Title
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Publication Date
2011

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Keeping Cuts Away from Kids? Deregulation in a Time of Ongoing Budget Cutbacks

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor in Philosophy

in

Education

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Cynthia Coburn, chair
Professor Bruce Fuller
Professor Todd LaPorte

Fall 2011

Abstract

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Deregulation advocates have long argued that local educational leaders can make better resource decisions than state and federal policymakers. But viewed from the central state, without regulatory requirements locals will spend too little on underserved students and specific educational reforms. Lacking direct authority over local districts, the California Legislature has frequently used mandates and sanctions, tied to targeted "categorical aid" grant programs, to encourage attentiveness to state reform aims. Categorical aid programs' rules, layered on over time, have produced a range of bureaucratic tasks which have become part of the taken-for-granted fabric of work in the central office, but remain loosely connected to instructional aspects of districts' work. At the same time, tacit cultural conceptions of schooling have come to overlap with some of the educational objectives funded through categorical resources, from providing supplementary dollars for particular kinds of students to reducing class size. Deregulation proponents argue that districts will cut administrative costs, reconsider local fiscal priorities, and deploy resources in ways that boost students' achievement. But little is known about how organizational routines, neoinstitutional conceptions of the district's work, and local political pressures shape how district organizations implement large-scale deregulation. What, then, is the relationship between the institutionalized practices used to manage categorical aid resources inside districts and deregulation?

Conventional politics of education explanations suggest that decentralization expands locally powerful constituents' influence and control over how deregulated resources are used. But neoinstitutional theorists, on the other hand, suggest that pressures from the institutional and technical environment of schooling will shape how deregulation unfolds. Some categorical aid programs, supported by a web of work practices, norms, and cultural expectations, will remain firmly in place while others that are less deeply embedded will be redeployed to address salient institutional and technical pressures.

This study uses a qualitative, comparative case study to investigate how districts responded to 2009 legislation deregulating about 40 state categorical aid programs, commonly referred to as Tier 3 categorical flexibility. At face value, this reform freed up six percent of annual revenues. But it was enacted in the context of mid-year budget cuts and ongoing fiscal austerity. I analyze Tier 3 categorical flexibility implementation in

two California districts to investigate the processes used to make decisions about Tier 3 categorical resource reallocation. I examine how these processes connected to tacit conceptions of schooling. I also examine the role of power and constituencies in how discretionary resources came to be distributed. Data include: observations of district budgeting routines; interviews with central office administrators, board members, and stakeholders; and a review of budget materials.

The two study districts reallocated some, but not all, Tier 3 categorical resources. I found that political and cultural pressures influenced how board members and district administrators engaged in resource decision making, and these pressures were constrained and enabled by the formal structure of district positions, relational trust, and the distribution of expertise in district management and operations. These processes did not mirror the rationalized responses of deregulation's theory of action. In particular, I found that districts' resource decision making was shaped by the fiduciary role of the elected school board, a role that has generally been overlooked in research on education policy implementation.

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Acknowledgements

Many individuals helped make this dissertation a reality, and I thank the University of California at Berkeley for the generous financial support that made this project possible.

I am fortunate to have three exceptional committee members in Cynthia Coburn, Bruce Fuller, and Todd LaPorte. Cynthia Coburn has supported my academic growth in countless ways, and I cannot thank her enough for demanding a level of rigor and that greatly strengthened this study. Bruce Fuller inspired this project, which branched off from a summer filled with stimulating conversations in the service of writing a proposal to persuade foundations to support what became the Deregulating School Aid in California project. His insights and questions pushed me to think more deeply about how this study matters for policymakers, not just education researchers. Todd LaPorte pushed me to reflect on my findings through the lens of what people's life is like as a result of the challenging and often brutal environment in which school districts and other public organizations operate today.

Thank you also to colleagues and friends Willow Mata, Jessica Rigby, Sarah Woulfin, and Erica Turner for their support throughout my dissertation fieldwork and writing. Members of the Policy Implementation Research Group were also instrumental to the genesis and framing of this work.

My father, Peter Spain, showed me, long ago, what it meant to write a dissertation. He and the entire Spain clan have constantly encouraged me and taken interest in my work, even as I struggled to describe what exactly my graduate studies were about.

This dissertation is dedicated to Fabrizio Cariani, who was instrumental in convincing me to pursue a doctoral degree, and whose incredible support, patience, and cooking throughout my graduate studies helped herd this project to completion.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Proponents of deregulation argue that greater efficiency will flow from decentralizing who makes decisions about how to use resources. In the case of public education, deregulation advocates have long argued that local school leaders are better equipped to make appropriate resource decisions than state and federal policymakers (Chubb and Moe 1990; Friedman 1968; Ouchi 2003, 2009). Yet policymakers do not necessarily trust school and district leaders to pay attention to underserved student populations or specific educational reforms favored by the central state. Over the past several decades, educational policymakers have often created and regulated narrowly targeted funding streams (categorical aid programs) to this end, applying spending restrictions and compliance requirements in order to ensure that monies reach their intended targets.

California's complex and fragmented school finance system, which relies heavily on categorical programs, is often criticized for overreaching in its efforts to centralize and regulate public education. As of the early 2000s, the state's categorical programs numbered about 120, in addition to federal categorical programs (Legislative Analyst's Office 2003). At the district level, managing and monitoring each of these programs for compliance creates a set of incentives and administrative tasks at best loosely linked to teaching and learning (Hannaway 1985). In addition, the governing rules attached to these numerous funding streams, layered on over time, have created a complex array of enduring organizational practices, supported by political constituencies and, in some cases, tacit notions about schooling and the district's work. How, then, do the institutionalized practices used to manage categorical aid resources inside districts matter for deregulation efforts?

I examine how the California Legislature's move to deregulate $4.5 billion in categorical aid resources played out in two contrasting school districts. Three working theories of action flow from recent decades of debate and experimentation with fiscal deregulation in K-12 education. I will situate these policy theories in organizational theory below. First, districts will use expanded discretion over resources to rationally prioritize and address student learning needs. Second, districts will use expanded discretion to shift resources toward the specific technical demands and accountability logic of improving test scores. Third, districts will use expanded discretion to maintain a variety of traditional programs and services.

Overview of Tier 3 categorical flexibility

California's spending on K-12 education dropped by one-fifth between the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years (from $38 billion to $30 billion). Districts continued to face declining revenues as initial hopes for a rapid economic recovery have faded. Against this backdrop, in February 2009, the legislature passed SBX3 4, a deregulation initiative commonly known as Tier 3 categorical flexibility for the discretion it grants to local districts over a majority of the state's categorical aid programs. This legislation

suspended mandates governing almost 40 of the state's categorical aid programs, decentralizing discretion over how to use these funding streams to districts. Statewide, deregulated Tier 3 categorical dollars accounted for 38 percent of categorical aid revenue and six percent in total annual revenue for districts (Legislative Analyst's Office 2010). As summarized in a California Department of Education (2009) memo, under Tier 3 categorical flexibility,

> [A district] may choose to use funds from one or more of the 39[1] items in a manner completely different from how the funds could be used in years prior to 2008-09. Conversely, [a district] may choose to use the funds to continue to operate a program in the same manner as in the past. Both of these scenarios reflect a local decision as allowed by the flexibility provisions; any restrictions imposed on the funds from these 39 items are therefore local restrictions.

Tier 3 categorical flexibility included some highly visible programs, such as art and music instruction, adult education, gifted and talented programs, and teacher professional development, as well as many of smaller programs aimed at diverse student populations and educational objectives.

Tier 3 categorical flexibility does not unravel the state's complex categorical aid system nearly to the extent advocated by some researchers and policy analysts (Governor's Committee on Education Excellence 2007; Legislative Analyst's Office 2003; Loeb, Bryk, and Hanushek 2007; Timar 2007). Policy analysts argue that granting districts discretion over Tier 3 categorical resources, as a solution to the California's complex categorical aid system, fails to deal with a fundamental disjuncture between the state's multiple and sometimes outdated funding formulae, what we know about the costs of educating students with different learning needs, and efforts to concentrate resources on reforms to core teaching and learning activities (Legislative Analyst's Office 2010, 2011; Weston 2011). On the other hand, professional associations and Tier 3 categorical program constituencies claimed that deregulation would result in the loss of local attention to underserved student populations. For example,

> Having critical programmatic funds considered part of the local general fund by community members and district staff will send a message that program offerings for poor children/students and English language learners, for example, are not a priority for the district. (Association of California School Administrators 2009)

This chapter is organized as follows. I first sketch how traditions of local control over public education in the United States have shaped how schools are funded, and

[1] ABX4 2 removed one program from Tier 3 that was allowed to sunset, making for a total of 38 programs. Materials generally cite the 39 programs from the original Tier 3 categorical flexibility legislation, although some of these programs actually flowed to county offices of education and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, for example, rather than to districts.

discuss two dominant tendencies in education resource policies in recent decades. Then I describe the California context and Tier 3 categorical flexibility legislation in greater detail. Finally, I review recent research on the early implementation of this policy, making the case that questions critical to understanding the implementation of deregulation remain unanswered so far.

Funding public schools

Jonathan Kozol's (1991) *Savage Inequalities* famously critiqued public school funding mechanisms, pairing per-pupil expenditure data with descriptions of decaying schools. He argues that governing structures, which reflect the historically decentralized funding of the American education system, contribute to the maintenance of these inequalities. Over the past half-century, two resource policy tendencies have emerged: centralization (through school finance lawsuits and the use of categorical aid) decentralization (through efforts to address perceived overstepping of centralized policies, such as school-based management and school-based budgeting).

When California school districts make decisions about their annual budgets, they have traditionally had less discretion to align spending with local priorities than the average school district in the United States. In fact, only six states place greater restrictions on the state funding that goes to districts (Duncombe and Yinger 2007). These constraints are the legacy of two landmark events. First, in the wake of the California Supreme Court's 1971 ruling on Serrano v. Priest, the state began to create a centralized school finance system that attempted to equalize unregulated funding between California districts.[2] Second, the passage of the Proposition 13 ballot initiative in 1978 greatly restricted school districts' ability to raise local property taxes, increasing their reliance on the state for funding. Reflecting these policy changes, districts' local control over resources decreased greatly over the past forty years, falling from about 90 percent in the early 1970s to about 50 percent as of 2005 (Loeb, Grissom, and Strunk 2007). In fact, between 1980 and 2000, the proportion of state educational funding allocated as regulated dollars increased by 165 percent (Timar 2007).

The push for deregulation is premised on the idea that the state cannot make appropriate decisions for the California's over 1,000 local school boards and districts. But though the ideas of deregulation and decentralization have considerable currency among policymakers, there are actually few cases where decision making about resources is actually decentralized. School-based management, the most common form of decentralization in K-12 education, increases school leaders' control over instruction but makes relatively few changes made with regard to site leaders' control over the staffing decisions that represent the bulk of resources in K-12 settings (H. Meyer 2009; Odden 1991). For example a comparative study of school-based budgeting in Chicago, Fort Worth, New York, and Rochester found that site leaders had limited access to truly

[2] Following the introduction of federal categorical aid for K-12 education with the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Act, California created its own categorical programs to provide supplementary funding for bilingual instruction and school improvement, among others. These programs existed prior to the 1971 Serrano I decision, and regulated categorical dollars have always been excluded from Serrano-mandated funding equalization.

discretionary dollars: not more than 20 percent of the budget in any of the case districts (Goertz and Leanna Stiefel 1998). A study of two California districts implementing versions of student need-weighted funding identified many of the same challenges (Chambers et al. 2008). The evidence on decentralization as a tool for enhancing educational productivity remains limited (H. Meyer 2009).

The centralization, or categorical program, approach moves in the opposite direction. It assumes that the legislature and its staffers are more progressive than local districts and can craft policies that supplement the level of resources for certain types of students beyond what local districts would ordinarily provide. Members of the Legislature across the aisle, for example, have long assumed that local school boards primarily use unregulated dollars in collective bargaining with employee unions, instead of prioritizing resources for lower achieving students or standards-based reform efforts (Timar 1994). By tying rules and regulations to funding streams, districts gain an incentive to serve targeted groups of students in more specialized ways than they would otherwise. We know that these programs do have a significant impact on districts and schools, promoting specific organizational structures (J. Meyer, Scott, and Strang 1987) and specialization among teachers and inside the central office (Fuhrman and Elmore 1995; Hannaway 1985). Developed over time, at different levels of government, and directed at special purposes, these targeted funding streams support special interests in ways that have often been poorly integrated with the core curricular and instructional change (Kirst 1995).

But studies of intradistrict resource allocation also raise questions about the success of categorical aid as a funding mechanism for concentrating additional resources on underserved students. In one large, urban school district, funding was almost level across schools even though only some received supplemental federal aid (Condron and Roscigno 2003). This was because the district directed fewer local dollars to schools eligible for categorical state and federal resources. Similarly, based on analysis of fifteen districts in four states, Roza and colleagues concluded that the current patchwork of disjointed federal, state, and local allocation formulae frequently fail to ensure that schools receive supplemental funding to serve higher-need students (2008). While Timar emphasizes the importance of Sacramento as a site of politicking for educational dollars in the California context (1994), local districts ultimately decide how to differentiate the taxpayer's educational investment in different student populations and among competing conceptions of schooling and the school district's work.

Categorical aid in California's school finance system

Categorical aid is one tool that policymakers use to distribute dollars to districts and schools. Categorical aid programs are intended to create specific changes in the behavior of local educational agencies by placing restrictions on the use of funds (Lee, Johnson, and Joyce 2008). The theory underlying this mechanism is that local agencies, left to their own devices, may not pay as much attention to minority populations or the central state's objectives as policymakers would like to see. But the restrictions placed on funds are frequently cited as the source of administrative waste and inefficient resource

use (Governor's Committee on Education Excellence 2007; Legislative Analyst's Office 2003).

Categorical aid programs have flourished within California's school finance system in part due to political reasons (Kirst 1995; Timar 1994, 2007). First, they provide a mechanism for policymakers to make their mark on the state's public education system, by setting up a narrowly targeted funding program for a specific student population or to address a particular educational objective. Second, categorical aid programs are considered outside of districts' revenue limits. This means that categorical aid dollars come above and beyond the state's court-mandated funding equalization. As such, these formulae are better understood in terms of political maneuvering and special interests than the estimated costs associated with higher need students such as poor or English learner children.

Work on the equity of the state's school finance system consistently critiques the allocation patterns that result from this hodgepodge of narrowly targeted funding streams. Scholars, legislators, policy analysts, and practitioners have all called for reform to the state's very complex school finance system (Governor's Committee on Education Excellence 2007; Legislative Analyst's Office 2003; Loeb, Bryk, et al. 2007). In fact, the sheer number of federal and state targeted funding streams that supplement basic funding greatly constrain districts' ability to align budget categories with educational priorities (Chambers et al. 2008; Roza et al. 2008), and threaten the system's political credibility (Governor's Committee on Education Excellence 2007; Loeb, Bryk, et al. 2007).

Tier 3 categorical flexibility, in fact, is the sixth attempt by the legislature to address concerns about the proliferation of categorical aid programs (Fuller et al. 2011). The legislature initiated a "sunset review" of all categorical aid programs in 1979, then allowed districts to coordinate spending among categorical programs in 1981 and again in 1992. In 2000, the legislature approved a pilot program for funding flexibility among 24 state categorical programs. Then, in 2004, it consolidated about 30 targeted funding streams into six thematic block grants statewide, allowing districts to spend broadly on: general instructional improvement, instructional improvement targeting underperforming students, teacher professional development, school safety, school and library improvement, and arts and music instruction. But even after this consolidation, over 60 discrete programs remained on the books.

Tier 3 categorical flexibility

In response to the state's economic crisis and the long-run contraction of the welfare state (Pierson 1998), Tier 3 categorical flexibility expanded districts' discretion over educational dollars in exchange for fewer dollars overall. Although not the first time that policymakers have attempted to reform the state's complex categorical program portfolio, Tier 3 categorical flexibility represents the most significant such attempt at deregulation: it represents six percent of state education funding and incorporates the majority of the state's categorical aid programs (38 of about 60). It included highly visible and salient programs such as adult education, gifted education, teacher credentialing, counseling, and interventions for students at risk of not passing the high

school exit exam. It also included programs, such as deferred maintenance and teacher professional development, which were important to district operations but less visible in terms of how they touched students and classrooms. One part of the policy granted districts the ability to shift carryover funds from prior years into the general fund. This provided one-time budget fixes that were largely used to address the state's 2009 mid-year cuts.

Tier 3 categorical flexibility was widely perceived as a political move, both among state-level actors involved its creation and the district administrators tasked with its implementation. As Weston (2011) notes, the absence of clear policy signals at least partially stems from the fact that it was part of legislative wrangling around the state budget rather than an educational policy per se. The resulting division of categorical programs into three "tiers" did not carefully assess how the state's school finance system supported its professed priorities for K-12 education. Some actors familiar with the policy's development characterized the identification of programs as Tier 3 (rather than as Tier 1 or Tier 2, for which governing spending restrictions remained in place) as the product of their supporters' lack of political clout in Sacramento (Fuller et al. 2011). Political mobilization, for example, appears to explain how Economic Impact Aid grant, which funds services for low-income and English learner students, shifted from Tier 3 to Tier 2 between the Governor's proposal and legislature's enactment of Tier 3 categorical flexibility. One advocacy group dramatically made the case against deregulation as follows:

> The Governor's categorical program flexibility proposal would undo the many years of tireless legislative effort in seeking to provide access to quality educational programs and opportunities that often eluded many of our most vulnerable students. Implementation of the Governor's flexibility proposal would require removal of ALL statutory requirements for each categorical program, including the Economic Impact Aid (EIA). The EIA is the ONLY state funded program targeted to poor students and students who are English learners. Is it the Legislature's intent to eliminate parent involvement, parent advisory councils, and identification of English learners? (Californians Together 2008)

This excerpt highlights ongoing tensions shaping the redefinition of the state's role in providing resources for underserved students and signaling educational priorities in an budgetary environment characterized by ongoing austerity.

In addition to decoupling dollars from educational objectives, Tier 3 categorical flexibility raises issues about its lack of linkages between funding and student population. Districts no longer receive these funding allocations based on their average daily attendance or student need formulae for these 38 programs; instead their annual allocation is 80 percent of funding received in the 2007-08 school year.

The Tier 3 categorical flexibility legislation has at least three consequences for equity and transparency in educational funding. First, districts' funding structure under

the categorical flexibility is not linked to changes in their student population. Second, some of the deregulated Tier 3 categorical programs were competitive, time-limited grants. As currently structured, districts that happened to be awarded these grants in 2007-08 continue to receive funding based on that allocation. Both the Legislative Analyst's Office (2010, 2011) and Public Policy Institute of California (Weston 2011) reports critique Tier 3 categorical flexibility on this basis. Third, high school and higher-poverty districts were harder hit by the 20 percent cut accompanying Tier 3 flexibility (Imazeki 2011) because these types of districts tend to receive proportionally more Tier 3 categorical funding than other types of districts.

Early implementation of the Tier 3 categorical flexibility

Some California districts immediately began repurposing funds from at least some Tier 3 categorical aid programs when the legislation was passed (Fuller et al. 2011). To understand how districts were responding to categorical flexibility, the Legislative Analyst's Office administered a survey to districts in late 2009 and again in 2010 (Legislative Analyst's Office 2010, 2011). Both reports document that districts took advantage of categorical flexibility to shift funding away from Tier 3 programs across a range of the flexible programs and at different levels. According to the more recent report, more than half of districts reported discontinuing or making major changes to nine of the 22 programs asked about. Table 1-1 summarizes the Legislative Analyst's Office's findings about how districts implemented deregulation across these two surveys by program. These statewide patterns, although they describe average Tier 3 categorical resource reallocation as reported by fewer than one-third of the state's total school districts, suggest that many districts are cutting back on, or entirely abandoning, many Tier 3 categorical programs.

Table 1-1. Percentage of districts reporting that they discontinued or changed a Tier 3 categorical program in major ways

	2009-10 funding in millions ($)	2010 (N = 231) (%)	2011 (N = 382) (%)
Targeted Instructional Improvement Grant	855	**53**	**50**
Adult Education	635	48	**57**
Regional Occupational Centers/Programs	385	46	**51**
Schools/Library Improvement Block Grant	370	43	**54**
Supplemental Instruction	336	46	**55**
Instructional Materials	334	38	46
Deferred Maintenance	251	46	**50**
Professional Development Block Grant	218	38	39
School Counseling	167	46	**52**
Beginning Teacher Support and Assistance	90	**59**	**75**
Arts and Music Block Grant	88	30	44
School Safety Block Grant	80	34	43
High School Class Size Reduction	79	28	46
Pupil Retention Block Grant	77	35	42
CAHSEE Supplemental Instruction	58	25	33
California School Age Families Education	46	36	48
Math/English Professional Development	45	33	42
Gifted and Talented Education	44	13	21
Community Day Schools	42	18	23
Community Based English Tutoring	40	12	16
Intern Program/Alternative Certification	26	24	42
Peer Assistance and Review	24	10	30
Principal Training	4	4	26

Source: Legislative Analyst's Office 2010; 2011.
Note: Bold is used to mark where at least half of respondents reported discontinuing or making major changes.

But these data fail to shine a light on how districts use deregulated Tier 3 categorical resources. In fact, while the Legislative Analyst Office reports (2010, 2011) suggest that the reallocation of Tier 3 categorical resources is supporting core instructional programs, the surveys did not actually collect the data needed to demonstrate this outcome. Carefully evaluating the extent to which this assumption is borne out is, unfortunately, far from straightforward. The California Department of Education discontinued collecting detailed data on Tier 3 categorical program spending after the policy's enactment. As a result, existing statewide data can, at best, indicate shifts in spending on the broad categories of certificated personnel, classified personnel, and instructional materials districtwide (Imazeki 2011).

To begin to understand how California districts responded to deregulation and what they did with reallocated resources, Fuller and colleagues (2011) take an in-depth, case-based approach, investigating implementation by interviewing a variety of district stakeholders in ten unified districts. The districts enacted small to severe reductions across a range of Tier 3 categorical programs, and dominant issues in implementation included minimizing layoffs and maintaining lower class sizes for students. Usefully, the

study conceptualizes prior contextual conditions and factors that actively shaped Tier 3 resource decisions as distinct sets of influences on implementation, attempting to pull apart dimensions that earlier deregulation studies tended to conflate (Hood et al. 1982; Millsap et al. 1992; Schenck and Beckstrom 1993).

But if we understand implementation as sets of activities carried out by different district subunits, with different priorities, we need to look at the processes through which key factors influence outcomes. Gaining more nuanced understanding of these interactions is critical given earlier findings that deregulation often led to the discovery that "regulatory barriers" were often district interpretations of law or tradition, rather than legal requirements (Fuhrman and Elmore 1995). We might expect similar responses to Tier 3 categorical flexibility.

How this case informs organizational theory

This study seeks to deepen lessons learned from a past generation of deregulation efforts in education by offering a more contingent explanation of how and why districts implement deregulation in varied ways. That is, the California Tier 3 categorical flexibility case informs differing theoretical frames, articulated by academics and policymakers, to predict how local actors will respond to expanded discretion over resources. Contemporary education policy implementation research takes variation and complexity as its starting point, and sees implementation as "the product of the interaction among particular policies, people, and places" (Honig 2006b). In line with this strand of research, I draw on organizational theory to analyze how districts as organizations respond to deregulation in the context of budgetary strain for the foreseeable future.

Learning when and under what conditions district administrators act to reproduce existing spending patterns—or not—can help us understand the situated nature of resource allocation in districts. This study examines how local school districts make resource decisions, tied to specific programs and services, as their revenues shrink. By examining budgeting following categorical flexibility, this study empirically examines the extent to which prior spending patterns remain persuasive for those who manage the implementation of policies and programs on the ground.

Viewed theoretically, there are alternative narratives as to how local school districts will respond to this case of expanded discretion over resources. Some argue that suspending heavy-handed legal and regulatory requirements frees up local district and school-site leaders to rationally prioritize local needs, then reallocate resources in ways that focus on student learning (Chubb and Moe 1990; Friedman 1968; Ouchi 2003, 2009). Under the current accountability paradigm, we might expect the accountability system's performance benchmarks and threatened sanctions to further encourage a specific focus on student learning in terms of reading and mathematics test scores.

Alternatively, a second narrative suggests that administrative work routines and long-standing practices, along with cultural-cognitive conceptions of the district's work and obligations to students, will limit the degree to which deregulated resources will be

redeployed. Instead, through cultural processes that reproduce highly institutionalized practices, we will see the continued routing of deregulated resources toward maintaining institutions and the status quo (J. W. Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powell 1983) or, potentially, in ways that adapt to the evolving institutional and technical environment of schooling (Rowan 2006; Coburn 2005b).

Finally, a conventional politics perspective suggests that with the central state's rules removed, locally powerful constituencies have greater access to, and influence over, school district decision making about how to distribute resources and budget cuts (Peterson 1974; Scribner and Layton 1995). We might expect, under this theory of action, that that groups with little political influence will lose access to deregulated resources.

After reviewing the literature on intradistrict resource allocation and districts in education policy implementation, Chapter 2 develops a theoretical argument for studying how districts as organizations respond to deregulation. I draw from literatures on "old"[3] and neoinstitutional approaches to organizational research, the politics of school district responsiveness to constituency preferences, and organizational work routines to develop the conceptual framework I use in this study. Chapter 3 describes the study design and methodology employed in this comparative case study. It also introduces the two study districts, describing the superintendents, boards, and key contextual conditions to help situate findings drawn from these cases.

The next three chapters present findings drawn from analysis of the processes and micro-interactions that comprised the two districts' implementation of Tier 3 categorical flexibility. Chapter 4 analyzes how the formal structure of positions in districts and informal cooptation influenced implementation. I situate Tier 3 categorical flexibility implementation as one component of district resource decision making. I find that board members did not necessarily have the same tacit notions of schooling and the district's work as administrators and this shaped their attitudes about what it was appropriate to do with Tier 3 monies. The two school boards' broader, more pluralistic notions of schooling, along with constituency political pressures, influenced how Tier 3 resources were reallocated because boards, rather than district superintendents, have fiduciary authority.

Chapter 5 examines how deregulation connected to institutionalized district categorical aid practices. I use organizational routines as a unit of analysis, and compare how one budgeting routine was carried out over time and across districts. I draw on evidence of change over time as evidence of the deinstitutionalization (or maintenance) of the tradition of administrative discretion over categorical programs. I examine the dynamics of relational trust between the board and administration to understand how boards drew on administrators' expertise and came to view the appropriateness of continuing administrative discretion over Tier 3 categorical resources. This line of

[3] Though multiple scholars contributed to what is generally characterized as the old institutional tradition, this study draws specifically from Selznick's (1949) work illustrating the role of power and political constituencies on policy implementation.

analysis tends to support a neoinstitutional conception of how organizations respond to the suspension of governing rules and expanded discretion over resources.

Chapter 6 examines a case in which district administrators successfully persuaded board members to discontinue one Tier 3 categorical program: the Arts and Music block grant. I draw on the concept of problematizing to illustrate how specific kinds of interactions can contribute to deinstitutionalizing even highly institutionalized practices. Focusing on the problematizing process, I claim that discourse in the forms of fact-making (bringing new or different information to micro-interactions) and justifying (articulating specific rationales as the basis for decision making) together eroded the place of music in elementary education as a top priority. I show this by contrasting interactions related to the elementary music program across resource decision making, and trace fact-making and justifying over time to explain how boards that initially absolutely rejected cuts to the elementary music program came to view these cuts as appropriate and necessary.

In Chapter 7, I consider the consequences of Tier 3 categorical flexibility and deregulation policies more broadly for resource reallocation and democratic accountability inside districts. I also discuss the study's implications for future research seeking to link how micro-level processes can erode institutions to macro-level institutional change.

Chapter 2. Literature review

Over the last twenty years, there has been new enthusiasm for rethinking and reforming school budgeting practices in K-12 education. One set of proposals, informed by school finance scholarship, advocates paying greater attention to the ways in which schools and districts use resources. Scholars seeking to move beyond a longstanding debate over whether resources matter for student learning (Greenwald, Hedges, and Laine 1996; Hanushek 1989, 1994, 1996; Hedges, Laine, and Greenwald 1994) have tried to differentiate between more and less educationally effective spending patterns (Grubb 2009; Grubb, L. A. Huerta, and Goe 2006; Odden and Archibald 2009; Odden et al. 2003). Reformers aligned with this research direction have proposed policy changes that may help more districts and schools improve how they use available resources to impact student learning (Elmore and Burney 1999). A second set of proposals, emerging out of ongoing budgetary strains and increasing pressure on the welfare state, promotes decentralizing school management and resource decision making (e.g., school-based management and school-based budgeting) in order to save on administrative costs while allowing school leaders to improve how they use resources (Chubb and Moe 1990; Ouchi 2003, 2009).

