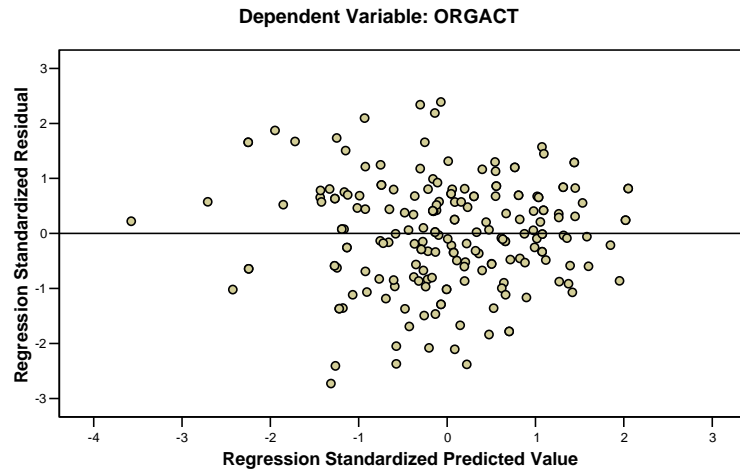
Table 4.14: Coefficients, Model 3, ORGACT Dependent

Variable	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(CONSTANT)	1.920	.258		7.445	.000
Public participation (Independent)					
PUBPART	.170	.026	.328	6.551	.000
Other independent variables (Controls)					
STABILITY	.037	.016	.111	2.288	.023
REGDOM	.093	.017	.271	5.393	.000
OTHCON	.033	.014	.107	2.325	.021
LEGUNIQ	.001	.011	.003	.054	.957
SERVAREA	.006	.011	.027	.545	.586
REGBOD	-.002	.021	-.005	-.097	.923
REVTAX	-.023	.010	-.110	-2.362	.019
SPECLEG	.004	.014	.016	.325	.745
ELECBOD	.011	.008	.059	1.275	.204
ORGTYPE	-.016	.052	-.015	-.302	.763
WRKENV	.299	.043	.391	6.916	.000
ACTPRCPT	.021	.035	.032	.605	.546
SPECINT	.006	.006	.044	.970	.333

$R^2=.647$, Adjusted $R^2=.620$, $F=24.456$, $N=201$

Visual inspections of histograms and scatterplots evidence no basis for reinterpreting the essential underlying assumptions essential to multivariate analysis. A scatterplot on the following page of the model's standardized residuals and its standardized predicted values provides a reference.

Figure 4.6: Scatterplot, ZRESID/ZPRED, Model 3



4.5 Model Building: Confirmation and Reconciliation of Three Models

The three models, taken together, show only modest variation in terms of their overall explanatory power, statistical significance and the relative order of importance assumed by the three key independent variables. While the absolute weighted differences among the beta coefficients of these three variables changes by some small measure across the alternative models, WRKENV remains as the most substantive explanation for variation in ORGACT, the dependent variable. Although clearly important in explanatory power in each model, PUBPART does not achieve the dominance of WRKENV.

Even with outliers removed on the basis of discrete measures, the overall fit and integrity suggested by the initial model is unchanged. Under these circumstances, there are no ostensible reasons for deleting any of the observations comprising the

dataset or altering inferences based on a comparison of the roles assumed by each of the key variables within the original regression model. With all cases retained, the initial model has enhanced generalizability. In effect, Models 2 and 3 are confirmations of the content and assumptions that underlie Model 1.

4.5.1 Interpretations and Comparisons with Bivariate Analysis and Findings

The preferred model is consistent with the strongest bivariate relationships that have been described. For example, STABILITY, REGDOM, OTHCON, WRKENV, and PUBPART evidence statistical significance at least at the .05 level in the preferred model. No additional variables emerge in the in the preferred model with potential explanatory power.

SPECLEG and LEGUNIQ -- identified in the bivariate analysis as having a statistically significant but weak correlation to ORGACT -- decline in their importance when incorporated in the preferred model. Neither is significant at the .10 level in the preferred model. These variables, however, exhibit greater importance than REV TAX and SPECINT which display no bivariate correlation with ORGACT and virtually no significance or explanatory power in the preferred model. SERVAREA and REGBOD which had weak correlations with ORGACT -- but significance at the .05 level -- also show virtually no explanatory power in the preferred model. In effect, the poorest or weakest of the bivariate relationships with ORGACT assume similarly low explanatory power in the preferred model.

On balance, the character of the preferred model adopts the attributes of the bivariate analysis. To the degree, there are differences, they appear to be immaterial to a general interpretation of the preferred model and the role of the independent variables contributing the greatest explanatory power.

The preferred model, viewed in the aggregate, points to the obvious importance of political context, civic interaction and workplace setting in achieving desirable accountable behaviors. The comments of special district executives reaffirm the importance of transparency and communication with constituents (attributes of public participation); communication with other governments, stewardship, consistency in action and apolitical behaviors (attributes of stability and political dominance); along with ethical standards, controlled expectations, reinforced behaviors, higher purpose and favorable employment conditions (attributes of the workplace environment) in achieving overall organizational accountability. These attributes, though the mix is varied by organization, represent recurring themes in shaping commitments to accountability.

The conversations with organizations evidencing high accountability indicate a greater awareness not only about the perceptual importance of accountability but the ethical conduct that must accompany preferred behavioral practices. Public participation is recognized as sometimes burdensome and costly but essential to assure community integration and organizational responsiveness. The views are balanced but lean toward a preference for more – more involvement, more communication, more training, more

leadership. The highly evolved organizations see accountability as requiring complex systems in the ways envisioned by Romzek and Dubnick (1987), Behn (2001) and Koppell (2005). The leadership in these organizations, while agreeing there may be some confusion about which system takes precedent, however, may not necessarily agree that the goals are always in conflict.

Organizations with lower or less accountability seem more concerned with appearances rather than substantive measures or behaviors. Participation, for example, is practiced because it is expected or legislated, not because of its potential for contributions. Legal prescriptions provide cover but are not a vehicle for accomplishing organizational goals.

4.6 Application of Data and Analysis to Research Questions and Hypotheses

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: What is the importance of accountability in the administration of special districts?

H_{1.1}: Perceptions about the awareness or importance of accountability will substantially effect the overall organizational commitment to accountably and accountable behaviors.

Although intuitively attractive as an institutional force, accountability remains something of an abstraction. While many special district governments appear in broad agreement that the concept is an influence in defining the ways in which accountability shapes its organization's programs and defines the standards by which it is judged and interacts with its constituents, it is less clear that sensitivity

to its importance is anything more than rhetorical, hence the minimal explanatory power of ACTPRCPT in Model 1 and its variations. The low explanatory power of ACTPRCPT and its failure to achieve statistical significance in any of the models indicate that this hypothesis is properly rejected.

