

THE ELUSIVE 'GOOD': HOW PERFORMANCE MEASURES SHAPE THE US CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

Ana Carolina R. Macatangay

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



2019

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The elusive 'good': how performance measures shape
the US child support enforcement program

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University of
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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
at the University of St Andrews

February 2019

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General acknowledgements

I would like to thank the leadership and staff of Clark County District Attorney's Office, Family Support Division, the Federal Office of the Child Support Enforcement Program, the National Child Support Enforcement Association, and the Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council for their participation in and/or support for this study.

I would like to thank my principal supervisor Dr. Philip Roscoe and secondary supervisor Dr. Shona Russell for their guidance, support, and encouragement throughout my program of studies. I am also grateful for the support and assistance I received from the academic staff, professional services team, and fellow PhD students of the School of Management.

I would also like to acknowledge the external examiner Professor Neil Pollock and internal examiner Professor Lorna Stevenson for their invaluable feedback on my work.

The completion of this work, however, would not have been possible without the prayers and support of my family and friends, especially those who have passed on without seeing it through to the end. They have been with me all this time and I thank them most dearly.

Finally, I am deeply grateful for the unfailing and loving support of my husband, who always seeks to bring out the best in me.

Funding

This work was supported by the University of St Andrews (School of Management) and the Russell Trust.

Abstract

Performance measures do not just capture an organization's 'good performance'; they intervene in the valuation and construction of what counts as 'good' so it can be valued, enacted, and measured. This is the central theme of this thesis. Using a performativity lens, and drawing on valuation studies and the sociology of quantification, this research investigates the framing processes and mechanisms by which the federal performance measures, through a network of actors and devices, enable a U.S. child support enforcement agency to enact the 'good performance' that can be measured. Using ethnographic and case study methods, the study examines how actors and devices, through a framing process, qualify and negotiate the boundaries of their interactions to produce the 'good performance' that can be counted and measured. The boundaries they establish, however, produce overflows that potentially threaten the production of the qualified and quantified 'good'. Such overflows emerge due to unexpected events, different versions of 'good', and conflicting frames of valuation of what counts as 'good'. Based on the findings, the study offers a taxonomy of performative framing to explain how measures stimulate the organizing work of an agency so the 'good performance' can be organized, articulated, produced, and validated. It also offers a taxonomy of counter-performance to describe the uncertainties, multiplicities, and rivalries that the measured 'good performance' generates.

Abbreviations

ADA	Assistant District Attorney
AFDC	Aid to Families with Dependent Children
AWS	Alternative Work Schedule
CMT	Case Management Tool
CSEP	Child Support Enforcement Program
CSPIA	Child Support Performance and Incentive Act
DAFS	Clark County District Attorney's Office, Family Support Division
DWSS	Division of Welfare and Supportive Services
EPR	Employee Performance Report
FFY	Federal Fiscal Year
FPM	Federal Performance Measure
GPRA	Government Performance and Results Act
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
NAF	Notice and Finding
NCSEA	National Child Support Enforcement Association
NOMADS	Nevada Operations of Multi-Automated Data Systems
OCSE	Office of Child Support Enforcement
PCS	Participant Consent Form
PIP	Performance Improvement Plan
PIS	Participant Information Sheet
PMM	Performance Measurement and Management
PRWORA	Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act
SCADU	State Collection and Disbursement Unit

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1 Introduction

This thesis explores the performative effects of measures and incentives in the U.S. Child Support Enforcement Program (CSEP). It uses the performativity concept of Callon (1998a, 2007, 2009), while drawing insights from the literature on valuation (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006; Dussauge, Helgesson & Lee, 2015b; Dussauge, Helgesson & Lee, 2015a; Kornberger, Justesen, Madsen, *et al.*, 2015) and the sociology of quantification (Espeland & Lom, 2015; Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Espeland & Stevens, 1998, 2008; Fourcade, 2016), to examine how measures, rather than simply capturing an organization's performance, intervene in the construction and valuation of the 'good performance' they seek to measure. Using an actor-network inspired approach (Latour, 1996, 1999a, 2005) to the investigation, the study focuses on a particular case – District Attorney Family Support Division (DAFS), a local child support agency in the state of Nevada – to explore the processes and mechanisms by which measures (and the incentives tied to them) intervene. It demonstrates how measures, through their connections with actors and their devices, transform behaviors, practices, and identities that shape, organize, and make possible the enactment of 'good performance'. The study is also empirically sensitive to the materiality, relationality, and heterogeneity (Law & Singleton, 2013) of the 'constructed reality' to unravel their implications for the kind of world the study wishes its readers to consider.

The extant literature on performance measurement systems in the public sector is abundant and diverse. Several studies tend to focus on their design, impact, or implementation (e.g. Oh & Bush, 2015; Holzer & Yang, 2015; Speklé & Verbeeten, 2014; Stecher, *et al.*, 2010; Heinrich & Marschke, 2010), and also on the challenges associated with their deployment (Oh & Bush, 2015; Lewis, 2015; Dubnick & Frederickson, 2011; Heinrich & Marschke, 2010). Yet, there seems to be no scholarly work on the performance measures' performativity in one of the most successful U.S. federal programs. This research attempts to fill this gap in the literature. Specifically, it seeks to understand how the federal performance measures intervened in one of the poorest performing child support agencies, making it one of the '*most outstanding*'. It rejects the notion of measures as a passive or neutral instrument that simply captures

what is out there or as an external force that naturally improves (or worsens) performance. It does not regard measures as a pre-set frame that commands its force. Rather, it is an entity that is *practically* connected to a network of actors and devices (or what Callon (1998a, 2007, 2009) calls *agencement*), organizing a particular form of performance. This research, therefore, seeks to investigate *how* measures (and those connected to them) shape practices and *what* renders an organization, such as a child support agency, a ‘good (or bad) performing agency’. Thus, it is interested in exploring the relationships that develop between the measures and the performance they intend to measure to capture the performative dimension of the former.

Guided by the methodological underpinnings of actor-network theory (Latour, 2005), the performance measures’ intervention can be captured by tracing the network of relations emerging as a result of a negotiated, heavily invested, and contested process seeking to define, enact, and make visible and valuable the ‘good performance’ that can and must be measured. The study, therefore, explores the network of relations involving human and nonhuman actors, or *actants* (Latour, 1996, 2005), that are linked to each other through *framing* (Callon, 1998a) in order to act in a particular way. Using interviews, observations, and artifacts to follow the actors and the traces they leave behind, the study provides a rich account of their connections that explain the construction and valuation of ‘good performance’. *Actants’* connections to each other, however, are not exclusive due to other interests or concerns connecting them to other networks of relations. This potentially causes disruptions or *misfires* (Callon, 2010) in their collective action, leading to renegotiations and further framing of their constructed reality. Thus, relations are never completely settled or established. Instead, actors and devices are constantly readjusting, rearranging, and reconfiguring their connections to manage the resistance from the ‘outside’ world and keep their ‘socially constructed good performance’ *real* and measurable. The rationale for adopting the performativity concept for the investigation is that it brings to the fore the role of nonhuman and non-individual actors (Callon, 1999, 2009; Latour, 2005) and their coordinated, distributed, and contingent actions to explain the emergence of ‘good performance’. This affords an analysis that is different from previous approaches to the investigation of performance measures in U.S. federal programs as it takes into account the framing, overflowing, and reframing (Callon, 1998a) involved in *actants’* construction of their social reality.

For decades, the use of performance measurement and management as a mechanism for promoting accountability and productivity in government abound. Particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, the use of measures linked to incentives became prevalent in several public sector services (Parker & Gould, 1999; Stecher, Camm, Damberg, *et al.*, 2010). The CSEP is no exception. Since the program's establishment in 1975, the federal government introduced a performance-based incentive system to encourage states to collect child support payments from noncustodial parents of welfare cases as a cost-recovery measure (Solomon-Fears, 2016). While the program has evolved in many ways (OCSE, 2016a), its performance measures and incentive system continue to be its driving force. From 1998 until today, the 50 states and four U.S. territories primarily responsible for administering the program are evaluated yearly on five performance indicators and financially rewarded (or penalized) for their performance. For years, the State of Nevada was among the poorest performing states in the nation. Year after year, DAFS, the local agency driving Nevada's performance, performed poorly in the five performance indicators (MAXIMUS, 2006). But in 2009, it began to see some improvements and eventually became one of the most outstanding child support agencies in the nation. This case, therefore, offers a powerful and interesting site for exploring the measures' intervention in the transformation of DAFS into a 'good performing agency'.