Proponents of both sets of proposals seem to take for granted that given discretion over resources, school or district decision makers will reallocate resources in a highly rational, goal-driven manner. While improving student learning and cutting costs are two imperatives in most school districts in the United States, to understand the extent to which either of these sets of proposals is likely to achieve their goals, we first need to answer a seemingly straightforward question: given discretion over resources, how and why do districts arrive at the resource allocations they do?

As I described in Chapter 1, Tier 3 categorical flexibility granted districts discretion over what had traditionally been categorical resources in an overall fiscal context of reduced funding. Based on assumptions made about how actors on the ground respond to deregulation (Chubb and Moe 1990; Friedman 1968; Ouchi 2003, 2009), districts will take advantage of increased discretion to shift their spending toward district priorities. Resource decision making and allocation carried out at the district level will be more rational and relevant, in terms of local priorities and student learning needs, than decisions made by the central state. This suggests that *districts will respond to expanded discretion over resources by using rational, goal-driven prioritizing in resource decision making.* For districts implementing a districtwide Program Improvement plan under the federal accountability system, I narrowly define this "rational" prioritizing in terms of the alignment between decision making about how to use formerly categorical resources and the goals and objectives in their plans.

Yet neoinstitutional theory suggests that the abandonment of institutionalized budgeting practices may not necessarily be how all or most school districts respond to deregulation policies. Instead, this lens suggests that the structural shift of discretion to

districts will moderated by the institutional environment and tacit conceptions of schooling. The same conceptions are not necessarily shared across all stakeholders or participants to resource decision making. Under neoinstitutional theory, one way that participants in resource decision might respond to deregulation is in line with the intensification of the logic of accountability and standards-based reform in the technical environment of schooling. *Districts will use expanded discretion to shift resources toward the specific technical demands and accountability logic associated with improving test scores* (Chubb and Moe 1990; Sunderman 2010). While the mechanism driving resource reallocation is cultural rather than rational as in the first prediction, the outcome will look similar: districts reallocate Tier 3 categorical resources toward instructional improvement efforts.

Still under neoinstitutional theory, a second way in which participants to resource decision making might respond to deregulation is in line with a range of ideas about schooling in the institutional environment of schooling. In line with older, more pluralistic "real school" (Metz 1989) notions of schooling, *districts will use expanded discretion to maintain a variety of traditional programs and services*. In this scenario, deregulation does not necessarily lead to improved or even different resource allocations. Instead, broader ideas about what a legitimate district looks like, and the programs and services it is appropriate and necessary to offer, shape responses that look very much like the status quo. For example, minimizing employee layoffs and, linked to this, maintaining smaller class sizes for students represent one way of reinforcing existing conceptions of the district's work. Unlike the mechanisms of rational prioritizing or adaptation to an evolving technical environment, district responses under this prediction are stabilized by the pull of older, pluralistic expectations for schooling.

Finally, a conventional politics perspective suggests that through the mechanisms of political bargaining among interest groups, *districts will use expanded discretion in ways that accommodate the preferences of their more powerful constituents.* Under this perspective, district responses to deregulation will generally move resources away from the types of students and educational objectives that used to be mandated through spending rules attached to categorical programs. In districts where teachers unions and other associations are powerful, we could expect to see deregulated dollars on the collective bargaining table. Similarly, where middle class parents actively pressure the board, we might see resources shift toward gifted and talented, music, sports, and other enrichment programming. If resource allocations already reflect the status quo to a large extent, political bargaining may revolve around keeping existing programs in place.

School districts are not neutral funders of schools

In the past decade, school finance scholars have produced a growing body of empirical work describing resource allocation inside school districts (Condron and Roscigno 2003; Goertz and Leanna Stiefel 1998; P. Iatarola and L. Stiefel 2003; Roza et al. 2008; Rubenstein et al. 2007). Findings from these studies challenge the assumption that districts simply allocate federal and state resources in the ways state and federal actors intend. For example, Roza and colleagues (2008) analyzed how funds were channeled across students with differing needs, examining data from fifteen districts in

four different states. Turning up inequitable spending patterns across their case districts, they conclude that federal, state, and local funding formulae collectively fail to ensure that schools receive supplemental funds to serve higher-need students.

Similarly, in one large, urban school district, Condron and Roscigno (2003) found that funding was almost level across schools, even though some schools received supplemental federal aid. This outcome was due to fewer local dollars being directed to schools that were eligible for state or federal resources. Other intradistrict resource allocation studies document similar outcomes (Goertz and Leanna Stiefel 1998; Rubenstein et al. 2007; P. Iatarola and L. Stiefel 2003) These patterns demonstrate that school districts are not simply neutral funders of schools.

Yet, existing studies of intradistrict resource allocation provide little insight into the processes by which state and federal resource allocation policies designed to supplement funding levels for some student populations fail. First, none of these studies explicitly observes decision making about intradistrict resource allocation. As a result, we have few concrete descriptions of the processes that produce inequitable spending patterns. Second, the economic lens that academics generally bring to the study of resource allocation, as well as their focus on revenue and expenditure data, depoliticizes the decision making that produces resource distribution. Treating resource allocation as an issue of district management and coordination provides answers about the equity of how resources are allocated, but little guidance as to the nature of the processes that apparently undercut state and federal attempts to supplement the level of funding targeted to poor, minority, English learner, and special needs student populations.

Finally, key factors and influences on resource allocation in education are undertheorized in the existing literature. Without theoretical framing to guide how we explore and test emerging empirical data, we remain hard-pressed to explain how factors and outcomes are linked. This omission limits our understanding of process and leaves policymakers and district leaders alike to seek guidance from a largely prescriptive literature.

Drawing on contemporary education policy implementation scholarship, this study begins with the idea that districts are complex and fragmented, and that district stakeholders bring different priorities, professional preparation, and influence to resource decision making. I primarily use concepts from institutional theory to investigate the processes by which school district spending patterns are maintained in place or discarded, and how the implementation of deregulation may be underpinned and reinforced by district budgeting practices, organizational structures, legal protections, and tacit cultural expectations for schooling. Because the conceptual tools institutional theory offers for explaining the loss of stability are underdeveloped (DiMaggio 1988; Lawrence and Suddaby 2006; Oliver 1991; Zucker 1988), I draw on a separate literature on organizational routines in work settings (Barley 1986; Feldman 2004; Feldman and Pentland 2003; Orlikowski 1996; Pentland and Feldman 2005; Pentland and Rueter 1994) to see implementation processes more clearly. This literature argues that how people perform a given routine over time can indicate shifts in norms, meanings, and beliefs: in

other words, the normative and cultural-cognitive elements that make up institutions. I use iterative, interactive budgeting routines to link interactions to larger patterns of resource decision making and allocation over time.

School districts adapt and expand on state policies

Contrary to some expectations, the centralization of state educational policies over the past thirty years has not "crowded out" district policymaking and implementation. Instead, districts actively leverage state mandates to promote local objectives, sometimes even creating local policies that exceed state requirements (Fuhrman and Elmore 1990). This evidence of district policy making as part of state and federal education policy implementation contradicts earlier assumptions that districts were middle managers without much influence over how implementation unfolds (Marsh 2000) and suggests a need to attend to districts as organizations with their own preferences and agency.

Recent state education policy implementation scholarship shows that people's professional orientation and existing organizational arrangements influence how district subunits implement policy (Coburn and Russell 2008; Hill 2001; Honig 2006a; Spillane 1998). In general, individuals hold diverse orientations toward a given reform effort, levels of expertise, and interpretations of what a given policy is trying to achieve. Departmental (or subunit) norms, which often coincide with professional preparation, mediate how people understand and carry out the implementation tasks they are responsible for. This fragmentation is clearly depicted in Spillane's (1998) study of the implementation of a state reading policy: within the same district, central office departments delivered conflicting instructional guidance to schools. Implementation may also come be marginalized when it does not overlap with how district stakeholders conceive of the core work of the district (Honig 2006a).

Finally, within the district, school boards represent an important subunit in policy implementation processes. Outside of politics of education research or the practitioner-oriented advice literature, however, empirical attention to school boards is circumscribed. This omission implicitly gives the impression that boards' behaviors matter little with regard the core content of district's work. Where researchers do deal with school boards in the context of other parts of the district organization (e.g., central office administration, school sites), we see that the formal authority is central to the nature of the board's work. There is reason to believe that boards should matter for policy implementation because school board members often hold different values and norms from educational professionals (Binder 2002; Tyack and Cuban 1995) and, through their formal authority, set the frame within which districts carry out teaching and learning work. There has been little empirical attention to this dimension of school boards' activities, however (Land 2002).

Research on how conflict and role conceptions shape the board-superintendent relationship, though, suggests that the board-administration dynamic may have implications for education policy implementation nevertheless. Alsbury (2008a), for example, notes that both board and superintendent roles have changed significantly in

response to community politics over the twentieth century. Boards are more directly pressured to be more responsive to community interests than professional educators, by virtue of the elected nature of their position (Alsbury 2008b; Howell 2005; Kirst 1994). How boards tend to carry out their democratic governance functions with respect to processes of policy implementation, however, has not been empirically investigated (Bowers 2010).

Taken together, we know districts reconstruct policies in ways that adapt and expand on state policies, and that these adaptations are partially shaped by fragmented implementation activities carried out by different district subunits. And though school boards set the frame within which district administrators go about their work, the interaction between the board's framing of core district activities and administrators' framing and reconstruction of policies through implementation has not been investigated. My study takes a step in this direction, looking at a case of policy implementation that falls squarely within the traditional fiscal oversight focus of school boards.

Using neoinstitutional theory to see cultural assumptions in policy implementation

Neoinstitutional theorists suggest that deeply-embedded cultural assumptions shape how people choose among different courses of action (J. W. Meyer and Rowan 1977; Scott 2001; Scott and G. F. Davis 2007). In this view, culture influences how district organizations implement deregulation. Unlike rational, neoclassical accounts of why people and organizations behave as they do (Friedman 1968), neoinstitutional theory sees organizations and people as shaped by broader social and cultural processes. Theorists working in this tradition explain stability by drawing on a conceptualization of institutions as "composed of cultural-cognitive, normative, and regulative elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life (Scott 2001:48). When people refer to "core academics," for example, they invoke ideas about a subset of educational activities (e.g., reading and mathematics) that are supported by an array of practices, including: the distribution of instructional minutes across subjects; the selection of topics covered in high-stakes tests; and the division of instructional responsibilities between regular teachers and specialists.

Institutionalized practices tend to be stable because discarding them has costs. Organizations abandoning deeply embedded practices can punished because alternative practices are perceived as inappropriate or immoral (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Scott 2001). For example, in school settings, departures from standard curricula and ways of assessing student learning can result in the loss of significant resources (L. Huerta 2009; J. W. Meyer and Rowan 1977). Given this explanation of stability, how are institutionalized practices likely to interact with deregulation?

To begin to answer this question, distinguishing between practices as more or less institutionalized is a useful first step. Institutionalization refers to the multi-level process through which practices become routinized, gain legitimacy, and come to be deeply embedded, even taken for granted, in the fabric of social life (Colyvas and Powell 2006). Deeply institutionalized practices tend to be highly standardized, delegated (rather than

carried out by top-level personnel), and have a practice-specific vocabulary (Colyvas and Powell 2006). Categorical aid practices, broadly construed, demonstrate these characteristics: established procedures collect data required for state audits, middle management positions are dedicated to managing and supporting categorical programs, and administrators share specific understandings of terms such as "supplement, not supplant."[4]

Sometimes, though these embedded practices can lose their persuasive pull. This is the process of deinstitutionalization. Deinstitutionalization is the process that erodes and leads to the abandonment of practices. Although institutional theorists have largely investigated mechanisms of persistence and stability (DiMaggio 1988; Zucker 1988), a small body of empirical research suggests the process of deinstitutionalization is distinct from institutionalization and has its own predictive factors (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006; Oliver 1992). Normative fragmentation and the loss of social consensus, for example, can foster deinstitutionalization (Oliver 1992). But particularly relevant for the present study, contextual conditions like regulative change and resource scarcity can encourage organizations or particular organizational members to recognize and actively discard an institutionalized practice (Oliver 1992).

First, altering how resources or sanctions connect to a practice affects its technical usefulness, as demonstrated in the cases of health and safety standards in coal mining (Wicks 2001) and regulatory change in the radio industry (Leblebici et al. 1991). Though institutionalized practices are valued beyond their specific technical contributions (Selznick 1949), the state can undercut the institutionalization of practices through changes in how governing rules and policies connect rewards (or sanctions) to existing practices (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006). In the wake of deregulation, for example, people's beliefs may undermine practices no longer supported through central state policies or regulations (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006; Oliver 1992). Following Oliver (1992), my study conceptualizes deregulation as condition likely to affect categorical aid practices. With legal and regulatory requirements suspended, districts may reallocate resources in ways that align with assumptions about local preferences or other kinds of institutional pressures.

Second, increasing competition for resources or authority can undermine the stability of practices (Oliver 1992). As Ahmadjian and Robinson (2001) illustrate in their study of the abandonment of permanent employment among Japanese firms, economic strain can bring an existing practice into contradiction with organizational survival. In response, individual organizations may proactively discard institutionalized practices. But at the same time, this abandonment may be perceived as morally inappropriate and undermine the organization's legitimacy and key supports (J. W. Meyer and Rowan 1977; Scott 2001). Budgetary strain, a condition that characterizes the current fiscal circumstances of most California school districts, is likely to encourage districts to rethink some practices, even without regulatory change enacted by the central state.

[4] Language from the first reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act that specifies that federal dollars cannot be used to pay for programs and services that the district would otherwise pay for with local funds. "Supplement, not supplant" frequently appears in authorizing statutes for categorical programs.

Despite this emerging work investigating the process of deinstitutionalization, descriptions of how actors actually upend institutionalized practices remain rare (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006). The handful of studies that empirically describe the erosion and abandonment of practices investigate this phenomenon at the macro-level. As a result, we know little about the mechanisms and process of deinstitutionalization as it unfolds on the ground. This is a critical gap in the literature.

In addition, no scholars attempting to observe deinstitutionalization to-date actually observe their phenomenon of interest in real time. Instead, research in this area relies on archival methods, an approach that by definition gives primacy to formal and documented aspects of organizations. At best, archival data approximate how people carry out "institutionalized" practices across space and time (Schneiberg and Clemens 2006), obscuring what we can learn about people's informal adaptations and adjustments to practices. This shortcoming comes, in part, from an obvious difficulty entailed in researching this phenomenon: scholars must anticipate where and when instances of deinstitutionalization are likely to come about.

Research on organizational routines provides some useful tools to address these limitations. Recent conceptual and empirical literature on routines suggests that how people adapt interactive habitual activities can either reinforce or undermine the status quo, and that minor changes in these routines can, over time, destabilize and erode standardized organizational behaviors.

Using routines to see change in cultural schema

Routines, as iterative and interactive performances, are useful for observing how conditions predictive of deinstitutionalization pull on practices. Recent empirical research on organizational routines shows us that people constantly adapt and alter seemingly habitual ways of accomplishing organizational work (Feldman and Pentland 2003). Contrary to earlier ideas about routines as static "standard operating procedures" (Cyert and March 1963), this new line of work demonstrates that people constantly adjust and adapt a given routine's abstract template to particular spaces, times, and groups of participants (Barley 1986; Feldman and Pentland 2003; Orlikowski 1996; Pentland and Rueter 1994).

Carefully observing interactions inside a routine provides a way to "see" cultural schema in action. People perceive some ways of carrying out a routine as more appropriate or correct than others (Feldman and Pentland 2003). Beyond any legal or regulatory requirements, there are normative expectations that further define what counts as appropriate ways to carry out a routine. For example, in response to the implementation of a new approach to literacy assessment (the routine) at one school, Sherer and Spillane (2011) find that teachers and administrators adapted the content, meanings, and purposes of the assessment. Accomplishing the literacy assessment, in this way, generated change. At the same time, continuing to carry out the assessment built up academic expectations that persisted across years and changes in school leadership.

Observing routines also helps us begin to understand how authority, trust, expertise, and other organizational properties influences how routines are carried out (Barley 1986; Feldman 2004). Some actors are better equipped to sway how a routine is carried out because they hold formal authority over decision making, are trusted by those in positions of authority, or have expert knowledge or access to information that is not commonly shared (Feldman 2004). Where such actors attempt to prioritize and further policy goals (the reduction of administrative activities tied to deregulated categorical programs, for example) we are likely to see evidence that adaptations to routines align with, and further, those goals (Feldman and Pentland 2003; Pentland and Rueter 1994). Conversely, participants to a routine may prefer to slow down or undermine implementation. Authority and trust, thus, can be used either to promote or impede policy implementation.

Observing routines also potentially develops our understanding of how people's relationships shape what they actually do in their everyday work, aiding in developing our understanding of implementation. We know that formal job categories imperfectly capture the distribution of authority and expertise inside school districts (Honig 2006a; Spillane 1998). Barley (1986) vividly demonstrates that how routines are enacted can reshape the distribution of authority, showing how the introduction of CAT-scan technology produced divergent patterns of authority between radiologists and technicians in two hospitals. But while understanding the degree of change and constancy in individual routines is interesting, my goal in this study is to use data gathered through examination of routines to see linkages between micro-interactions, practices, and l change in cultural expectations.

In sum, research on resource allocation in districts demonstrates that spending patterns do not align with either mandates or what we know about the different costs of educating students with diverse learning needs. But these intradistrict studies do not empirically investigate either resource decision-making processes or contextual conditions that may help to explain these spending patterns. At the same time, there is reason to believe that deregulation, implemented by adapting a range of district budgeting practices, will be shaped by people's conceptions of schooling and the district's work in ways not accounted for in the prescriptive literature. Finally, although district budgeting routines are iterative and shaped by regulatory and legal guidelines, we lack descriptions of how budgeting work is actually accomplished, particularly in a time of budget cutting. In light of the ongoing austerity facing state and federal governments, coupled with current enthusiasm for deregulation as a policy tool in education, it is critical that we better understand how categorical aid practices and deregulation interact.

This study addresses these issues using the case of Tier 3 categorical flexibility, a deregulation policy enacted in a context of ongoing budget cutbacks. At its core, this study asks: What is the relationship between resource deregulation and the deinstitutionalization of categorical aid programs in districts? To elaborate this relationship, I ask the following research questions: What are the processes school districts use to make decisions about how to allocate deregulated Tier 3 categorical

resources? How are these processes, if at all, connected to tacit conceptions of schooling? What is the role of the authority and trust, if any, in these interactions?

Conceptual framework

Drawing on routines as a unit of analysis, this study seeks to explain how deregulated but locally-institutionalized categorical program practices may come to be eroded. In this section, I outline the framework for this study and explain the relationship between key concepts I draw on to investigate how rational prioritizing, the erosion of cultural expectations, and political pressures by district constituencies shaped local Tier 3 categorical flexibility implementation.

Institutional analyses of budgeting highlight that although routines can originate in legal and regulatory requirements that govern how resources can be used, over time they become a habitual and expected part of organizational work (Burns and Scapens 2008). But in keeping with the idea that people adapt and adjust routines within normative and cognitive boundaries set by cultural schema, I look to districts' budgeting routines as a site likely to expose tensions between institutionalized categorical practices (along with related organizational structures, traditions, beliefs, and expectations). I define deregulation as the disappearance of rewards and sanctions that traditionally reinforced those practices.

Specifically, the study investigates budgeting routines to illuminate how district actors evaluated and pursued district and programmatic priorities in order to protect what they held to be essential components of "schooling" and the district's work. According to these held beliefs, without specific components, the quality of public education offered by the district dips below good or acceptable levels. In light of research evidence showing change in teacher, principal, and central office administrator work practices in response to the technical demands of state and federal accountability systems (Booher-Jennings 2005; Hamilton et al. 2008), it is likely that district goals and priorities would be articulated in terms of "academic excellence," performance benchmarks, and the logic of accountability and standards-based reform. In the context of general budgetary strain and continuing pressures for improved student test scores, the particular context of this study lends itself to the tightening of existing linkages between districts' resource allocation and ongoing instructional improvement efforts related to school and district Program Improvement status. In this way, I anticipate that the tacit notions of schooling and accompanying cultural schema that participants brought to budgeting routines will largely be in terms of academic excellence.

But we also know that people hold multiple, contradictory expectations for schools and districts (Grubb and Lazerson 2004; Labaree 1997; Tyack 1974). For example, often cited purposes include: social and emotional development, self-discipline, creativity, civic participation, and academic achievement. Thus, I anticipated that other notions of schooling that more closely approximate what Metz (1989) terms "real school" could be held by some participants in district budgeting routines. Further, if data suggested the presence of multiple tacit notions of schooling, I expected that such differences in cultural schema would fall along the lines of district subunits (i.e.,

curriculum and instruction, business services, school board). Competing tacit notions of schooling may affect how routines were carried because participants might differently perceive the appropriateness of competing ways of reallocating Tier 3 categorical resources.

I also anticipated that although most district stakeholders are excluded from direct participation in district budgeting routines, some may be well-positioned to pressure district leadership to protect certain programs and services from cuts (e.g., contract renewals, election outcomes, donations to the district). District leaders may choose to accommodate some outside political pressures, effectively offering these more powerful constituencies a form of informal representation and participation in policy implementation. Selznick (1949) coined the term informal cooptation to refer to this organizational behavior, emphasizing that it contributes to organizational stability by using power sharing behind the scenes to eliminate some political opposition. Couto (1988) further emphasizes that informal cooptation facilitates organizations' ongoing realignment to changes in the political environment, and argues that informal cooptation, over the long term, is actually a reciprocal process. If data suggested that formal participants in budgeting routines viewed particular constituencies as important or powerful, I expected that these constituencies to have greater access to, and influence over, decision making about Tier 3 categorical resources.

In this way, a focus on budgeting routines highlights connections between tacit notions of schooling, the dispositions that individuals bring to budgeting routines, power, and policy implementation inside districts. It begins to explain why districts may fail to carry out implementation that mirrors the rational prioritizing predicted by proponents of deregulation.

Three types of relational dynamics are likely to influence how participants in budgeting routines carry them out: informal authority, relational trust, and expertise. These three constructs are particularly useful in the district budgeting context, where the process of developing and approving a district budget involves: (a) working from highly technical accounting data; (b) conflicting ideas about how to most appropriately allocate limited resources; and (c) non-experts holding positions with formal authority.

Informal authority. Inside districts, the formal structure of positions constrains who controls resource allocation. Some actors, such as the school board, are formally charged with making decisions about resource allocation. Others, through their perceived expertise or access to important networks rather than through their formal organizational position, are granted informal influence over resource allocation, which Dornbusch and Scott (1975) term informal authority. Within a routine, participants that hold formal authority may be persuaded or influenced by others to whom they grant informal authority. For example, board members choose to rely on staff recommendations as they negotiate about how to distribute budget cuts because the superintendent and other key personnel are experienced with district operations and management. While formal authority can be easily read from organization charts, routines can provide insight into

how informal authority is distributed and how key relationships between individuals shape implementation.

Relational trust. Descriptions of the board-superintendent relationship frequently reference the importance of trust (Bird, Wang, and Murray 2009; Mountford 2004). High trust relationships are frequently characterized in terms of participants' willingness to be vulnerable (Mayer, J. H. Davis, and Schoorman 1995), based on positive expectations about how others will behave (Rousseau et al. 1998). By definition, participants to organizational routines are dependent on (so vulnerable to) the actions and decisions of others. Relational trust comes from repeated interactions between participants and is reinforced by information that comes from within the relationship, along with the social-psychological attachments that come from sustained interaction (Bryk and Schneider 2004; Rousseau et al. 1998). In this way, relational trust is interactive and built up, sustained, and dissipated through how people carry out habitual routines over time (Bryk and Schneider 2004). I use the concept of relational trust to characterize the extent to which participants to district budgeting work are willing to rely on each other (e.g., staff provide good information to the board and the board makes informed decisions) with respect to resource allocation.

Expertise. Expertise refers to expert knowledge or information that is not held in common. In school districts, central office administrators' expertise is often specialized according to the departments they work in. For example, with respect to categorical aid programs, business administrators are likely to have expertise in accounting aspects while curriculum and instruction administrators are like to have expertise in operating specific programs and services. As a result, these individuals are likely to bring different kinds of expert information to district budgeting routines from each other, and from board members. Depending on how expertise is shared inside these routines (Feldman 2004), those in positions of formal authority may or may not have access to relevant expert information as they made key decisions. I use the concept of expertise to analyze the content of board-administrator interactions.

The conceptual framework I develop to investigate the Tier 3 categorical flexibility implementation emphasizes tacit conceptions, assumed routines, power relations, and the impact of a change in formal rules governing resource allocation. Drawing on this conceptual framework, this study explores competing theories of action for how districts will implement Tier 3 categorical flexibility. Because the study draws from resource decision making in two districts, findings are not generalizable. Instead, my goal is to begin to illuminate the processes by which resource decision making is accomplished, sketch how these processes can matter for how districts implement deregulation, and extend theoretical understandings of how and why district organizational structures and dynamics can come together in ways that trigger the process of deinstitutionalization.

Chapter 3. Study design and methodology

To investigate the relationship between deregulation, deinstitutionalization, and resource allocation inside districts, I drew on a cross-case study of district budget processes in 2009 and 2010. Existing research on the Tier 3 categorical flexibility statute provides some information about general trends in district spending overall (Imazeki 2011) and district reports of where spending on Tier 3 categorical programs was reduced or eliminated (Legislative Analyst's Office 2010, 2011). This study uses the enactment of Tier 3 categorical flexibility to develop how local districts implement deregulation through their budgeting work. To empirically investigate this relationship, the study observed the processes districts used to engage in resource decision making about deregulated Tier 3 categorical resources, investigating connections between resource allocation, tacit notions of schooling, and political pressures exerted by powerful constituencies within districts.

I use a comparative case study design to investigate these dynamics. As Yin (2003) and George and Bennett (2005) argue, case study methodologies are useful when the phenomenon of interest is not well understood. Comparative case studies, in particular, represent an appropriate research strategy where linkages between context and the phenomenon under investigation may be crucial for understanding the case at hand. Comparing two contrasting districts' implementation of Tier 3 categorical flexibility, then, is a productive strategy for beginning to illuminate the relationship between deregulation and the process of deinstitutionalization.

Districts' budgeting work

To investigate districts' budgeting processes following the passage of Tier 3 categorical flexibility legislation, my study focuses on board-superintendent resource decision making tied to second interim budget development in 2009 and 2010. Following the January release of the Governor's budget, districts are legally required to update their first interim budget by submitting a second interim budget that uses updated revenue numbers from the state. This takes place on or before March 15th each year. Then, by June 30th, districts make final budget adjustments based on the state budget adopted by the Legislature. In general, districts' resource decision making involved in converting the second interim report into the final budget is relatively minor. Figure 3-1 provides a visual representation of how a range of district budgeting activities map against deadlines in the California Education Code.

Table 3-1. Timeline for district budgeting work

District Budget Development	Month	State Budget Development
Board approves final district budget District issues layoff notices to administrators	**June**	Legislature approves state budget
	July	State budget takes effect
Board approves any needed adjustments to the final budget based on the approved state budget	**August**	
Board sets goals, process for budget development	**September**	
	October	
	November	
Board approves first interim district fiscal report	**December**	
Board review audit report District begins work on budget development	**January**	Governor submits state budget proposal to the Legislature
District continues work on budget development	**February**	
District presents draft of budget to the board Board approves second interim district fiscal report District issues reduction in Force notices (pink slips), seniority list	**March**	
	April	
District presents draft of budget to the board Board approves third interim district fiscal report (if needed) District issues layoff notices to teachers	**May**	Governor submits a revised state budget proposal to the Legislature

*Adapted from EdSource's *Budget Calendar*, downloaded August 25, 2010 from http://www.edsource.org/iss_fin_bud_calendar.html.