Ultimately, of course, this observation begs the question of whether these special districts *are* or *are not* accountable. While perceptions of accountability may not in themselves be a force to generate accountable behaviors, given the statistical significance of public participation and other variables, a systematic evaluation of accountability according to a defined standard indicates that at least sixty percent of special districts, applying the most stringent standard of measurement, would be at least moderately accountable. The medium standard indicates that at least forty-one percent are generally or highly accountable by the criteria invoked here. This standard parallels the perceptions that executive personnel have expressed about the importance of accountability even if those perceptions do not figure strongly into its production. “Accountability is a fundamental concept but the laws alone do not invoke accountable behavior.”

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: In what ways, if at all, does public participation affect organizational accountability and does its influence vary by operational or program focus?

- H_{2.1}:** Public participation, when controlled for other internal and external factors, is a material influence in encouraging accountable behaviors and overall organizational accountability.

Public participation emerges in all three of the models developed for this analysis as an important predictor of the variability in an organization's commitment to accountability. In Model 1, PUBPART has a standardized coefficient of .242, and it is statistically significant at the 0.001 level. While it shares explanatory power with other key variables in the regression, it is among only three predictors that are instrumental in influencing variability in ORGACT. While the weight of PUBPART's standardized coefficient ebbs moderately in relation to these other variables in subsequent iterations of the model, it still retains strong explanatory power and has statistical significance at the 0.001 level. This hypothesis is sustained.

H_{2.2}: The programs and operating focus of special district governments, when controlled for other internal and external factors, are a material influence in encouraging accountable behaviors and overall organizational accountability.

Implicitly, there are material differences in providing, managing or creating programs oriented to the social and physical environments. The regression model, however, controls for these differences in its use of the variable ORGTYPE, intended to distinguish the emphasis of program content and orientation between districts. ORGTYPE, however, offers little explanatory value in Model 1 or its variants and achieves no statistical significance in any of the models. This hypothesis is rejected.

Apparently, program focus and direction make little, if any, difference in the ways an organization demonstrates its commitments to accountability or accountable behaviors. The possible explanation may be as simple as understanding that it is the totality of the workplace and the environment it creates. Based on that premise, it is compelling to think that even diverse organizational cultures, regardless of programs and potentially the technical skills involved, can nurture accountable behaviors if they adopt a core set of values and practices. *How* accountability practices are implemented then becomes as important as *what* the concept itself represents. Notes one executive, “It really doesn’t matter what the organization does but how it does it.”

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: Are there observable differences in the way that public participation affects each system or dimension of accountability?

H_{3.1}: As a means of inducing accountable behaviors, public participation is strongly associated with the political dimension of accountability.

The bivariate analysis -- stemming from both Spearman and Pearson -- identifies correlations between PUBPART and each of the five variables standing for the multiple dimensions of accountability, including ADMACT, PROFACT, POLACT, MKTACT, POLACT, and LEGACT. While the strength of these correlations varies, PUBPART achieves a moderately strong correlation with POLACT, statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This relationship, based on the indicated value of the correlation, is of greater strength than that achieved between PUBPART and the remaining four variables. This hypothesis is sustained.

H_{3.2}: As a means of inducing accountable behaviors, public participation is weakly associated with the legal dimension of accountability.

As described above, the bivariate analysis identifies correlations between PUBPART and each of the five variables standing for the multiple dimensions of accountability, including ADMACT, PROFACT, POLACT, MKTACT, POLACT, and LEGACT. In this instance, the correlation between PUBPART and LEGACT appears very weak although it is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This relationship, based on the indicated value of the correlation, is of much less strength than that achieved between PUBPART and the remaining four variables.

Regarding the relationship between PUBPART and POLACT, one executive observes that his district has substantial participation and the board listens. “They are active board members so that makes them politically animated. I see no connection between participation and legal accountability. The organization either follows the laws set in code or it does not.” This hypothesis is sustained.

4.7 Summary

The univariate, bivariate, and multivariate procedures work together to demonstrate both the seeming accountability of most special district governments and the value or strength of public participation in exacting organizational accountability. There is also validity to the claim that the influence of public participation is likely to vary across dimensions. As the research indicates, the influence of public participation will be most evident in a

highly politicized setting or situation, as DeLeon (1998) posits, where citizen involvement has the power to redirect resources, to create or change policy, and to bring immediate redress or accountability.

At the same time, the analysis also indicates that other forces are at work to assure accountability and they may not be as evident or possess the rhetorical quality implicit in a call for enhanced citizen involvement. The work environment, in particular, emerges, as a possible source of accountability empowerment that can respond to fundamental principles of leadership, communication and task stimulation.

Apparently, even though a structured and systematic evaluation of their accountability practices evidences that a material number of special districts are accountable, it is not clear that perceptions about the importance of accountability are themselves a singular factor in the generation of accountable behaviors. If there is a conflict, it may only be the questions posed in the analysis provoke socially desirable responses while failing to address the materiality of the complex forces that are the real controls to accountable behavior.

In the next chapter, the current research is discussed in terms of its contributions to the existing literature, public administration principles, and professional practice.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given their proliferation, independence and concentration of financial resources, special district governments remain a relatively unexplored form of government. Even though special districts now outnumber general purpose governments, little is known about their behavior, administration, and responsiveness to the democratic ethos that presumably characterizes the typical political unit.

Romzek and Dubnick's 1987 typology has proven useful for classifying various means and methods of seeking or assuring accountable behavior. With some modifications, their model provides the foundations for a more robust framework used to examine the practices that constitute various approaches to accountability in these special districts. Of particular interest in the current research is the way in which public participation might strengthen an organizational commitment to accountability.

The focus on public involvement as a means of assuring accountability arises from its pivotal role in the participatory model of governance. Indeed, active participation is seen as essential to assuring public accountability (Ashford & Rest, 1999; Balls, 2000; Gardner, 1998), and advocates of the process such as Arnstein (1969) suggest that governments purposely distancing themselves from engagement are inherently flawed.

The normative values associated with an engaged citizenry as the fulcrum on which accountable behaviors balance comprise the bedrock on which most of our democratic institutions are constructed. Nonetheless, the relationship between accountable behaviors and the force of citizen action is understood almost exclusively at a procedural level. The current study provides an opportunity to explore the relationship between citizens and the institutions perceived to be controlled through participatory processes and to analyze the specific behavioral systems in place in America's devolved system of special purpose governments.