My chosen site for the investigation, while interesting for its radical transformation, is a familiar setting. Having worked at DAFS as a management analyst and member of the management team from 2007 to 2012, I was deeply immersed in the federal performance measures. I frequently referred to them to make sense of our performance goals and strategies for organizational improvement. This familiarity with the site and performance-based incentive system, however, triggered some questions that caused me to wonder *how* measures and incentives influence, control, or even persuade people to act and think the way they do. During the five years I worked at the agency, which in public service terms is considered a relatively short period, I had the chance to witness DAFS' early transformation and get a glimpse of the dynamic and competitive spirit that surrounded the agency as performance scores and incentive payments were brought to light. Particularly during the last two years of my employment, I witnessed some of the changes made to the agency's business operations, organizational structure, and technological devices, as

well as improvements in their performance scores. While my previous affiliation with the agency enabled me to access the site with ease, I was particularly conscious of how this link might influence my exploration, analysis, and writing. Hence, maintaining a reflexive approach (Alvesson, Hardy & Harley, 2008; Hibbert, Sillince, Diefenbach, *et al.*, 2014) was paramount to the conduct of my research and participation in the re-construction and re-presentation of the social reality under investigation.

The empirical analysis of my research shows that measures are deeply bound up with framing processes and mechanisms of *organization, articulation, production, and validation*. These layers of framing create the conditions for DAFS' 'good performance' to exist. They reveal *how* measures intervene in framing and reframing the 'good', and *who* and *what* changes to produce it. They give shape and format to DAFS' *agencement* (Callon, 1998a, 2007, 2009) so it can establish, generate, and measure its 'good performance'. But, as the analysis also shows, the construction and valuation of the 'good' is never stable. Actors and devices performing the 'good' provide a convenient opening to a world of uncertainties, triggering a renegotiation of what counts as 'good' and the production of multiple versions of 'good'. But when other potential 'goods' are ignored, conflicts and tensions arise, thus revealing the political struggles that the measures' intervention provokes. The term 'good', therefore, is deliberately used throughout this work to emphasize the elasticity and elusiveness of the term.

This study contributes to the concept of performativity by presenting the different dimensions of framing through which measures intervene, as well as the processes and mechanisms involved, in the making of 'good performance'. It contributes to the analysis and understanding of the relationship between measures and performance, where the former can be understood both as a form of organization and a process in which actors and devices are constantly embroiled in a negotiation and framing of their situated, collective performances. Rather than postulating that measures are neutral or passive instruments that capture performance, it elaborates on their operative role in formatting and shaping (Callon, 2009) organizations and their activities. It also contributes to the valuation studies by exploring the disputability and multiplicity (Kjellberg & Mallard, 2013) of what counts as 'good' and by exposing

the politics of competing ‘goods’. Finally, the study makes a contribution to the performance measurement and management literature more generally as it puts one of the most complex, yet ‘effective’ and steadily improving, federal programs (see Doar, Smith & Dinan, 2013; OCSE, 2018a; Solomon-Fears, 2016) to the test to demonstrate how ‘good performance’ is the relational effect (Law, 2004), not just of measures, incentives, or good leadership, but of the constant framing and reframing of humans and nonhumans (Callon, 1999) that collectively act and produce it.

The thesis is presented as follows. In the next chapter (Chapter 2), I begin by providing some background on the U.S. Child Support Enforcement Program and its legislative history, followed by a description of the program’s performance-based incentive system. I then introduce the case (i.e. DAFS) and provide some contextual background to put its transformation in perspective. I provide some details about their organizational structure and services and an overview of the changes in their performance scores in the five measures. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework for the investigation. It begins with a brief discussion on the continuing debate surrounding the effectiveness of performance measurement and management systems, the elusiveness of measures, and the performance-accountability relationship. I then present the lens through which my investigation intends to proceed. I discuss the key elements of the performativity thesis of Callon (1998c, 2007, 2009) and draw on some valuable insights offered by the valuation studies and sociology of quantification to develop the framework for the research and analysis. I end the chapter with the research questions. In Chapter 4, I discuss my methodology for the investigation by first making explicit the philosophical perspectives guiding this social inquiry. As I consider the construction of social realities in the Latourian sense (Latour, 1996, 2005), where the material participates in the construction, I then describe the actor-network theory (ANT) as the practical and reasonable methodological approach for the investigation. As ANT recommends following the actors and the traces they leave behind, I discuss the planning and preparation required to access them. I then describe my data sources, as well as the methods used for data collection. Given that my data collection was conducted in two phases, I describe each phase to capture the network-tracing activities involved. I end the chapter with a discussion on my approach to data analysis.

The next three chapters (5, 6, and 7) focus on the presentation and analysis of the data. They are rich descriptions of the various entities (humans and nonhumans), processes, and mechanisms involved in the construction of ‘good performance’. They highlight the developing relations, framing and reframing efforts, transformations, and political struggles emerging from the construction and valuation of the ‘good’. Chapter 8 presents the key findings from this network-tracing. It suggests that the measures’ intervention in the construction of ‘good performance’ involves the constant shifting of a network of relations and re-articulation of the ‘good’ that counts – a process that does not seem to settle. It points to a pragmatic construction of situated, contingent ‘goods’ that heavily depend on the *agencements*’ developing relations of domination (Çalışkan & Callon, 2010) and the uncertainties and controversies these *agencements* generate. The thesis concludes (Chapter 9) with a summary of the key points made, as well as the potential limitations of the study. It also offers possible directions for future research.

2 Setting

This chapter introduces the U.S. Child Support Enforcement Program (from hereon, CSEP). It provides the context for the study's empirical site, the Clark County District Attorney's Office, Family Support Division. The first section begins with a general description of the program, followed by a brief historical overview. It then highlights some of the key legislative changes that significantly shaped the program's direction and describes the organizational and operational framework of the program. The section ends with a broad description of the mechanics underlying the performance-based incentive system.

The next section describes the study's empirical site. It begins with a brief description of the area and the local child support agency responsible for providing child support services to the residents of the county. It then describes the agency's organizational structure and provides a general account of its performance in the five measures.

2.1 The U.S. Child Support Enforcement Program

The CSEP is a federal program focused on obtaining from absent or noncustodial parents their share of financial support for their children. It was created in response to the nation's increasing number of divorced and non-marital births, and its impact on government spending and welfare assistance (Garfinkel, McLanahan, Meyer, *et al.*, 1998). The surge in the number of children born out of wedlock between the 1960s and 1990s resulted in a rise in single-parent families living below the poverty line and the expansion of the welfare system (Huang, Garfinkel & Waldfogel, 2000; Garfinkel, *et al.*, 1998). Congress, therefore, through the establishment of the CSEP, authorized the funding of state child support offices to help with locating absent parents and making them financially responsible for their children's needs. This, as Garfinkel, McLanahan, Meyer, & Seltzer (1998) suggest, *'may be seen as an attempt to privatise the cost of children and to shift some of the burden from the state and from mothers onto the shoulders of fathers'* (p. 3).

In its early years, the program was geared towards serving families who relied on the nation's welfare program, known then as *Aid to Families with Dependent*

Children (also known as AFDC), with the hope of reducing and recovering welfare cost. The cost-recovery is accomplished by allowing the government to retain the child support collected from noncustodial parents as reimbursement for providing public assistance to their children through AFDC. Therefore, as a condition for receiving welfare assistance from the government, custodial parents are required by law to assign their rights to the child support payments collected by the state back to the state. As child support becomes a reliable source of income, families would then be expected to keep off welfare, thus reducing government spending (Doar, *et al.*, 2013; Solomon-Fears, 2013b, a; Government Accountability Office, 2011; Barnow, Dall, Nowak, *et al.*, 2000; Huang, *et al.*, 2000; Keiser & Meier, 1996; Morgan, 2000). With the growing demand for improving the economic conditions of women who make up the majority of custodial parents, the 1984 legislative amendments required states to extend their services to non-welfare recipients in order to avoid a growing population of families who may have to resort to public assistance later on (Keiser & Meier, 1996; England, 1983). To ensure that states administer the program efficiently and effectively, a performance-based incentive system was eventually introduced.

2.1.1 A brief historical overview

CSEP is among the U.S. federal programs with a long history of performance measures and incentive system. The Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the federal agency overseeing the program, provides federal funding and technical assistance to help states, in partnership with local governments, deliver child support services efficiently and effectively. Since its inception in 1975, OCSE provides financial incentives to encourage states to collect child support payments as a way of recovering welfare costs and promote self-sufficiency (Solomon-Fears, 2013a; Doar, *et al.*, 2013). These market principles guiding the program, however, had to be negotiated as competing values were brought to bear through legislative debates and rulings (see Solomon-Fears, 2016) and as proponents of such principles establish what they consider to be good governance. Though lengthy, the 1972 quote from Senator Russell B. Long, then chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, provides a good illustration of the economic justification for the enforcement of child support:

Should our welfare system be made to support the children whose father cavalierly abandons them—or chooses not to marry the mother in the first place? Is it fair to ask the American taxpayer—who works hard to support his own family and to carry his own burden—to carry the burden of the deserting father as well? Perhaps we cannot stop the father from abandoning his children, but we can certainly improve the system by obtaining child support from him and thereby place the burden of caring for his children on his own shoulders where it belongs...