Reflecting the pace and procedures of budgeting work, data collection centered on the resource decision making leading up to the second interim report, and followed each district through final budget report activities taking place in June. The second interim budget is a critical point for resource reallocation. At this point, districts drop the prior school year's audited actual spending that was included in the first interim report and add a new year to the budget's three-year projections. Developing the second interim budget involves two activities: updating the current year budget (based on actual expenditures) and estimating the budget for the next two upcoming school years. In addition, negotiations with bargaining units are rarely complete at this point, so cannot be included as budget savings.[5] This means that the board must identify cuts that do not include employee concessions.

Over the period of this study, the 2009 second interim budget needed to incorporate a 15 percent mid-year cut to all Tier 3 categorical programs and the 2010 second interim budget, while not including further mid-year cuts, needed to tack an

[5] Bargaining units like the teachers union can request specifically that the savings obtained from furloughs and other concessions be applied to a particular end, such as keeping class size down. The Board can deny these requests, but further negotiation then is needed.

additional five percent cut onto all Tier 2 and Tier 3 categorical programs (20 percent total) and a negative cost of living adjustment. As a result, the final district budget, due in June each year, represented minor adjustments rather than the contentious negotiations that occurred over January, February, and March. The only major renegotiation I documented with regard to the final district budget came as the result of an accounting mistake that counted an ongoing cut from the state as a one-time cut; the county office asked the district to update their final budget rather than resubmit the second interim budget.

Sampling

I drew on Oliver's (1992) proposal of empirical predictors of the likelihood of deinstitutionalization as a theoretical basis for sampling school districts. As described in Chapter 2, Oliver (1992) identifies a range of conditions as predictive of the process of deinstitutionalization. I drew from her sketch of technical and political conditions to operationalize a set of indicators that could be assessed based on fiscal data collected by the California Department of Education or information readily accessible to the public (e.g., newspaper articles and district websites). I selected my two study districts based on the following four criteria:

- Currently certified as able to meet financial obligations for the 2009-10 and following two school years
- Higher than state average proportions of funding from state and federal categorical programs
- Heterogeneous but similar demographics
- Contrasting level of turnover in district leadership (superintendent and board members)

In this section, I describe the theoretical underpinnings of these empirical criteria.

First, I motivate the set of indicators I used ensure the similarity of external technical pressures facing the study districts and the salience of deregulation to district resource decision making. Then, I discuss the set of political indicators I used to identify contrasts in districts, in line with Oliver's (1992) proposal that changes in the distribution of power and organizational leadership turnover can be antecedents of deinstitutionalization.

Technical pressures

I drew on two indicators to gauge technical pressures on districts' institutionalized categorical practices: districts' official certification of fiscal health, as submitted to the state, and the proportion of district revenues tied to federal and state categorical aid programs and Tier 3 categorical flexibility programs specifically. Because Tier 3 categorical flexibility is a state-level policy being implemented by districts, I wanted to hold general fiscal pressures on districts fairly constant. At the same time, I wanted to ensure that the deregulation of Tier 3 categorical flexibility resources was salient in district resource decision making and allocation.

Initially, I identified school districts holding a positive certification of their ability to meet their near-term financial obligations. While most California districts faced budget challenges over the study period, about one-tenth of districts were already formally certified as "financially stressed" when I drew the sample (108 of 1,047 total in 2009 (California Department of Education n.d.). I anticipated that districts already identified as potentially or not able to meet their financial obligations for current and following two school years might implement Tier 3 categorical flexibility in ways that systematically differed from more fiscally stable districts. To minimize this potential difference, I excluded California districts under or recently emerged from state trusteeship for bankruptcy, as well as districts that were on the state's official watch list. Although technical pressures can be a powerful force in undermining cultural beliefs (Ahmadjian and Robinson 2001; Oliver 1992), the phenomenon I sought to observe in this study, I wanted to ensure that these processes were not already long underway when I began observations.

I also limited the sample to districts that received 25-40 percent of their total revenue through either state or federal categorical grants. Statewide, unified districts on average received 29 percent of revenues through categorical programs. Within this range, I attempted to select districts with greater than average proportions of total revenues flowing from Tier 3 categorical programs. To ensure the relevance of Tier 3 categorical flexibility to districts, the study sample was limited to districts that received at least 5 percent of total revenue through Tier 3 categorical programs in 2007-08; this accounted for about two-thirds of districts statewide (California Department of Education n.d.).[6] At the time of sampling, about one-third of California districts fell within the scope of these two funding characteristics.[7]

Finally, to limit differences in resource decision making and categorical aid practices due to district size, I sampled mid-sized, unified districts in the greater Bay Area. I focused on mid-sized districts because large districts can both (a) experience diseconomies of size with regard to running instructional programs overall and (b) experience economies of size with regard to operating small, specialized programs and services, such as those funded by many Tier 3 categorical programs (Andrews, Duncombe, and Yinger 2002). To identify districts with more "typical" resource decision making and management and operational activities connected to state categorical programs, I excluded large Bay Area school districts (e.g., San Francisco Unified and Oakland Unified). I also restricted the sample to unified districts. Although California has fewer unified districts than elementary districts (333 as compared with 547 at the time of sampling), unified districts serve about 70 percent of the state's K-12 students (California Department of Education n.d.). Focusing on unified districts, in this way, provides insights into the specific type of districts that serve the majority of students in the state.

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[6] On average, districts at the time of sampling received 6.7 percent of their total revenues through Tier 3 categorical programs (California Department of Education n.d.).

[7] The sampling frame does not directly examine district wealth as a selection variable. However, the two sampling dimensions related to revenue characteristics effectively eliminate the wealthiest districts that because these districts tend to face less restrictions on spending, in part because their student populations are eligible for fewer categorical aid programs.

Within-district political pressures

As Kirst (1995) notes, few constituencies support freeing up the targeted funding that supports their own policy priorities. In addition, organizational characteristics such as high turnover in leadership positions or heterogeneous district constituencies can heighten the salience of political pressures to reconsider existing resource allocations and practices (Oliver 1992). I selected districts that served heterogeneous communities, operationalizing ethnic and socioeconomic diversity as a potential source of contestation. Then, I looked at leadership turnover, identifying districts with contrasting leadership tenure to enable comparison of potential differences in terms of pre-existing contention among constituencies.

My heterogeneity indicators attempted to capture sources of political pressure that could potentially be brought to bear on deregulated Tier 3 categorical resources. I identified districts that were high on the spectrum of ethnic diversity by using an ethnic diversity index (Lopez 2001). This index rates the likelihood that two people selected at random from the community will have different ethnic backgrounds; on this index, higher percentages indicate higher levels of diversity. I then looked for districts that served significant proportions of poor, minority, and English learner students. In the districts I eventually selected, no more than 40 percent of district students belonged to any single ethnicity. I conceptualized these indicators as proxies for the presence of potentially conflicting expectations for the district's obligations to the community.

The second set of indicators focused specifically on the tenure of current district leadership as evidence of active political contention. I conceptualized superintendent and school board tenure as indicators of the community's current level of satisfaction with the educational experiences the district was delivering. Where satisfaction was high, I anticipated that district constituencies would keep elected board members in place and board members, in turn, would continue to renew the contract of their top district official, the superintendent. Conversely, unhappy district constituencies and board members would result in turnover in these top-level positions. I anticipated that the relationships among administrators and board members could vary in line with turnover levels.

In line with this sketch, and based on advice from administrators and board members I informally consulted as I refined my sampling frame, I attempted to limit the likelihood that I would observe the "honeymoon" period in which boards tend to be highly supportive of a newly recruited superintendent. To account for this, I limited my sample to districts where the superintendent had at least two years of tenure. However, I did seek contrasting levels of board turnover in order to capture differences in satisfaction with current district leadership.

As can be seen in Figure 3-2, the two study districts have similar proportions of categorical funding to the statewide average. The percentage of revenues coming from Tier 3 categorical flexibility programs is fairly similar across the districts and higher than the statewide average. The two study districts both had experienced superintendents. Clifton Hill's superintendent had led the district for more than five years, while

Eaglemont's superintendent was hired two years prior. In line with my goal of achieving contrast through this dimension, the tenure of board members differed in the two districts. One district had only one new board member as of the prior election; the other had four newly elected board members.

Table 3-2. Study Districts' Characteristics on Technical and Political Indicators

	Clifton Hill Unified	Eaglemont Unified	Statewide average for unified districts
Technical indicators			
Holds positive certification for district ability to meet financial obligations	Yes	Yes	82%
Percent of district revenue from Tier 3 programs	10%	16%	7%
Percent of district revenue from all categorical Aid programs (state and federal)	34%	29%	29%
Political indicators			
Neighborhood ethnic diversity index	74%	71%	--
Percent of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch	55%	50%	54%
Percent of non-white students			
Percent of English learner students	30%	20%	24%
Superintendent tenure	7 years	2 years	
School board tenure	4 new members out of 4 seats	1 new member out of 3 seats	--

I describe the districts in further detail at the end of this chapter.

Data collection

Early on, I discovered that although Tier 3 categorical flexibility required, as part of implementation, public hearings about how the district planned to take advantage of deregulation, these hearings (at least in the study districts) involved re-approving resource reallocation choices the board had already negotiated in concert with budget cuts. As a result, I sought to observe a variety of activities related to budget review, adjustment, and approval that occur over every school year. Following Feldman (2000, 2004), I drew on data gathered from pilot study interviews and initial conversations with district leaders to identify key district budgeting routines. I identified the following: developing the budget, gathering and interpreting stakeholder input, approving budget cuts, and adjusting the budget to bring back popular programs. The board formally directs how each of these routines is carried out, but key outcomes (e.g., a balanced budget that a majority of board members agree on, successful negotiations with bargaining units) are tied to legal deadlines set out in the California Education Code.

Observations

In keeping with this emphasis on the direct observation of processes, the primary data source for this study is derived from my non-participant observation of school board meetings, board finance committee meetings, and other meetings held with community and district stakeholders to gather input and feedback on budget reductions. I conducted a total of 57 hours of direct observation between February and July 2010, with 28.5 hours of observation conducted in Clifton Hill and 28.5 in Eaglemont. While the bulk of these

hours consisted of regular and special board meetings, I observed nine hours of board finance committee meetings in Clifton Hill as compared with one and a half hours in Eaglemont. There are two reasons for this substantial difference: the board finance committee meetings had very different roles in budgeting work in the two districts and, related to this, the Eaglemont board cancelled its finance committee meetings between February and July 2010. I conducted an additional 12 hours of follow-up observation in January and February in 2011 (seven hours in Clifton Hill and five hours in Eaglemont).

I took all field notes by hand, then typed them up within two days of the observation. I chose to take notes by hand because I could pay greater attention to the non-verbal interactions as they unfolded. Concurrent to transcribing my field notes, I typed up memos as I came to understand more about the nature of district budgeting work and issues that were unique to each district.

I also obtained video or audio-taped recordings of board meetings that I identified as relevant to district budgeting work on the basis of board meetings and newspaper articles. I transcribed twenty hours of board meetings that took place in 2009. The recorded board meetings were a valuable source of data for several reasons. First, because many of the same individuals were involved in both years, I was able to document trends over time for things like participants' facility with budgeting acronyms and categorical aid programs and how they participated in questions-answer interactions in the board meeting setting. Second, these tapes provided much more precise and detailed information about who did what and when than was available either in official minutes of these meetings or recalled by participants in interviews.

Interviews

To complement these data, I interviewed school board members, central office administrators in each district's business services and education services departments, and community stakeholders (N = 23 individuals, see Table 3-3). I conducted interviews after I had already attended multiple board meetings and become somewhat familiar with the types of information publicly shared about budget cuts and Tier 3 categorical flexibility. I selectively approached individuals to participate in interviews based on their position according to the district organization chart, their participation or regular attendance at school board meetings, or because they were identified by other informants as playing a key role in resource decision making. Interviews lasted an average of one hour, but ranged from 30 to 90 minutes in length. I conducted semi-structured interviews and covered the following topics: nature of the informant's job and responsibilities; district, departmental, and informant priorities in resource decision making; informant's direct involvement in Tier 3 decision making; informant's direct involvement in budgeting work; district's approach and processes for resource decision making; community responses to district decisions; and nature of school board and top-level district officials roles in resource decision making over time.

Table 3-3. Interviews by respondent type

	Clifton Hill	Eaglemont
Superintendent	1*	1
Chief Academic Officer	*	1
Chief Business Officer	1	1
Business Administrators	1	2
Curriculum Administrators	*	3
Board Members	4	4
Local Foundation Representatives	3	--
District Budget Committee	1	--
Total Interviews	11	12

*When I conducted interviews, the chief academic officer was serving as interim superintendent of the district. An interim chief academic officer was appointed at the same meeting where the board approved cut recommendations.

Although I planned to collect information about resource decision making for several Tier 3 categorical programs, initial interviews with board members indicated that recollections about particular Tier 3 programs were strong only when there was considerable discussion or community advocacy involved. In addition, some informants confused the chronology of events investigated in the study. To supplement later interviews, I shared copies of district budget materials with respondents after going through an initial part of the interview and asked respondents to explain to me how particular artifacts were used. While I did not ask about the contents of these artifacts, sometimes they reminded respondents about particular details relevant to the earlier part of the semi-structured interview.

With four exceptions, all interviews were recorded and transcribed. For one of these interviews, I typed on my laptop directly onto my protocol document. For the other three, I took notes by hand and transcribed them immediately following the interview. For these interview transcripts, I distinguished between actual quotes (which I noted using quotation marks) and my general notes on the informant's comments.

Documentation

Both Clifton Hill and Eaglemont made their official budget materials, other documentation of resource decision making processes and outcomes, and official board meeting minutes available on their websites or in the central office. I also collected presentations about the budget situation made by chief business officers and budget directors, and different iterations of the budget reflecting board members' preferences over time. I drew on these documents to understand how resource allocation evolved because most informants did not precisely recall their decision making processes. I drew on these artifacts primarily to flesh out my understanding of what resource decision making looked like in the first and second budget cycles covered by the study, and in particular, how "standard" materials changed over time as their authors tried to enhance their clarity for non-technical consumers. These materials also provided some insight into the ways in which each of the study districts was connected to neighboring districts and professional associations. For example, business staff frequently frequently used templates that were developed by School Services of California.

In addition, across the study period, I consulted local newspapers for reporting on each of the districts, collecting all articles published. I also periodically searched for

information about local community advocacy efforts and collected materials handed out at board meetings by groups or individuals that were not part of the district. After contacting the leaders of two groups that were organizing using Facebook and explaining the study, I was added to each group's Facebook listserv so that I could receive their updates. Table 3-4 describes the subset of data I draw on in each chapter.

Table 3-4. Matrix of data drawn on in each chapter

	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapter 6
Observations			
School board meetings (non-participant)	✓	✓	✓
Video and audio-taped school board meetings	✓	✓	✓
Interviews			
Central office staff	✓	✓	✓
School board members	✓	✓	✓
Other stakeholders		✓	✓
Documentation			
Official budget materials	✓	✓	
District documentation	✓	✓	
Meeting minutes	✓	✓	✓
Newspaper articles	✓		✓
Local organization websites, materials, and listservs			✓

Data analysis

Throughout and following data collection, I iteratively engaged in qualitative data analysis. As the basis for data analysis, I created a low-inference database that traced events at each district over time (M. B. Miles and Huberman 1994). I developed my description of these events from field notes, interview transcripts, video recordings, and district budget documents. Then, I crosschecked my observations and interview notes against draft and final versions of budget materials presented at school board meetings. Separately, I reviewed the budget interim and final reports submitted to the county office of education, and official meeting minutes to chart key decision points over time.

Drawing from my conceptual framework, I reviewed the events database, identifying instances of resource decision making and key participants in these processes. I drew on these instances as the basis for writing rich narrative descriptions of resource decision making in each district. This section describes my approaches to coding, data analysis, identifying the theoretical case these data describe, and verifying emergent findings.

Coding

To compare these instances over time and across districts, I initially consulted Oliver's (1992) empirical conditions to create codes that aligned with the technical and political dimensions used in my sampling frame. I defined a first category of codes to capture evidence of how technical pressures connected to resource decision making: categorical aid-specific terms and vocabulary; legal and regulatory mandates governing the timeline and content of districts' resource allocation; and Tier 3 categorical flexibility and the 38 deregulated categorical programs. These codes helped me begin to analyze how each district experienced the external technical pressures related to Tier 3 categorical

flexibility and reduced revenues. I defined a second category of codes to identify evidence around the presence and salience of political pressures connected to resource decision making: who participated in resource decision making; constituent groups and efforts to influence resource allocation; explicit statements about personal attitudes and "non-negotiable" budget items; and instances of negotiations about which district programs and services to cut. These codes helped me to identify key actors in resource decision making and the implementation of Tier 3 categorical flexibility. To facilitate comparisons of change over time and across districts, I later added low, moderate, and high intensity as a separate dimension within these two categories.

Throughout my iterative coding of the study data, as well as following some data collection activities, I drafted analytic memos (M. B. Miles and Huberman 1994). Using the memos as a guide, I focused on identifying dynamics and processes that shaped the relationship between deregulation and the deinstitutionalization of categorical aid programs inside districts. To understand this relationship, I focused on key categories such as tacit notions of schooling and political pressures from different district constituencies.

Drawing on these memos, I inductively developed a third set of codes to capture the texture of interactions between school board members and district leaders during pivotal events related to budget development and approval. This third category helped me develop a more nuanced analysis of relational aspects of authority, trust, and expertise in the situated context of district organizational work routines. To code for relationships among these district actors, I identified instances that provided evidence about the distribution of informal authority and relational trust. To code for expertise, I identified instances that illustrated particular actors' expertise or the provision or restatement of technical information related to district operations and management. I also paid particular attention to "breaches" (Goffman 2005), moments where behavioral norms are violated. Breaches expose and clarify the boundaries of shared tacit expectations, providing useful evidence for my study around the taken-for-granted beliefs and ideas that remain implicit under normal circumstances.

Creating data displays

Working from my events database, I created two different types of data displays to analyze different aspects of implementation: activity record displays and role-ordered matrices (M. B. Miles and Huberman 1994). Activity records displays are useful for summarizing specific, repeated activities that are limited in space and time (M. B. Miles and Huberman 1994; Werner and Schoepfle 1987). This approach to data analysis make activity and process explicit, aligning with my focus on district budgeting routines. Using data displays to describe how district budgeting routines were accomplished, and by whom, over time, I drew from fieldnotes to schematize multiple routines. This was particularly helpful because there are few concrete descriptions of how districts carry out budgeting work (Bird et al. 2009).

Then, to highlight the role of individuals and constituency groups inside these routines, I developed what Miles and Huberman (1994) term a role-ordered matrix. Role-

ordered displays help organize information about people's perceptions and views of how they should carry out work activities. In contrast to the activity records, which were drawn from fieldnotes, data entered in the role-ordered matrices were drawn from interview transcripts. By organizing these data according to different roles, these data displays helped me systematically analyze district leader and school board descriptions of implementation processes and outcomes at the district subunit level, and identify patterns across individuals' priorities, goals, and experiences with resource decision making. I analyzed the relationship between roles and peoples' views about Tier 3 categorical flexibility and resource decision making by comparing subunits within and across study districts.

Casing

Simultaneous to creating these data displays, I used the case study inquiry process (Ragin and Becker 1992) to develop a casing that was appropriate for understanding Tier 3 categorical flexibility implementation unfolded in the two study districts. Casing refers to the process of working through the often problematic relationship of theory to data (Ragin and Becker 1992). In contrast to positivist views of casing as the practical task of identifying empirical units for analysis, explanatory casing probes on how generic categories are relevant to a theoretical idea. This study uses the context of policy implementation to investigate and compare processes of institutional change and maintenance.

As I originally conceived the study, each Tier 3 categorical program represented a set of institutionalized categorical practices that connected to distinct specific activities, services, and educational objectives. I expected to see deregulation affect the fungibility of specific Tier 3 categorical program dollars differently, perhaps as a function of differing funding amounts, years in existence, or how directly they touching students' classrooms experiences. To investigate these assumptions, I identified specific events involved in implementation and district resource decision making, then created a "plot" of the case that specified critical turning points and situational consequences. Using the casing process, I came to conceptually reframe the relevant boundaries and contingencies of the relationship between deregulation and the deinstitutionalization of categorical aid programs inside districts. These contingencies did not necessarily link to individual categorical aid programs as I initially assumed. In this way, casing helped me identify a more appropriate theoretical approach, and it illustrated linkages between ways that implementation was shaped by tacit notions of schooling, organizational structures, and dynamics inside districts.

Verifying findings

I drew on two principal strategies to verify the validity of findings from my analyses: assessing plausibility and checking representativeness. First, as I began to identify patterns and themes, I sought to iteratively assess the plausibility of my emergent findings and identify rival explanations. To this end, I informally consulted with experienced central office administrators I knew in other districts. These conversations yielded some explanations I had not developed on my own. For example, one administrator suggested that divisions among board members might have more to do with their general relationship with the superintendent than the given policy issue under discussion. Another administrator suggested that because board members were politicians, they tend be less open in interviews and the public parts of board meetings than other kinds of informants; in order get high quality data, then, I needed to put extra effort into recruiting multiple board members for interviews.

I engaged in some of these conversations mid-way through data collection, and this helped me expand my fieldwork in ways that would later help me to distinguish between several plausible explanations of emerging findings. After I concluded data collection, as I encountered additional plausible explanations of patterns and trends, I combed through my data displays and narrative descriptions to identify evidence that supported different explanations. I also drew on discussions with fellow researchers to consider the extent to which my findings drawn from observing two districts aligned with or contradicted in interesting ways findings draw from an ongoing comparative investigation of how ten California districts implemented Tier 3 categorical flexibility (Imazeki 2011; Fuller et al. 2011).

Second, to check for representativeness, I reviewed the quality of data and counted instances of individual codes and tallied the evidence supporting emergent patterns. I did this in two stages. Initially I compared these counts against impressions recorded in the analytic memoing I carried out while still involved in data collection. When I identified instances in which my emerging findings relied heavily on lesser quality data (e.g., the accounts of very articulate and reflective individuals, very limited periods of observation), I sought to triangulate key "outlier" data points against (a) budget materials, newspaper articles, and other documentation and (b) field notes and interview transcripts. This helped me identify and follow up on potentially confirming or disconfirming evidence in order to gauge the weight that I could reasonably place on particular accounts. Then, to complement this approach, I informally gathered study respondents' impressions about key events and trends related to resource decision making when I returned to board meetings in the year following the study. These informal conversations helped me reassess the influence of some seemingly pivotal events one year out.

Introducing the districts

This section provides some background on the study districts as well as their superintendents and chief business officers and board members. It serves as background for analyses presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Clifton Hill

Clifton Hill is an urban community which some describe as having a suburban feel. The district has a long history, with many of its current school facilities dating back to the early 20th century. The school board prides itself on its conservative management of district revenues, and looks frequently to neighboring districts to make sure it is keeping up with the Jones. Historically, the district's community relations have not been easy and date back, according to one community member, to the district's decision to close certain schools and sell these properties in the 1980s. More recently, some community members believed the district's declining academic performance levels were declining due to children from a neighboring city "sneaking in" to their boundaries. Stemming from these different issues, one community member described the community as unwilling to put money into supporting educational activities because of perceptions of the central office as wasteful.

The district had pursued a parcel tax in the mid-2000s as a way to raise money for educational activities, but the proposal failed at the ballot box. Less than a year later, though, Clifton Hill voters approved a bond measure to build a new high school and performing arts facility. These complexes were being completed simultaneous to the resource decision making and cuts investigated in this study. At the same time, the district was struggling to cover other facilities maintenance needs, so limited maintenance and repair projects to those that directed affected students' safety.

At the time of the study, two education foundations already existed in the community, one that supported music and one that supported sports. The music foundation dated to the mid 2000s and purchased instruments and supplies for the elementary music program, as well as bringing in musicians to provide seminars for high school students. The sports foundation was more successful at fundraising (as reported by the foundation's president) than other community organizations, as well as mobilizing toward the end of the study period to propose a bond measure to help the district improve its existing sports facilities. Community members started a third foundation directly in response to the district's budgetary challenges. The shape of this foundation continued to develop over the course of the study, focusing primarily on helping jumpstart the district's grant writing and partnering with local businesses and pre-existing fundraising mechanisms to highlight district needs in the community.

The school board. The Clifton Hill community was divided in its opinion about the direction of the district: some community members distrusted the district central office, even as other saw the superintendent and other leaders as tackling important issues such as the district's achievement gap. A stand-off between the superintendent and teachers union over the collective bargaining agreement contributed to the election of four new school board members two months before the Legislature passed the Tier 3 categorical flexibility. Some of these board members ran for office to correct what they saw as the current board and superintendent behaving in ways that wasted district resources and promoted poor relationships with teachers, classified staff, and other district employees. The community's conflicting perceptions of the superintendency were reflected in the composition of the board at the time of the study. Some board members

saw their election as a mandate to create change in how the district was being run. Others saw the superintendent's expertise and commitment to closing the achievement gap as critical for identifying the kinds of cuts that would cause the least long-term harm to the district.

While board members disagreed about the superintendent's leadership of the district, they also characterized each other in interviews as representing particular points of view when it came to considering district policy making. Of the four new board members, one characterized herself as bringing a union point of view to bear, while two others were characterized by themselves and colleagues as primarily concerned about equity. Others described themselves as parents first and foremost. Despite the fact that many board votes were 4-3 split, whether to do with resources or other types of district policies, current board members described their working relationship as much more functional that the prior board.

The superintendent and chief business officer. The superintendent's vision for the district focused on addressing the achievement gap between its minority and white children, as well as providing a strong music enrichment program. At the beginning of the study period, she had served as district superintendent for more than five years. But while some stakeholders saw her as an inspiring and competent leader, others had a different view. Midway through the study, the board let the standing superintendent go and asked the chief academic officer to serve as interim superintendent. This, then, left the chief academic officer position open, and another former district administrator accepted the invitation to return to Clifton Hill and serve as interim chief academic officer. The board viewed these two individuals quite positively, as did key community constituencies. As evidence of the good fit, the audience at the board meeting stood up and applauded when the board offered the superintendency to the interim superintendent toward the end of the study period.

Like the initial superintendent, the chief business officer had been at the district for several years and was working to bring more systems into place. She came to the district with experience in a variety of district settings, including a county office of education, as well as a background in corporate finance. Since coming to the district, she had led efforts to be frugal, and this had allowed the district to avoid some of the massive layoffs other nearby districts implemented. At the same time, she oversaw the district's facilities bond measure, and was very successful in getting state matching grants for Clifton Hill's local construction projects.

Ongoing instructional improvement efforts. During the study, the district was identified for districtwide Program Improvement. Previously, Clifton Hill had only individual schools in Program Improvement. The district hired the chief academic officer (who later became interim superintendent), in fact, because of her expertise in implementing instructional improvement efforts. As a result, during the second year of the study, central office administrators involved in curriculum and instruction were deeply engaged in developing specific approaches to instructional improvement. A major focus of these efforts was designing a tiered intervention system for differentiating

services to students districtwide from academic and behavioral perspectives. In addition to the rigorous instruction that all Clifton Hill students would receive, additional supports were to include additional time, alternative materials, and close monitoring of student progress, among others. This system was beginning to be implemented at the close of the study.

In addition to the tiered intervention system, Clifton Hill administrators were scaling up activities that had been undertaken and proven to be effective at the district's school that was farthest along in Program Improvement. The costs of implementing the district's Program Improvement plan amounted to about 2 percent of the budget. Cuts directly affected implementation, requiring the elimination of weekly grade-level professional learning communities, an approach that the district was using to focus on language arts instruction.

Eaglemont

Eaglemont is a district covers two cities, the result of unifying several elementary and secondary districts in the late 1960s. A freeway runs through the middle of the district, with schools on one side of the freeway serving poorer, largely minority students, while schools on the other side serve a wealthier, whiter student population. The community and board are particularly also attached to the district's gifted and talented magnet program, operated at one of the elementary school sites. While the ethnic mix of the two cities has not changed substantially in recent years, the area has suffered from the recession and lost industrial jobs. As a result, the student population is poorer than in the past, although it has not changed substantially in terms of proportions of non-white and English learner children.

Like Clifton Hill, the Eaglemont district had recently invested in facilities, building a modern central office that some stakeholders referred to derogatively as "the Taj Mahal." By the late 2000s, the district faced decreasing enrollment because families were moving away from the area due to poor job prospects in the area. Simultaneously, it faced increased special education costs because of the significant number of foster care institutions inside the district's boundaries. Over my fieldwork, district leadership developed and implemented a plan for reducing the substantial costs incurred by serving students in private placements, converted an unused school site into a special education school. The board also looked into selling district land as a way of enhancing district revenue.