In this chapter, the current research is summarized and the findings are discussed in the context of their implications for special districts, the role of public participation as a democratic tool, and the ways in which special district governments respond to the pressures of participation and calls for accountable behaviors. The findings documented in this dissertation are important ones, and they are described in terms of their contributions to the literature and to the practice of public administration.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This dissertation poses three research questions related to special districts, their attitudes about accountability generally, and the procedural form of accountability as it might be influenced by public participation and practiced by special purpose governments.

- RESEARCH QUESTION 1: What is the importance of accountability in the administration of special districts?
- RESEARCH QUESTION 2: In what ways, if at all, does public participation affect organizational accountability and does its influence vary by operational or program focus?
- RESEARCH QUESTION 3: Are there observable differences in the way that public participation affects each system or dimension of accountability?

The first question is investigated in this research through a series of inquiries that probe organizational attitudes regarding the importance of accountability to public perception, the quality of work, program efficiency, general work ethos, and public trust. Viewing this series of inquiries as a group, at least 63.4 percent of the respondents indicated that accountability was a material factor in achieving these various functional or practical objectives. Further, only 4.3 percent of the respondents indicated that the rules in place to assure accountable behavior are difficult or cumbersome to follow. In effect, we see an organizational culture attuned to the value of accountable behavior to advancing organizational goals and priorities, both internally and externally. Possibly as important, these special district governments are not dissuaded from their attitudes by a bureaucratic structure that might frustrate desirable behaviors or practices.

These perceptions apparently parallel the reality of accountability even if it is unclear that perceptions themselves are instrumental in the production of accountability. Despite the harsh criticisms levied against special districts and encompassing a broad range of undesirable practices, the current research offers the prospect that these governments are,

in fact, accountable. Applying the medium classification scheme described in Chapter 4, at least 12.4 percent of the sample group would be considered highly accountable and more than forty-one percent would be considered generally or highly accountable. The higher percentage tracks responses from district personnel about various symbolic and functional aspects of accountability. Using the medium standard no more than 6.3 percent would be considered unaccountable. Under the most stringent standards of measurement no more than 22.1 percent would be deemed unaccountable. The criticisms of special districts seem largely unfounded, and the analysis may offer some evidence that privatization initiatives by themselves do not erode democratization.

The second research question is the foundation on which this analysis rests. In three variations of the model, public participation (PUBPART) is statistically significant at the 0.001 level as a predictor of an organization's commitment to accountable behavior. In conjunction with the nature of the workplace environment (WRKENV) and the political context in which the organization exists (REGDOM), public participation emerges as one of the three key variables in the model that explain the variability in organizational accountability (ORGACT). While there may be perceptions that groups with a social or humanist centered mission will more naturally respond to demands of accountability by vigorously incorporating public participation in their program activities, the analysis evidences virtually no statistical indication that accountability is a function of program focus. Again, in three iterations of the model, ORGTYPE shows neither explanatory power or statistical significance.

Finally, the third research question probes the way in which participation influences specific dimensions of accountability. The bivariate relationships indicate that the strongest relationships exist between PUBPART and PROFACT, PUBPART and POLACT. The weakest relationships exist between PUBPART and LEGACT, PUBPART and ADMACT, generally as posited in the model. There is at least the inference that an organization's politically propagated behavioral controls intended to instill accountable behavior respond to public participation.

5.2 Voices and Participation

The models developed for this analysis indicate the relationship between public participation and organizational accountability, both at the latter's broadest level and at its more discrete levels represented by the multiple forms of behavior originally described by Romzek and Dubnick (1987). These are important findings that underpin the rhetorical value of participation in the American system of governance. Because the analysis considers public participation in terms of many dimensions -- in the current research these dimensions include participation's accessibility, permeability and transparency -- the process has a rich conceptualization that goes beyond intuitive and emotional claims. Across a broad spectrum of special district governments, roundly criticized for their apparently poor accountability practices, it has been determined that public participation heightens an organization's commitment to accountability. This conclusion has tremendous implications for the management of these and other units that

must balance the demands imposed by participation and the calls to be programmatically and financially efficient. Studying these potentially competing demands in the special district setting automatically centers attention on program efficiency because these organizations are fundamentally defined by their program content.

What also emerges from this research is that public participation *by itself* may not be adequate to assure the full range of accountable behaviors even if process is fully developed and administered. Something more may be needed, especially if the trade-offs between efficiency and cost, for example, are to be adequately managed.

Given the specific meaning of participation as used here, the analysis also offers some evidence that an enriched and well-organized work environment -- one in which employees and managers see each other as team members devoted to a common series of objectives -- can be a potent indicator of an organization's predilection to pursue accountable behaviors as well. There is at least the inference that highly motivated, properly paid, and intellectually challenged employees will collectively work for the constituencies represented by their respective organizations, even absent the well crafted public participation sequence. In this rubric, the emphasis is centered on the value of the organization's personnel and expectations that they set for themselves. In a fertile environment, the proper behavioral forms are nurtured and grow without rigidly structured form. Though participation sustains the voice of its democratically centered claimants, other vehicles may exist for accomplishing similar objectives.

Ideologically, the merits of participation as a precursor to transparency are difficult to refute given a substantial body of literature citing its value in trust building, information exchange, and satisfaction. The literature is rich with the importance of broadly inclusionary participation invigorated through unlimited access to pertinent information (Bockmeyer, 2000; O'Donovan, 2002; Ryan, 2002; Tauxe, 1995). Given the promises of favorable results from both an ideological and a practical standpoint, the image of an engaged public is intuitively compelling.

Unfortunately, it is not proven, other than through incidental observation, that public participation necessarily yields better outcomes (Linder, 2001) or more accountability in special purpose or general purpose governments. The assumed rationale for citizen participation may be based on both unfounded and idealized expectations about the citizen's role in the functioning of the state (Kettl, 1996; King and Stivers, 1998) that tax the very limits of the participatory and representative models.

Boundaries for participation exist even if they have yet to be recognized fully by those evoking the concept exclusively on normative grounds (Benveniste, 1989). It seems reasonable to assume that any mechanism that implements public participation necessarily must compromise what might otherwise be the best means to assure adequate time, attention, and resources to the widest range of issues. Inevitably, a balance must be achieved between rational decision making where costs are always a consideration and democratic decision making where societal values are the hard currency.

While it may not be a popular idea to confront a fundamental belief in democratization, participation's real utility -- beyond visceral enhancement -- may be limited in large part by the notions described originally in *The Federalist Papers* (Kramnick, 1987). That is, a fundamental lack of time, commitment, and expertise to address the issues at hand cloud its value except in isolated situations. Such situations, according to DeLeon (1998), are those that lack obvious resources or means of resolution. Those situations respond to a collective voice by airing new ideas, establishing new priorities and redirecting resources. In the case of special districts, their routinized situations would mitigate the need for participation, just as the professional skills of special district staff engaged in a technical specialty presumably obviates the need for engagement in the course of normal service provision. Employees well trained, directed and aware of their missions may be capable of achieving the desired results without outside intervention, at least in the short term.