... I plan to insist that the deserting or runaway father assumes his parental responsibility and support to his family so that the children will not be dependent upon Government. We must put a stop to this ridiculous situation by which almost any man can leave his children and avoid supporting them or even worrying about them because he knows that the taxpayers under our system will support them regardless of his conduct. (Congressional Record, 1972: 8291)

As key sponsor of the Social Services Amendments of 1974, Senator Long's report to Congress also appeals to experts' (e.g. Rand Corporation) research to demonstrate the need for a '*more aggressive administration*' of child support enforcement through the use of incentives (Committee on Finance, 1974: 43-46). Despite President Ford's signing of the associated bill, he expressed his misgivings because '*certain provisions of this legislation go too far by injecting the Federal Government into domestic relations*' (Ford, 1974).

Through the years, President Ford's concerns seemed to have been muted by the overarching demand for program effectiveness and accountability backed by testimonies from research groups and consulting firms (Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, 1995). As discursively articulated through established political processes, members of Congress and expert advisers argued that government's adoption of business concepts, such as performance measurement, benchmarking, and reengineering, will help improve the delivery of public goods and services, and assist Congress through their authorization and appropriation processes (Committee on

Government Reform and Oversight, 1995; Kettl, 1996). Although earlier attempts to promote business concepts in government existed, it was not until the passing of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) that conditions became conducive for these concepts to settle in (Groszyk, 1995).

OCSE's participation in the GPRA pilot program in 1994 facilitated CSEP's transition to a performance management-based program (General Accounting Office, 1996). With the passing of the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, Congress required HHS to propose a cost-neutral, performance-based incentive system. HHS, together with their state partners, developed and presented to Congress this new system, which became law under the Child Support Performance and Incentive Act (CSPIA) of 1998. With little effort, strategic planning, performance measures, and progress reporting carried a resounding force into the child support arena. And for two decades now, CSEP's performance-based incentive system continues to thrive.

2.1.2 Legislative changes

The CSEP, for a total of twenty-two years¹ between 1975 and 2010, saw several legislative changes. Three of those years introduced major child support provisions and are worth mentioning. The 1984 legislative changes were closely tied to the Economic Equity Act², a bipartisan effort aimed at promoting women's economic conditions (Keiser & Meier, 1996). During that time, an estimated 90 percent of noncustodial parents with a court support order failed to make all the payments, and between 25 and 33 percent never made a payment (England, 1983). Hence, some of the key changes to the program included the requirement of states to pass laws that would improve the application of enforcement mechanisms (e.g. income withholding, tax intercepts, liens against properties, drivers' license suspension, etc.), extend services to non-AFDC families, and formulate guidelines for determining the appropriate child support amounts (H.R. 4325 - 98th Congress, 1984). These changes sought to promote greater uniformity in enforcement practices among states and equal treatment of families (i.e. AFDC and non-AFDC) needing

¹ Child support legislative changes were introduced in the following years: 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2006, and 2009.

² The Economic Equity Act was introduced in the House (H.R.2090; 1983) and in the Senate (S.888; 1981) but was never enacted. (Source: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/98th-congress/house-bill/2090> and <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/97/s888>; Access date: 11 Dec 2014)

support (Horowitz, Dodson & Haynes, 1985).

The 1988 (H.R. 1720 - 100th Congress, 1988) changes re-emphasized the need to minimize welfare cost through an effective enforcement program and the obligation of parents to work and support their children. It provided a clear mandate for judges and other officials to use the guidelines provided by their state for determining child support obligation amounts. It also required HHS to collect and maintain state-level statistics for reporting purposes.

By 1996, legislation introduced major reforms under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), also known as the Welfare Reform Act. With the passing of PRWORA, Congress required considerable administrative and operational improvements at the state level. It strengthened cooperation among states for the expanded enforcement of support orders and better monitoring of noncustodial parents across state lines. It also altered the audit process and demanded significant data, computing, and reporting requirements from HHS, government agencies (e.g. motor vehicle, law enforcement), and other sectors (e.g. employers, labor organizations, financial institutions). A major change introduced in this legislative amendment was the requirement imposed on HHS to develop a new cost-neutral performance-based incentive system, which was established under the CSPIA of 1998 (Committee on Ways and Means, 2012) and continues to be the system in place. Despite the variety of tools available to states, the enforcement of child support continued to be a challenge (Henry, 1999). By the turn of the century, the CSEP has evolved into a major enterprise with financial, technical, organizational, and legal machineries to maintain the balance between securing the financial well-being of children and families and controlling government spending.

The legislative components of the CSEP, clearly, had played an extensive role in framing the program goals and objectives, roles and identities of stakeholders, activities, and other components necessary to ensure a successful program. It provided not only the rules of the game, but also the framework for making each state accountable to their constituents. Indeed, as Espeland and Vannebo (2007) note, '*[L]aw is a site for interpreting accountability, a vehicle for establishing it, and sometimes its target*' (p. 22).

2.1.3 Organizational framework

Under the OCSE's guidance, the CSEP is administered and/or supervised by the 50 states and four U.S. territories (Washington D.C., Guam, Puerto Rico, and Virgin Islands). The program's organizational structure gives states some autonomy and flexibility in their program management and operations, allowing them to define the rules and regulations for the administration of the program within their own jurisdiction (Horowitz, *et al.*, 1985). As the organization overseeing the program, OCSE performs monitoring and regulatory duties. Its responsibilities include sharing the states' administrative costs (currently at 66%), establishing standards for the operation of the program, auditing program performance, providing regulatory oversight, and offering technical assistance and other services (e.g. provide last known address of the absent parent or secure assistance from the Internal Revenue Service) to support the work of each state (Committee on Ways and Means, 2012; Solomon-Fears, 2013b). Although the federal government provides the general statutory requirements for program operation, each state passes its own laws and defines how these requirements ought to be implemented with specific policies and procedures at a practical level. Understandably, given the variations in political processes, bureaucratic norms and values, knowledge and expertise, and material resources, the policy refinements and bureaucratic discretion across jurisdictions are likely to be broad and potentially inequitable (Keiser & Soss, 1998). Despite the potential differences in state-level laws and regulations, the federal guidelines are presumed to serve as the benchmark for establishing and delivering the same child support services across the nation.

The states, often in partnership with their local governments, are responsible for the administration of the child support services, which include locating noncustodial parents, establishing the legal paternity of children born out of wedlock, establishing legal orders for the provision of child support, reviewing and modifying support orders under certain circumstances, collecting and distributing child support payments, and establishing the provision for and enforcing medical support (Doar, *et al.*, 2013; Barnow, *et al.*, 2000; Solomon-Fears, 2013b). To facilitate service delivery, states depend heavily on the technological infrastructure established and developed through the years. These include national and state case registries containing personal information, such as addresses, record of child support orders and payments, and

personal information of individuals associated with a case. States also have access to directories of new hires with names, addresses, and Social Security numbers of newly hired employees. They are also authorized to link to other databases to facilitate enforcement efforts. Such resources are particularly useful for locating absent parents, establishing paternity, and establishing or modifying child support orders (Solomon-Fears, 2013b).

Within each state, court officials and legal professionals have a huge role to play in the CSEP. Their involvement is central to the business of child support. They settle a child's legal paternity and a noncustodial parent's obligation amount and ensure the appropriate enforcement of a child support order. Professional associations and organizations (e.g. American Bar Association and the National Child Support Enforcement Association) provide the legal community with expert advice, training, and continuing education on specific federal and state directives.

2.1.4 CSEP's Performance measures and incentive system

Since the enactment of CSPIA in 1998, OCSE uses five performance measures³ (from hereon, FPMs) to evaluate states' delivery of the CSEP. These measures, according to U.S. federal representatives interviewed for the study, are directly tied to the program's mission. To manage the implementation of the performance measurement system, OCSE provides general rules and regulations to ensure that all state agencies deliver program services fairly consistently. The provision of guidelines presumes the successful deployment of the measures and, consequently, their calculative and evaluative functions. With an incentive mechanism in place, there is great expectation that those who are subject to this measurement framework would naturally conform to the norms inscribed in the measures. What follows is a brief description of the measures and incentive system.

The FPMs render certain program activities valuable and worthy of attention. The weighted measures to calculate a state's incentive payment further indicate the value given to them. The first measure focuses on the number of children born out of wedlock with paternities established. Once a child's legal father is established, the CSEP sets the monthly obligation amount that the noncustodial parent (in most cases,

³ For more on the development of CSEP's performance measurement and management system, see Doar, Smith et al. 2013.

the father) must pay. This accounts for the second measure. The establishment of a court order gives the agency the authority to enforce it using various enforcement strategies. Examples include automatic income withholding, driver’s license suspension, passport denial, asset seizure, and others. The monthly obligation amount reflected in the court order directly impacts the other two measures, both of which are focused on the collection of support. One measure is the rate of current collection expressed in terms of *amount of current support collected* divided by *amount of current support owed*; and the other is the rate of arrears payment expressed in terms of *number of cases paying towards arrears* divided by *number of cases with arrears*. The former is interested in the dollar amount, while the latter considers the count of arrears-paying cases. The fifth measure, *cost-effectiveness*, looks at the state’s dollar ratio of collection to expenditures. OCSE reviews states’ performance outputs and results based on data generated by their automated data collection and reporting systems (Solomon-Fears, 2013b). Figure 2-1 provides a summary of the program’s FPMs (see Appendix for more details).