Despite considerable booster activity around music and specific sports, there were no active education foundations supporting district activities. To help music and sports stakeholders organize and raise money to save enrichment activities in the district, the superintendent allowed these groups deposit contributions into special bank accounts with the district. According to the superintendent's updates at board meetings, in spite of multiple fundraising efforts on the part of community members interested in bringing back elementary music program and sports, the dollars raised were not at the magnitude needed to actually support these programs. On the books, there was an Eaglemont

chamber of commerce education committee, but this committee had not been active in recent years.

The school board. Several veteran board members sat on the Eaglemont board, including two that had originally served in the 1980s and 1990s. These two individuals ran for election again in the 2000s in response to the identification of Eaglemont schools, and eventually the district, for Program Improvement status. The community elected one new board member over the study period, and this individual's campaign platform involved rolling back budget cuts. Unlike in Clifton Hill, there was not a clear-cut pattern among board members with regard to supporting or challenging the superintendent's policy proposals. Instead, board members were divided along political, religious, and cultural lines and highly responsive to community advocacy. One example I observed (and which administrators referenced in interviews) was the board's refusal to approve on the next school year's calendar, a months-long project that had just been negotiated with each of the district's associations. At a board meeting, a few parents argued that they had been left out of the process and the proposal would negatively affect the summer activities they had planned for their children. Their comments persuaded the board to direct administrators to rethink the proposal.

District administrators characterized the board as not being committed to the idea that all children can learn. According to one interviewee, six of the seven board members lived in a gated community and within the residential area of the one district site that housed Eaglemont's gifted program. This contrasted with the many students from a largely blue-collar community served by the district. In addition, top-level administrators characterized the board as less responsive to union pressures than the boards of other districts where they had worked previously. In fact, as part of budget cut negotiations, two board members explicitly called for union concessions because they did not want to further cut programs and services for students.

The superintendent and chief business officer. In contrast to the tension over district leadership in Clifton Hill, board members largely supported the superintendent. The superintendent held a doctoral degree, and had years of experience as a superintendent in California and out of state districts working to increase student achievement while dealing with shrinking revenues. She brought this experience to bear on how she structured budget cutting. In particular, she emphasized the importance of depersonalizing cuts and organizing cutbacks so that the board could lead the process. At the same time, she prioritized improving student learning and closing the achievement gap in the district, topics that she mentioned frequently in board meetings. Some of the standing board members at the time of the study had been involved in her recruitment and compared her leadership style and manner of working with the board positively with that of the prior superintendent.

Like the superintendent, the chief business officer was a well-seasoned professional who had been through the California state budget downturn in the early 2000s. While she was new to Eaglemont, starting in the district with the budget cycle that included Tier 3 categorical flexibility, she brought considerable experience with resource

decision making and fiscal leadership in other districts to the table. She and the superintendent helped facilitate multiple stakeholder feedback meetings that the board asked to see, in keeping with the board's preference to work directly with the public rather than having a budget advisory committee. To summarize these sessions, the chief business officer created spreadsheets that bundled the preferences of different employee and community groups and budget options that provided board members with the building blocks for negotiating cutbacks among each other. Board members described the chief business officer in very positive terms, valuing her straightforward and honest approach as well as her experience.

Ongoing instructional improvement efforts. When the district fell into districtwide Program Improvement, many senior staff (including the superintendent) left, producing what one board member termed a "brain drain." The school board then hired the current superintendent in 2008, an experienced administrator with years of working in similar districts, to raise student achievement and address program improvement requirements. Shortly afterwards, they hired a new chief business officer and chief academic officer as well. Across my interviews, many administrators characterized their work and responsibilities in terms of a mission of serving all students. One newly hired administrator commented that the strong commitment of the district to instructional improvement was one of the reasons she accepted the position in Eaglemont.

Over the course of fieldwork, the district continued to contract with a technical assistance educational organization to coach teachers on mathematics instruction, an effort that was done first at the elementary level but which was to expand to secondary. The costs of implementing the district's Program Improvement plan, including professional development for teachers on how to teach in larger class sizes, represented about 3 percent of the district budget.

To emphasize the district's focus on instructional improvement outside of the classroom, district leadership took steps to change practices in the central office. For example, the board approved closing the central office to the public one afternoon a week during the time that all teachers were engaged in professional learning communities and professional development activities. In addition, the categorical aid administrator in curriculum and instruction was influential in reshaping how decision making about particular programs was made: she developed a worksheet in which all purchase requests made by senior officials had to specifically detail how they addressed the Program Improvement plan's objectives. As a result, all potential purchases were discussed by the entire curriculum and instruction management team in light of their cost and contribution to addressing Program Improvement goals.

Wrapping up, after motivating the study design and approach to sampling, I provided background on the study districts to help situate their implementation of Tier 3 categorical flexibility within the scope of their larger budgeting work, struggles with continually decreasing revenues, and different actors' personal commitments and backgrounds. In the following chapters, we will begin to see how and why these

contextual conditions shaped how the two districts reallocated Tier 3 categorical resources.

Chapter 4. Implementing deregulation

Deregulation as an education policy initiative originated in the wake of the centralized reform efforts of the 1960s. Deregulation and related decentralization of authority in the school system has taken a variety of forms in recent decades: school-based management, breaking down districts into smaller, locally controlled regions, and school choice. Today, the idea of improving the quality of education while pulling back on resources is particularly appealing in light of the long-term fiscal challenges facing California, as well as other states and the federal government. Some advocates of this approach point to research that suggests districts and schools, faced with clear performance benchmarks under state and federal standards-based accountability systems, are already attempting to shift resources toward instructional improvement (Hamilton et al. 2008). Increased discretion over resources, the argument goes, will aid local efforts to focus on excellence in core academics, and should contrast with the traditional uses and educator preference-driven tendencies observed in an earlier generation of deregulation efforts (Fuhrman and Elmore 1995; Hood et al. 1982; Millsap et al. 1992; Picus 1991; Schenck and Beckstrom 1993).

This chapter provides an overview of the two districts' implementation of Tier 3 categorical flexibility. I investigate the processes by which administrators and school board members arrived at resource allocations. I identify a factor that crucially shaped the districts' implementation outcomes: differing views of district priorities held by administrators, board members, and district constituencies. I show that board members, through their professional backgrounds and personal commitments, held assumptions about schooling that extended beyond the narrow "academic excellence" focus encouraged by accountability norms. They valued, for example, providing enrichment activities and vocationally-oriented programming to keep students engaged and in school. In line with these tacit notions, and emerging from the formal structure of positions in districts, board members used their fiduciary authority initially to protect many resource allocations outside of the academic excellence conception of the district's work. They supported multiple, diverse district programs and services, rather engaging in purely rational prioritizing or extensively accommodating particular constituencies. In so doing, I demonstrate that school boards are central actors in shaping how districts responded to the state's move to deregulate Tier 3 categorical resources.

To make this argument, I draw from work on urban education politics that describes the influence and agency of school boards (Boyd and Wheaton 1983; Scribner and Layton 1995), and argues that the board, as a collective actor, may push different solutions than central office administrators. Extending the urban education politics contention that board members and central office administrators are differently responsive to political pressures, I argue that board members also do not necessarily channel the same tacit notions of schooling and the district's work as central office administrators and other educational professionals. I then explore patterns in the reallocation of Tier 3 categorical resources, examining overlap between competing tacit

notions of schooling and each district's accommodation of particular constituency preferences (that is, board members' use of informal cooptation to eliminate political opposition) in the distribution of budget cuts. I ask: How did boards and administrators prioritize among cuts, including Tier 3 categorical programs? What was the role of informal cooptation in each district's budgeting work?

The problem

Deregulation, as enacted under Tier 3 categorical flexibility legislation, did not take place in a vacuum. In order to maintain balanced budgets over the study period, the two districts had to make substantial cuts. Top-level district administrators and board members repeatedly emphasized their commitment to keeping those cuts away from kids and classrooms. But many of the cuts, to Tier 3 categorical programs and otherwise, tangibly affected the educational experience of students.

Both Clifton Hill and Eaglemont raised class sizes in kindergarten through third grade from twenty to thirty students per classroom in the second budget cycle. Both districts eliminated enrichment instruction (music and physical education) for elementary students and laid off specialist teachers. They scaled back the level of state-allocated discretionary funding that site leaders controlled. As a result, non-Title I school sites had minimal access to discretionary dollars to purchase items like paper. They cut assistant principals and classified staff at sites, generating concerns about impacts on student safety. Facilities maintenance activities were also limited to those that had a direct impact on safety.

Cuts also directly affected ongoing instructional improvement efforts. Both districts put off purchasing new standards-based textbooks adopted by the state, along with the professional development accompanying those adoptions. Both districts also eliminated other spending on professional development, including weekly release time that was used to implement grade-level professional learning communities in Clifton Hill. Intervention programs for underperforming students and opportunities to participate in summer school were also considerably scaled back.

Tier 3 categorical flexibility, in the context of overall budgetary strain, represented one way to lessen the impact of lost revenues. A review of budget documents shows that each district cut some, but not all, of its newly deregulated Tier 3 categorical programs. Eaglemont shifted 45 percent of its Tier 3 categorical[8] dollars into its general fund for the 2009-10 school year, and expanded this to 74 percent for 2010-11. Similarly, Clifton Hill shifted 30 percent of its Tier 3 categorical dollars for 2009-10, and bumped this up to 62 percent in 2010-11. But districts also continued to spend on many Tier 3 categorical programs. As described in Figure 4-1, both districts cut down on previously categorically-supported activities including: elementary art and music instruction, school and library improvement (generally passed down to sites as discretionary money), and standards-aligned instructional materials purchases. Clifton Hill reduced spending on a

[8] These figures exclude the one-time ability to recoup Tier 3 categorical program carryover balances.

wide range of Tier 3 categorical programs but kept them going. In contrast, Eaglemont eliminated multiple programs entirely.

Table 4-1. Implementation of Selected[9] Tier 3 Categorical Flexibility Programs

	Clifton Hill		Eaglemont	
	Budget cycle 1	Budget cycle 2	Budget cycle 1	Budget cycle 2
Adult education	○	⊙	⊙	⊙
Deferred maintenance	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Elementary art and music	⊙	⊙	●*	●
English tutoring (adult)	○	○	○	●
Gifted and talented	●	●	⊙	⊙
High school exit exam	○	⊙	○	⊙
Instructional materials	○	⊙	○	●
Pupil retention	○	○	○	●
Secondary counseling	○	⊙	●	●
Secondary programs	○	○	○	⊙
School safety	⊙	⊙	○	○
Staff mentoring	⊙	⊙	⊙	●
School and library improvement	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Teacher credentialing	○	○	⊙	●

●: Eliminated; ⊙: Reduced; ○: Protected

*: Eaglemont's board approved repurposing its elementary art and music funding to support job retention at large, but decided to close schools in order to maintain the program in 2009-10. This is the only instance I observed where funding was entirely shifted and the program continued to be offered. Starting in 2010-11, the program was eliminated.

Thus, reallocating Tier 3 categorical resources required administrators and board members to assess the linkages between a diverse range of educational activities and the district's core mission in some way. Understanding these linkages, however, required a certain degree of expertise in district operations and management. Clifton Hill and Eaglemont board members did not possess this expertise: none of the standing fourteen members had worked as a principal or in a district central office. For board members, implementing deregulation required learning about what each categorical aid program had been used for, and likely consequences of pulling a given funding stream to other uses.

Board members held diverse priorities for implementation. As one board member explained in an interview, "Staff presented [the categorical flexibility policy], they told what we spent it on and so forth. And then we kind of had this realization of how these different monies come in and what they're for. And, you know, how you can use them. And now all of a sudden you can use them for other programs. So now you have to kind of evaluate, is adult school important? Is P.E. important?" Further, because of the difficult fiscal climate, these assessments involved thinking about the degree to which a program supported the district's mission, as well as how valuable that program was in comparison to other programs the district offered. Clifton Hill's board president described the board's approach to implementation as follows. "Those decisions are made

[9] See Chapter 1 for a full list of all Tier 3 categorical flexibility programs that were allocated to school districts. This table focuses on programs that were discussed by board members during fieldwork.

based on what we're doing with the program, how much money can we get, what impact will it have on the program? And our needs of our students."

Disagreement at the board level as to what counted as top funding priorities contributed to politicking around how the districts could use Tier 3 categorical resources. One legacy of the bureaucratization of schooling over the 20th century has arguably been to heighten the legitimacy of educational professionals' preferences at the expense of other district constituencies (Chubb and Moe 1990; Tyack 1974). But the district's organizational structure grant democratically elected board members, not the superintendent, fiduciary authority. As a result, the boards in this study channeled a broader, more diverse range of constituency pressures than their administrations. These pressures, along with board members' personal commitments and tacit notions of schooling, contributed to moderating the extent to which districts used Tier 3 categorical flexibility resources to reinforce ongoing instructional improvement efforts. The standards-based accountability norms that administrators tended to draw from did not exert the same pull at the board level.

Findings

In deliberating how to cut district spending, board members did not necessarily have the same priorities for the district as administrators. Consequently, they had different ideas about what to do with deregulated Tier 3 categorical monies and how to "fairly" distribute budget cuts across district programs and services. As a result, boards reshaped how administrators initially planned to reallocate Tier 3 categorical resources. The first half of this chapter demonstrates that district administrators and board members held different priorities. I argue that these priorities were rooted in taken-for-granted assumptions about the purposes and obligations of schooling. I show that while district administrators were swept up in the logic of accountability and standards-based reform, many board members held onto older notions of real school. In the second half, I draw on the concept of informal cooptation to explore the extent to which boards-initiated adjustments to the superintendent's recommended budget cuts accommodated specific political pressures from outside the board room. I claim that board members' taken-for-granted, pluralistic notions of schooling moderated their willingness to wholly accommodate any one district constituency's preferences about how to use Tier 3 categorical resources.

Differences in district administration and school board priorities

District administrators and school board members had different priorities for what to protect from budget cuts. These differences became apparent in the context of deciding how to distribute budget cuts across programs and services. These priorities were rooted in taken-for-granted ideas and cultural assumptions about the district's responsibilities and obligations to its students. Interviews with board members and administrators suggest that overarching goals guiding district budgeting work were fairly consistent across both subunits. Both board members and district administrators in Clifton Hill and Eaglemont described instructional improvement and raising students' test scores as a major concern. Over half of my district administrator and board member informants named getting schools and the district out of Program Improvement and improving students' test scores

as a top priority. Slightly fewer named fiscal stability. These statements of priorities were similar across districts, as well as when confined to only board members or only administrators. In this section, I argue that administrators were highly attentive to the logic of accountability in their priorities for budget cuts, while school board members held a more pluralistic range of taken for granted assumption that aligned with "real school" notions of the responsibilities and obligations of the district.

Viewed from the central office in both districts, budget cuts needed to be concentrated away from efforts to improve student learning. Administrators directly involved in curriculum and instruction leadership (e.g., chief academic officers, elementary and secondary directors) emphasized the primacy of accountability pressures in their work roles and responsibilities. Eaglemont's chief academic officer, for example, described her work to me specifically in terms of the district's Program Improvement plan. She explained, that the district was working from a plan "which set out goals A through G. For an example, goal A was an instructional goal. Goal B was an alignment goal. There was an assessment goal. And so my job is to make those goals a reality in the district, thereby improving student achievement and bringing up test scores. That's it in a nutshell." While this connection to instruction was less direct for administrators working in finance (e.g., the chief business officers, budget directors, district accountants), I heard about accountability goals and pressures from these individuals as well. For example, Clifton Hill's chief business officer said that even though the district's instructional division took the lead with regard to implementing instructional improvement, the business division had "to support [Program Improvement plan goals] in the sense that the PI [Program Improvement] drives a lot of what the budget is." Across the districts, administrators oriented and defined their work in terms of accountability norms and improved test scores.

In contrast, a number of board members did not prioritize instructional improvement to the extent that they were willing to do away with other aspects of schooling, such as enrichment, vocational, and civic education activities. In interviews, some board members explicitly disagreed with de-emphasizing a range of programs to focus on the academic subjects tested under the accountability system. One Clifton Hill board member told me, "There are many things that we don't test on that are still important to the development of our children. Sports, music, arts. I think those things we do not test on, may not get specific funding for, but we've been able to—at least till now—been able to maintain funding for." Further, some board members (three of the eight I interviewed) expressed concern with their district's emphasis on bringing lower achieving students up to proficiency and administrators' push to realign resources district-wide toward this objective. On the one hand, they saw it as important that the district emerge from its Program Improvement status. On the other, they preferred not to let these criteria dominate their resource decision making and implementation of Tier 3 categorical flexibility.

These assumptions influenced how the two boards used their fiduciary authority in budgeting work. In each district, board members worked to find ways of maintaining programs and sharing the impact of cuts across many activities, rather than aligning

resource allocation with standards-based reform goals only. As board members deliberated about how to fairly distribute cuts across programs and students, administrators sometimes interjected to remind their boards of the district's Program Improvement status. For example, in the context of a workshop on the district's budget situation, the Eaglemont superintendent reminded the board, "From the feds, we get $8 million in Title I, so we are accountable for adequate yearly progress in English language arts, English language development, and math. For the district, the first priority, foremost we are focused on that. Second is on our high achieving students." The superintendent's characterization of district priorities specifically mapped onto accountability pressures, as assumed by the theory of action underlying deregulation. In contrast, the board's discussion before and after the superintendent's comment had to do with preserving a range of programs, and invoked diverse tacit notions of schooling (e.g., maintaining a "comprehensive" education, providing enrichment opportunities).

Board members justified their emphasis on maintaining a range of programs and enrichment activities by linking to ideas that the district was failing to address the learning needs of its higher performing students. In an interview, an Eaglemont board member told me, "Some of us think it's extremely important in this day and age, there's a lot of emphasis on helping the low end, low achieving students. I'm not in that camp. I want to see it spread across the whole spectrum." Similarly, during a board meeting, a Clifton Hill board member commented, "What continually comes up is people understand the need to work with the far below basic, below basic kids. But not once does the district talk about proficiency and advanced. What we're not doing says a lot, and people take their kids elsewhere." This statement suggests that at least some board members were interested in finding ways to compensate for the district's predominant focus on underperforming students.

Observations of resource decision making provided some concrete examples in which board members actively resisted implementing cuts that aligned with accountability norms. They characterized administrators' cuts as unfairly prioritizing the educational needs of lower-performing students and the academic subjects tested. Board members sought to maintain funding for the district's offerings that signaled a "real" educational experience to them, including offering a range of programs and presence of extracurricular activities. This is consistent with Metz's (1989) characterization of the elements that characterize what she terms "real school." She claims while actual schools differ considerably in their practices and the ways that they affect students, "real school" is signaled by the presence of certain pervasive, expected elements such as the scope and sequence of the curriculum, extracurricular activities like athletics, and the presence of standard textbooks in classrooms. In contrast, accountability norms and standards-based reform define schooling in relation to students' reading and mathematics test scores.

These competing notions show that we cannot assume that the institutional environment in which districts' resource decision making takes place is dominated by the same norms and values for all participants. Despite growing evidence that educational professionals are increasingly structuring their work in ways that respond to accountability norms (Hamilton et al. 2008), we cannot assume that other district

constituencies have similarly internalized the logic of accountability. Instead, both districts' implementation of Tier 3 categorical flexibility suggested that some constituencies' preferences powerfully influenced resource decision making in spite of limited direct linkages to students' test scores or research on effective approaches to instructional improvement. Board members' statements about what they refused to cut during public board meetings give some indication of how each board perceived the district's educational obligations to the community. In Eaglemont, this included opposing closing schools, cutting transportation for students, and closing libraries. In Clifton Hill, board members stated their opposition to raising primary grade class sizes, cutting secondary athletics, and closing libraries. What accounts for how these competing priorities influenced the distribution of budget cuts?

Understanding resource allocation inside districts

Political scientists read resource allocation as a snapshot of political negotiations (Wildavsky 1986), in the context of which organizational leaders can sometimes informally share power with powerful political opponents or constituencies in order to promote organizational stability (Piven and Cloward 1993; Selznick 1949). Selznick (1949) terms this accommodation process, which he uncovered his focal study of the Tennessee Valley Authority, "informal cooptation." I found that how the two school boards adjusted their administrators' recommendations somewhat mirrored preferences articulated by mobilized and powerful district constituencies. But neither board wholly accommodated either dominant constituency or administrator preferences. I argue that, emerging from the democratically accountable nature of school board positions, board members channeled more pluralistic notions of schooling as well as competing political pressures. In response, they attempted to accommodate many constituencies' preferences (rather than represent those articulated by more powerful groups only) as they deliberated about how to distribute budget cuts within the district.

Administrators' recommendations shaped budget cuts in line with the logic of accountability

The task of developing recommendations for budget cuts was not an activity undertaken by the superintendent in isolation in either district. But when administrators took the lead in crafting budget recommendations, their expertise shaped the recommended budget cuts and resulted in greater coherence. This section illustrates that how administrators engaged in processes somewhat approximated the "rational" prioritizing predicted by theories of deregulation. I first trace what took place in each district, then examine how they contrasted in key ways.

Eaglemont. Eaglemont's superintendent worked extensively with her fiscal and educational services staff to develop three cohesive recommendations packages. Each one of the three packages reached the needed level of reductions. In an interview, she described this as a way to help the board feel in control of the reductions process, as well as ensuring that the enacted cuts were legal (as compared with ideas that board members might come up with on the spot). After going through several revisions internal to the central office, the superintendent facilitated four stakeholder meetings and asked for written feedback on how these groups prioritized different components of the packages.

The feedback was then reviewed and incorporated into the packages. The first version that went before the board was labeled "version 4." After the board approved part of that set of recommendations and individual board members stated what they saw as top priorities, administrators prepared a fifth version.

In the second budget cycle, this process looked very similar. But each package reallocated Tier 3 categorical resources that had supported the elementary art and music programs. This was because, as the chief business officer put it, there was no way to achieve the target for cutbacks without including this large chunk of Tier 3 categorical dollars.

Clifton Hill. In contrast with Eaglemont, Clifton Hill's superintendent took a more direct hand in shaping the recommendations herself. She engaged in less back and forth with her board. She did consult, however, with a recently formed district Budget Advisory Committee, composed of representatives of all employee groups and the community. This committee's charge was to provide guidance around budget cuts and resource decision making. In addition, the superintendent in collaboration with a board member held a community forum about the district's budget situation. At this forum, they asked stakeholder groups to provide ideas about the district's top priorities and areas that could be cut. Neither the Budget Advisory Committee nor the community forum generated consensus around anything close to the level of cuts that were needed. In the end, the superintendent crafted the recommended budget cuts on her own. She summarized the process as follows. "I was given a charge by the board, did what I could do the best way. Does it leave us open to vulnerability? Yes. I gave it my due diligence. I did it by myself, with some advice." (recorded board meeting notes, 3/2/09)

This process looked quite different the following year. With the chief academic officer standing in as interim superintendent, Clifton Hill's board charged its own finance committee with crafting a set of recommendations. The finance committee asked each board member to identify reductions from a long list of cost-estimates, then consolidated this information into "consensus" recommendations. The finance committee's choices about what to include and exclude in their recommendations, thus, shaped the range of alternatives actively considered by the board. When board members began budget deliberations in public, they worked from a spreadsheet that had the Budget Advisory Committee and board finance committee recommended cuts side-by-side.

How did these contrasting processes matter for the distribution of budget cuts? In Clifton Hill and Eaglemont, superintendents were ostensibly expert in balancing priorities and the operational needs of the "whole" district against the elements that specific constituencies preferred. In both districts, they developed recommendations for cuts in consultation with other top-level executives. The two superintendents also solicited input from the public and specific groups of district stakeholders. But this input was not necessarily viable or even legal. For example, administrator reported receiving feedback such as reducing district spending on special education and cutting teachers' salaries, steps that the district could not actually take. As a result, administrators needed to do more than aggregate the priorities and preferences of district stakeholders. They needed

to craft a cohesive set of cuts that would minimize long-term harm to the district, while incorporating diverse stakeholder priorities. In general, these recommendations aligned with priorities that corresponded with accountability pressures.

Observations suggest that when administrators took the lead in crafting budget recommendations, their expertise shaped the recommended budget cuts and resulted in greater coherence. This coherence was present in the packages presented to boards across the two budget cycles in Eaglemont and the first budget cycle in Clifton Hill. Administrators developed the set of cuts they recommended as options that together minimized long-term harm to the district and protected funding for core academics and activities related to instructional improvement. However, this coherence was less evident in Clifton Hill's second budget cycle when the board took the lead. There, administrators provided expertise when asked by board members. This new format did not provide an opportunity for the superintendent and top-level executive administrators to develop cohesive cuts that together addressed district or, for that matter, board priorities. As a result, expertise played a much weaker role in the second budget cycle in Clifton Hill. Now I turn to the ways in which board members acted on administrators' recommendations about how to distribute budget cuts.

Board members adjusted administrators' recommendations

Across the study, board members reshaped the Tier 3 budget cuts recommended by their staff. This took place in two ways: through direction to staff as budget cuts were being developed and as part of finalizing budget cuts. But though Selznick (1949) suggests that informal cooptation is particularly likely to occur in organizations headed up by representative leadership, the distribution of budget cuts inside the study districts suggested that diverse priorities limited boards' willingness to wholly accommodate particular constituencies at the expense of others.

Board members rejected specific recommendations during board meetings multiple times. In the first budget cycle in Clifton Hill, one board member disliked the administration's recommendation to cut elementary specialists, the teachers that delivered enrichment music and physical instruction to students. One of the programs she hoped to cut as a way of keeping these teachers was the Instructional Materials Realignment Funding Program. This Tier 3 categorical program provided dollars for the purchase of standards-based instructional materials. She reported that a neighboring district had cut this program and saved $360,000. The superintendent, chief business officer, and chief academic officer each cautioned that this program helped the district replace consumable textbooks for elementary students. In addition, the district was due to purchase standards-based Spanish-language materials for mathematics instruction. The decision ultimately rested on the issue of what was mandated. When the trustee tried to clarify that these purchases were optional, the chief academic officer answered, "No, it is a mandate that we do it. Every day our teachers are waiting."

Ultimately, the board implemented a partial cut to this program based on a recommended amount that the chief academic officer estimated "would be doable, but tight." (fieldnotes, 3/2/09). By shifting resources around, the board restored specialist

positions. This illustrates the importance of the board's role and influence in resource reallocation, as well as highlighting the ways in constituency preferences (in this case, middle class parents that valued the district's commitment to enrichment for students) helped reinforce board members' personal orientations. As I noted earlier, board members in Clifton Hill (as well as in Eaglemont), consistently identified music supporters as among the most vocal and mobilized constituency in the district.

Boards' selective adoption of recommendations meant that other activities needed to be cut in order to balance the district budget. This shuffling of cuts limited administrators' ability to generate accurate cost estimates. This was particularly evident where board members introduced and approved new budget cuts during the board meeting before administrators reviewed the implications of the cut. For example, in the second budget cycle, the Eaglemont board decided to remove library technicians from the budget cut list. But they had not previously asked staff to estimate the cost of these positions separate from the proposed cut to libraries as a whole. The result was that business services staff worked during the remainder of the board discussion to generate and double-check a reasonable estimate of keeping libraries open by funding library technicians only. I documented a similar instance in Clifton Hill, also over library technicians. In both of these instances, administrators' estimates were slightly off, initiating a new round of tussling over resources.

Second, the cuts introduced by board members were loosely, at best, rooted in the actual operation of programs. For example, board members, especially in Clifton Hill, sometimes moved to minimize the impact of cuts to a specific program by locating smaller cuts across a broad swath of programs. For example, in both budget cycles, Clifton Hill's board asked to see reductions of $10,000 or $20,000 to individual line items as they reviewed the entire district budget. This had the impact of spreading cuts across many programs and activities. In general, administrators agreed that these smaller amounts of cuts could be made without decimating programs. But unlike when administrators recommended cuts, board-brainstormed cuts were not linked to specific plans as to how the cuts would be implemented or how the program might be reconfigured to deliver the needed level of savings. The Clifton Hill chief academic officer explained what this looked like from inside the central office.