Public participation may invigorate democratization, but the present research suggests it is not an absolute prerequisite to accountability unless involvement is defined in the broadest possible terms to include virtually any form of interaction. This line of reasoning leads to the conclusion that the narrowly ordered purpose of certain bodies may reduce the need for public participation if there is a particular emphasis on administrative means of control which, as indicated by the model, are the least responsive to public participation. Thomas (1990, 1993), in his protocol for policy deliberation, makes this distinction for general purpose governments and it would seem to have application here.

The limited literature specific to special districts (Bollens, 1961; Burns, 1994; Foster, 1997; Mitchell, 1992,1999; Walsh, 1978) maintains that these governments are less likely than their general government counterparts to engage citizens in active dialogues regarding agenda setting and policy making, actions associated with public participation that could be the foundation for a system of accountable behavior. The activities of special districts, certainly in many cases, are of such a narrow technical nature that they may not warrant or attract public input in the ways that their critics insist are necessary. Foster (1997), for example, observes that the course and direction of special district programs is set within their legislative framework (Foster, 1997) implying that their mission, while potentially altered by participation may in certain cases be independent of such processes.

Though desirable in western civic culture, openness and accessibility should not be confused with public involvement that has forced interaction as its primary objective. To achieve the desired accountability that is the focus of the current research, public participation must be rich and multi-dimensional as the process is conceived here. At the very least, the current analysis seems to imply that institutional commitments toward accountability need not depend exclusively on public participation to assure that there are no commensurate reductions in transparency, legitimacy, or program outcomes.

5.3 Accountability of Special Districts

Bollens (1961), Henriques (1986), and Walsh (1978) among others contend that special districts are not accountable, reasoning in large part that their independent form and non-public style of administration together preclude accountable behaviors while encouraging corrupt or delinquent behaviors. Their perspectives express the sentiment that general purpose governments adhere to a more rigid standard of behavioral compliance because of their broad constituencies and opportunities for citizen input through multiple points of access. In effect, their claims are an indictment of non-electoral schemes of governance.

Their disapproval of this form of government may be unjustifiably harsh and imbalanced based on the evidence that is assembled. The charges against special districts have something of an ideological foundation that pits the participatory and representative forms of democratization against one another, claiming the inherent dysfunction of the latter. Excepting Foster's (1997) detailed work, the literature is primarily anecdotal or illustrative and appears at odds with the wide body of evidence collected in the current research. Just as there are examples of poorly managed business affairs, there are examples of productive and well implemented programs provided by special district governments. The charges against special purpose implicitly promote the general purpose government as the superior form of government. The academic and popular literature report glaring flaws, corruption or declining trust in these units that cast some doubt on their abilities in a contemporary setting stressed by time, competing constructs and profusion of information and ideas.

If anything the data favorably suggest that these governments may satisfy their functions within accepted democratic principles. Their independent structure is a visible target for attack but the evidence indicates that the totality of accountability and the way in which it is implemented are properly the focus of scrutiny, not the structural integrity of the legal arrangement that breathes life into these governments.

Accountability is essential to legitimate governance regardless of its form but a broadly conceived normative scale may be inadequate for dealing with ideas beyond those that constitute a core value system. At the very least, the independent structure and application of the special district suggest that the complexities of accountability described by Romzek and Dubnick (1987) may have attributes different from those of the general purpose government. Legislation creating the special district intentionally diverts the structure away from the conventions of the traditional general purpose government to accomplish an intended mission or scope of activities.

The criticism of special districts appears focused on the wrong set of issues. It is not *diversion* that is problematic but the abdication of responsibility to an affected constituency (Adams, 1998). Research completed by Sinclair (1995) concludes that public officials acknowledge the importance of accountability, sometimes shaping its requirements to suit a value system that comports to their own personal and professional value systems. In the current analysis, the leadership of the responding special districts have uniformly identified accountability as an important management objective. Because

their independent form insulates these organizations from political control, the conceptualization of accountability may be more important to a special district government than it is to a general purpose government with an established history of direct electoral participation.

5.4 Implications for Public Administrators

Berman and Wang (2000), together and individually, (Berman, 1997; Wang, 2002b) have written extensively about the need for performance measurement systems to guide, assuage and reinforce specific behaviors that advance organizational objectives. Berman (1997), in particular, notes that performance measures are a way of avoiding the mediocrity and cynicism that distract so many government units from their principal missions. The current analysis seems to reinforce and to broaden those findings by reasserting the primacy of communication tools and workplace controls as the institutional variables most influential in shaping the conduct of employees.

This interpretation of prior work should come as no surprise but the concept of behavioral encouragement or reinforcement has not been thought of in terms specific to cultivating participation skills or developing mechanisms for accountability. To the degree that techniques of performance measurement are incorporated into organizational management, it may be appropriate to integrate measures that consider various indicators of accountable behaviors. For executive staff, those indicators may relate to the attitudes they display openly and consistently, expecting staff to emulate. A priority would include

positive attitudes toward open governance and participation, an authentic rather than a contrived or token form, that recognizes its intended purpose is to provoke, distill and advise not just confirm. For staff, indicators may simply relate to the way in which routine activities or functions are executed on behalf of affected constituencies.

Whatever the importance of performance measurement as a means of monitoring employee behaviors, the analysis offers evidence that it is not the process of measurement that is itself the means of encouraging the proper behaviors. To be clear, performance measurement is only the vehicle used to gauge the organizational practices that are the most critical to performance and accountability. The process of establishing those standards is much more cumbersome. To assure that the workplace environment is maintained in a form conducive to both accountable behavior and performance, leadership must be sensitive to general physical conditions, workplace ethics, payroll, advancement opportunity, general fairness, department, and other work centered concerns which together comprise the favorable work setting.

While participation and workplace conditions prove themselves valuable in creating accountable employees, simple legal measures prove less dependable (Cooper, 1998). Mandates may establish minimal thresholds for practice and reporting, but today's leadership cannot protect their organizations behind a battery of legal controls that may only ensnare the culpable by accident rather than by design. Legal devices confer legitimacy but they do not assure it even if the controls are easily abided. All too often, as

Romzek and Dubnick describe, legal controls are layered atop of other controls when outcomes are different than anticipated.