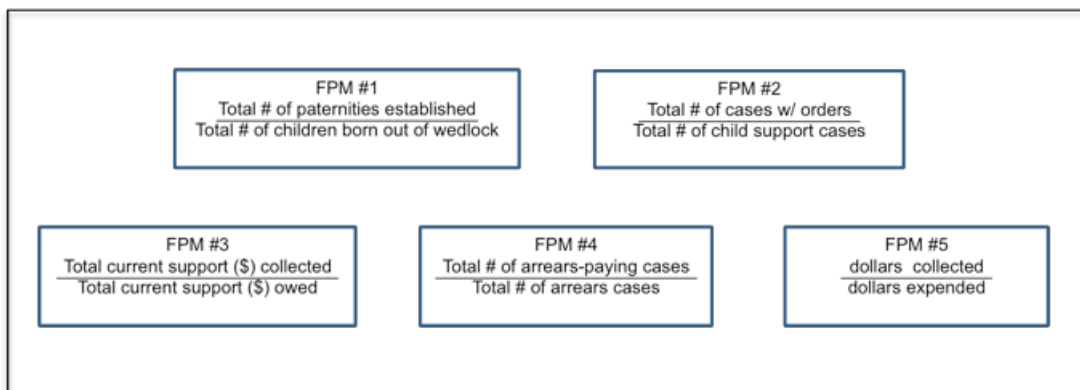


Figure 2-1 Five federal performance measures

The CSEP’s performance-based incentive system is rather complex (Solomon-Fears, 2013a). Many factors are considered when determining a state’s incentive payment. One factor is a state’s performance level in the five measures. The federal government provides a guide for determining the applicable percentage of incentive payment based on a state’s performance level at each measure. The second factor is the state’s total child support collection, which becomes the basis for determining the maximum incentive payments a state can earn given their performance in each of the five measures. The incentive payments that states can earn, however, are drawn from a limited fund for a given federal fiscal year (FFY). This third factor implies that

'individual states have to compete with each other for their share of the capped funds' (Solomon-Fears, 2013a: 5). Another factor is the combined collection and performance of the other individual states, thus defining a state's relative share of the incentive funds. Finally, the incentive amounts can only be awarded if the data used to report a state's performance level are found to be complete and reliable by the Office of Audit. States may incur a penalty if their data are found incomplete and unreliable, or if they fail to meet the required performance levels for three of the five measures that are considered critical to the program. The three measures include: paternity establishment, child support order establishment, and current support collections.

The amount of financial rewards a state can earn is calculated using a formula that puts more weight on child support collections from welfare and former welfare cases. It also takes into account the performance levels and collection amounts of other states. Moreover, three of the five measures (paternity establishment, child support order establishment, and current support collections) are weighted at 100% and subject to a penalty system. Each of the five measures has both upper and lower performance thresholds. States that meet or exceed the upper threshold can earn the maximum possible incentive payment for that measure. However, states performing below the minimum performance level are not entitled to incentive payments unless their scores demonstrate the required performance percentage improvement from the previous FFY. Failure to meet the performance level requirements of the first three measures or the 95% standard of data reliability will incur federal financial penalties that translate to a reduction in a state's welfare block grant. States can also be penalized if found to be non-compliant with program requirements (Solomon-Fears 2013b; Tapogna, Gardiner *et al.* 2003; Huang, Edwards *et al.* 2008).

As one can imagine, determining a state's incentive payment takes several factors into account, but its 'total collection' is a key component in the calculation (for details of the formula, see Appendix). Population size and other demographic information (e.g. number of unemployed, number of cases on welfare, number of single parents, etc.) could also affect a state's collection capacity. Hence, despite improvements in performance scores, a state may earn less financial incentives than a state with lower performance scores if the former has a lower total collection amount (Solomon-Fears, 2013a). To this day, OCSE continues to evaluate states according to

a common metric notwithstanding their unique features, identify the high and low performers, and determine the nation's collective efficiency so they can report back to Congress.

2.2 The empirical site: DAFS

2.2.1 Location

Clark County, which includes the Las Vegas metropolitan area, is the largest of 17 counties in the State of Nevada and the 14th largest county in the nation, with an area equivalent to that of New Jersey. It serves approximately 2.25 million citizens (or 70 per cent of the state's total population) and extends its services to more than 46 million visitors a year. The county is governed by seven elected county commissioners and administratively supported by a county manager (Clark County). The District Attorney's (DA) Office is one of 38 departments of the Clark County government. Among its four main divisions is the Family Support Division (from hereon, DAFS), which is the agency responsible for child support enforcement.

DAFS is located in the city of Las Vegas, east of the famous Las Vegas Strip. The main two-story building, visible from a major thoroughfare, has a huge sign that says, '*Child Support Center of Southern Nevada*'. Occupying this building are DAFS personnel and its partner agencies, which include the Clark County Child Support Court and the State Collection and Disbursement Unit (SCADU). The former manages two courtrooms dedicated exclusively for child support cases. The latter is the state agency responsible for receiving and disbursing all child support payments. The rest of DAFS employees (mostly caseworkers) are located in the ground floor of the adjacent building to which customers do not have access. Both buildings have an atrium. All individual offices and modular cubicles or workstations are well furnished and tastefully decorated. Most (if not all) employees have two computer monitors and a printer nearby. All individual offices have their own printers. Conference and training rooms are fully equipped with white boards and audio-visual technologies to support presentations, video or telephone conferencing, webinars, and other collaborative work. Security measures are visibly in place, with electronic access control to all sections (including conference, meeting, and training rooms) of both buildings.

All visitors must go through a security check, similar to those found in major airports, before entering the main building. Visitor access is restricted to the main lobby, courtrooms, and mediation rooms (if escorted by a staff member). After passing through the security checkpoint, there is an information counter and a customer ticketing system. Those scheduled to attend a court hearing or meet with their case managers are directed to the courtrooms or mediation rooms. Others are directed to the waiting area before walking up to the counter to speak to one of DAFS' customer service representatives and must wait until their ticket number is called. Customers making a child support payment are directed to the SCADU counter.

2.2.2 DAFS organization and services

DAFS, through a cooperative agreement with the State of Nevada Department of Health and Human Services, provides child support services to Clark County residents. Their services include locating parents, establishing paternities and child support orders, and enforcing current and arrearage orders. DAFS' mission, as stated in their website⁴ and handbook (District Attorney's Office, 2014), is to *'improve the lives of families by engaging and empowering parents in providing continuous support for their children'*. Its vision statement, also noted in the handbook, is to *'Be The National Leader in Providing Superior Child Support Services'*. These statements are prominently displayed on the walls (see Appendix) throughout the two buildings.

DAFS has approximately 300 employees, organized into 13 units or departments and teams (from hereon, units), under the leadership of a Director and supported by an Assistant Director⁵. The units include: Administration, Audit, Court Team, Customer Service, Enforcement, Establishment, Information (which includes the Mailroom), Intake, Investigations, Legal, Locate, Quality Control, and Social Work Team. DAFS' management team is composed of the Director, Assistant Director, all unit heads, and the management analyst. The Director presides over their weekly Monday meetings. Unit heads of the Operations group⁶ hold two additional

⁴ For more details, see: <http://www.clarkcountynv.gov/district-attorney/fs/Pages/default.aspx>.

⁵ Information is based on staffing information gathered during the September 2015 site visit.

⁶ The Operations group is comprised of the following units: Enforcement, Establishment, Intake, Locate, Audit, Customer Service, and Social Work.

weekly meetings. The first, a recent addition⁷, is devoted to discussions on operational matters that they can resolve on their own. Any decision that may require approval is brought up at another weekly meeting, which they refer to as the Operations Meeting led by the Assistant Director. Individual team meetings are also held regularly across the organization. DAFS employees also convene at quarterly All Staff meetings, where *'performance measures are always addressed'*. And on a yearly basis, DAFS employees get together to celebrate social events, including a hotdog day, employee appreciation awards day, Halloween, and other similar activities.

The Operations group constitutes the units directly involved in processing child support cases, with each unit specializing in a particular service (e.g. locating parents, establishing legal paternities, enforcing current support and arrearage orders, etc.). Caseworkers within each unit are responsible for managing a number of cases, also known as a caseload (i.e. cases assigned to them based on an alphabetic distribution of last names by alpha). A caseload size generally depends on a caseworker's specialized function. For example, a caseload of an Establishment caseworker is generally smaller than that of an Enforcement caseworker. Once an Establishment caseworker completes the process of establishing an order, the case automatically moves out of the Establishment unit and into the Enforcement unit. The Enforcement caseworker assigned to the case would then manage the enforcement of that support order as long as the child is entitled to that support. Hence, the case remains in the Enforcement unit, unless it needs to be closed or requires a modification (after which it would then go back to the Enforcement unit). Caseworkers depend heavily on the Legal Team, Customer Service, Investigations, and other units at various stages of their case processing.