> If it's "find $10,000" and they [administrators] look at their choices and come up with $10,000, they also are figuring out how to live without that $10,000. Because, you know, it's crumbs. All we're left with are the crumbs. So yeah…that $10,000 that impacts our programs. Here's how we'll adapt and adjust. And what they've been doing now for the last three years really is, you know, figuring out about what are they gonna give up?

This approach to budget cutting constrained administrators' ability to connect dollars to a concrete impact on district activities. This also meant that board members were less than fully informed about the likely consequences of their resource decisions. In an interview, one Eaglemont board member explained the board simply hadn't understood that they had eliminated the bulk of librarians when they approved the recommended cuts. This

became clear only when they saw the number of full-time equivalent positions that were attached to the dollar amount of the library cut. Nonetheless, board members responded to each "final" set of recommended budget cuts by trying to save at least some of the activities that their administration recommended for cuts. This took place in both of the budget cycles documented in this study.

Despite this general tendency to redistribute cuts recommended by administrators, a few board members felt that this activism was inappropriate given the board's lack of expertise in this area. They cautioned their fellow board members about the fine line between fiscal oversight and micromanaging. For example, one Clifton Hill board member retorted to a suggested change, "I'm not a superintendent. You're not a superintendent. Let's listen to the superintendent. She knows how to make those decisions on what's happening in district office. Now we're second-guessing her." (recorded board meeting, 2/24/09). Similar conversations took place in Eaglemont in the second budget cycle, where some board members reminded their colleagues that the district was in Program Improvement and they needed to focus on the core instructional program, rather than figuring out ways to protect elementary enrichment and athletics activities. But across both budget cycles, both boards adjusted their administrators' recommendations in order to maintain a range of programs and services. To what extent do political explanations account for these adjustments?

Board members discounted political pressures from some constituencies

Consistent with scholarship on school board policy making (Alsbury 2008a; Greene 1992; Howell 2005), the two districts' enacted budget cuts reflected input and feedback received from the community. As described above, the Clifton Hill and Eaglemont school boards adjusted the budget cuts their superintendents recommended, bringing back some programs that had been proposed for elimination. However, those adjustments did not uniformly mirror the preferences of the most powerful and mobilized constituencies, particularly in the second year of budget cuts. Board members and administrators alike identified music and athletics supporters as vocal, active, and persistent. Yet both boards ultimately reallocated funding from these programs as part of balancing the district budget.

Public comment did overlap with how some board members perceived and tried to protect "real school" from budget cuts. Table 4-2 summarizes the topic of public comments over two budget cycles. A number of comments across the two districts and over time had to do with minimizing teacher layoffs and keeping primary class sizes small. In the second budget cycle, threatened cuts to secondary athletics resulted in a major outpouring of community support: more than one-third of all public comments in Clifton Hill and one-quarter of all public comments in Eaglemont.

Table 4-2. Topic of public comment in Clifton Hill and Eaglemont districts, budget cycles 1 and 2

	Clifton Hill		Eaglemont	
	Budget cycle 1 (N=76)	Budget cycle 2 (N=55)	Budget cycle 1 (N=230)	Budget cycle 2 (N=90*)
Elementary specialists	4%	9%	31%	33%
Budget process	15%	9%	6%	3%
Career-technical and adult education programs	27%	13%	8%	1%
School closure	--	--	14%	--
Teachers, class size in grades K-3	25%	18%	13%	11%
Secondary athletics	2%	35%	2%	25%

*The Eaglemont board asked public commenters to gather into groups, and assigned each group 10 minutes to make their case. As a result the number of public speakers is lower than the number of individuals that signed up.

Neither boards' approved cuts predominantly reflect constituency pressures, either as identified in interviews or based on analysis of public comment in board meetings. Clifton Hill and Eaglemont's boards both raised primary class sizes in each budget cycle, as well as reducing or eliminating district funding for elementary specialists and secondary athletics in the second budget cycle. Board members rationalized these departures in three ways. First, the individuals making up the board did not necessarily interpret their role as representing the preferences of the most powerful constituencies. Some saw their roles as trustees for the district. For example, one Eaglemont board member contrasted the community's anger about the board's decision to close schools with the fact that by closing schools, the board had been able to balance the budget and continue providing elementary music and other programs valued in the Eaglemont community. She explained,

> The reason why you're in your role is because members of the community elected you. You weren't hired, you weren't at this point appointed. You were elected by voters. And voters want certain things. And sometimes you can't always meet their demands or their wants or their needs because you've had to prioritize students. And even though their desires and their needs may also center around students, the priorities might be different.

Second, some board members specifically conceived their role as speaking up for community members not able to attend board meetings to speak up for programs they valued. During board deliberations, for example, the Clifton Hill board president interrupted a discussion about whether more people supported music or athletics. He stated, "We're not up here making cuts based on number of people here, because not everyone has time, can get babysitters, whatever the case may be." In this way, even though board members felt political pressures from particular constituency groups, thye did not necessarily feel it was appropriate to cede control over the distribution of budget cuts and reallocation of Tier 3 categorical resources to these groups.

Finally, some board members did conceptualize their role in terms of representing constituency preferences but saw themselves as representing only a specific constituency

or community within the region served by the district. A different Eaglemont board member reflected on this point in an interview, explaining "We are seven people elected from the community. I look at us as representatives of the community. We make decisions based on that, but there is not one cohesive community that we represent. There are lots of little communities."

In sum, these three views about how to appropriately balance heterogeneous preferences led to different ideas about how best draw on deregulation to address budgetary and accountability pressures facing the district. These conceptions of the board role, despite its democratically accountable nature, moderated the influence of straightforward political pressure by powerful, single-issue district constituencies. The way that the two boards adjusted their administrators' recommendations demonstrates that board members were unwilling to adopt budget cuts that violated their own real school and pluralistic notions of schooling, despite political pressures from some quarters.

Board members steered away from legal and labor complications

Boards also adopted specific types of administrators' recommendations in spite of personal commitments or constituency preferences. Namely, board members primarily followed administrators' recommended cuts where they saw specific restrictions or mandates involved. Administrators' characterizations of what the district must do, in light of their management and operations expertise, contributed to maintaining stability and existing resource allocations in place in a number of cases. This suggests that some aspects of implementation can be explained by the specific instances in which board members were willingly to forego their preferred resource allocations in light of potential legal and labor complications. Labor and legal rationales were persuasive with the two boards in a way that accountability appeals, also articulated by administrators, were not.

Labor issues. Inside budgeting meetings, administrators in both districts recommended that the board avoid cuts to item that fell under the district's collective bargaining agreements, in spite of the large proportion of district dollars they represented. For example, when chief business officers talked about reductions, they emphasized that the board did could not enact certain kinds of cuts because they required agreement from the unions, and this was unlikely to be reached before certain budget-related deadlines. As an example of what this looked like in boards' resource negotiations, when Clifton Hill's board reviewed its budget, the board finance committee chair noted about one line item dealing with a grant that funded some counselor positions that the board was "under advisement not to take action tonight." As a result, even though there were board members were interested in lowering the number of counselors, this line item was excluded from consideration because it related to labor issues and contract negotiations. Instead, changes of this sort would come later, as unions agreed to concessions that would allow the district to restore some of the cuts approved by the board. This had the effect of focusing budget cuts on the less than 20 percent of the district budget that did not have to do with salaries and benefits.

Legal issues. Boards also depended on district leaders to navigate legal mandates relevant for how they could use categorical funding that still retained strings (such as Tier 1 and 2 state categorical programs and federal Title I funding). As reductions were made to Tier 3 categorical programs, districts had to figure out how to continue serving students in ways that kept the district in compliance. For example, as part of Clifton Hill's budget deliberations, the board began discussing cutting some or all of a grant. The superintendent then explained that this would mean the district "need[s] to buy something else that serves all students." Since the board had already repurposed funding from a Tier 3 categorical program that funded mostly site discretionary spending in the prior year, the district had reorganized how it passed funds through to different schools. This was in part to ensure that all schools had some discretionary funding.

Consequently, standing district organizational structures cooled out a number of board ideas for budget cuts and reallocating resources. Boards generally altered the recommendations away from a narrow focus on accountability demands. At the same time, they left certain kinds of cuts alone. This analysis suggests that ties to labor and

legal issues were perceived as compelling reasons for board members to defer to their superintendent's expertise. As a result, resource allocations tied personnel or potentially subject to negative audit findings remained in place, reinforced by shared perceptions about their necessity across board members and administrators. In contrast, as described above, the priorities articulated in the accountability system did not prove so uniformly persuasive at the level. Board members consistently sought to ensure that they implement cuts they believed would serve the interests of the district, interests that they perceived more clearly than administrators because of their position as lay politicians. Tier 3 categorical flexibility was primarily used as a tool for maintaining programs that were threatened by reduced levels of resources overall. Its direct ties to accountability norms and standards-based reform were looser than theories of deregulation predict. How the study districts reallocated resources also reflected the ways in which pluralistic, real school notions established bounds of acceptable levels of cuts, which in turn conscribed the influence of some powerful constituencies.

Discussion

Recent research on state and federal education policy implementation emphasizes the non-monolithic, often fragmented character of district implementation activities (Spillane 1998). District organizational structures shape who responds to which aspects of a policy. In this way, implementation is constrained and enabled by how these organizational structures distribute responsibilities for implementation across some actors for whom the policy is a top priority and others for whom it is little more than background noise. My findings extend this line of work by emphasizing the leadership role that school boards play, through their fiduciary authority, in deciding what district functions and activities they can afford, and which are luxuries in the context of budgetary strain. Board members I spoke with saw themselves as policy makers. They believed they should leave administration in the hands of their one staff member, the superintendent. But they also actively adjusted their administration's budget recommendations. This chapter demonstrates the need to conceptualize boards as actors that actively shape how districts use the discretion over resources granted through deregulation, rather than assume that their behavior is largely irrelevant to these processes.

The formal structure of positions in districts is particularly important as we think about the relationship between resource allocation and how districts are presumed to respond to sanctions tied to student test scores. This chapter showed that board members channel a wider range of notions of schooling and constituency pressures than administrators. In line with the idea that the bureaucratic context of schooling prioritizes and legitimizes the preferences of educational professionals over other constituencies (Chubb and Moe 1990; Tyack 1974), administrators responded to accountability pressures by outlining budget cut recommendations and an implementation of deregulation that protected the specific instructional improvement activities outlined in the districtwide Program Improvement plan.

Standards-based reform has been positioned as a policy tool for prioritizing student and community interests over those of educational professionals (Sunderman

2010). But even in the context of districtwide Program Improvement sanctions, the two districts in this study responded to deregulation in a fragmented rather than cohesive way. In response to more powerful constituencies, boards attempted to maintain of a range of programs and services, even those many of these activities did not clearly tie to district instructional improvement efforts. Selznick (1949) suggests that implementation controlled by representative boards is particularly likely to be coopted because board members are individually directly democratically accountable to district constituencies. As a result, this theory predicts, boards are more likely to be focused on eliminating political opposition in the short-term, and are more inclined to informally grant powerful constituencies access to organizational decision making than top-level district administrators.

My findings suggest, however, that boards' willingness to share power with constituencies with regard to decision making about Tier 3 categorical flexibility was limited. Neither board simply accommodated the most vocal and powerful district constituencies. Instead, boards' adjustments to the superintendent's recommended budget cuts appeared where recommendations contradicted board members' own notions of schooling. Further, board members tended to discount straightforward political pressures that they perceived as contrary to their obligations to students and the community. In this way, boards' priorities, flowing from tacit notions of schooling, moderated particular constituents' ability to coopt how deregulation translated into local discretion over Tier 3 categorical resources.

Boards are key players in district resource decision-making. But they aren't necessarily focused on issues of instruction and do not prioritize instruction as their only or even primary criteria in evaluating what programs were most important for the district. Instead, maintaining programs emerged as a major influence as they prioritized among budget cuts, particularly those elements that represent real school. In this way, board members were influenced by the way that power was distributed in their communities: they responded to constituencies that favored notions of schooling other than those called out in accountability norms. Even as district administrators and board members both sought to preserve as much of a high quality program as they could, they did not share the same cultural assumptions about the district's work. Despite research suggesting a growing internalization of accountability norms and values among educators, my findings are a reminder that these pressures are far from a uniform guide to action, particularly outside of educational professionals.

I have further argued that how boards capitalized on the expertise of district administrators can play a significant role in how districts interact with policies that deregulate and decentralize discretion over resources. With those at the table for resource decision making differently inclined to support particular constituencies' preferences, and holding diverse notions of the responsibilities of the district, resource reallocation becomes a more complicated endeavor. Identifying priority areas and core activities is all the more difficult in the absence of agreed-upon goals.

This chapter offers a first step towards conceptualizing the school board as a critical actor in district implementation processes. As implementation outcomes described here demonstrate, boards exert considerable influence and agency over resource decision making and budget cuts through the formal structure of positions in districts. I expand on how the interactions that comprise district budgeting routines connect to tacit notions of schooling and organizational structures in implementation in the next two chapters.

Chapter 5. Deinstitutionalization? Relational dynamics and deregulation

Decades of research on education policy implementation have taught us that contextual conditions can matter a great deal for what a policy looks like on the ground (McLaughlin 1987; Odden 1991). Contemporary theory and discourse on implementation see variation as inherent to large-scale policies and instead directs our attention specifically to the dimensions and processes of policies, people, and places (Honig 2006b). Empirical research examining how and why these three dimensions combine as they do emphasizes the importance of cognitive and interactive group processes in producing implementation.

Building from these theoretical developments, I claim that to understand Tier 3 categorical flexibility implementation in the two study districts, we need to better understand the dynamics shaping how district administrators, board members, and other stakeholders engage in resource decision making and the extent to which they trust each other to make cuts that represent the least long-term harm to the district. In Chapter 4, I established that the working theories of action I drew from deregulation and conventional educational politics poorly characterized my observations from fieldwork. In this chapter, I closely examine the group processes that comprised one district budgeting routine using a neoinstitutional line of analysis to explicate how and why the two study districts responded to deregulation and discretion over Tier 3 categorical resources as they did.

I have two goals for this chapter with respect to understanding the process of deinstitutionalization. The first is to demonstrate similarities across the districts in how the central office responded to deregulation, and in connection with this, maintained or discarded standard categorical aid practices. Having established similarity between the study districts in this respect, I analyze differences over time in how each district carried out the same budgeting routine. I show that despite the maintenance of many institutionalized categorical aid practices in both central offices, Clifton Hill's board abandoned the tradition of administrative discretion with respect to Tier 3 categorical programs while Eaglemont's board maintained it. I claim that the level of board-administration relational trust was a driving force influencing board members perceptions of the appropriateness of staff recommendations about reallocating Tier 3 categorical resources. In line with these perceptions, board members manipulated the budget cutting routine differently in the study districts, with consequences for the practice of administrative discretion over Tier 3 categorical programs.

Routines and relational trust

In this study, district budgeting routines were the primary context in which Tier 3 categorical flexibility intersected with the tradition of delegating discretion over categorical aid decision making to administrators. This chapter draws on change over time in one budgeting routine to illuminate the process of deinstitutionalization. Bringing together findings from Chapter 4 that highlighted the distribution of budget cuts as the

product of interactions between people's tacit conceptions of schooling, district organizational structures, and political pressures, I draw explicitly on the idea that people manipulate and use institutionalized practices. Though deeply institutionalized practices tend to produce conformity (Scott 2001), people can and do hold conflicting views about their meaning and relevance (Friedland and Alford 1991). Further, in contexts where social ties are absent or negative, people are more likely to pursue courses of action that promote institutional conflict and deinstitutionalization (Zucker 1988). Drawing on these ideas, I conceptualize relational trust as one asset participants to district budgeting routines may draw on to challenge "the way things are done"—that is, the resource allocations in place before deregulation.

This chapter investigates how the level of relational trust between the board and administration influenced the distribution of budget cuts I established in Chapter 4. Following Barley (1986) and Orlikowski (1996), I examine district budgeting routines as critical sites for observing the erosion of practices. While organizational routines have long been assumed to contribute to organizational stasis (Cyert and March 1963), empirical analyses demonstrate that, to the contrary, a great deal of change happens through routinized work activities (Feldman 2000; Feldman and Pentland 2003; Sherer and Spillane 2011). In particular, even though people have guiding principles and expectations about how to accomplish a habitual routine, actual performances of the routine inevitably involve different participants and particular moments in space and time (Feldman and Pentland 2003). Sometimes these changes may contribute to altering how work is accomplished (Orlikowski 1996). Such changes can have important implications for how people interpret the usefulness and relevance of practices.

This chapter argues that institutionalized, conventional categorical aid practices reflect and reinforce perceptions about how to legitimately allocate resources within the district. These practices embody standard ways in which people in districts have worked out how to manage and legally account for how they transform categorical aid resources into programs and services for students. As I noted previously, documented district responses to new categorical aid programs include bringing on specialized personnel and developing organizational structures to ensure funded services comply with relevant rules and regulations (Hannaway 1985; J. Meyer et al. 1987). In turn, as I illustrated in Chapter 4, such organizational structures can influence how district stakeholders interpret the connections between categorical aid and the district's educational mission, through linkages to professional norms and task conceptions.

But at the same time, properties specific to an organization at a particular time and space, such as authority, trust, interpersonal ties, and expertise, shape how people carry out habitual work together (Feldman 2004). While some actors are better equipped to bring about change because of their organizational position, others can be persuasive because they are trusted or are regarded as having expert information relevant to tasks at hand (Fligstein 2001).

I employ the concept of relational trust to analyze how board members and administrators carried out one budgeting routine over time and across districts. As I

highlighted in the study's conceptual framework, relational trust comes from repeated interactions between people, and is built up, sustained, and dissipated through how people carry out habitual routines over time (Bryk and Schneider 2004). The same kinds of repeated interactions can also foster negative beliefs and distrust (Lewicki, McAllister, and Bies 1998). By definition, participants in routines are dependent on the actions and decisions of others. I analyzed how board members' and administrators worked together to produce the implementation of Tier 3 categorical flexibility by drawing on key dimensions of this definition of relational trust. I show that where I observed the deinstitutionalization of administrative discretion over Tier 3 categorical resources, the board also was unwilling to follow staff recommendations about reallocating Tier 3 categorical resources and insisted on carrying out the budgeting routine in ways that violated administrators' conceptions of their roles and responsibilities.

The budget cutting routine

This chapter analyzes one district budgeting routine to illustrate the ways in which participants to resource decision making negotiated a subset of well-rehearsed, institutionalized categorical practices in response to deregulation. The budget cutting routine has several defining characteristics. It is carried out annually whenever district expenditures exceed anticipated revenues. Historically, the time between iterations has often been lengthy, and where needed adjustments are minor, it can be a largely pro-forma event. The participants are administrators, who have expertise in the management and operations of the district, and board members, who have fiduciary authority over the district's budget. And, as I described in the previous chapter, the structure of positions in districts constrains the degree to which administrators can directly shape resource allocation.

There are five phases that punctuate how districts move from cuts recommended by administrators to a set of cuts approved by a majority of board members: presentation of staff recommendations; board questions; public comment; board discussion; and voting (see Table 5-1). These phases reflect the legal requirements established by California's Brown Act, the sunshine law that outlines the standard steps boards must take as part of taking action (California Attorney General's Office 2003). First, the chief business officer introduces the staff recommendations and points out what she sees as highlights or key take-away points for the board. Second, board members ask questions to the superintendent or chief business officer about the recommendations and prepared budget materials. Sometimes these questions have to do with reading the budget correctly; in other cases, the questions can be fairly technical. Third, members of the public speak one at a time about the recommendations. Fourth, the board discusses the recommendation, with individual board members stating their preferences and trying to identify where the board is in agreement. Fifth, the board votes on a set of cuts, with a majority needed for the cuts to move forward. The five phases are generally accomplished within a single board meeting, although I documented the routine being stretched over two meetings in two of the five iterations described in this chapter.

Table 5-1. Description of the Budget Cutting Routine

Phase	Description
Presentation of "staff recommendations" for budget cuts	The chief business officer introduces the agenda action item titled "Board action item identifying specific budget reductions," and points out highlights. Board members have already received copies of these recommendations as part of their meeting materials. Sometimes the budget cuts are also provided to the public as a handout or projected overhead.
Board questions	Board members ask questions to clarify particular aspects of the budget cuts. These questions range from asking about changes in budget numbers since a prior cost analysis, to what particular line items actually pay for. Sometimes questions asked during this period preview issues that will be raised in the board discussion period.
Public comment	The board clerk opens the public comment (also referred to as "request to speak") period, where the board hears comments from members of the public. The clerk introduces each individual who submitted a public comment card prior to the beginning of the agenda item, and who they are (e.g., a district teacher, a parent, a city council member). Typically the clerk limits public comment at board meetings to 3 minutes per person
Board discussion	The board begins discussing the budget cut list. Board discussion differs from board questions in that board members state their preferences and make arguments to try to persuade their fellow board members to commit to a subset of suggested reductions or remove particular cuts from the list. Board members sometimes ask the superintendent or chief business officer to explain the consequences of removing various line items from the list, or provide recommendations regarding a solution just brainstormed by the board. Very occasionally, the superintendent or chief business officer interjects to clarify that the solution under discussion is illegal or problematic for some reason.
Board vote	The discussion closes when a board member motions to approve some version of the budget cut list. Once another board member seconds the motion, the full board votes. When the discussion has shown some items remain particularly controversial among board members, the board may choose to vote separately on subsets of reductions.

Completing this routine sets in motion numerous activities in the district office. First, the board-approved cuts give business administrators their marching orders with respect to the substantive content of the district budget reviewed by the county office. Second, board-approved cuts are converted into a specific number of layoffs, the basis for the layoff proceedings carried out by human relations administrators. Third, board-approved cuts indicate the specific resource allocations that administrators could use to deliver programs and services to students

This chapter analyzes five iterations of the budget cutting routine. Four of these five iterations were carried out at the standard time of year, so were tied to deadlines for pink slip notifications and submitting a balanced budget to the county office (late February and early March in 2009 and 2010). I observed one further iteration in Clifton Hill in June 2010. Because this was due to an accounting mistake, it was not as involved as other iterations I observed. It did, however, provide further data regarding the evolution of how the budget cutting routine was carried out in this district.

Tier 3 categorical flexibility legislation initially required that a separate public hearing be held for changes to be made to Tier 3 programs,[10] and I documented staff attention to making sure these hearings were held and fulfilled legal requirements. Clifton Hill held eight such hearings over the course of the study, while Eaglemont held four. Despite this new mandated structure, neither district created a separate routine for decision making specific to Tier 3 categorical programs. Instead, decision making about how to implement deregulation was bundled in with the existing budget cutting routine. This contributed to constructing Tier 3 categorical flexibility as continuous with the prior array of practices that governed budgeting for categorical aid. In addition, my observations suggested many critical choices about Tier 3 categorical resource reallocation took place inside this particular routine.

In sum, this chapter uses the budget cutting routine to illustrate how dynamics inside the routine can link to the process of deinstitutionalization. This routine's template is well-defined and held in place by statutory requirements, providing a clear beginning and end, allowing me to easily compare iterations over time and across districts. The data analysis reflects the idea of deinstitutionalization as a contested process that unfolds over time and through people's face-to-face interactions.

Findings

How Clifton Hill and Eaglemont carried out the budget cutting routine varied in very visible ways. In Clifton Hill, administrators decided not to incorporate Tier 3 categorical flexibility into the staff recommendations presented to the board. Most changes to the allocation of Tier 3 categorical flexibility resources were at the behest of the board. Some board members in this district, in particular, interpreted Tier 3 categorical flexibility as an opportunity to share the burden of cuts across people and programs. The district shifted funding away from a small number of Tier 3 categorical programs in the first budget cycle, and cut a greater number of Tier 3 categorical programs, and more deeply, in the second budget cycle. The situation was different in Eaglemont, where administrators up front recommended shifting funding for many Tier 3 categorical programs into the unrestricted general fund. The district cut a number of Tier 3 categorical programs. But at the same time, it deployed general, unrestricted funding in support the goals of many Tier 3 categorical programs that they viewed as good for students.

In this chapter, I first describe how central office administrators responded to Tier 3 categorical flexibility. Then, I describe how each district carried the budget cutting routine over time. I highlight key contrasts in the board-administration relational trust dynamics between the two districts, and discuss how these contrasts contributed to the varied outcomes of deinstitutionalization and maintenance of administrative discretion over Tier 3 categorical resources.

Maintaining categorical aid practices inside the central office

[10] The trailer bill approved in July 2009 (ABX4 2) eliminated the hearing requirement but specified that boards needed to say how Tier 3 categorical resources were being used. This legislation was enacted between the first and second budget cycles.

Inside the central office, professional norms and role conceptions reinforced central office administrators' commitment to conventional categorical aid practices and ways of budgeting for Tier 3 categorical programs. Support for Tier 3 categorical flexibility among central office administrators was low in both districts, and this affected how these individuals approached various aspects of budgeting for Tier 3 categorical programs under bureaucratic control. I did not find evidence that Tier 3 categorical flexibility immediately redefined districts' categorical aid practices. Instead, the view from the central office in both districts was that Tier 3 categorical flexibility did not signal a substantial change of direction in the state's school finance system. Consistent with findings from Fuller and colleagues (2011), in interviews administrators in both districts characterized Tier 3 categorical flexibility as a political expediency, and a convenient excuse for the state to grant districts greater control over fewer dollars.

Administrators frequently equated deregulation with the loss of programs and services for students in interviews, viewing this loss as a violation of their professional norms. For example, one Eaglemont administrator noted, "One option certainly could have been to sweep out all those programs…eliminate all of that. As a Program Improvement district, where we have such great at-risk student needs, that's not the educationally, academically sound thing to do." Viewed from this perspective, Tier 3 categorical flexibility removed rules that administrators believed were essential to protecting certain groups of students. The Clifton Hill interim superintendent made a similar point along these lines. She explained in an interview that although categorical programs emphasized compliance at the expense of a focus on student learning, categorical rules helped her bypass local political influences on resource allocation. She emphasized, "You have competing interests. And unless we're funded appropriately, it's always going to be cutthroat." Without these rules in place, and in the context of increasing budgetary challenges, administrators worried that they might not be able to continued dedicated programs that addressed particular groups of students and educational objectives.

Separate from threats to programs stemming from budgetary strain, Tier 3 categorical flexibility upended the board tradition of the delegating discretion over categorical aid programs to district administrators. Discretion over categorical aid programs was an important component of how many administrators conceived of their roles in relation to achieving district goals related to underperforming students. Administrators in both districts expressed concern about how board members might reallocate Tier 3 categorical resources, in contrast with the equitable and instructional improvement-driven approach they brought to the table. In an interview, the Eaglemont chief academic officer emphasized that the elected nature of board politicians meant that they made politically-driven decisions, even where they had good intentions and adequate understanding of the educational issues at hand. She elaborated, "If you look at the level of questions that they're asking as an indication of their understanding of the issue, I think they… They ask very excellent questions. Does it make a difference in the way they vote? Absolutely not. What makes a difference is who calls them, and pressures them. That's what makes a difference. 'Cause they're ultimately politicians." Related to these concerns, some administrators suggested that it was likely that Tier 3 categorical

resources would end up going toward salaries in response to union pressures on the board. In this way, expanded local discretion over Tier 3 categorical resources threatened administrators' control over programs and services for poor, minority, and English learner students.

A number of interconnected categorical aid practices tied to minimizing potential compliance and legal issues reinforced these professional norms and role conceptions. In interviews, administrators described anticipating needing, one day, to be able to show precisely where Tier 3 categorical program dollars had gone. This was despite official guidance from the California Department of Education on this point, and the revision of the state budget reporting format and categorical program monitoring activities to eliminate references to Tier 3 categorical programs. According to various informants, the business departments in both Clifton Hill and Eaglemont created shadow systems that continued to track what was purchased with Tier 3 categorical monies. Describing the creation of these systems, Clifton Hill's budget director told me, "For me, and for everybody here, it is, it has disrupted our work tremendously, tremendously, by keeping us legal." She also noted, "The other districts haven't tried as well as we have, that's what I've heard." Business administrators in both districts reported receiving advice to continue tracking how Tier 3 categorical program dollars were used, both from their county offices of education and local chapters of the California School Business Officers professional association. This maintenance of many categorical aid practices is consistent with findings from Fuller and colleagues (2011), and highlights the role of work practices in promoting cultural persistence (Scott 2001).