Specific to special districts, it might be worthwhile to emphasize accountability and transparency in public communications with affected constituencies. While the analysis suggests engagement is one among a battery of influences, participation remains among the key variables in the model in advancing organizational commitments to accountability. Further, the literature offers evidence that participation does promote satisfaction in decision making which is itself a beneficial goal of the process. The point to be made here, however, is that the fullness and richness of the public participation process as recited in the literature may not always be necessary, hence the purpose of market, administrative and professional controls. Open and continued *communication*, on the other hand, is probably a minimal requirement of transparency. Absent regular, balanced communication every special district may be exposed to claims that the information it distributes is either selective, self-serving or both. These charges, even when baseless, inevitably generate defensiveness, potentially causing the special district to withdraw even further from minimal engagement. If accountability is about the management of expectations, then any failure to act affirmatively always invites scrutiny premised on information ostensibly withheld because it was unfavorable or damaging.

Linking management practices to public participation, it then seems prudent to reward staff and leaders that are open about the organization's activities. A setting in which information is available and freely flowing may do much to create the favorable workplace environment in which accountability, as well as employee performance, are enhanced.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

Any of the key variables in the model offer the prospect for richer research and perspective. If the workplace environment is so important in establishing a context for accountable behaviors, then it makes sense to delve in greater detail into those elements of the environment that can be isolated, controlled or redirected. As described, existing research touches various aspects about the workplace environment but not in a way that illuminates the connection to accountability. Similarly, the current model offers the prospect that special district governments, politically dominant in their respective settings, will demonstrate a greater organizational commitment to accountability. Again, it is worth understanding how this political positioning has occurred, if it occurs in conjunction with some extraordinary oversight or regulatory role, or if is dependent upon some special technical expertise peculiar to a franchise, resource or provisioning process. We still know very little about which types of government units are the most accountable. While there are indications that special districts may not confirm to normative concepts of accountability, it is not clear that general purpose governments, when pressed on some broad level, will yield behaviors that are more supportive of our democratic ethos. A

research effort targeted to chief executive officers in both special purpose and general purpose governments that inquiries about comparable practices would offer insight into electoral and non-electoral schemes that would validate apparent claims about their respective commitments to the litany of behaviors associated with accountability.

Program outcomes are among the principal reasons cited for increased public participation but they are also a justification for establishing an accountability regime. Although not a concern of this analysis, an examination that probes the satisfaction of program outcomes in terms of their dependence or linkage to accountability systems would offer valuable insight into the ways organizations manage their activities when facing different accountability devices. At this point, we simply do not know whether program performance is affected or not by the presence of accountable behaviors.

Conversations with representatives from a few of the governments responding to the survey instrument indicate a crisis in leadership or programs may be an instrumental control variable that is worth exploring. Although some aspects of institutional memory would seem to be implied by the age of the organization -- which most people reported -- a more focused effort exploring potential events that redirected or reshaped perceptions about the need for accountability could prove valuable to administrators.

5.6 Limitations of the Current Study

In this analysis public participation is conceived in the broadest procedural or terms possible. The emphasis is on the *frequency* and *intensity* of interaction. Given many widely dissimilar efforts to measure the effectiveness of various participation processes in previous case studies, there may simply be other aspects of participation required to capture its full process value. Because participation has yet to be explored in special districts, the more pertinent issue at this level is whether these governments provide an environment in which participation, however it is defined, can be realized.

In this study, the unit of analysis is the organization itself. The research effort is dependent upon the responses of chief administrative officers at the identified special district governments as representatives of those bodies. Controls have been imposed to assure that it is this administrative officer who speaks for the special district government in question and almost eighty-eight percent of the respondents identified themselves as chief executives or the most senior staff. Still, it can never be confirmed that the views reported are those of that officer rather than a designated staff person. The bigger challenge, at the organizational level, is confirming that the reported perceptions accurately gauge the sentiments among all key staff. Because the analysis is an exploration of administrative viewpoints, the replies would seem to reflect the apparent environment in which the opinions are offered.

It may have been appropriate to solicit more detailed demographic data about the specific respondents even though the organization was the subject of analysis. Staff with a longer period of employment history may have answered certain questions differently, assuming varied institutional knowledge. Although the paper does not discuss operating history, for example, the survey instrument did query about the age of each organization which would stand for its maturity and its evolved institutional memory. In a brief exploratory analysis, preparatory to the models documented, age indicated no association with any other variables.

The literature suggests definitional issues in the population of special districts that may result in a sampling error. Among the group of 35,000 governments, those without staff or financial resources seem unlikely to contribute to an understanding of these governments as vehicles for governance. The purposeful focus of this research on those districts that comprise about ninety per cent of special district finances would seem to address that limitation. Further, among those remaining there is representation from a wide variety of industries and specializations that might mitigate sampling error. As shown in a discussion of the sampling frame, there was no obvious bias based on function or size even though the analysis focuses on this seemingly small group of special district governments.

The conceptualizations involving accountability and its subsystems may be another limitation. The analysis treats the many subsystems as the equivalent of dimensions, and the research is entirely dependent upon the work of Romzek and Dubnick (1987) to give these dimensions form. Together, these dimensions imply that greater or lesser accountability is defined by these varied aspects in their totality. In the most democratic schemes of accountability where all dimensions of accountability integrate with public participation, this is a defensible position that extends the reasoning already posited in the literature. Still, the intended measurement of accountability may be an invalid construction.

Finally, of course, it is virtually impossible to identify the full range of organizational and environmental influences that impact accountability. In an attempt to generalize to this type of government, it seems inevitable that there are material differences deeply embedded in the state and local legislation that have created these bodies. While it is likely that these differences were not fully addressed in the survey instrument, the effort attempts to capture the nuances of varied operating history, legislative form, and legal constraints that vary from state to state. As noted in Chapter 2, there are marked differences in the numbers of these governments across states that hint at the distinctions in needs, policies and structure that will influence their response to accountability and certain required controls.

**APPENDIX A: COMPARISONS BETWEEN SPECIAL PURPOSE AND
GENERAL PURPOSE GOVERNMENTS**

Table A.1: Features Distinguishing Special Districts from General Purpose Governments, Focusing on Their General Powers

General Powers	
General Purpose Governments	Special Purpose Governments
Relatively broad and fluid	
Geographically specific	May be geographically specific but more likely to be service specific
Powers most likely to originate with State	Powers defined by enabling legislation but may not be discrete
Citizen centered	Customer centered
Obvious separation of powers between executive and legislative functions	Board involvement (legislative) but management vested in administrative authority (executive)
Visible dynamic between legislative and administrative functions on range of issues	Activities highly techno centered with board providing guidance primarily on policy
Broad taxing powers	Specific taxing and revenue powers
Broad revenue generating capabilities	
Substantial capacity to act as a principal in a broad range of legal matters	Legal capacity to act likely to be specific
Unspecified life	Statutory life may be of limited duration
Broad objectives but no specific mission	Stipulated objectives and presumably specified mission

Table A.2: Features Distinguishing Special Districts from General Purpose Governments, Focusing on Their Decision Making Processes