While each unit is focused on a specific function, there is an expectation of the movement of cases from one unit to the next and dependency between units. Table 2-1 provides a summary of the services offered by DAFS:

⁷ At the time of the site visit, these meetings had been running for approximately two months.

Services	General Description
Processing applications	Reviewing and processing all case applications; assessing case referrals from the State of Nevada Division of Welfare and Supportive Services (DWSS).
Locating parents	Locating noncustodial parents using information provided by applicants/custodians and requesting assistance from the State Parent Locate Service or the Federal Locate Service.
Establishing Parentage	Establishing paternity on children born out of wedlock by a Declaration of Paternity (if both parties agree that child is theirs) or genetic testing.
Establishing a child support order and arrearage order	Establishing the noncustodial parents' monthly ordered amount to be paid based on Nevada's guidelines ⁸ either through a 'consent order' conference with a caseworker (both parties must agree) or a court hearing in the presence of a Hearing Master.
Enforcing an order	Notifying the employer to withhold money from the noncustodial parent's pay check or, if the noncustodial parent is not employed and not paying, using other enforcement tools.
Modifying an order	Reviewing cases for a possible (upward or downward) modification or adjustment of an order based on federal and state guidelines.

Table 2-1 Summary of DAFS child support services⁹

2.2.3 Technology

A key component in case processing is the state's case management system, known as the Nevada Operations of Multi-Automated Data Systems (NOMADS). The majority of DAFS employees regularly log into the system to record case information and activities according to a standard of practice defined by state policies and procedures. As the federally certified system (OCSE, 2018b), it is considered the state's official data source for program performance evaluation. The system is used to store all case records and case processing activities, which are then reported to the federal government for the calculation of the state's performance percentages in each of the FPMs and incentive payments and penalties.

The development of NOMADS began in the early 1990s. According to the State Director, it took almost ten years to build NOMADS. Before it was completed, the state met a huge stumbling block when government introduced new policies under the Welfare Reform Act of 1996 and implemented the federal performance measures and incentive system. This meant that the state had to make adjustments to the system.

⁸ Nevada uses the Percentage of Income model to calculate the obligation for support. See also NRS 125B.070 for details: <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/NRS/NRS-125B.html#NRS125BSec070> (Access date, 3 July 2018).

⁹ Source: District Attorney's Office, Family Support Division, 2014. *The C.A.R.E. Handbook: Children are reason enough. Assisting you in supporting your children.* Las Vegas, NV: District Attorney's Office.

Consequently, they exceeded their budget, were behind schedule, and almost lost the continued financial support from the federal government, leaving a bad memory in the state legislature.

NOMADS was designed to support the management of both child support (commonly known as IV-D) and public assistance (commonly known as IV-A) cases. However, the idea of building a comprehensive automated system that shared information between two programs with different business operations and agendas created problems for caseworkers. As noted in a 2006 audit report on the state's child support program commissioned by the legislature, '*[t]he issue of data ownership needs to be re-visited, primarily due to the significant negative impact that [Public Assistance] data has on the IV-D side*' (Section D, pg. 82). The report describes the system as '*fractured*' (MAXIMUS, 2006: Section D, 75) and makes a recommendation for its replacement. In an interview with one of DAFS' managers, NOMADS was described in this way:

...there's over 400 screens that a case manager needs to know and understand in order to do case management for child support. The problem is that not only do you need to know those 400 screens, you need to know how to navigate through them, and you need to know all the codes that are associated with the values that go into the fields on those screens... [it] does not support multiple layers of supervision, does not support a lot of the different things that we need to do just to manage the volume of cases that we have here.
(Andy, InterviewManager)

Based on a more recent assessment of NOMADS (Policy Studies Inc., 2011) by another consulting firm, it is clear that DAFS for years had been managing their cases with very little technological support from the state system. Most of the deficiencies noted in the assessment confirm what has previously been reported by the 2006 audit report. Some of the issues raised include the system's poor user interface, deficient reporting and workflow management capabilities, and lack of mechanism to prevent or minimize incorrect data entries. Indeed, as the report concluded, '*[n]early every element of the current system was found to be in need of some form of remediation*' (Policy Studies Inc., 2011: 215). This suggests that DAFS employees

must have been perpetually challenged without a reasonably functional system to support their delivery of child support services.

2.2.4 DAFS' performance: an overview

As the largest jurisdiction in the state, DAFS manages the majority of Nevada's child support cases and practically drives the state's overall performance. In 2006, DAFS' caseload constituted 71 per cent of the state's total caseload (see Table 2-2). Nevada's performance scores at that time (based on FFY 2005, which runs from October 2004 to September 2005) were among the lowest in the nation, putting the state close to the bottom of state ranking¹⁰ (see Table 2-3). Given Nevada's historically poor performance in the five measures, the state legislature commissioned a third-party audit of the state's child support program. The audit report, which offered several recommendations for improvement, provides useful insights on DAFS' state of affairs back then and puts this study in perspective.

Nevada Jurisdictional Caseload - 7/06		
Office	Caseload	% of State
Carson DA	2,504	2.14%
Churchill DA	1,501	1.29%
Clark DA	82,723	70.85%
Douglas DA	773	0.66%
Elko DA	2,502	2.14%
Humboldt DA	1,301	1.11%
Lincoln DA	175	0.15%
Lyon DA	2,005	1.71%
Mineral DA	619	0.53%
Nye DA	2,305	1.97%
Pershing DA	339	0.29%
Storey DA	21	0.02%
Washoe DA	13,931	11.93%
Ely CSE	330	0.28%
Reno PAO	4,531	3.88%
Elko PAO	786	0.67%
Pahrump	280	0.24%
NSWD Central Office	126	0.10%
Total	116,752	

Table 2-2 Nevada caseload distribution by office, MAXIMUS (2006)

¹⁰ Nevada's ranking in the four measures puts the state in the bottom 6 of the 50 state programs in the nation.

Nevada's Performance FY2005	Score	Rank
Paternity Establishment (%)	66.30	49
Order Establishment (%)	62.41	45
Current Support Collection (%)	45.68	49
Arrearage Collection (%)	49.61	48
Cost-Effectiveness (\$)	2.98	47

Table 2-3 Nevada's performance scores and rank for FY05, MAXIMUS (2006)

Until the site visit in 2015, DAFS was headed by an Assistant District Attorney (ADA) and supported by an Assistant Director. In 2008, a new ADA took over as head of the agency. Soon thereafter, a new Assistant Director was hired. In 2009, DAFS began to see some improvements in its performance scores, but the state remained at the bottom of state ranking. By 2013, DAFS received the ‘Most Improved Program Award’ from the National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA)¹¹. In October 2015, DAFS’ share of the state’s total caseload dropped significantly to 56 per cent¹² and performance scores dramatically improved, making DAFS the ‘Most Outstanding Program’ (Clark County District Attorney, 2016). This brought the state ranking from 54th to 23rd in the nation¹³. Based on OCSE’s preliminary performance reports for FFY 2017, Nevada has further climbed up the ranks to 13th in the nation (Clark County District Attorney, 2018). Given DAFS’ (and the state’s) remarkable improvement in performance, it is a case no doubt worth exploring.

¹¹ Clark County District Attorney. (2013) *DA Family Support Division Receives Award* [Online]. Las Vegas, NV: Clark County Local Government. Available: <http://www.clarkcountynv.gov/district-attorney/announcements/Pages/DAFamilySupportDivisionReceives2013MostImprovedProgramAward.aspx> [Accessed 2 Feb 2017].

¹² Nevada Department of Health and Human Services, DWSS,. *State of Nevada Caseload by Office, For Month Ending: October, 2015* [Online]. Available: https://dwss.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/dwssnv.gov/content/Support/Caseload_Statistics/CS_Caseload-2015-10.pdf [Accessed June 28 2018].

¹³ Based on a DAFS presentation at the Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council.

3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 The problem: measuring performance in government

Performance measurement and management (PMM) in the U.S. first made its way in the public sector at the beginning of the 1900s (Williams, 2003), resurfaced in the 1960s, and became an important mechanism of governance in the 1980s and 90s (Dubnick & Frederickson, 2011; Stecher, *et al.*, 2010). According to Williams (2003), the earliest known ‘sustained’ performance measurement practices could be traced back to the New York Bureau of Municipal Research (p. 644). The bureau, founded in 1907 by men who were considered experts in social statistics, accounting, and scientific management, promoted the principles of accountability and productivity in the executive branch of government. They introduced the systematic collection of data through the use of accounting techniques for monitoring, reporting, and budgeting of government work. Thus, as the author noted, ‘precise measurement replaced vague impressions to inform decision making and to verify claims of performance’ (Williams, 2003: 645).