Turning to the enactment of budget cutting routine specifically, administrators did not emphasize Tier 3 categorical flexibility when they stood at the podium and introduced staff recommendations. This treatment was in keeping with traditions of devoting minimal attention to categorical aid programs during board work on budget development. Because boards were not empowered to put categorical funds toward alternative uses, administrators did not typically explicitly review categorical aid programs in budget development work at the board level. For the same reason, the county office staff that reviewed district financial reports had little interest in how categorical dollars were spent. These dollars were somewhat irrelevant for budget balancing purposes: categorical program resources did not count toward reserve requirements[11] and usually could not be used to address district budget deficits. As Clifton Hill's budget director explained to me in an interview, "As far as the state report, they [county office fiscal oversight personnel] aren't at all interested in the restricted budget." As a result, administrators were accustomed to reminding board members that they could not touch categorical dollars. In most board budget materials, Tier 3 categorical programs were not obviously demarcated from still regulated categorical programs or even labeled as Tier 3.

In sum, the responses observed within the central office demonstrate that many categorical aid practices remained in place after deregulation. This form of implementation aligned with professional norms and role conceptions, as well as an array

[11] California districts are required to maintain a reserve fund equivalent to at least 3 percent of their revenues.

of interconnected work practices tied to managing and monitoring categorical aid programs. Consistent with the stability that characterizes deeply institutionalized practices (Colyvas and Powell 2006; Scott 2001), I observed the maintenance of categorical program practices outside of the budget cutting routine. Turning our attention to how boards and administrators carried out this critical routine, however, reveals divergent responses in the board room.

Deinstitutionalizing administrative discretion over Tier 3 categorical resources from the board room

My main argument so far has been that the deregulation enacted through Tier 3 categorical flexibility failed to dislodge a number of standard categorical aid practices. Central office administrators in both districts resisted pressures for change, creating Tier 3 categorical program-specific practices that were consistent with professional norms, role conceptions, and existing categorical aid practices. However, this continuity was not necessarily sustained into the board room. To the contrary, the Eaglemont board maintained administrative discretion over categorical programs (a subset of existing categorical practices) while the Clifton Hill board discarded it. In this section, I first provide evidence regarding the deinstitutionalization of administrative discretion over Tier 3 categorical resources. Then, I show how the level of board-administration relational trust influenced board actions that reinforced or undercut administrative discretion over Tier 3 categorical resources.

Eaglemont: Continuing administrative discretion over Tier 3 categorical resources

Eaglemont's board largely interpreted Tier 3 categorical flexibility as an accounting change, one that allowed the district to afford valued programs and services. Administrators reinforced this interpretation by consistently integrating recommendations about Tier 3 resource reallocation into staff recommendations across the study period, including the budget cutting routine that began one week after the enactment of Tier 3 categorical flexibility. Administrators presented three options for budget cuts to the board, and each option relied on the elimination or reduction of a range of Tier 3 categorical programs. The superintendent introduced the staff recommendations to the board in this way. "Reductions we have been able to effect this year, coupled with changes in the way the state is spending its money, allowed us to take stakeholders' information, the preferences and desires of board, and work hard to patchwork systems of cuts and reductions" (recorded meeting notes 3/3/09). In this way, she represented the Tier 3 categorical flexibility as enabling the district to move toward existing resource allocations closer toward community and board preferences.

After the superintendent and chief business officer walked through the recommendations, board members asked a number of questions related to Tier 3 categorical resources. These questions mostly focused on the negative impact of cuts to Tier 3 categorical programs that had been outlined in staff recommendations. In this way, the superintendent had to persuade board members that some cuts to Tier 3 categorical programs were appropriate. The following example illustrates what the majority of board-administration interactions sounded like during this first iteration of the budget cutting routine.

Board 1	With respect to adult education, I believe you said there were no reductions to the program. Is that right?
CBO	That is correct.
Board 1	These monies that we would be using for other purposes, you said we don't see a need at

adult school. I'm hearing from some folks that line for GED is out the door, because of the economy. Are we taking that into account?

Superintendent The $500,000 was in a reserve fund. The money was being saved in case the adult ed center was asked to move. By state law, we are not allowed to pay for adult ed facilities. This is not program money, it was set aside for facilities. Are you asking could it be used?

Board 1 Could it be used to address expansion?

Superintendent Yes, but normally what adult ed would do, if they were needing money, I would never recommend expansion. I would recommend going to high school and offering in the evening.

Board 1 Are we are doing that?

Superintendent Yes, I'm sure we are, we have an excellent adult education program in this district. I just met with [central office administrators and adult education principal], and we were talking about ways to increase our cap, there are some new rules. Yes, we're very supportive of adult education program, we want to see it grow.

(recorded board meeting, 2/23/09)

Exchanges like this demonstrated to board members that staff recommendations used Tier 3 categorical flexibility in thoughtful, creative ways that minimized harm to the district.

Over the course of the routine, administrators persuaded the board to reallocate $2.6 million from Tier 3 categorical programs. In general, board members characterized the distribution of cuts overall as more acceptable than earlier drafts of staff recommendations. One board member even explicitly affirmed the superintendent's recommendations about reallocating Tier 3 categorical resources, stating that she was pleased with this in contrast to what had been on the table prior to the legislation's enactment. She said, "This is so much better than what we had. What delights me is that what it looks like, P.E. programs being impacted, it doesn't take it away. Throws out the challenge to the parents, boosters, to bring in $380,000." In this way, board members interpreted the superintendent's proposal for implementing Tier 3 categorical flexibility as valid. This defined the district's approach to Tier 3 categorical flexibility in this first iteration of the routine, and beyond. If anything, the superintendent was put in the position of convincing individual board members to approve cuts to some high visibility Tier 3 categorical programs. Board members were satisfied with the staff recommendations, as evidenced by three board members publicly thanking administrators for their efforts. One said, "I would also like to say commend [staff] with their efforts to put together the proposal. It shows our effort to listen to the community, look at the things we're cutting, look at stakeholder list."

Consequently, administrators took a fairly similar approach to budget development in advance of the budget cutting routine in the following year. Staff recommendations reallocated an additional $3.2 million away from Tier 3 categorical programs. Though there was greater board time devoted to carrying out the routine in the

second iteration (four and a half hours), there was minimal board negotiation around the reallocations proposed by the superintendent. Board members asked few questions about Tier 3 categorical programs or the implications of proposed resource reallocations. No board member actually proposed changing the Tier 3 categorical program cuts incorporated into the staff recommendations. As in the first iteration of the routine, no board members asked to see additional or different reallocations applied to Tier 3 categorical programs.

The budget cutting routine remained largely intact over the study, as did the practice of administrative discretion over categorical programs. And although administrators worried about the political choices their board would make, fieldnotes showed little evidence that the board attempted to reclaim control over reallocating Tier 3 categorical resources. Instead, Tier 3 categorical flexibility became absorbed into existing ways of managing and operating categorical programs.

Clifton Hill: Deinstitutionalizing administrative discretion over categorical programs

Unlike in Eaglemont, Clifton Hill board members took an active interest in Tier 3 categorical flexibility from the beginning. In particular, they interpreted deregulation as an opportunity for the board (as opposed to administration) to gain greater control over resource allocation. At the time of the first budget cycle, generally poor board-superintendent relations led to contention on a range of district issues. The timing of the legislation's enactment activated dynamics in the budget cutting routine that centered around who controlled the implementation of Tier 3 categorical flexibility. The dynamics I observed inside the budget cutting routine ultimately helped deinstitutionalize the tradition of administrator discretion over categorical aid programs.

A major point of contention in the first iteration of the budget cutting routine was that Clifton Hill's staff recommendations did not reallocate any Tier 3 categorical resources. In interviews, administrators reported that they had examined the policy and decided not to rush implementation. But this information appeared not to have left the central office. At the same time, one board member interpreted Tier 3 categorical flexibility as an opportunity to share the burden of cuts more equally across district programs. She gathered information about what a neighboring district had done, as well as seeking out professional associations' analyses of how districts could take advantage of Tier 3 categorical flexibility. Then, she repeatedly brought up the policy inside the budget cutting routine, asking why the district was not taking advantage of deregulation. She identified Tier 3 categorical programs in her copy of the district budget, and asked what each program was and staff to recommend cuts. The following back and forth between this board members and the chief business officer illustrates how these conflicting interpretations played out inside the routine.

Board 1	So we have $872,000 sitting in the adult school fund balance in excess of the approved operating budget of the adult school. Is that what I'm hearing?
CBO	Yes.
Board 1	So why hasn't that been suggested as a possibility of transferring funds, which is now possible because it's a Tier 3 program? Transferring funds into the general

fund.

CBO Well, first of all the Tier 3 program just got out last Friday, around 5pm. The second thing that this is, adult ed, this is site services, this is protected programs. By law, general fund cannot have access to those funds.

Board 1 But my reading, and I got this off of ACSA's [Association of California School Administrators] website, it says that you can transfer to the general fund. And that's what my question was when I emailed it.

(Clifton Hill recorded board meeting, 2/24/09)

Here, the board member perceived and actively questioned the validity of administrators' interpretations of, and efforts to implement, Tier 3 categorical flexibility. She attempted to frame the reallocation of Tier 3 categorical resources as a board prerogative. While other members did not pursue reallocating resources from specific Tier 3 categorical programs, they did make several positive comments about how deregulation could ease the district's budgetary strain.

While few in number, these highly contentious interactions appeared to undermine perceptions of staff recommendations as outlining an appropriate implementation of Tier 3 categorical flexibility. Throughout the routine, board members suggested ways of reallocating Tier 3 categorical resources. In fact, mid-way through the routine, the board began to compile its own recommendations for reallocating Tier 3 categorical resources. The abandonment of staff recommendations with respect to Tier 3 categorical flexibility implementation signaled the deinstitutionalization of administrative discretion over categorical programs.

In the second and third iterations of the routine (both taking place in the second year of the study), the board finance committee generated budget cuts and recommendations for reallocating Tier 3 categorical resources based on preferences collected from all board members, a significant change in the budget cutting routine. These preferences came from looking at individuals' suggestions and recommending the minimum level of cut that a majority (at least four) of board members suggested. In interviews, board members suggested that this approach was less time consuming and allowed for a more thorough vetting that recommended cuts aligned with board priorities. The board president commented, "Once we have that starting point, we may not, that may not be the complete package that we agree on as a board. But it gives us a starting point and makes the process much smoother and take much less time during the actual board meetings. It's something that I very much appreciate."

This change altered how the board carried out the second and third iterations of the routine. In the second iteration, the district Budget Advisory Committee's recommended cuts were projected overhead side by side with the board finance committee's cuts. But the board discussion addressed only the board finance committee recommendations. As a result, in the budget cutting routine Clifton Hill administrators were effectively constrained to pointing out where proposed actions invoked into legal or labor issues. In contrast to budget development that drew on administrators' deep

organizational knowledge, board members selectively consulted administrators, asking for information and guidance primarily to avoid legal pitfalls. The board did not ask for administrators' expertise with regard to the best interests of students or how to align resources with the district mission. Field notes showed that on an occasion where administrators devised a plan to maximize cuts to one Tier 3 categorical program in the short-term in exchange for the return of resources three years out, the chair of the committee was quick to remind them that the administration did not have discretion over Tier 3 categorical resources. She said, "Ultimately, that's a board decision." Now, I contrast in detail how the Clifton Hill and Eaglemont boards responded to staff recommendations, the embodiment of administrative discretion over Tier 3 categorical resources.

Staff recommendations about reallocating Tier 3 categorical resources and relational trust dynamics

> If the board can't trust the information that staff gives it, then it can't be sure of the decision to be made, if we're going to be worried about that decision. – Clifton Hill board president

This section highlights three differences in how the two boards differed in their responses to staff recommendations about how best to reallocate Tier 3 categorical resources: the extent of board questioning about Tier 3 categorical resource recommendations; the tone of board-administration interactions around Tier 3 categorical resources; and how each board defined the responsibilities of the board finance committee.

First, analysis of the budget cutting routine demonstrates that, overall, board members in Clifton Hill asked for more information about staff recommendations than their counterparts in Eaglemont. Field notes document 96 instances total in which board members asked administrators to explain or provide different kinds of information about staff recommendations (56 in Clifton Hill and 40 in Eaglemont). As illustrated in Figure 5-1, the Clifton Hill board also posed a greater proportion of questions to their administration about reallocating Tier 3 categorical resources specifically. While neither board covered anything close to each of the 38 Tier 3 categorical programs, Clifton Hill administrators talked about 11 different programs while Eaglemont talked about five. Thus, Eaglemont's board's level of questioning about staff recommendations and Tier 3 categorical flexibility-specific recommendations was quite limited in comparison. Observations showed that Eaglemont board members asked questions about budget line items they were personally interested in, or were unfamiliar with. In contrast, Clifton Hill board members walked through each line item on the district budget.

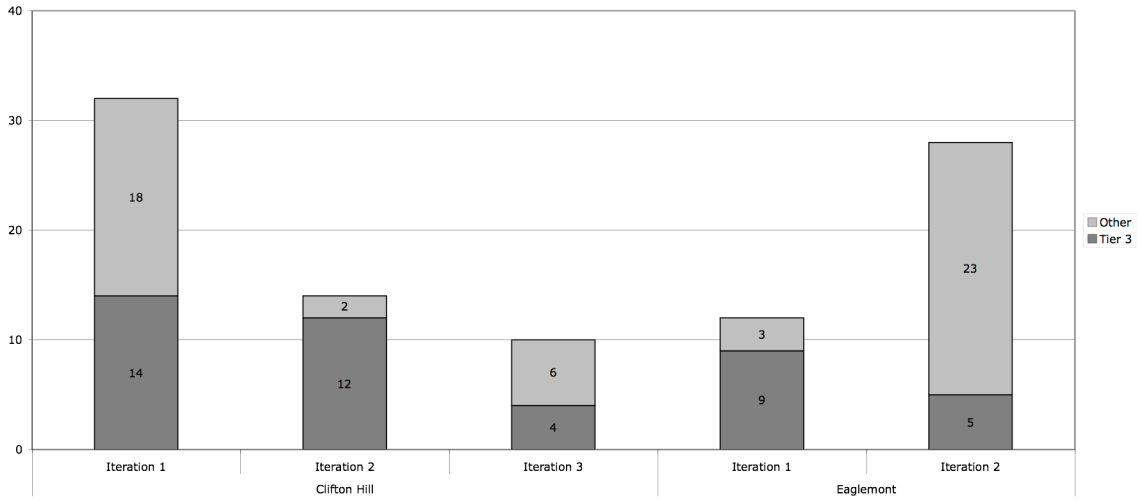

Figure 5-1. Number of board questions about Tier 3 categorical programs and other budget line items, by routine iteration and district

These contrasting levels of questioning reveal that the two boards differently conceived of what constituted due diligence with respect to understanding how and why staff recommendations proposed reallocating Tier 3 categorical resources as they did. The Eaglemont board reviewed recommendations in an idiosyncratic way, gathering information that addressed areas that individual board members were concerned about. In contrast, the Clifton Hill board asked for information that allowed them to judge whether they agreed with staff recommendations on a case-by-case basis. As I highlighted in the earlier description of the budget cutting routine as carried out in Clifton Hill, much of the routine consisted of the board negotiating adjustments to individual budget line items.

Related but distinct from my characterization of board questioning in the study districts, I also identified very different tones of interactions between board members and administrators inside the budget cutting routine. In Clifton Hill, board members were openly critical of the perceived intent of staff recommendations. Inside the first iteration of budget cutting routine, board members dismissed staff recommendations as applying cuts in "nooks and crannies" rather outlining cohesive changes in resource allocations. At the end of that particular meeting, the superintendent explained, "I can only tell you that I was given a charge by the board, I did what I could…To have it suggested that it was not good enough, is surprising, discouraging." Across each of Clifton Hill's iterations of the budget cutting routine, I found that administrators responded to board questions by outlining the impact and consequences of different courses of action, providing neutral information rather than recommendations.

In contrast, the Eaglemont board's questions generally had to do with building a common understanding about the consequences of different cuts and the trade-offs involved in working from any one of the three options contained in staff recommendations. In an interview, the Eaglemont superintendent explained that her staff

recommendations included three cohesive plans that were legal and would maximize district savings from budget cuts in order to help the board focus on trade-offs among cuts, instead of taking bits of funding from different budget items. She commented, "This way, the board can do it all by themselves." Observations showed that the tone of board interactions with administrators with regard to these recommendations was respectful.

Next, the tone in which board members posed questions and provided direction to administrators provides further evidence regarding the level of board-administration relational trust. I highlight the tone of these interactions because, as a Clifton Hill board member explained in an interview,

> There's always the issue of when you ask questions in public of staff. Are you questioning [administrators'] judgment or are you just trying to find out a little more information? And sometimes there's some hesitancy to do that if [administrators] think essentially that they're going to end up getting criticized in public by a board member.

My analysis reveals that a considerable contrast between the districts in this respect. Although Clifton Hill board members in interviews expressed a high level of satisfaction with the chief business officer, I documented board comments during her presentations such as "Get that typo fixed" and "We did get this really late. It would be helpful if you did a bullet point list of things that changed, and explain it in writing. It's hard to digest." In Eaglemont, I did not document any instances of board members publicly criticizing the chief business officer or the budget director. Instead, Eaglemont board members frequently thanked these staff for communicating budget information in a clear, easy to understand manner.

Finally, the two districts also differed in how their boards defined the responsibilities of the board finance committee with regard to budget development. In Eaglemont, this committee served first and foremost as an audit committee: it reviewed and provided direction with regard responding to findings from the annual district audit. According to board members, this committee was a place for more in-depth discussion than regular board meetings allowed. But it was not directly involved in the budget development process. One board member that was part of this committee described the meetings to me as "not lengthy." This characterization was consistent with observations: one meeting was held over a seven-month period, and it provided background information about rising special education costs in the district. The board finance committee did not review budget materials or provide direction about budget development in isolation from the full board. When the board wanted further budget information, it held study sessions rather than delegating this task to the board finance committee.

In contrast, in the second budget cycle, Clifton Hill's board directed its finance committee to take on a direct role in the budget development and identify places where Tier 3 categorical resource could be reallocated. This redefined role included providing specific direction to administrators about the content of budget recommendations to be

presented to the full board. In addition, the board finance committee meetings were scheduled in advance of major finance-related agenda items so the committee could provide feedback on Powerpoint slides and handouts prepared by the chief business officer. I observed two separate meetings in which the chief business officer walked through her prepared presentation, with board members suggesting changes.

Connecting relational trust to the deinstitutionalization of administrative discretion

Administrative discretion over categorical resources diverged in Clifton Hill and Eaglemont in ways that aligned with the level of board-administration relational trust. We know that low levels of relational trust can impede carrying out habitual routines: the absence of reciprocally held role expectations and participants' unwillingness to be vulnerable to the actions of others contributes to unpredictability. While the Clifton Hill board's response to legislation could be interpreted at face value, essentially as a power grab, I argue that these relational trust dynamics also foster the process of deinstitutionalization.

First, I compare board members' willingness to work from staff recommendations to implement Tier 3 categorical flexibility as one source of evidence about the level of board-administration relational trust. As I describe above, this relationship was generally contentious in Clifton Hill, and this was demonstrated in the board's rejection of staff recommendations in favor of negotiating how to reallocate Tier 3 categorical resources inside the budget cutting routine. In an interview, one board member providing further insight into the board's unwillingness to "be vulnerable" to administrative discretion over Tier 3 categorical resources, as follows. "Last year [first budget cycle], whenever there was something that the superintendent wanted to save, suddenly she would discover a little pot of a million dollars to save it." This board member went on to note that with the interim superintendent, "It's a whole different kind of communication… obviously I have things that I agree with her about and things that I don't, but I feel like I can work with her and there's a good relationship." But despite the increased trust that this board member and others indicated in the interim superintendent, observations of how the board changed the budget cutting routine highlight a distinct lack of willingness to follow staff recommendations regarding the implementation of Tier 3 categorical flexibility.

In contrast, as I described above, the Eaglemont board primarily worked within the boundaries outlined in the three options contained in staff recommendations. While board members did make changes to staff recommendations overall, they did not engage in negotiations about how the superintendent proposed to take advantage of Tier 3 categorical flexibility. Further, the level of board members' questioning that specifically connected to reallocating Tier 3 categorical resources was very low in the second iteration of the budget cutting routine. Instead, in interviews, board members characterized deregulation as an accounting change that facilitated the preservation of district programs and services they valued. In short, I found considerable evidence that the Eaglemont board was willing to be vulnerable to how staff preferred to respond to deregulation.

Next, turning to the dimension of reciprocally-held role expectations, divergent ways of carrying out the budget cutting routine clearly pinpoint differences in how each board conceived of the role of administrators, and staff recommendations, specifically in response to deregulation. In Clifton Hill, the board's exercise of control over reallocating Tier 3 categorical resources shifted what had been administrative decisions to the board level. This change deeply undercut administrators' professional norms and role conceptions. For example, in an interview the chief business officer contrasted the dominance of the board over Tier 3 categorical programs with her own expectations for her job obligations and responsibilities. She explained, "If the board has all these things in place, the only thing that is left for me to do is crunch the numbers." In this way, the board's newly assumed role with regard to Tier 3 categorical resources constrained her ability to fulfill her responsibilities and obligations as a chief business officer. The budget director, also in an interview setting, commented about her frustrating experiences with Tier 3 categorical flexibility: "Actually, this like therapy for me just to talk about it."

In Eaglemont, where the board held the practice of administrative discretion over Tier 3 categorical resources in place, the board perceived administrators as providing expertise about reallocating Tier 3 categorical resources that the board did not possess. In this way, the role conceptions held by board members and administrators were much more reciprocal than in Clifton Hill. For example, one board member positively characterized the implementation of Tier 3 categorical flexibility to me as follows. "They [district administrators] did all the grunt work way ahead of time…different categories and programs and services, because it's hard for us just as board members to keep track of all that." In addition, my observations and interviews in Eaglemont generally demonstrated that the board had a very high degree of trust in the superintendent. This was the case even with a board member that frequently voted against the superintendent's proposals. That board member characterized the superintendent in this way: "I give the superintendent tons of credit. She is just a genius as far as moving things around so that everything turns out better…Ideologically we're pretty far apart, but she is just fantastic."

Discussion

This chapter demonstrates how deregulation has the potential to affect districts' deeply institutionalized practices in a divergent manner. In keeping with general predictions from institutional approaches, the categorical aid infrastructure remained in place in spite of changes in the state legislation that enabled it to be dismantled. A range of district structures and practices that support the complex management and monitoring tasks associated with categorical programs, granting and reinforcing distinct identities for many administrators. My data showed that contrary to the swift uptake of decentralized discretion over resources, many administrators worried about losing the ability to direct these dollars toward less politically popular student populations and educational aims. Related to these concerns, there was extensive work in both central offices to establish a dual-purpose system that facilitated continued local monitoring while reporting to the state appeared as general fund dollars. These data affirm that the elimination of governing rules, in itself, is not likely to sufficient to interrupt habitual practices.

However, shifts in support for those practices can and do trigger the process of deinstitutionalization in ways that tie to regulatory rules, however (Leblebici et al. 1991; Maguire and Hardy 2009). In this case, administrative discretion over categorical resources was deinstitutionalized in one of the two study districts. In each district, Tier 3 categorical implementation was a recurring element in the budget cutting routine, departing from past ways of managing categorical aid programs. But the level of relational trust influenced board perceptions of the staff recommendations used in the budget cutting routine, and the extent to which board members negotiated about reallocating Tier 3 categorical resources in ways that affirmed the existing practice of administrative discretion over categorical resources. Clifton Hill's board wanted to see certain kinds of changes in the district, and used Tier 3 categorical flexibility as a way to enhance their control over resource allocations. Eaglemont's board didn't necessarily like the goals set out in their Program Improvement plan, but they allowed themselves to be persuaded that extending conventional ways of budgeting to Tier 3 programs was appropriate. Through analysis of the dynamics of relational trust inside the boundaries of the budget cutting routine, we begin to see how these negotiations can provide insights into why organizational responses to largely the same environmental pressure for change can diverge.

Finally, as neoinstitutional scholars have observed, individuals can be important in framing certain solutions and gaining the attention of other key actors (Fligstein 2001; Lawrence and Suddaby 2006). In Clifton Hill, one board member's determination to include Tier 3 categorical programs in discussions about budget cuts contributed to changes in the budget cutting routine that had consequences for how board members drew on the expertise and organizational knowledge of their superintendent and other top-level administrators. These changes produced a subset of Tier 3 categorical practices that looked very different from the institutionalized practices traditionally used in budgeting for categorical aid. Further, without the low level of board-administration relational trust and the one board member's interest in using Tier 3 categorical flexibility to the maximum extent feasible (pushing against conservative staff recommendations), it is unlikely that we would have seen the deinstitutionalization of administrative discretion over categorical programs to the degree that we did. This reinforces the utility of drawing on routines as a unit of analysis for investigating how situated interactions inside organizations can promote institutional change.

Chapter 6. Problematizing the place of music in elementary education

Schooling has long fulfilled various social responsibilities outside of the three Rs (Grubb and Lazerson 2004; Labaree 1997; Tyack 1974). Music instruction, the focal case examined in this chapter, was offered to offered to students at least once a week in nine out of ten elementary schools in the United States as of 2009 (Parsad and Spiegelman 2011). Advocates argue that music education helps foster a number of outcomes we value for children: social and emotional development, self-discipline, creativity, and academic achievement, among others (see, for example,(National Association for Music Education 2007). For that matter, the No Child Left Behind Act defines the arts, including music, as part of the core of education, although it refrains from mandating testing in this subject area.

Yet media and advocacy reports suggest that arts education is a major victim of falling education revenues in California and across the nation (Bryant 2011; Noguchi 2011). The state's Arts and Music block grant was included in Tier 3 categorical flexibility, and according to the Legislative Analyst's Office (2010, 2011), about two-thirds of responding districts (69 percent) reported shifting funding away from this categorical program. In this study, the Clifton Hill and Eaglemont boards did not initially reallocate their Arts and Music categorical resources and lay off their elementary specialist teachers. But in spite of personal commitments and constituency pressures, both boards did so in the second budget cycle, looking to regular elementary teachers to deliver music instruction. Why did board members come to see their valued specialist-taught elementary music program as problematic?

I conceptualize this shift as evidence of the erosion of cultural-cognitive beliefs about the place of music in elementary education at the board level, and argue that the process of problematizing is one way in which local political struggles can become transformed into institutional contestation. I show that over time administrators' presentation of facts about district operations successfully persuaded board members that to maintain fiscal integrity, the district needed to cut music specialist teachers. While board members justified protecting the elementary music program, I claim that these rationales revealed board members' inconsistent beliefs about the place of music in elementary education, pushing them to rely on administrators' facts in budget negotiations. I provide evidence that the microprocess of problematizing, through the parallel mechanisms of fact-making and justifying, helps explain to the elimination of the formerly institutionalized specialist-taught elementary music program. In the conclusion, I discuss how this helps us understand the process of deinstitutionalization.

Problematizing as a microprocess of deinstitutionalization

In debates at board meetings, as well as in communication with the public, different district constituencies made claims and argued about the place of music in elementary education relative to other programs and services, a set of interactions that I analyze as problematizing. As defined by Maguire and Hardy (2009:151), problematizing

involves articulating "claims, arguments, stories, examples, statistics, anecdotes, and so forth that 'substantiate and dramatize the ineffectiveness and injustice of existing practices' (Colomy, 1998, p. 289)." The uneven distribution of political assets within organizations means that actors are differently positioned to make claims that are likely to be heard and perceived as legitimate (Fligstein 2001; Lawrence and Suddaby 2006).

We can, however, anticipate problematizing by "experts" to be consequential (Maguire 2004; Maguire and Hardy 2009). Experts have greater than average influence in problematizing because they typically are regarded as authoritative (Maguire 2004). This chapter conceptualized district administrators as well-positioned to problematize the elementary music program in ways that others will pay attention to. Although administrators are not scientists, they are experts in district management, with skills and knowledge honed from professional preparation and work experience. As a result, when administrators claim that a particular use of funds is out of compliance with the law, other district stakeholders tend to take these statements as truthful.

While we might expect administrators' preferences to already be represented in "the way things are done" in the district (Selznick 1949), this chapter examines a case where administrators problematized the tacit notion of "real school" with regard to the place of music in elementary education in order to shift a subset of Tier 3 categorical program resources closer to instructional improvement efforts outlined in the district Program Improvement plan. Some scholars suggest that boards and their attitudes, more than superintendents or other top-level executives, predict the likely outcome of policy debates (Binder 2002; Zald 1969). But administrators are uniquely able to access and interpret technical information that they can use to reinforce the case they are making for change. Expertise, in this way, can be a critical tool that actors manipulate as they try to bring together "evidence" and "facts" in support of their preferences for particular courses of action.