Decision Making	
General Purpose Governments	Special Purpose Governments
<p>Electoral centered</p> <p>May employ referenda</p> <p>Directly responsive to political actors broadly elected</p> <p>Representative based on broad constituency demands</p> <p>Referenda may be initiated by citizen actions</p> <p>Purposefully inclusive</p> <p>All citizens able to participate</p> <p>Characterized by one man/one vote</p> <p>Wide range of issues debated in public forums</p> <p>A specific type of public participation not typically mandated</p>	<p>Technology centered</p> <p>Membership to board often based on staggered terms to avoid political influences. Board members are usually appointed, rather than elected</p> <p>Board members may come from specified interest groups or specified constituencies</p> <p>Likely to be exclusionary</p> <p>Balloting on issues may be based on proportionate to ownership of property</p> <p>Agenda tends to be narrowly construed</p> <p>In some cases, public participation of a certain type is legislated</p>

Table A.3: Features Distinguishing Special Districts from General Purpose Governments, Focusing on the Nature of Their Public Services

Public Services	
General Purpose Governments	Special Purpose Governments
Broadly distributed	Distributed or provided to a specific constituency
All citizens have entitlements or experience distributional effects	
Based on widest possible concept of public interest	
Extensive involvement in activities concerned with general health safety and welfare	
Keyed to vague quality of life considerations	Keyed to specific considerations about efficiency and effectiveness

Table A.4: Features Distinguishing Special Districts from General Purpose Governments, Focusing on Their Orientation toward the Public Interest

Public Interest	
General Purpose Governments	Special Purpose Governments
May vary depending upon issues	Relatively narrow based upon mission
Multi-dimensional constituencies but geographically defined	Issues may be multi dimensional but constituencies are small and the mission is defined
Governmental responsibilities extend to all citizens	Responsibilities focus on a specific constituency
Citizen one with the jurisdiction	Metaphorically, citizens are customers
Legal standing is broad	Legal standing is based on "private acts"

Table A.5: Features Distinguishing Special Districts from General Purpose Governments, Focusing on Their Range of Fiscal Powers

Fiscal Powers	
General Purpose Governments	Special Purpose Governments
Relatively broad financial power and spending authority	Focus primarily on enterprise activities
Varied financial resources available	Broad financial tools available but resources are relatively limited
Not restricted to enterprise or similarly oriented activities	
GO debt may require referenda	No GO debt
Subject to legislative and executive discussions and debate	Insular budgetary authority
Accounting principles have only recently introduced concept of "useful life" for major assets	Accounting practices similar to private industry
Subject to extensive public disclosure	Public disclosure not systematically employed

APPENDIX B: HISTOGRAMS ASSOCIATED WITH KEY VARIABLES ANALYZED

Figure 4.1: Histograms Associated with Key Variables Analyzed

Figure 4.1A: STABILITY

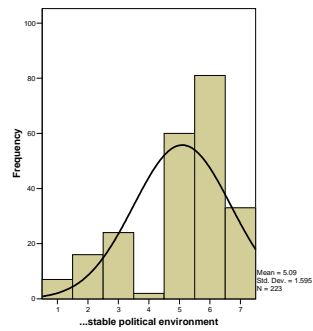


Figure 4.1B: REGDOM

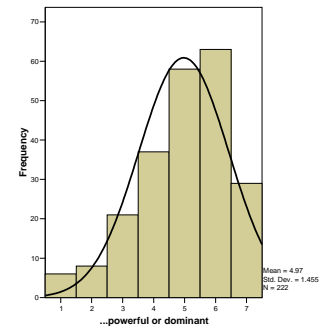


Figure 4.1C: LEGUNIQ

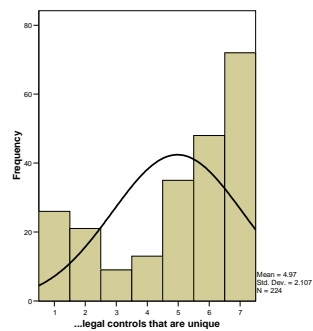


Figure 4.1D: SERVAREA

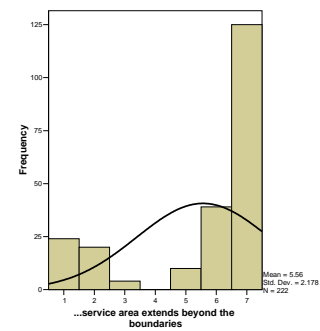


Figure 4.1E: REGBOD

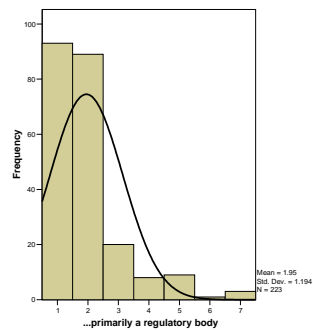


Figure 4.1F: REV TAX

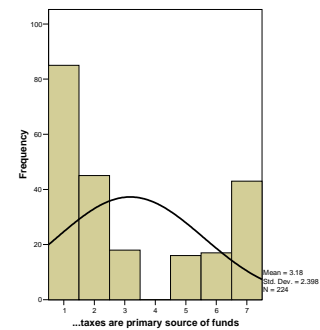


Figure 4.1G: SPECLEG

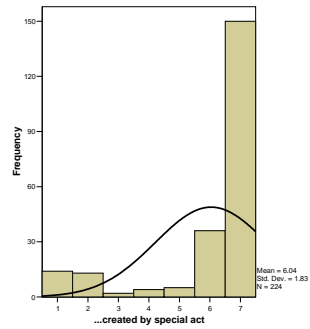


Figure 4.1H: ELECBOB

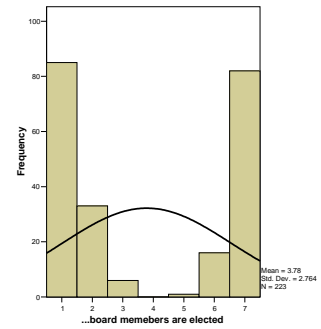


Figure 4.1I: WRKENV

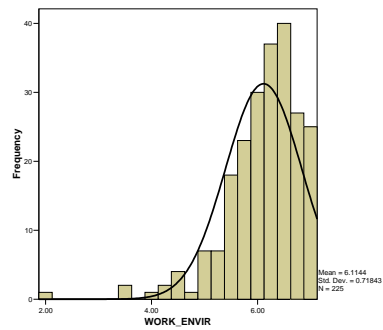


Figure 4.1J: PUBPART

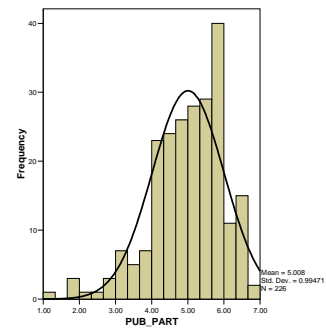


Figure 4.1K: ORGACT

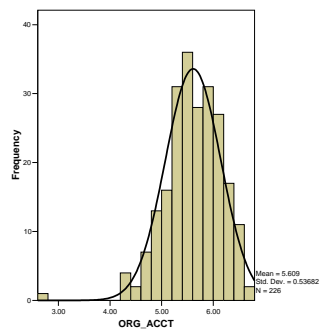
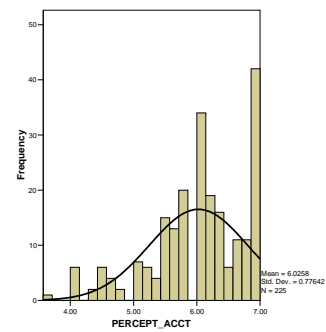