A series of government reforms followed these initial efforts of the bureaus (Stecher, *et al.*, 2010). These reforms were geared towards improving efficiency and performance through the adaptation of industrial engineering and scientific methods in public management. By the middle of the century, the U.S. government began introducing program evaluations using logic modeling as a policy analysis tool to assess systematically an entire program’s resources against its activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts (Stecher, *et al.*, 2010). Eventually, the use of performance measures linked to incentive mechanisms to improve services became widespread across several public service sectors particularly during the 1980s and 1990s (Parker & Gould, 1999; Stecher, *et al.*, 2010). Similar efforts associated with performance measurement and performance budgeting occurred in other parts of the world, including the U.K. and, more notably and aggressively, in Australia and New Zealand (Stecher, *et al.*, 2010).

Literature on PMM in the public sector is disciplinary and methodologically diverse (Heinrich & Marschke, 2010; Holzer & Yang, 2015). In the field of public sector accounting, public administration and management, and public policy, some

have examined the issue conceptually from a design or policy perspective (e.g. Oh & Bush, 2015; Heinrich & Marschke, 2010; Propper & Wilson, 2003) or quantitatively using economic or behavioral theories to investigate the impact of measures on the organization's performance (e.g. Speklé & Verbeeten, 2014; Courty & Marschke, 2008; Barnow, 2000). While results are varied (Stecher, *et al.*, 2010), scholars (Oh & Bush, 2015; Dubnick & Frederickson, 2011; Heinrich & Marschke, 2010; Lewis, 2015) have acknowledged the challenges involved in implementing a PMM system due to competing interests of stakeholders, diversity of principals, a variety of measurement perspectives or orientations (i.e. inputs, outputs, results, or outcomes), values (e.g. efficiency, resource allocations, or equity), and the contextual complexity in which they operate. Whether exploring the appropriate approaches to measuring what is 'out there' or the challenges associated with establishing an effective performance measurement system (Van Ryzin, 2004; Hyndman & Eden, 2000; Stecher, *et al.*, 2010; Holzer & Kloby, 2005), the underlying assumptions seem to suggest that a measurement system, if designed and implemented well, can provide reliable information to guide management decision-making, improve public organizational performance, or inform policy formulations (Oh & Bush, 2015; Speklé & Verbeeten, 2014; Heinrich & Marschke, 2010). Yet despite the rise of numerous performance measurement systems in government, the debate continues (Dubnick & Frederickson, 2011; Martin, Downe, Grace, *et al.*, 2013), suggesting the elusive character of measures, the unstable phenomena they intend to capture, or the nebulous performance-accountability relationship they purport to sustain. Indeed, there appears to be a lack of agreement as to what accountability really is, what constitutes performance, or who should be held accountable (Stecher, *et al.*, 2010; Dubnick, 2005). Moreover, as scholars hypothesized, the lack of evidence supporting the effectiveness of performance-based incentive systems is due to the challenges associated with evaluating such systems in the first place, as well as the political climate and dynamic conditions in which these systems operate (Stecher, *et al.*, 2010). They noted that the poor historical data, changes in measures over time as new knowledge and practices emerge, and the changing circumstances as the system moves from pilot testing to full implementation make it difficult to conduct an impact evaluation on a complex and dynamic system.

Given the dynamic and changing environment in which PMM systems operate and lack of compelling evidence indicating their effectiveness, perhaps the more fundamental question to ask is *how* measures define, shape, and produce ‘good performance’. By asking this question, we put forward a new way of examining organizational performance using Callon’s (1998b, 2007, 2009) performativity thesis, while drawing on valuation studies (Kornberger, *et al.*, 2015; Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015b; Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015a; Fourcade, 2011a, 2012) and the sociology of quantification (Espeland & Lom, 2015; Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Espeland & Stevens, 1998, 2008; Espeland & Vannebo, 2007), to consider the role of measures in the valuation, construction, and enactment of ‘good performance’ (from hereon, GP). It demands abandoning the idea that GP is a phenomenon that is objectively measured or valued and invites us to consider it as a result of a negotiated, heavily invested, and constantly challenged process. Hence, it is through this process that GP acquires its ‘value’ and is made ‘valuable’ (Roscoe & Townley, 2016) so it can be measured, but not without the complexities and uncertainties that require its constant adjustment.

The performativity lens provides a window of opening into how to investigate or examine taken-for-granted ideas or statements in concrete practices. Rather than considering them as outside of or distinct from the phenomenon they describe, we can explore their participation in or engagement with that phenomenon. Performance measures, like theories and scientific statements, can be examined in the same way. As a mechanism for measuring or evaluating performance, measures can be explored as inseparable (Dussauge, Helgesson, Lee, *et al.*, 2015c) from the object of measurement (i.e. performance). They can be studied as an engine of the valued performance – or what makes performance valuable and measurable. By doing so, we can observe how the valued performance is defined, coordinated, and implemented in practice, instead of simply assuming that measures dispassionately capture the objectively valued (good) performance. Taking a performativity perspective is to consider performance measures as actively participating in the construction and valuation of good performance so it can be enacted and measured.

Using a local agency that has moved from being among the worse to being the ‘most outstanding’ for the investigation may provide some useful insights on the organizing practices involved in the making of GP. It can shed some light on the

complexities and uncertainties that managers and support staff had to navigate in order to respond to and perform what they consider to be ‘good’ and help us understand the effects these might have on their decisions, actions, and the ‘good’ that they intend to measure. This could then contribute to the extant literature on performativity and more specifically on the performative construction of organizational values (Gehman, Treviño & Garud, 2013).

The sections that follow discuss in more detail the key concepts that the performativity literature and valuation studies/sociology of quantification offer for our understanding of the valuation and construction of performance. It begins with a general discussion on Callon’s performativity (Section 3.2.) to establish the idea that theory intervenes in the making of social phenomenon. This is then followed by explanations of two key concepts that are central to his thesis: *sociotechnical agencement* (Section 3.2.1.) and framing and overflowing (Section 3.2.2.). It then illustrates broadly how valuation is a performative practice (Section 3.3) through qualification (Section 3.3.1.) and quantification (Section 3.3.2.). The final section (Section 3.4.) presents how these key concepts could provide a framework for examining how measures intervene in the valuation and construction of good performance. It ends with a brief explanation of the research questions.

3.2 Performativity as lens

Callon’s (1998b, 2007, 2009) performativity framework offers an opportunity for conceptualizing the performance of measures and incentives in a way that captures their dynamic, constitutive, and distributive nature. His thesis suggests that discourses or statements, which can be in the form of theories, models, or formulas, shape the world or phenomenon they describe through their application (or *utterance*) involving a whole assemblage, or an *agencement* – a term borrowed from Deleuze – of actors and devices. So as not to suggest that the theory ‘creates’ reality by merely stating it, Callon clarifies that reality is produced or constructed as the theory intervenes in the process of describing it. To illustrate, Callon uses the example of an operating instruction that would not make much sense without the specific device to which it refers. Without the device, the instruction is meaningless; without the instruction, the device becomes inoperable. The theory, therefore, successfully intervenes when all the elements necessary for the theory to perform are present and their arrangement

(that is, their connections, links, relationships) gives them the capacity to act or perform the theory. It is this *agencement* or the ‘morphology of their relations’ (Callon, 1999: 185-6) that gives the agents and their devices their capacity to act collectively.

Callon’s performativity perspective, inspired by Actor-Network Theory (ANT), can be found in Science, Technology, and Society (STS) studies, economic sociology, sociology of finance, accounting, and organization and management studies (Callon, Millo & Muniesa, 2007; Callon, 1998c, 2007; Mackenzie, 2006; MacKenzie, 2007; Orlikowski, 2007; Pollock & D’Adderio, 2012; D’Adderio & Pollock, 2014; for a review, see Gond, Cabantous, Harding, *et al.*, 2015). In applying the Austinian notion of performative utterance (Austin, 1975), Callon and MacKenzie demonstrate how economic and scientific statements are constitutively participating in the shaping or construction of the social phenomenon they intend to describe. What is interesting about their work is the idea that a statement’s (e.g. theory or model) intervention in the making of a phenomenon (i.e. economic or financial market) produces a sociotechnical *agencement* that gives the phenomenon its particular shape and form. As a collective, the *agencement* has the capacity to act or give meaning to action (Callon, 2005). As Callon (2009) elaborates, the ‘signification and effectiveness of scientific statements cannot be dissociated from the socio-technical arrangements or *agencements* involved in the production of the facts that those same statements refer to’ (p. 18). This means that the theory or scientific statement is deeply entangled with the devices, tools, instruments, rules, procedures, practices, etc. involved in producing the phenomenon that the theory or statement is attempting to describe. It is how these elements are positioned and relate with each other that a phenomenon is made to exist – that is, to act – ‘in a controlled and predictable way’ (p. 19) so it can be examined, known, and reproduced. Hence, the theory or statement contributes to the meaning-production of a phenomenon that, while it is able to exist, is made to exist. To avoid misinterpretations, Callon explains that for an entity or phenomenon to exist as an object of knowledge, it must first be acted upon to produce the activities and effects – in a word, the ‘facts’ – that can be relied upon for its description and representation. When phenomenon and theory are bound up, ‘performance’ ensues. The sections that follow should help clarify further some of these concepts.