This chapter looks in detail at how and why the inclusion of the state's Arts and Music block grant among Tier 3 categorical programs came to shake the two districts' solid commitment to the place of music and the arts in elementary education.

The case of the Arts and Music block grant

As of 2009, only one categorical aid program targeted elementary music instruction: the Arts and Music Block Grant. Dollars from this grant were restricted to the implementation of a standards-based visual and performing arts program. They could be used for hiring staff, purchasing instructional materials, and providing staff development. For the entire state, the 2008 apportionment was about $110 million (California Department of Education, n.d.). With the 20 percent reduction that came with the passage of Tier 3 flexibility, this amount decreased to $88 million (California Department of Education, n.d.). It was also the only source of consistent state funding dedicated to this aspect of K-12 education.

As implemented in both study districts, the specialist-taught elementary music program provided to students cost more than the Arts and Music Block Grant allocation.

This meant that each district committed a substantial proportion of unrestricted dollars in order to offer what it deemed a high-quality program. For example, Eaglemont's administrators estimated the cost of the program (including the actual salaries of music specialists) as $1.4 million. Its Arts and Music block grant in 2009 amounted to only $390,000 (California Department of Education, n.d.), less than one-third of its spending on the specialist-taught elementary music program. Similarly, Clifton Hill's Arts and Music block grant totaled $151,000, compared to the $615,000 spent on the program (California Department of Education, n.d.). With the advent of Tier 3 categorical flexibility, laying off music specialists represented a way to reallocate badly needed resources toward other district needs.

But many Clifton Hill and Eaglemont parents and other stakeholders perceived an elementary music program delivered by specialists as an integral and valued part of elementary educational experience. They did not like the idea of ratcheting back district offerings to focus only on what was tested. For both of these communities, elementary music instruction was an important enrichment activity, with students going on to play in award-winning bands and orchestras at district high schools. As a result, there was considerable energy in both communities to maintaining specialist teachers to provide "high quality" music instruction. Board members and community members explicitly argued that regular classroom teachers were unlikely to prioritize music instruction in the context of the instructional minutes to be dedicated to "core" academic subjects.

Consistent with the idea that policies can mobilize constituencies that otherwise might not be politicized (Skocpol 1992; Timar 1994), parents and community members pressured board members to protect the block grant in both districts. This was in spite of the fact that this particular categorical program had existed for only three years and represented less than one-third of what each district actually spent on its elementary music program. All eight board members I interviewed (four of the seven board members in each district) identified music supporters as among the most vocal and active constituents trying to influence the distribution of district budget cuts. Board members characterized music supporters as "well-connected," "more affluent," and "more educated" than other interest groups in the community. One Clifton Hill board member commented that the generally well-connected nature of music supporters was particularly evidence at board meetings because this group generally turned out in large numbers. She commented, "when we actually had people come, like I said, you can see it's just that they got the word, you know."

At the same time, some board members were also personally committed to their districts' specialist-taught elementary music programs. In several instances, individuals running for election to the board cited their support for music in their campaigns. Here are excerpts from the platforms of two standing board members during the study:

> I will also seek to build the community trust and support to pass a parcel tax. The tax should be earmarked for art, music, drama and athletics there by providing financial security for those programs always under threat of budget cuts (Clifton Hill board member).

> I oppose any cuts to sports, music, P.E. or student enrichment programs (Eaglemont board member).

These comments illustrate that music was an expected and highly legitimated part of elementary education, characteristics associated with deeply institutionalized practices, particularly among those voting in school board elections. Board members also referred to specific music specialists by name during board meetings, reminding their colleagues about research connecting music to students' academic achievement, and simply stating that they were not willing to cut to music specialists.

In Clifton Hill, I observed particularly strong linkages between the board and perceptions of music as a core district priority. An ex-board president started a music education foundation that purchased instruments for the district's elementary sites. A board member at the time of my study also sat on that foundation's board. Consistent with this board-level emphasis on music, a national arts education association featured Clifton Hill's superintendent and her promotion of the arts her district in a newsletter. In that newsletter, she referred to the arts as "a civil rights issue" and part of the district's "'essential' core program." She further explained, "By design, the arts education program is a release time program which results in making it part of every child's experience in school." In this way, beliefs about the place of music in elementary education were reinforced by district organizational structures, such as the dedicated number of minutes all children spent with specialist teachers.

Yet protecting music specialist teachers had major budgetary consequences in Clifton Hill and Eaglemont. Because the program served all elementary students every week (once a week in Clifton Hill, twice a week in Eaglemont), it supported many certificated potions. In Eaglemont, the savings that would be obtained from cutting music specialists were estimated at $1.4 million. In Clifton Hill, these savings were estimated at $770,000.[12] As described in Figure 6-1, to come up with an equivalent dollar value of cuts, the Clifton Hill and Eaglemont boards reduced or eliminated a range of other programs and positions in the first budget cycle. Both boards opted to raise class sizes in kindergarten through third grade by four students per classroom (from 20:1 to 24:1) as part of protecting the elementary music program. Eaglemont's board also decided to pursue what turned out to be a highly politicized process of school closings in order to fund music specialist teachers.

[12] Administrators provided the $770,000 figure during a board meeting. Later materials revised this estimate to $615,000.

Figure 6-1. Timeline of board actions on music specialists in Clifton Hill and Eaglemont

	Clifton Hill	Eaglemont
Budget cycle 1	Board votes 5-2 to enact cuts to a range of district activities and keeps all music specialist positions intact.	Board votes 7-0 to eliminate all music specialist positions. Music specialists receive pink slips and the community pressures the board to restore these positions. Then board votes 7-0 to restore music.
Budget cycle 2	Administration does not make a formal recommendation. Board votes 5-1 to eliminate half of music specialist positions. Later, this is recast as one-fourth of all specialist positions, to be applied to music, art, or PE at a later point in time.	Board votes 4-3 to eliminate all music specialist positions. Board asks community to fundraise to restore lost positions. At board direction, administration works to develop a framework for an after-school music program. To support this effort, the district rehires a small number of music specialists.

Both boards faced cutting music specialist teachers again in the second budget cycle. In Eaglemont, the board cut all music and P.E. specialists. In Clifton Hill, the board approved the board finance committee's recommendation to halve the minutes of music instruction provided to elementary students. This time around, a majority of board members in both districts approved cuts to the specialist-taught elementary music programs. This cut can be seen as evidence of the process of deinstitutionalization. In the rest of this chapter, I investigate the interactions between board members and administrators in detail to trace how this cut, impossible from the perspective of popular expectations for schooling, came to be perceived as appropriate and necessary at the board level.

Findings

Music in elementary education has long been socially constructed as part of what schools and districts do. But it is not part of the measures currently used to assess districts' academic performance for accountability purposes. The absence of clear linkages to accountability norms and concrete instructional improvement activities contributed to essentially the same proposal in both districts: cuts to the specialist-taught elementary music program. In this section, I briefly summarize the case, as articulated by district administrators, for reallocating the Arts and Music block grant to other, "core academic" uses. Then, I draw on specific examples from fieldwork to illustrate the mechanism of fact-making. I argue that fact-making was the dominant manner in which administrators attempted to persuade board members of this position. Next, I show that board members' response to fact-making, an activity which I term justifying, surfaced inconsistencies in the cultural beliefs underlying board members' commitment to a specialist-taught elementary music program. In the conclusion, I draw together my decomposition of problematizing into the distinct activities of fact-making and justifying to extend how we understand the process of deinstitutionalization.

Fact-making

Along with showing stark budget numbers, administrators in both districts repeatedly distinguished between the presence of music in the elementary curriculum (as mandated by California academic content standards) and the local district practice of hiring music specialist teachers provide elementary music instruction. Administrators claimed that the district couldn't afford to continue spending money on music specialists anymore. The Eaglemont chief academic officer articulated the case against music this way in an interview:

> We're down to the point now where we have to, I believe, focus on the core program: English language arts, English language development, mathematics; and do it really well. Do it *really* well. And if people want athletics and music and everything else—not to say those aren't wonderful things, because they are. We can't afford it anymore. They're going to have to find another way to pay for it.

This statement clearly references accountability norms and the narrow educational excellence conception of schooling that has characterized federal and state education policy initiatives since the Reagan era (Sunderman 2010).

The elementary music program, as practiced in both study districts, went above and beyond what districts actually had to provide in terms of covering the state's music standards. As much as administrators might personally value the program, in interviews, they uniformly characterized it as outside of district priorities: that is, district priorities in light of norms and values these administrators internalized as professional educators working in a Program Improvement district. Across the two budget cycles, administrators emphasized the need for the district to refocus on staying in compliance and doing what was mandated, and working to improve student learning as reflected by reading and mathematics test scores.

In a context of ongoing austerity, the case for cutting music specialists became more compelling. As the Clifton Hill interim superintendent described in an interview,

> Our district really, really supports the arts, and really supports visual and performing arts and music. And those have been very tough conversations. So when we have this windfall money… I'm exaggerating, but rarely do we get money for the arts, PE and the arts. And we got some money, and everybody was so excited. And then it became flexed, and then it was eventually swept to pay bills. So that was a struggle, you know. There was a very vocal part of the community to save the money, for PE as well. And we couldn't.

An Eaglemont administrator in business services characterized the budget choices facing her board in a similar way.

> I think that they've, they've had to make some really, really hard decisions. And some very unpopular decisions getting rid of athletics, getting rid of music and art and P.E. in the elementary schools. It's just, it's been harrowing. They've had to vote on reducing a lot of teaching positions, increasing class size, but they understand, they seem to understand that we don't have the money to continue paying for the core education of the students without making some of these sacrifices.

This comment characterizes the cost and contribution to core academics made by particular programs and services as the relevant criteria to use in resource reallocation. This way of defining schooling did not sit well with many in the community, however. Parents and other stakeholders called on board members to protect music specialist teachers, forcing board members to prioritize for the district by choosing among competing "real school" and "academic excellence" notions of schooling.

Given that both boards did eventually approve cuts to the specialist-taught elementary music program, I turn now to two mechanisms that help account for this change: fact-making and justifying. I first sketch what fact-making looked like in detail, than discuss the evidence around the mechanisms of fact-making and justifying in the study districts.

The activity I term fact-making revolved around demonstrating that district's options with regard to the elementary music program were greater than what existing practice suggested. Over time, the way administrators presented "facts" became more elaborate. Administrators provided with verbal clarifications and, more frequently in the second budget cycle, preparing written cost estimates and other artifacts explaining the details of the recommendation and how the district would address concerns raised by board members and other district stakeholders. Because of expertise in district operations and management, administrators were able to diagnose where board members' understandings were ignorant of technical issues.

In board discussions about budget cutting, board members made a number of claims about the substantive content of the teachers' contract and issues related to the management and operation of the district that prevented cuts to the elementary music program. For example, a Clifton Hill board member claimed that music specialists as a negotiated item, meaning that the board could not make changes to this budget item without entering into negotiations with the teachers association. Another board member hand-calculated the savings that would be obtained from cutting music specialists, which she noted was "extrapolated at my kitchen table." These were technical points that board members perceived as countering administrators' case for cutting music specialists. But they were not necessarily accurate, according to administrators.

Over time, administrators' fact-making convinced board members that they could actually legally cut the specialist-led elementary music program. Administrators' repeated clarifications of the actual rules governing this program conflicted with board members' interpretations of the intersection between their existing program, California's academic content standards, and the standing collective bargaining agreement. In this way, administrators' authoritative fact-making slowly undermined board members' willingness to protect the program at all costs. Superintendents and other top-level executives presented new data and clarified ambiguous understandings, engaging in fact-making. Over time, board members began to perceive the facts articulated by these experts as legitimate, even if they were not yet convinced that the cuts were desirable. What did this look like in terms of the micro-interactions making up budget negotiations?

Fact-making about teachers' prep time

Here, I sketch in detail how the mechanism of fact-making unfolded through budget negotiations. Administrators in both districts repeatedly engaged in fact-making about teacher preparation time (also referred to as prep time or release time) over both budget cycles. Teacher preparation time refers to the practice of guaranteeing teachers a specified number of minutes per week in which they do not work with students during the regular school day. In California, this is negotiated at the local level because prep time is one of the issues that teachers unions have a statutory right to bargain over (Kemerer and Sansom 2009; Koski and Tang 2011). The organization of regular teachers' prep time often intersects in some way with time in which specialist teachers deliver enrichment activities such as music, art, and physical education to students.

Historically, both districts used elementary specialists to cover the prep time guaranteed to regular classroom teachers. Eaglemont's negotiated teachers contract included five 30-minute periods per week of prep time. Music and physical education specialists each taught students twice per week. Clifton Hill's negotiated teachers contract included four 45-minute periods per week. Music and art specialists each taught students once per week, with physical education specialists working with students twice per week. Clifton Hill had also implemented grade-level professional learning communities beyond the negotiated prep time, scheduling these sessions during time that students spent with specialist teachers. In this way, elementary specialists and prep time were implicitly married through choices prior district leadership had made years prior about how to organize the elementary school day for teachers and simultaneously provide for teachers' prep time and enrichment instruction for students.

But the provision of enrichment instruction during teachers' prep time was a matter of operational convenience rather than law. Existing practice incorporated enrichment into the elementary school day as a way to provide teachers with the prep time promised under the collective bargaining agreement. But this was not the only way that prep time could be guaranteed. Administrators in both districts arrived at the same solution: rearranging the school day. Students simply would not be at school during prep time. The proposed cuts to music specialists, in this way, left regular teachers' prep time alone.

To illustrate, here is an example of fact-making I observed specific to this issue in Clifton Hill. After board members asked about the legality of cutting music specialists, the Clifton Hill chief human relations officer responded by elaborating what the change would look like in terms of the school day and affirming that this was a legal option that could save the district about $750,000. Later in the same meeting, he provided further details about the impact of the cut. By this point, board members appeared persuaded this choice was both legally viable and already in place in neighboring districts.

Board 1	The elementary specialists, at 1 point came as non-negotiated item, then came back as negotiated item. I want to make sure I'm treating it properly in whether we can discuss at all. What can, can't we do?
HR	For elementary specialists, elementary teachers are entitled to four 45-minute prep periods. The impact is roughly $750,000. We have to maintain fourth and fifth grades. What we could do, to maintain minutes, is teachers teach from 8:30 to 2:15, then have 45 minutes prep for those four days. There's still prep. Students just wouldn't have enrichment staff, Students would go home earlier.
…	(30 minutes of discussion not related to music specialists)
Board 2	I know we've moved past this, sorry if I'm beating a dead horse, but when we put up $720,000 for elementary specialists. Can you clarify whether that's every elementary specialists? That number doesn't jive with what's going on in head with that's potentially every elementary specialist that we have?
Board 1	If I understand correctly, that represents K-3. It doesn't include 4th and 5th.
HR	1st through 3rd grade.
Board 2	And the impact of that also does away with the stagger. This has big impact. There were some people, not me, that put that on [the budget cut list] as the consensus, and I just wanted to be clear that that has a bigger impact than just the dollars.
Board 1	It's a big, ugly impact, I agree.
Board 3	You know, when a lot of districts went into the CSR [primary grade class size reduction], they got rid of the stagger. We're probably one of the only districts that still have it. I'm wondering how they do the enrichment of the art program and the PE? What is that in terms of the stagger?
HR	For those districts that are not staggering, longer day, put prep as we do, but don't have 10:10 on either end.

(Clifton Hill recorded board meeting notes, 2/24/09)

Fact-making in this example put several key pieces of information on the table. The proposed cut was not tied to the collective bargaining agreement, it would bring the district toward a schedule comparable to what other districts were already doing, and generated a substantial savings to the district. These "facts" contributed to the strength of administrators' problematizing of the elementary music program.

As evidence of the salience of this particular set of facts outside of this excerpt, I documented administrators explaining the logistics of prep time in both budget cycles and

in both study districts. For example, early on in the second cycle, the Eaglemont superintendent's fact-making looked as follows. In response to a parent question at a community stakeholder meeting, she stated: "It isn't true that regular classroom teachers would lose their prep time if the board cut music specialists. Instead, there are ways the district can maintain prep time without needing to enter into negotiations" (Eaglemont fieldnotes, 1/25/10). In a later board meeting, she reiterated, "With specialists, I understand they are married with prep time, but prep time would be given differently." Fact-making, in this way, involved making the case that administrators, as experts in district operations and management, were well-versed in and working within the constraints imposed by the relevant rules. This presentation of facts in operational terms exposed board members to the ways in which their administration had thoughtfully addressed the issue. It was not simply a knee-jerk response.

Over time, board members stopped arguing that they could not cut music specialists because of the teachers contract. In an interview, one Eaglemont board member explained to me, "Music, PE, and art have some other complications because that was release time for our teachers. And so that's a real complication. Now, administration tells us there is a way to take care of that release time. And so I had to believe what they're saying to me, and we'll see how it works." The effect of fact-making, as illustrated, was to convince board members to redefine the basis on which they were keeping music. It was no longer because it was simply required because of complications involving the collective bargaining agreement, per the prior board interpretation.

Administrators' fact-making in the context of prep time appeared to have persuaded their boards by the second budget cycle. As described above, board members questioned the legality of cutting music specialists because of prep time in both districts early on. But in the second budget cycle, board members did not raise legal issues as they had earlier. Instead, they focused on understanding the logistical implications of the potential cut to music specialists. For example, in the final board finance committee meeting observed in the study, only one board member asked about the elementary music program. Her question was straightforwardly about the link between the dollar amount on the budget and the program's logistics: "line 124, instrumental music. How much is that, twice a week?" The superintendent, in turn, asked the chief academic officer, "Two times a week for 45 minutes, is that true?" The chief academic officer responded, "It really varies, it might be that. Other schools do it twice a week for 40 or 35 minutes." No other board members asked any questions about legal or logistical issues during what was a four-hour meeting about budget cuts.

In sum, board members had to rely on technical information specific to their district that was provided by their administrators. As a result, they were hard-pressed to engage in sustained questioning in the face of the materials and rationales assembled by their administrators. Fact-making, in this way, represented one mechanism through which administrators' expertise constrained contestation around cuts to the elementary music program.

Fact-making in the two districts

Administrators repeatedly linked facts to the accountability norms that guided their approach to resource reallocation, engaging in fact-making with respect to several "technical" issues. One such issue was whether regular classroom teachers were qualified to provide music instruction. Administrators explained that in the eyes of the state, all multiple-subject credential holders were, in fact, qualified to teach music. In a context in which the district was broadly trying to focus on compliance issues, the goal was to ensure coverage of the standards. Multiple-credential holders were certificated to teach those standards. As in the prep time example, administrators engaged in fact-making, distinguishing between board interpretations and understanding about what the district must do. For example, in describing that regular classroom teachers would now be providing music instruction during a community stakeholder meeting, the Eaglemont superintendent said, "it's not ideal. But the district is committed to providing a basic education, and I know our teachers are professional enough to do it" (fieldnotes, 1/25/10).

Fact-making also became more elaborate over time. From fieldnotes, I identified several differences in fact-making between the first and second budget cycles. In general, during the first budget cycle, administrators verbally explained the reasons and "facts" behind the recommendations they presented. In the second budget cycle, district administrators' fact-making extended beyond verbal statements to include providing supporting artifacts, including revised and expanded versions of earlier artifacts. For example, in Eaglemont, district administrators re-estimated the cost of providing elementary enrichment (including the elementary music program). This estimate was a more complex undertaking than the prior estimate because the business office pulled actual specialists' salaries rather than using the district average. The result was that the potential savings they attributed to cutting all elementary specialists increased by $1.4 million, from $2 to $3.4 million. In addition, the cut to elementary specialists was included in all versions of budget cuts that board members reviewed in the second budget cycle. This was because, as the chief business officer explained to me in an interview, "We tried to give a variety of different options…on none of the three options that we provided did we exclude the elementary music, art, and PE release time teachers. Because there's no way we could have gotten to $16.5 million dollars without including that big chunk." The handouts reinforced the administration's argument about the cost of the program and the impact of keeping it with respect to other district programs for students.

The superintendent also frequently reminded the board and the community that supporters of the music program could donate music using a tab they had set up on the district webpage. This reinforced the idea that the district could not afford to keep its specialist teachers or its elementary music program. She also noted that board action to cut specialists did not necessarily mean that the program needed to disappear from school sites. Instead, it made it legally possible for sites to pay for specialist teachers and other materials using federal categorical funds. As she explained to the board, "Once [the district program is] gone, not it's while here, then they can turn to restricted money in Title I. If that's something that that particular site values enough that it wants to spend restricted money that way, there's nothing to stop it. We checked with instructional

support services, they can do that. There are a lot of things that can be done with restricted [dollars]" (recorded meeting notes, 2/22/10). This reinforced the idea of the pared-down, accountability-focused district. By drawing on technical facts and legal aspects of operations, school sites, rather than the district, would be enabled to choose how to reconcile utilitarian and popular expectations of schooling.

In Clifton Hill, administrators did extensive work teaching board finance committee members about the legal and labor issues involved in keeping and, alternatively, cutting the music program. This came about because board finance committee took an increasingly active role in preparing recommendations as described in Chapter 5 in detail. Inside finance committee meetings, administrators reviewed multiple elements that came into play in recommending budget cuts. While in the case of music, administrators did not prepare specific artifacts (as in Eaglemont), they did talk about this option.

Demonstrating the persuasiveness of fact-making, Clifton Hill's board finance committee agreed to recommend that the full board cut music specialists. Two of the three board members that sat on the finance committee specifically stated during the first budget cycle that they were opposed to any cuts to music. But the evidence and facts presented by administrators contributed to changing the mind of these two board member and others with regard to the district's ability to afford music. One of the board finance committee members tried to convince her fellow board members of the urgency of the cut by pointing out that she now supported the cut even though, as she reminded her peers, "that was once the one thing that I promised I would never ever touch" (fieldnotes, 5/24/2010). All three finance board members, including the two members that expressed high level of commitment to the program earlier on, voted to cut specialists as part of budget cuts.

Justifying

Above, I described fact-making as a mechanism for problematizing institutionalized practices and argued that administrators' fact-making affected board members' knowledge about why cutting music specialist teachers was legal and viable. This section describes a second, related mechanism that unfolded primarily among board members: justifying. I argue that justifying strengthens the impact of fact-making by surfacing inconsistencies in the socio-cultural tenets underlying institutionalized practices. What I term justifying is the mechanism by which actors (board members, in this case) attempt to diffuse the level of contestation around an institutionalized practice, such as the idea that music is an essential part of elementary education. They justify and rationalize the way things are done in order to convince others not to take problematizing too seriously. Somewhat counter-intuitively, surfacing different justifications can reveal that beliefs are not commonly shared at a deeper level. As observed in field-level studies of deinstitutionalization (Ahmadjian & Robinson, 2001; Maguire & Hardy, 2009), an important stage in deinstitutionalization is where participants begin to understand that what they held to be shared presumptions are not, in fact, evenly held.

Board members' justifications for protecting a specialist-taught elementary music program were diverse, including: protecting students from a watered-down elementary curriculum; boosting students' achievement in core academic areas; and hurting the community by laying off a sizeable number of district employees. For example, an Eaglemont board member justified protecting the elementary music program in the following way: "I didn't run for this office to reduce the quality of education. I understand the loss of revenues from state. I can't see eliminating music, art, PE" (recorded board meeting notes, 2/22/10). This justification suggests that this board member and others were hard-pressed to imagine elementary education without the specialist-taught program they had come to expect in their district. Table 6-2 summarizes the four dominant justifications I identified across board meetings, interviews, and other documented board statements. These justifications illustrate that board members understood and valued the elementary music program in ways that overlapped, but were not necessarily consistent. As highlighted in the table, board members articulated justifications that referenced accountability pressures and the narrowing of the elementary curriculum, the district's responsibilities as an employer, standing board and community priorities, and the complex ways that cuts to music specialists would affect the district in terms of cost and logistics.

Table 6-2. Range of board members' justifications for maintaining music specialists

Type of justification	Illustrative excerpts
Accountability pressures and a narrowed curriculum	I'm a sixth grade teacher in another district, but I know pressures at elementary with the number of minutes with state mandates mean a lot of subjects by necessity get short shrift. Areas like PE, music, art, would be among those areas. With specialists in place, [we] guarantee access to those things. With a regular classroom teacher, they are less likely to have access to them. I don't want to do athletics, but if we're going to do athletics, I want to do music. And I don't want to do either of them. If you talk about directly affecting the child, that will affect them.
District as employer	As a board member, I have a responsibility to the district, kids, and the community. We are one of the largest employers in the county, we need to keep that in mind. With kids, I'm concerned about programs. With the community, local economy. I really oppose the idea of layoffs, any layoffs.
Violates board or community priorities	We did discuss that did not have consensus to put athletics and music on the list. I would like to not revisit it because we did not have consensus. It's disingenuous to steer away from that, and steer back to [the music specialist cut]. We had 50,000 people in here yelling at us.
Involves complex logistics	That also does away with the [prep period]. This has big impact. There were some people, not me, that put [music specialists] on [the cut list] as the consensus, and I just wanted to be clear that that has a bigger impact than just the dollars. We have to, I imagine, purchase additional supplemental materials. If we cut elementary specialists, that will increase as a one-time cost...tandem piece.

To provide evidence about how this mechanism played out in the study districts, I now connect justifying to board decisions about music specialist teachers in the second budget cycle.

Eaglemont. In Eaglemont's second budget cycle, a majority of board members voted for budget cuts that included the elimination of the elementary music program and all elementary specialists. Like in Clifton Hill, there were some budget items that the board chose to vote on separately. But the cut to music specialists was not among these

controversial items. In the first board meeting with budget cuts scheduled as an action item, two board members explicitly stated that they would not support cuts to music specialists. At the beginning of the meeting, board members variously talked about keeping libraries to maintain students' access to instructional materials, avoiding closing schools because of political costs, and keeping transportation because of student attendance and safety issues. The elementary music program came up again ten minutes later, with the same board member that asked about potentially including music credentials in the district's criteria for skipping specially credentialed teachers in seniority-based layoffs. She justified the elementary music program in several different ways: as part of the board's mandate to keep cuts away from children, part of the district's obligation as a major employer in the region, and as an important component of elementary education, particularly in the context of increased accountability pressures on the district. Here is an excerpt from how she articulated her opposition to voting on any budget cut list that included specialist teachers:

> Our mandate is to keep cuts out of the classroom…I ran on a platform of ABCs. Accountability, we're all showing up for managing the impact of these times on our schools, students. Basics and beyond. Not just reading, mathematics, but music, art, beyond. I can't abandon that. Laying off these kinds of people, they're not going on to new jobs, there aren't any jobs out there. This is our depression. Don't make any mistakes about that, laying them off, they aren't going to new work. Our community will suffer. It's not good for our successful students, they need release time to go to music, whether they're good at it or not. P.E. to stay fit, energize their minds. I'm fearful that if we take that away from there. We're already in Year 3 Program Improvement, *with* these programs. Where are we going to be if we take them away? So that's my bias.

This statement illustrates key contrasts between "real school" and the way that administrators talked about the education that they needed to provide as defined in terms of "academic excellence."

But after this call to action, the topic of the conversation shifted to how potential employee concessions could improve the district's financial situation. The chief business officer and chief human relations officer answered several questions about the impact of changes to step and column and freezing raises. In fact, the impact of laying off music specialists became the dominant way that board members talked about music for the remainder of the meeting. Effectively, the board returned to administrators' facts as a principle for decision making in this process. The particulars of music specialists were picked up thirty minutes later, when, as illustrated in the following excerpt, a second board member returns to the inappropriateness of layoffs to justify keeping the elementary music program from cuts.

Here, justifying appears to have produced a key shift: board members themselves took up the position outlined by administrators. They, not just administrators, began to offer justifications for the cut to specialist teachers. Specifically, board members

themselves argued that retaining specialist teachers posed a threat to the district's fiscal integrity. Rather than repeating or extending the layoff justifications further, three board members emphasized that fiscal integrity was the first priority of the district. Further, each board member rejected their colleague's justification in terms of layoffs for somewhat different reasons.