Figure 4.1L: ACTPRCPT



APPENDIX C: SURVEY



University of Central Florida
College of Health and Public Affairs

Department of Public Administration
Orlando, Florida

**A survey about best management and
organizational practices and
their relationship to public participation**

April, 2004



SECTION 1: Please indicate the extent to which you *disagree* or *agree* with all the statements below as they relate to your organization according to this scale:

<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree Somewhat</u>	<u>Don't Know, Can't Say</u>	<u>Agree Somewhat</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Not Applicable</u>
(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)

To help you, this scale is repeated at the top of every page.

Please tell us about the management and administrative practices of your organization.

	(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	Not Applicable
11 Our organization has a mission statement.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
12 Staff performance evaluations occur regularly and several times a year.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
13 The organization has an administrative manual that describes all routine procedures.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
14 The organization uses the most current information technology.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
15 Our activities are described in a comprehensive annual report.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
16 The organization has a clear chain of command.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
17 We complete an independent financial audit annually.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
18 Our mission statement offers a credible and useful perspective on our work and programs.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
19 The organization maintains a detailed job description for each staff position.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-10 For the most part, our job tasks or activities are a matter of simple routine or procedure.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)

PLEASE CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Don't Know, Can't Say	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)



Please tell us about the public and political setting in which your organization functions.

	(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	Not Applicable
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-11 Complex or controversial policy matters are always discussed openly during regular board meetings.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-12 All routine organizational or administrative matters are discussed openly during regular board meetings.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-13 We operate in a stable political environment.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-14 It is our practice to seek out the opinions of related or nearby governments.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-15 It is our practice to keep nearby or related governments informed of our plans or activities.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-16 Many people tend to compete or to seek our board seats.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-17 Our board typically supports proposals advanced by staff.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-18 Nearby or related governments have trust in our actions or programs.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-19 Nearby or related governments see us as powerful or dominant in setting policy.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-20 This organization is more likely to encourage citizen participation than other governments in this region.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)

Please tell us about the relationship between your organization and its constituents or clients.

	(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	Not Applicable
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-21 We have been able to adapt both our services and pricing to the demands of our customers.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-22 It is our practice to anticipate the needs of users or constituents in advance of their demands.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-23 Any service problems, deficiencies, or losses are promptly corrected.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-24 We provide information on alternative service providers, where they are available.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-25 The organization keeps its service costs and prices comparable to those of competitors or similar organizations.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-26 We achieve our financial goals while maintaining the quality of our services.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)

PLEASE CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Don't Know, Can't Say	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)



Please tell us how this organization sets its standards for performance.

	(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	Not Applicable
127 Most of our professional staff exceed the qualifications stipulated for their jobs.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
128 Our work is subject to external inspections or peer review processes.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
129 We encourage staff to participate in continuing education.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
130 Staff are subject to performance measurement.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
131 The standards or practices of this organization are subject to the rules of a professional association or regulatory body.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
132 Key staff are encouraged to contribute to publications.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
133 The organization and staff maintain licensures and/or certifications at least comparable to those of similar organizations	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
134 We have a recognized industry or institutional standard for almost every service we provide.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)

Please tell us about your organization and its program successes.

	(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	Not Applicable
135 We measure the outcomes of our programs.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
136 We met our financial goals in the most recent year.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
137 We met our program goals in the most recent year.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
138 We have received several awards of merit or excellence for our practices or programs.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
139 This organization is effective.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
140 We have introduced and promoted many new programs, products, services or upgrades over the last five years.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
141 Our programs are innovative.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
142 Many staff serve in leadership positions in related industry associations or professional groups.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
143 Our constituents or clients appreciate our services and accomplishments.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)

PLEASE CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Don't Know, Can't Say	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)



Please tell us about the workplace environment at your organization.

	(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	Not Applicable
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
144 Our wages and salaries are among the highest in this region for government service.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
145 Staff are encouraged to express their opinions to board members.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
146 Our staff is highly committed to their work.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
147 Overall, this is considered an excellent place to work.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)

Please tell us about the ways in which your organization uses or applies public participation.

	(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	Not Applicable
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
148 We encourage our clients or constituents to suggest new ideas for programs or services.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
149 We ask our constituents to suggest what kind of staffing or skills are needed to implement these new programs.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
150 We ask our constituents to tell us what the results of our programs should be.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
151 Every proposed, new, or continuing program uses public participation in some way.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
152 As a result of our citizen participation activities, there have been several new programs initiated in the last two years.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
153 As a result of citizen participation activities, there have been changes in the way our organization budgets, staffs, or manages its programs.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
154 Citizen participation activities are used to evaluate and/or critique our existing programs.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
155 Public participation activities influence our proposed, new, and continuing programs equally.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
156 The organization distributes minutes of its citizen participation proceedings.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
157 The organization's performance evaluation criteria consider the importance of citizen participation.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
158 We work hard to assure that citizen input is reflected in the programs we create, plan and manage.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)

PLEASE CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Don't Know, Can't Say	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)



Please tell us how public participation is managed by your organization.

	(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	Not Applicable
1-59 Staff typically initiate citizen participation activities.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-60 Citizen participation activities occur in a variety of venues and settings.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-61 Citizen participation activities occur at widely varying times.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-62 Citizen participation activities are supported by wide distribution of information.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-63 Informal citizen contact with or by staff is encouraged.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-64 We maintain a web site that allows direct communication.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-65 Staff from many different levels have a role in citizen participation activities.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-66 Citizen participation involves the use of many vehicles, including committees, individual meetings, and advisory boards.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-67 Our citizen participation activities rarely involve the use of large public meetings.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-68 Citizen participation activities occur regularly and frequently.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-69 Citizen participation activities are emphasized more today than they were two years ago.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-70 Our citizen participation activities generate public trust.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-71 Our citizen participation activities can be described as a candid exchange of ideas.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-72 The staff responsible for public participation have been involved in such activities for many years.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-73 The persons responsible for participation are comprised of senior staff or they report directly to senior management.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-74 Our participation activities can be described as polite or civil.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-75 We set clear goals for our participation activities.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-76 Our citizen participation activities are open to all persons.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-77 Even when the results of citizen participation are different than expected, it is our practice to schedule the remaining events as they were originally planned.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-78 We aggressively seek participants for our citizen input.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)

PLEASE CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Don't Know, Can't Say	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)



Please share your views about the importance of accountability.