3.2.1 Sociotechnical *agencement*

The idea of performativity, a concept associated with ANT, points to a heterogeneity of actors (both humans and nonhumans), or what Latour (1996) calls '*actants*', that gather to perform a reality. The use of the term '*actant*' is to distinguish from the term 'actor' often associated with an individual human actor. The term, therefore, extends 'actor' to nonhuman and non-individual entities, which through their connections account for the essence of social phenomena. It is the 'summing up' (Latour, 1999a: 17) of these actants' interactions and connectedness that *agencements* are formed and 'endowed with the capacity of acting in different ways depending on their configuration' (Callon, 2007: 320). In performing the economy, for example, an economic theory or model is only one of the *actants* that intervenes or performs to make that which the theory seeks to describe. It fulfills both 'representation and action' (MacKenzie, Muniesa & Siu, 2007: 2) as it engages with other *actants*. Callon (2007), referring to the Black and Scholes formula, makes it clear that "it is not the formula itself that can cause that world, a sociotechnical *agencement*, to exist. Other forces, other interests, are involved" (p. 323). He further claims that the success or failure of a formula is not dependent on people's belief in it, as the notion of self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948) tends to suggest. Rather, a formula's success is dependent on 'a world'; that is, the social and material elements, as well as the conditions necessary to make the formula act. Without this 'world', the formula fails to perform and the world it seeks to describe is not realized. A failed formula suggests that certain conditions were not met, triggering behaviors that compromise or undermine the integrity of the formula and make it 'counterperformative' (MacKenzie, 2007: 76).

MacKenzie (2007) provides a good example using the theory of options in financial economics that helped make or transform the financial market (in particular, market for derivatives) as it is known today. MacKenzie demonstrates how the Black-Scholes-Merton model of option pricing has shaped the financial market through market participants' application of the model. Although a market of options existed even as early as the seventeenth century, pricing practices were on a 'rule of thumb' basis and did not have a theory to describe it. The 1970s Black-Scholes-Merton model was an attempt to establish a theory of price determination using sophisticated

mathematical equations. Using the model to calculate the theoretical estimate of the price of options, however, required some level of knowledge and skills that no average person could be expected to perform. Thus, to facilitate the generation of options prices based on the model, computers inscribed with the model's equation performed the calculation and spewed sheets of paper of computer-generated prices (e.g. Black's sheets) that traders purchased and carried at trading floors to execute their 'buying and selling'. These 'material mediators' (p. 70) of carefully crafted sheets of paper (of the right size, with readable figures, etc.) displayed only the relevant information that traders needed to know, as defined by the model, to carry out their work. The model's representation of the phenomenon at work (i.e. option pricing) helped coordinate trading activities, ultimately changing economic processes and legitimizing the market that was once criticized for its resemblance to gambling. The model, therefore, served as a guide to traders and taught them how to participate in the market that the model helped shape and maintain. Hence, MacKenzie's analysis of the performativity of option theory showed how the theory described a legitimate options market and enabled or fulfilled it by creating an *effect* on economic processes and practices, on market participants and their devices.

Indeed, an important feature of the performativity thesis is the centrality of humans and devices in the production of social phenomena. It is humans' interaction with the material and technical devices, and vice versa, that enable a phenomenon to thrive. The theoretical statements or models inscribed in the devices 'are made to act by many other actants... in concrete-contingent socio-material networks' (Vosselman, 2014: 187). In MacKenzie's (2007) account of the Black-Scholes-Merton model, this aspect of performativity is quite evident. The traders' interaction with the sheets of paper not only facilitated their trading activities, but also allowed options prices to be determined. In a sense, traders' reliance on the model gave meaning to the prices within the boundaries in which they were determined, requiring the coordination of activities between the trading floors and the offices where options prices were generated to assist their choice of action (i.e. buy or sell). What is interesting about MacKenzie's account is the mobilization of the model as an articulation of the market it seeks to represent. As demonstrated in his account, the model's accuracy in generating theoretical options prices becomes secondary, at least initially. Its significance is rooted in its instrumental characteristics connecting and enabling

humans and their devices to perform their calculations and their trading. As Preda (2007) puts it, ‘we can encounter situations where a theory describes the reference x. At the same time, the uses for this theory are part of x. In this case, the theory appears both as a description (or interpretation) of the users’ actions and an intrinsic feature of these actions’ (p. 45). Hence, the constitutiveness of the theory in the trading practice and the diffusion of the sociotechnical *agencements* resulting from and supporting this constitutiveness shape and format the options market according to the specifications of the relationships established through these *agencements*. In essence, for a model or theory to be performative, it demands a sociotechnical *agencement* that can articulate the narrative about a ‘world’ it wants to produce. It is this articulation in and through the *agencement* that such ‘world’ exists.

Considering scientific statements or formulas as constitutive elements of social phenomena extends to accounting and accounting techniques (Skærbæk & Tryggestad, 2010; Vosselman, 2014; Miller & Power, 2013; Porter, 1995; Power, 1996). As an operative mode of writing (Kalthoff, 2005), accounting techniques are engaged in representing and manufacturing performance of economic activities; that is, accounting symbols represent objects as well as the operations performed on them. Instead of simply looking at accounting as a passive tool that ‘turns absence into presence’ (Vosselman, 2014), the performativity thesis invites an observer to consider its operative role in formatting the capacity and modality (Callon, 2009) of the accounting activities. As Vosselman (2014) points out, in its passive mode, accounting tools attempt to capture through accounting records the ‘objects and flows’ that are happening in the world. These recordings, apart from their efficient storage of information, facilitate the transportation of the representation of reality across time and space. In an organization, for example, accounting as a representational and storage device of recorded activities can serve as a monitoring instrument to a manager who aims to mitigate irregularities. But, as Vosselman (2014) suggests, this functionalist view of accounting fails to recognize the operative dimension of the instrument. The numbers and figures that are recorded do not only represent reality but are the result of an operational activity that enables and enacts the connections between the objects and flows they represent. Their deployment shapes the connections between the objects and flows, thus producing and enabling the recording of ‘reality’. This ‘manufacturing’ of reality is what makes accounting

performative. The ‘truthfulness’ or validity of the manufactured reality is not based on what is ‘out there’ but on the formula and rules governing its representation; in this case, accounting’s ‘internal plausibility’ (Kalthoff, 2005: 83). Hence, accounting techniques do not just serve as tools but as mediating instruments or mechanisms (Miller & Power, 2013) that establish the objects and flows, the social and the material, and the boundaries or spaces (Callon, 1998b) within which calculations and accounting activities are carried out.

3.2.2 Framing and overflowing

Callon’s (1999, 1998a) sociotechnical *agencement* inherently involves *framing* (a term he borrowed from Goffman) to enable *actants* to perform the theory that is part of their world. It is through the framing process that the *agencement*’s configuration is established, connections are defined, and movement is activated. The framed *actants*, configured to interact in a particular way according to the theory, can be conceived as an entity that operates (or acts) collectively. This framing involves the identification and formation of all the elements needed to enable their collective action to perform. It requires defining and negotiating the boundaries of their action and an agreement to perform according to the rules and procedures of their interactions. For example, if we consider the activities in a trading floor, we can imagine the various elements (e.g. computer screens, algorithms, software packages, procedural guidelines, and other instrumentalities) involved in the framing of market participants’ calculative practices within the specific market economy that the options theory is designed and expected to operate. Hence, in this case, the materialization of the theory establishes the ‘cognitive boundaries’ (Vosselman, 2014: 194) for the interaction of all concerned.

Indeed, as Callon (1998b, 1999, 2007) explains, agents are not naturally calculative. Framed and aided by tools, they are made calculative and activate the economy that the theory is designed to perform. Hence, economic or calculating agents (e.g. producers, distributors, marketers, buyers, etc.) are the effects of a process in which economic statements play a significant role (Callon, 1999). As Callon states, ‘[i]f agents can calculate their decisions, it is because they are entangled in a web of relations and connections; they do not have to open up to the world because they *contain* their world’ (p. 185). In a market transaction, for example, the calculation of

goods is not an operation attributed to the buyer or the seller alone. It is an operation that is shared or distributed across both humans and nonhumans (i.e. devices). Such distribution does not imply that devices can execute the calculation without the participation of the human agent, nor does it mean that humans cannot calculate without their devices. Rather, humans and their devices are framed and organized in such a way that their social relations enable them to perform the calculation, making both 'agents' of calculation. This notion of distributed calculative agencies (Callon & Muniesa, 2005) acknowledges the interdependence or engagement between human agents and their tools in the calculation. On the one hand, agents make the determination to use the devices to perform a calculation. On the other hand, devices are formatted or configured according to a calculative logic that, if utilized and triggered by human agents, perform accordingly, as in the case of *TripAdvisor* (Jeacle & Carter, 2011). The calculative capabilities of agents, therefore, are likely to vary depending on the kind of devices they use and their abilities to use them. Agents who rely on devices that can readily classify goods, establish relationships between them, extend the scope of goods to be classified and re-ordered for qualification and valuation, and systematize this whole process are likely to have stronger calculative capabilities than those who do not. Buyers or sellers who have access to such devices can have a dominant position in a transaction, thus influencing its outcome. Hence, agents' calculativeness is dependent on their relations with other entities involved in the calculation that have been 'disentangled and framed' (Callon, 1999) to determine the boundaries of their calculation. Only by defining who or what should be involved (and ignored) in the calculation, by demarcating clearly the boundaries of what's 'in' and what's 'out', can the calculation be performed.