Board 1 As a board member, responsibility to district, kids, community. One of the largest employers in the county, need to keep that in mind. With kids, I'm concerned about programs. We need to think about the community, local economy. I really oppose the idea of layoffs, any layoffs. We're talking about 200 plus people, talking about, in this economy, those people not finding jobs, maybe for a year, several years, destroying the families of those employees. I didn't run for this office to reduce the quality of education. Understand loss of revenues from state. Can't see eliminating music, art, P.E.…There are several different paths we can go. We can get people back to work, keep people employed, otherwise never get out of recession. Do what's right for our community, our kids. That's all.

Board 2 I totally agree with you. The problem is we've got to step up before March 15th to do something, otherwise we're negative qualified. They're not going to put anything out for negotiations until next month. Only through negotiations can we reach an agreement on what you're looking for. We have to act now, because of the timeline. I would love to see it that we're not laying people off. The only way is to mandate that at the end of the negotiation process. It's what I have to do, not what I'd like to do.

Board 3 While I agree, I believe, with the feelings behind what [board member 1] said, phrases like a layoff will destroy families, that a sports scholarship is the only opportunity, disrespects the entire legacy of America. To continually look to government to create jobs, when job creation is the talent, skill, purview of citizens…

Board 4 We really have to look seriously at this list and be realistic about having to make $16.5 million worth of cuts. Last year, we had options. We cannot afford liberty of spending $340,000 for transporting teams, athletic events. Maybe that's something we had the option of doing a year ago…Think about education, we are in Program Improvement Year 3, LEA plan. Unfortunately sports is not a big part of that plan. And we have to accept that. And in better times it will be. Right now it is not the focus. The focus is leaving no child behind, PI 3, not submitting negative report to the county.

(recorded board meeting notes, 2/22/10)

In this way, board members took up their administrators' cause, weaving different facts about the elementary music program and salient mandates into their justifications. The stances articulated by board members 2, 3, and 4 represent a marked contrast with events the prior year. In order to keep the elementary music program, the board pursued the highly politicized process of closing schools. At that time, board members unanimously removed music specialists from the district's layoff list. In fact, board members 2 and 4 from the above excerpt were individuals that consistently affirmed their commitment to the elementary music program throughout the first budget cycle, referencing the importance of music even at board meeting where cuts to music were not slated for discussion.

In the end, the board opted to hold another meeting to finalize and approve budget cuts. At that meeting, no board members specifically mentioned music specialists or

elementary music program. Yet individual board members did ask to remove cuts to libraries and transportation, and closing schools from the budget cut list. This suggests that several board members had been persuaded that it was appropriate to cut the elementary music program in favor of avoiding these cuts. After raising elementary class size to avoid these three cuts, the board approved the budget cut list in a 4-3 vote. Despite their ardent support for the elementary music program, neither of the two board members brought up protecting the elementary music program at the final meeting where the board actually voted on budget cuts.

Clifton Hill. Clifton Hill's board also cut music specialists in the second budget cycle. They reduced rather than eliminated the program (as in Eaglemont). But in contrast to the first budget cycle, board members' justifications for funding music specialists were considerably more muted in nature. Unlike in Eaglemont, no board member explicitly stated that they would not support cuts to music. As illustrated in the excerpt below, board members cited community support for the program as the primary justification for preserving the elementary music program. Facts, such as the reference to $312,000, organized board deliberations in a way that aligned with the technical perspective developed through administrators' fact-making.

Board 1 Last year, I was opposed to 26:1. I'm not sure what I can say about 28:1. It's getting passed over my dead body. I would like to see serious talks about merging the adult school with another [in nearby district]. With class size reduction and elementary prep time, I would go for cutting the elementary prep time.

Board 2 I think we would all agree we don't want to cut class size reduction. If you're going to vote against it, we need to come up with $312,000. It's fiscal responsibility to our community. To maintain fiscal stability, we have to agree on cuts.

Board 1 Normally, I would not respond, but to cut prep, music, athletics. People would be throwing rocks!

Board 3 We're under advisement that we should not deal with counselors tonight. The only thing to balance it out is to go to 30:1. The balance is $28,000. We could take the reserve. I don't know where magically we can come up with $220,000.

(fieldnotes, 2/23/10)

Unlike in the first budget cycle, board members did not actively work to restore the portion of the elementary music program recommended for cuts. Instead, after one board member estimated that several budget items combined (athletics, specialists, and an extra prep period) was about equivalent to the difference between 28:1 and 30:1 in primary class sizes, the board discussion turned to whether to keep enrichment activities or lower class sizes. The elementary music program was framed as part of this bundle from that point on. The board member then argued that the board ought to prioritize lower class sizes; this same board member had orchestrated the restoration of the elementary music program in the first budget cycle. Another board member pointed out that he had saved music from cuts in the preferences he submitted to the board finance committee. But he did not actually request to see the program restored, appearing to accept that a majority of his colleagues favored the cut. In this way, repeating facts

outlined by the administration diffused the number and nature of justifications the board articulated in the second budget cycle.

Reinforcing this shift, the conceptual bundling of cuts appeared to define and limit the number of budget puzzle pieces in play. In the first budget cycle, board members approached the task of budget cuts with the assumption that there must be a way to keep the elementary music program intact. In the second budget cycle, the bundling of cuts transformed the deliberations into a matter of trading off programs in terms of dollar amounts. This drove home the related claims that (a) the district's investment in its elementary music program was substantial in dollar terms and (b) keeping the program intact would require cutting multiple programs that the board also valued and hoped to sustain. As described in the previous section, the facts introduced by administrators in the first budget cycle crossed over, in the second budget cycle, to the board's justifications. This shift is important because the board, not administration, exercised authority over resource allocation.

The remainder of the board discussion further demonstrates that justifying had undermined the specialist-taught elementary music program as an institutionalized practice. First, when the board began to move toward voting on the budget cut list, the finance committee chair summarized what she referred to as "significant changes." Although she mentioned class size and counseling, she did not reference music specialists. Second, board members requested to vote on some budget items separately from the budget cut list. The items they were pulled were elementary class size, library technicians, and athletics. Finally, no board members ever made the case that it would be preferable to keep specialists and raise class size and the other items that were bundled into the dollar-equivalent of the elementary music program. This was the opposite of what transpired in the first budget cycle: the board raised class size in order to protect specialists from cuts.

In response to the loss of taken-for-grantedness, the board exercised its authority in line with "facts" as presented by their administrators. One board member pointed out the community high level of support for these programs, then contrasted these pressures with what she perceived as the most appropriate course of action for the board. She said, "We heard speaker after speaker. Students also need to learn how to read." Another board member responded in this way. "I understand the argument about that we measure English, language, math, science. Education consists of more than that. I don't like going to 30:1. But I don't think the alternative [saving specialists, athletics, prep period] is the way I would like to go." In this way, even though some board members believed that music belonged in elementary education, they prioritized keeping class sizes low.

Despite continued pleas from stakeholders in board meetings, such as "[Specialists] are what makes the district different and attractive" (fieldnotes 6/10/10), the board maintained the specialist cut. The continued community attention to music demonstrates the continued weight of popular notions of schools even as accountability's technical demands increased. The board did, however, put off setting in stone that this was actually a cut to music: the budget submitted to the county office specified a generic

specialist cut that to be implemented with elementary music, art, or PE specialists. This demonstrates that board members remained reluctant to cut their high quality specialist-taught music program, even as they became persuaded that it was a necessary step to maintain fiscal integrity. The place of music in elementary education remained unresolved, even as administrators focused on creating and implementing programs that addressed the objectives outlined in their Program Improvement plan.

In sum, popularly held expectations for schooling became less persuasive to the board over time. Administrators' fact-making eroded support for prioritizing this activity at the expense of other educational offerings. Parallel to this, board members' own efforts to justify the place of music in elementary education demonstrated that the "shared" expectations were, in fact, inconsistent and fragmented. This reinforced the persuasiveness of administrators' fact-making. This cultural-cognitive fragmentation contributed to a shift towards prioritizing other activities at the expense of the specialist-taught elementary music program.

Discussion

The purpose of this chapter was to explain how political struggles can be transformed into institutional contestation that triggers the process of deinstitutionalization. To draw out these linkages, I elaborated the concept of problematizing on the ground, describing fact-making and justifying as distinct mechanisms shaping this microprocess. I drew on the case of music to show change in how board members and administrators batted conflicting notions of schooling back and forth as they debated the fate of music specialists. Both districts historically were highly committed to providing a high quality specialist-taught elementary music program. But reduced resources forced administrators and board members to reevaluate this commitment, reducing their support for music over time. Administrators helped bring this policy change about by championing accountability norms for schooling on the one hand and demonstrating how facts aligned with their proposal to cut elementary specialist teachers on the other.

In Clifton Hill, the board rejected the idea of cutting music specialists initially. But once the board finance committee took control of budget reductions, the challenges of reconciling the community push to protect music with the need to locate a substantial amount of cuts somewhere in the district budget remained. Through board deliberations, justifications to protect the program in terms of the student experience, the layoffs cuts would entail, and district traditions revealed that board members valued the program for different reasons, and did not share the same ideas about what trade-offs were reasonable for keeping the program intact. Members of the board finance committee became persuaded that the depth of cuts that would have to be made to other areas to continue protecting music specialists was not fair. As a result, they recommended reducing the program and engaged in the fact-making that had formerly been the province of administrators.

In Eaglemont, despite following the superintendent's recommendation to shift the Arts and Music block grant into the general fund, board members balked when they

actually faced issuing layoff notices to their music specialists. They not only personally felt committed to the district's elementary music program, but experienced music as one of the most vocal and active constituency groups. As a result, they chose to close schools and preserve music as a service for children. As they entered in to the second budget cycle having weathered great community opposition to the school closures, they were more willing to accept the fact-making, particularly as the justifications provided by some of the board members pointed to solutions that the board as a whole was not willing to consider: not submitting a balanced budget.

This chapter has two implications. First, I uncovered a relationship between the ways in which expertise and "facts" can contribute to deinstitutionalization through interactions among people. Field-level studies of deinstitutionalization identify the importance of authoritative experts in undermining highly legitimated practices (Maguire 2004; Maguire and Hardy 2009), and I extend this research by providing guidance as to how the distribution of expertise and organizational knowledge can matter inside organizations such as districts. I claim that the mechanism of fact-making is an important, but not sufficient, to link problematizing inside organizational political struggles to deinstitutionalization. Tacit beliefs and ideas must also begin to fragment in the face of new understandings about purposes and practices, and this can come about through efforts to justify and rationalize why actions should not be taken. In fact, the events I traced in Clifton Hill and Eaglemont emphasize that it is only once those holding formal authority, in this case the board members, become convinced of certain facts that see deinstitutionalization outcomes.

Second, returning to a theme of Chapter 4, I showed that the deregulation of Tier 3 categorical flexibility programs does not necessarily imply the capture of these resources by more powerful, organized constituencies outside of the organization. Instead, straightforward political pressure is moderated by district organizational structures and tacit beliefs. The first budget cycle certainly can be interpreted as evidence that the institutionalized expectations of the place of music in elementary education derailed administrators' attempts to reallocate resources toward the technical demands associated with the accountability system. But tracing this story ought over the second year suggest that changes were underway. With boundaries of "real school" not shared at a deeper level, the facts proffered by administrators gained a foothold in deliberations at the board level.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

Proponents of deregulation policies in education make a number of claims about how eliminating rules will increase the efficiency of the central state's educational dollars: removing distracting legal rules and mandates will help refocus districts' attention on student outcomes; teachers and school leaders close to students are necessarily better informed about how to make appropriate resource decisions than state policymakers or administrators; and categorical programs and their associated bureaucratic infrastructure reflect powerful special interests more than a "state" educational agenda. In the current recessionary climate, enthusiasm for deregulation policies remain high. The California Legislature extended district discretion over Tier 3 categorical resources for two further years, through 2015. At the federal level, a current Senate proposal consolidates about 60 federal categorical programs into two block grants (Klein, 2011). After describing and analyzing the case of California's Tier 3 categorical flexibility in the two study districts, what do we now know about the relationship between deregulation and the deinstitutionalization of categorical aid practices?

This study showed that districts did reallocate Tier 3 categorical resources, using these formerly regulated dollars to pay for personnel, programs, and services that traditionally were paid for using unrestricted general fund dollars. Both Clifton Hill and Eaglemont reallocated more than half of their available Tier 3 categorical dollars. But neither districts' resource reallocation choices uniformly honed in on core academic instructional improvement, as the argument articulated by proponents of deregulation goes. Nor were powerful constituents wholly protected from budget cutbacks. The two districts cut popular programs that had large and important constituencies fighting for their survival.

Instead, my findings document board members' efforts to protect a range of programs and services, often downplaying administrators' attempts to protect ongoing instructional improvement efforts. Through preserving enrichment activities, libraries, and other components of "real school" notions of schooling, two boards sought to fulfill what they saw as their district's work and obligations to students and the local community. These resource allocation choices evidenced limited direct linkages to the logic of standards-based reform, despite the fact that both districts worked extensively on districtwide and school Program Improvement plans over the course of my fieldwork.

This conclusion chapter is organized as follows. I first make the case for attending to the school board in district education policy implementation processes. Next, I highlight how findings in this study expands on what we know from a prior generation of deregulation efforts. Then, I turn to study's implications for understanding the phenomenon of deinstitutionalization. I highlight the study's empirical contribution to understanding how political struggle inside organizations trigger or diffuse the process of deinstitutionalization. Finally, I comment on the useful of organizational routines as a

methodological tool for better observing agency when investigating the phenomenon of deinstitutionalization.

Making the school board visible

This study challenges the assumption that school board members exercise little more than "due diligence" with respect to district education policy implementation processes. Instead, my findings emphasize that school boards influence how implementation unfolds. How board members exercised their fiduciary authority—for example, by preferring "sharing the burden" of cuts—has consequences for the dollars available for particular district programs and services. To-date, studies of education policy implementation have paid little attention to the formal fiduciary authority of the board and how this authority may shape teaching and learning activities. This line of research implicitly assumes that board behavior has little direct relevance to implementation processes that district administrators, school leaders, and teachers are asked to engaged in. This is not surprising given considerable evidence that policy targets themselves frequently misinterpret and act on policy demands in ways that fall short of policymakers' objectives (Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer 2002; Hill 2001; Coburn 2005a; Cohen 1990). But even in cases where board members run for office in order to pursue curricular change in their own school district, bureaucratic delay can dampen the influence of boards' reform efforts on classrooms (Binder, 2002). But the board's seemingly distal relationship to implementation processes is, in fact, critical.

This study showed that school board resource allocation choices directly influence how districts organize for instructional improvement efforts, such as the specific actions responding to school-level and districtwide Program Improvement sanctions. Board choices about how to cut spending mattered in this study because they affected district budget shapes administrators' ability to spend on instructional coaches and other personnel, teacher professional development, academic intervention services, and other activities that we might expect to see in place in districts facing sanctions tied to accountability policy. Thus, this study moves us beyond the simple conception of school board members as touching instruction only through the hiring and firing of the superintendent. Instead, boards can and do make resource allocations that they view as fair and appropriate, but these same decisions can be devastating for district instructional capacity and ability to commit to sustained reform efforts.

My findings also showed that board-administration relational trust shaped the degree to which board were willing to support a majority of staff recommendations about how to make use of deregulated resources. In Eaglemont, Tier 3 categorical resources generally flowed toward standards-based reform priorities, while in Clifton Hill, Tier 3 categorical resources were used to backfill the district budget deficit across both core academic offerings and other district functions and activities. Relational dynamics, in this way, deepen understanding of why school boards may appear to shape district implementation processes more obviously in some districts than in others. Although my findings are based on a small sample (two districts), the notable absence of rational, strategic prioritizing inside public board deliberations indicates a need for academics to more systematically draw together data and arguments to understand conflict and role

conceptions in the board-superintendent relationship as important contingent factors influencing district responses to deregulation and decentralization policies.

Related to this, my findings also illustrate that boards, even as they approve district mission statements and school and district-wide Program Improvement plans that explicitly define improving student learning in terms of test scores, may continue to hold other, older cultural assumptions about the district's responsibilities and obligations to students and seek to sustain these programs and services in spite of budgetary strain and administrators preferences to focus on improving "core academics." Although the logic of accountability and standards-based reform has been shaping educators' work for several decades, in this study, local communities and school boards, as their elected representatives, did not necessarily perceive the district's obligations and successes solely in terms of the proportions of students and specific student subgroups that demonstrate proficiency on grade-level benchmarks for core academic subjects. Instead, a range of other, older notions of schooling that emphasized schooling in terms of students' well-roundedness, socialization, civic education, engagement in school, and the scope of curriculum that have long signaled "real school" to parents and other community members influenced school board decisions. Board members' priorities influenced their budget decisions in ways that mattered for the district's instructional work.

Finally, this study suggests that school boards represent one component of the answer to a vexing question in school finance: how and why do districts make the resource allocations they do? This question emerged from school finance researchers' findings that intradistrict resource allocation appears to promotes horizontal equity (that is, even spending across students) in spite of federal and state categorical programs that attempt to target supplemental funding to schools serving higher-needs students. Roza (2010) suggests that these outcomes stems, in part, from the complicated and opaque nature of how districts pay for educational resources. But I found that board members also instrumentally adjusted resource allocation to ensure "fairness" and, in some cases, correct the administration's narrow focus on improving the achievement of lower performing students. While I did not design the study to investigate the extent to which democratic decision-making may be aligned, or at cross-purposes, with the accountability and academic excellence paradigm, my findings suggest that variation in local school boards' commitment to student achievement may have important consequences for the extent to which districts actually reallocate resources toward instructional improvement in core academic subjects. In a context of scarce resources overall and the elimination of state funding for Program Improvement-related reform efforts, future studies of intradistrict resource allocation can help to explore this possibility by carving out conceptual space for school boards.

Deregulation as education policy implementation

This study also contributes to our understanding of deregulation policies. My investigation of the case of Tier 3 categorical flexibility offers concrete descriptions of the processes two contrasting districts employed to implement deregulation. I document that deregulation policies can lead to changed organizational structures and practices. But I also show that these changes may not occur through the straightforward theory of action

typically assumed by proponents of deregulation. In general, proponents of deregulation policies assume that state-level decisions about resource allocation are inefficient and incur unnecessary administrative waste: spending rules restrict how lower-level agencies like schools district can tailor spending to reflect local context and specific needs, and require administrative oversight to ensure that spending is in compliance with relevant regulatory requirements (Chubb and Moe 1990; Friedman 1968; Ouchi 2003, 2009). Instead, people "on the ground" and closest to the action, such as school principals, are expected to make more efficient spending choices because they are familiar with their precise needs and where they most need to capacity.

I found that board members and administrators were reluctant to abandon many Tier 3 categorical programs, despite their legal deregulation. The two districts' responses are broadly consistent with research on a prior generation of education deregulation policies, where significant structural changes at school sites were the exception rather than the rule (Hood et al. 1982; Millsap et al. 1992; Schenck and Beckstrom 1993). The districts reallocated fewer Tier 3 categorical resources than they legally could. They also used reallocated dollars in ways that did not necessarily tie back to local needs as defined in terms of student test scores. Instead, budgetary strain helped encourage a focus on finding ways to maintain the status quo. These data suggest that deregulation and decentralization do not necessarily promote "rational" prioritizing about how best to match resources to goals.

The outcomes I identified contradict the idea that districts will simply switch out old Tier 3 categorical program mandates and objectives in favor of greater focus on ongoing or new instructional improvement efforts. I did not see clear evidence of rational prioritizing in line with local needs and efforts to improve student learning in line with the logic of accountability and standards-based reform. However, I did see administrators focus on a guiding priority they held for the district's work: improved teaching and learning in core academics. At the same time, I found that board members generally attempted to backfill traditional spending on a range of programs and services (even including some Tier 3 categorical programs). This unevenness of responses between district subunits suggests that other, older notions of schooling and the district's work sit along side the accountability system's technical demands. While not a focus of the present study, policymakers may want to further consider the implications of using policy tools that effectively deregulate and decentralize authority to lay elected boards control over resources while district and school leaders' contracts are increasingly frequently defined in terms in test score gains.

My findings about resource decision making and allocation further suggest that the ways in which local power relations and political pressures can be moderated by neoinstitutional conceptions of the district's work and obligations to students. This dimension does not appear in conventional political bargaining accounts or theories of deregulation. Both school boards did respond selectively to more powerful district constituencies, keeping or restoring some district programs in response to their campaigning at board meetings and in the community. But rather than simply representing powerful constituents in board decision making, several board members saw

their role as trustees for the district: that is, standing up for less powerful constituencies and pursuing resource reallocations that would best serve the district as a whole. As a result, policymakers may want to reframe the four decades-old debate regarding the extent to which decentralization puts resources on the collective bargaining table or more efficiently helps district and school-site leaders raise student achievement. Instead, variation in extent to which board members channel pluralistic tacit notions of schooling appears to affect the scope of priorities and uses for deregulated resources.

This research agenda with respect to better understanding how district organizations approach and respond deregulation is particularly critical in the context of what some are calling a "return to localism" (Henig 2009). In light of the central state's increasingly limited ability to rely on funding as policy tool for persuading districts and schools to attend to federal and state educational objectives, it becomes important to understand what districts do, as distinct from what optimists assume will unfold as legal and regulatory requirements are suspended. As states like California deregulate and decentralize authority over resources to districts in exchange for lowered funding commitments, the school board's resource allocation choices represent a critical leverage point in the annual process of translating dollars into spending that aligns with district educational goals and priorities.

Insights into the process of deinstitutionalization

This study illustrates mechanisms by which local organizational conditions can heighten or diffuse field-level pressures for change, extending how we understand the process of deinstitutionalization. Despite the weight that Oliver (1992) puts on intraorganizational conditions as antecedents of deinstitutionalization, the small number of studies that explicitly investigate deinstitutionalization only examine field-level processes. From these studies, we have learned about how national economic conditions can push conflicting interpretations and meanings of institutionalized practices to the surface (Ahmadjian and Robinson 2001) and the processes by which regulatory change and other forms of involvement by the state frequently codify (rather than initiate) changes in norms of appropriateness (Maguire and Hardy 2009; Leblebici et al. 1991). Findings from these studies further imply that the practices of elite or otherwise more powerful actors can hasten the erosion of institutionalized practices. My study complicates this literature by highlighting how subunits inside organizations unevenly experience and respond to external institutional and technical pressures.

Far from conforming to the state's attempt to deinstitutionalize categorical aid practices, superintendents, other top-level district officials, and board members responded to and manipulated the coercive pressures that accompanied deregulation. My findings are consistent with recent neoinstitutional research that foregrounds how actors exercise agency and power in the context of institutional processes (Scott, 2001). I showed that within each district organization, particular individuals behaved in strategic ways that aligned with their own professional preparation, personal orientations, and the nature of their work. For board members, Tier 3 categorical flexibility represented one tool for distributing budget cutbacks fairly and managing political pushback from the local community. They responded by using deregulated resources to maintain a range of

programs and services. From the perspective of administrators, instead, Tier 3 categorical flexibility upended their ability to target resources toward students unlikely to be supported by powerful constituencies. The statute's ambiguity also raised questions about how the district should best position itself to fulfill potential future compliance monitoring or reporting requirements. On both these counts, administrators perceived discarding the practices long connected to managing and reporting on Tier 3 categorical programs as professionally irresponsible. They responded by maintaining existing categorical practices in place and creating shadow systems to continue tracking how deregulated Tier 3 categorical resources were spent.

My findings further suggest that middle managers, not just organizational leadership, are key agents in the process of deinstitutionalization. I showed that administrators' commitment to existing practices, backed up by appeals to professional norms and values in both of the study districts, moderated the impact of conditions broadly predictive of the process of deinstitutionalization in parts of the district organization. One implication of this finding is that with about 20 additional state categorical programs and a number of federal categorical programs still firmly in place, deregulation policies like Tier 3 categorical flexibility may simply not be enough to shape tip the scales of behavioral change in the ways that policymakers hope. But study also investigated the state's attempt to deinstitutionalize categorical aid practices in the context of significant budgetary challenges to organizational stability. Further research on deinstitutionalization may find that work practices and environmental stress and ambiguity conditions may represent independently important dimensions shaping how organizations and organizational subunits respond to antecedents and predictive factors of deinstitutionalization.

In addition, this study extended Maguire and Hardy's (2009) proposal of problematizing as a microprocess contributing to deinstitutionalization. As these authors elaborate the concept, problematizing is the process of making claims about how and why an existing institutionalized practices is unjust or unfair. What these authors call "fact-making" refers to the deployment of "facts" as a way of giving further weight to claims articulated in problematizing. But while their study relies on published documents as evidence of claims and arguments being made, my findings draw out the ways in which actors can use specialized knowledge to debunk commonly held rationales in face-to-face interaction. I extend how we understand the microprocess of problematizing by showing that in addition to the fact-making conceptualized by Maguire and Hardy (2009), frequent interactions that involved justifying taken-for-granted beliefs had the unintended effect of demonstrating that those beliefs were not commonly held at a deeper level. In this way, I showed that the erosion of taken-for-granted beliefs help explain why board shifted toward a reliance on facts in later decision making.

Methodological implications for deinstitutionalization research

Finally, this study offers organizational routines as a methodological approach and unit of analysis useful for collecting data needed to explore and test conceptual arguments about how and why the process of deinstitutionalization comes about. This empirical task is challenging because, as Lawrence and Suddaby (2006:249) put it, "The

epistemological issue faced by neo-institutional research is, 'how can a traditionally trained empiricist investigate a phenomenon that has become reified and is, therefore, unavailable to conscious perception?'" As evidence of this challenge, these authors cite the handful of studies that examine the erosion and maintenance of institutions in comparison to a burgeoning literature on the creation of institutions.

The analyses of organizational routines presented in this study represent a useful development in this regard, helping us collect critical data that illuminates key conditions and microprocesses driving deinstitutionalization. To be clear, although institutional studies of organizations frequently cite routinization as evidence of deep levels of institutionalization, the routines referenced in this line of research are mechanisms of stability and permanence as in the early literature on routines (Cyert and March 1963). This study, instead, draws on newer routines research that highlights habitual routines as a potential source of organizational change (Feldman, 2000; Feldman & Pentland, 2003).. By comparing a district budgeting routine over time and across districts, I show that the same routine remained largely intact in one district but came to be reformulated by powerful participants in the other, leaning to deinstitutionalization. In this way, my comparative case findings extend Feldman's (2004) contention that people's interactions inside of organizational routines can generate new or different perceptions about the underlying purposes of their work and appropriate courses of action. I would further argue that what Feldman and Pentland (2003) call the ostensive aspect of routines complements neoinstitutional analysis' cognitive emphasis on the role of ideas, meanings, and beliefs. Future research on deinstitutionalization may profit from examining variation in routines over time and across organizations, as well as connections between different routines as a way of empirically demonstrating the emergence of conflict in the interpretations and meanings assigned to deeply institutionalized practices.

Broadly, my descriptions of conflict and competing preferences inside district organizations extend, rather than contradict, a larger literature documenting organizational behavior. But my findings specifically suggest the mechanisms through which people and common district organizational structures push and pull on institutionalized categorical aid practices. Inside departments within the central office, administrators shared similar professional preparation and encountered a specific of demands tied to the logic of accountability and standards-based reform as part of carrying out their everyday work. In contrast, the representative leadership constituted by the board drew on a wider range of normative assumptions about what schooling should look like, and linked these interpretations to their own priorities for district and the distribution of budget cuts. Thus, studying organizational work that involves substantial negotiations between bureaucrat and elected representative interactions may be a fertile point for observing deinstitutionalization, and help expand empirical research on the phenomenon of deinstitutionalization beyond reactions to major events that unfold at the organizational field-level.

Finally, my findings of uneven responses to deinstitutionalization that I observed across district subunits parallels conclusions emerging from investigations of the role of

technologies in organizational life (Levina and Orlikowski 2009; Orlikowski 1996; Barley 1986). The way that people use and draw on a particular institutionalized practice can restructure the ways in which relational dynamics like informal authority, relational trust, and expertise help people to carry out work together. But these are dimensions of the relationship among people carrying out a practice, not innate qualities of the practice itself. For example, I uncovered evidence of the deinstitutionalization of administrative discretion over categorical resources in one of the two study districts. At the same time, outside the boundaries of the budget cutting routine and board work, administrators in both districts attempted to stabilize resources for Tier 3 categorical programs by maintaining and extending a range of interconnected categorical program practices. While the present study did not observe these practices systematically, it is clear that these core routines to organizational work represent a rich source of micro-level observational evidence that can aid the project of empirically incorporating agency and interest into understanding of deinstitutionalization.

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