	(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	Not Applicable
179 By being accountable, the public takes a more favorable view of this organization.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(NA)
180 By being accountable, the actual quality of our work is improved.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(NA)
181 By being accountable, our programs are implemented more efficiently.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(NA)
182 A formal accountability system creates a positive work environment for the staff.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(NA)
183 Accountability is important to maintaining public trust.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(NA)
184 Our system of accountability is important to maintaining our financial and political independence.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(NA)
185 All the various rules and regulations that govern our organization's accountability or conduct are easy to follow.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(NA)

Please tell us about the laws, ordinances, or regulations that govern your specific organization.

	(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	Not Applicable
186 Meetings involving board members are generally noticed.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(NA)
187 This organization is set to expire as of a certain future date.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(NA)
188 Annual audits are required.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(NA)
189 Audits must be reviewed by another agency or body.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(NA)
190 Other reports must be completed or filed annually.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(NA)
191 Specific behavioral or ethics standards are described in law.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(NA)
192 All board members must file ethics or financial reports with an outside agency at least annually.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(NA)
193 This organization faces strict sunshine and open record laws.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(NA)
194 This organization faces other controls not described above.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(NA)
195 This organization is subject to legal controls that are <i>unique to this specific body</i> .	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(NA)

PLEASE CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Don't Know, Can't Say	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)



Please tell us about the operating structure shaping this organization's activities.

	(SD)	(D)	(DS)	(DK)	(AS)	(A)	(SA)	Not Applicable
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-96 Its service area extends beyond the boundaries of a single county or municipality.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-97 This organization views itself primarily as a regulatory body.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-98 Revenues from the sale of services or from the collection of tolls or fees are its <i>primary source</i> of funds.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-99 This organization is empowered to <i>levy assessments or taxes</i> free or independent of other bodies or referendum.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-100 Assessments, dedicated millages, or other taxes are this organization's <i>primary source</i> of funds.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-101 This organization was created by adoption of a <i>special act</i> of the state legislature or other body.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)
1-102 Most board members are elected.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(N/A)

PLEASE CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE.

SECTION 2: We would like to know a little more about your organization's size, history and its industry specialization.



- 21 During fiscal year 2002- 2003, approximately how many people (*NOT fulltime equivalents*) were actually employed by this specific organization?

- 22 During fiscal year 2002-2003, what was the approximate amount of debt outstanding carried by this specific organization?

- 23 During fiscal year 2002-2003, what was the approximate annual operating budget of this specific organization?

- 24 What would you say is the industry or technical emphasis for this organization (for example: transportation, healthcare, conservation, energy provision, sewer/water, water service only, sewer only, fire, housing, flood control, community development, social services, other as appropriate)? Please describe what you do.

- 25 In approximately what year was this organization created?

- 26 Exclusive of the executive director, how many persons comprise the board of directors?

- 27 How many board seats represent specific interest groups or industries?

- 28 How many board seats are appointed by the governor or the chief elected official of a related local government?

PLEASE CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE.



SECTION 3: Please share your thoughts to the questions below.

31 What do you regard as the most important aspect(s) of accountability?

32 As you reflect on this questionnaire, can you or your organization do more to enhance your accountability? What steps might you take?

33 Can you share an example that may have changed your organization's attitudes and practices toward accountable behavior? (Please, consider this question optional.)

PLEASE CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE.

SECTION 4: Please tell
us about yourself.



41 Your name and phone number:

42 Your position within this organization:

SECTION 5: Survey results
will be made available at your request.

YES, I'd like to receive a copy of the *summarized* survey results! It should be e-mailed to the person and address designated below. If you prefer a printed copy via regular mail, please specify.

**THANK YOU! PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED SURVEY
FORM IN THE ENCLOSED, POSTAGE FREE ENVELOPE. IF
IT IS MORE CONVENIENT, YOU MAY SEND THE FORM VIA
TOLL FREE FAX INSTEAD. THE NUMBER IS 1.800.867.3348.**

APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



Office of Research

April 2, 2004

Owen Beitsch
518 South Magnolia Avenue
Orlando, FL 32801

Dear Mr. Beitsch:

With reference to your protocol entitled, "Survey of the Administrative and Public Participation Practices used among Authorities, Special Purpose Governments, and Special District Governments throughout the United States. The Referenced Survey Supports Preparation of the Investigator's Dissertation Research," I am enclosing for your records the approved, executed document of the UCFIRB Form you had submitted to our office.

Please be advised that this approval is given for one year. Should there be any addendums or administrative changes to the already approved protocol, they must also be submitted to the Board. Changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received. Adverse events should be reported to the IRB as they occur. Further, should there be a need to extend this protocol, a renewal form must be submitted for approval at least one month prior to the anniversary date of the most recent approval and is the responsibility of the investigator (UCF).

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 823-2901.

Please accept our best wishes for the success of your endeavors.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Grayson".

Chris Grayson
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Copies: Evan Berman, Ph.D.
IRB File

12443 Research Parkway • Suite 207 • Orlando, FL 32826-3252 • 407-823-3778 • Fax 407-823-3299

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

IRB Committee Approval Form

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S): Owen Beitsch

PROJECT TITLE: Survey of the Administrative and Public Participation Practices used among Authorities, Special Purpose Governments, and Special District Governments throughout the United States. The Referenced Survey Supports Preparation of the Investigator's Dissertation Research.

Committee Members:

☐ Contingent Approval
Dated: _____

☐ Final Approval
Dated: _____

Dr. Theodore Angelopoulos: _____
Ms. Sandra Browdy: _____
Dr. Jacqui Byers: _____
Dr. Ratna Chakrabarti: _____
Dr. Karen Dennis: _____
Dr. Barbara Fritzsche: _____
Dr. Robert Kennedy: _____
Dr. Gene Lee: _____
Ms. Gail McKinney: _____
Dr. Debra Reinhart: _____
Dr. Valerie Sims: _____

☒ Expedited
Dated: 1 APR 2004

☐ Exempt
Dated: _____

Chair, IRB
Signed: [Signature]
Dr. Sophia Dziegielewski

NOTES FROM IRB CHAIR (IF APPLICABLE): _____

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