Framing, as can be imagined, demands considerable work (Callon, 1998a, 1999). Callon's example of commercial transactions and contract negotiations captures this. A contract cannot perform unless all the elements and parameters for action are clearly defined. The framing, therefore, has an operative power that demarcates not just the entities involved in the transaction but also the actions constituting their interactions. These actions are structured by the various elements (e.g. skilled and knowledgeable researchers, instruments, reports, formulas, rules, etc.) interacting within their bounded operational space. Any unexpected event or behavior that has not been accounted for within the existing frames of operation is

considered an *overflow*. Its occurrence is a disruption to the existing network of relations and indicates that the theory, and all the connections and relationships that accompany it, could no longer perform as designed unless adjustments are made to the framed entity. Hence, loosely speaking, the theory fails not because it is wrong but because the required *agencement* for its successful operation does not exist.

Overflows, however, are inevitable and often difficult to contain (Zhang, 2017). One obvious reason, as Callon (1998b) points out (using Granovetter's notion of a network), is that agents do not have fixed interests, knowledge, roles, identities, preferences, etc. These traits are variable and dynamic given agents' relationships with other agents within a wider network of which they form part. Hence, going back to Callon's example, agents involved in a commercial transaction do not operate as if completely *detached* from the wider network (or other networks). Their relationship with the latter may have positive or negative effects on the existing network to which they belong, thus potentially causing disturbances or unexpected eventualities. Therefore, in order to fulfill the transaction, those included in the transactional network must temporarily cut their ties from those excluded (Callon, 1999). But, if an agent's relationship with the wider network presents other alternatives for operation, the agent may re-calculate his/her options to assist future actions or transactions. Such decisions may then lead to the identification of new relationships, new sets of tools, and ultimately the development of new frames – hence, new *agencements* – that would set the boundaries for new operations (Callon, 1998a).

3.3 Valuation as performative

Like theories, models, or scientific statements, measures as a form of valuation are implicated in the practices, structures and infrastructures, situations in which they occur, and reflexive activities (Krüger & Reinhart, 2017) that make an object, place, or event measurable. They are constitutive of the valuation process that makes things measurable and valuable. Several studies (see Lamont, 2012; Krüger & Reinhart, 2017; Adkins & Lury, 2011; Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015a) have addressed the issue of valuation across disciplines and settings, arguing that valuation is a social process that is non-linear, multi-dimensional, and demands compromises. Whether they be valuation of economic goods (Garcia-Parpet, 2007; Fourcade & Healy, 2013), symbolic goods (Fourcade, 2011a, 2012; Reinecke, 2015), and intangible or unusual

goods (Kelly & Burrows, 2011; Roscoe, 2013; Zhang, 2017; Roscoe, 2015b), the process requires the organization, framing, and deployment of humans and nonhuman entities to enable the assignment of values to entities so they can be made valuable. The valuation of entities, however, is a performatively negotiated process where actors define, enact, and stabilize (at least temporarily), *in* and *through* their devices, tools, and infrastructures, what they consider to be worth valuing in the face of potentially competing (economic, cultural, ethical, etc.) values. The valuation effort, as these authors have shown, is often carried out in politically charged settings where experts, supported by bureaucratic organizations, regulations, and instruments, attempt to turn (competing) *values* into a single *value* (Pallesen, 2015; Fourcade, 2011b; Espeland & Stevens, 1998; Reinecke, 2015) and get the contesting lay public to concede and accept their valuation as ‘fact’ (Fourcade, 2009). The public contestations are indicative of the political struggles surrounding a valuation process especially when people’s moral justifications for their actions come to the fore (Roscoe, 2013). Despite the fact that valuation as a social process is not morally or politically neutral, an economic valuation of many aspects of social life seems to take the upper hand. This perhaps is due to the perceived objectivity of and ‘trust in numbers’ (Porter, 1995), making the assigned value ‘real’ and giving it the ‘moral force’ (Roscoe, 2013) to guide individual or collective actions.

The interest in valuation studies is a response to Dewey’s ‘flank movement’ (Muniesa, 2011; Kornberger, *et al.*, 2015) to shift away from the subjective-objective perspective of value(s) and to take on a pragmatist stance on valuation (Stark, 2009). Rather than regarding something as *having value* because of how it is *personally* desired or how it relates to other things (as in Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) order or principle of worth), this calls for a consideration of the *practices* that make something valuable or have value. It calls for an exposition of the practices, activities, and technologies involved when ascribing values to people, objects, or events in concrete situations, rather than examining value(s) as something ‘subjectively’ considered or desired (e.g. equality or diversity) or appraised based on an ‘objective’ standard (e.g. price for a punnet of strawberries). By focusing on valuation as a social action, one perhaps could better appreciate how things acquire their ‘value’ or are made ‘valuable’ (Roscoe & Townley, 2016) and ‘precious’ (Trébuchet-Breitwiller, 2015), how they shift over time (Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015c), and observe the dialogic

exchange between value and values. After all, as Skeggs (2014) claims, ‘values will always haunt value’.

Valuation is part of our everyday lives. Whether conscious or not, we engage in valuation when we make decisions or judgments about people, events, objects, and other entities (Espeland & Lom, 2015). We do so using various modes of valuing what is ‘good’ or valuable, what matters, or what is worth counting (Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015a). Thus, we use narratives or some form of measure (a common of which is price) to qualify or quantify what is valuable or good. Using such measure, we mark the valued good’s position in relation to other goods, creating a categorical schema (Fourcade, 2016) of related, yet differentiated, goods. But how is value assigned in the first place (i.e. who or what is involved) or how is quality constructed (Krenn, 2017) to enable ‘valuation’? By what measure or criteria do we value something and how are they made valuable? This leads us to the ideas of *qualification* and *quantification*, both of which are valuation practices that define and frame the evaluative criteria or measure for the valuing and ordering of goods. In the next sections, I discuss each as part of the framework for understanding the valuation and construction of good performance.

3.3.1 Valuation through qualification

From the mundane to the exotic, people, objects, events, places, and almost anything that we encounter or experience are qualified by us, for us, and through us. Even our use of the words ‘mundane’ and ‘exotic’ as qualifiers is shaped by our experiences and interactions with the social-material-technical world in which we are immersed. We qualify entities based on a set of criteria or a particular logic (health, taste, style, comfort, etc.) that we consider essential for coordination and interaction. The criteria used for our qualification are drawn from past encounters, which are often ‘mediated by the efficacious power of language, our affectively charged interactions with others, and the demands of institutions’ (Fourcade, 2016: 175). Thus these criteria are shaped by and embedded in historical, social, cultural, and political contexts, reproduced through evaluative mechanisms, and allowed to settle into our social world as ‘naturalized objectified facts’ (Latour, 2004: 227). With today’s high-powered computing, our digital footprints enable their propagation (Fourcade & Healy, 2017a) such that their qualifying prowess becomes our preferred system of

valuation, perhaps without realizing that such system or logic often collides with other logics of worth (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006) and continues to evolve (Diaz-Bone, 2017). Hence, the contingent character of our qualification is constantly embroiled in a negotiation process to account for the context in which it must operate (see Reinecke, 2015; Fourcade, 2009, 2011a, b; Callon, Méadel & Rabeharisoa, 2002).

In market settings, for example, the qualification process singles out certain features associated with the thing or product to be qualified, establishing them as the ‘unique’ features that a potential buyer seeks or desires. If a product is presented to possess the desired qualities, then the potential buyer may act by purchasing it at the agreed price. If she rejects it, the producer might go back to the drawing board, adjust the product, and re-qualify it until the product’s ‘properties represent a value for the buyer’ (Callon & Muniesa, 2005: 1233) who is now willing to complete the purchase. Through an iterative and collaborative process, the producer (and everyone involved in the production chain) and the buyer (through her actions, reactions, and interactions) ‘objectify’ the qualities that are sought and ‘singularize’ the product to meet the wishes of the buyer (Callon, *et al.*, 2002; Callon & Muniesa, 2005; Callon, 2016). Hence, the exchange of goods is made possible only after the goods have been ‘objectified’ or ‘transformed into a thing’ (Callon & Muniesa, 2005: 1233) that can be appropriated. Before a chair is sold in a furniture shop, its particularities undergo several iterations involving designers, producers, sellers, advertisers, and buyers, along with their material and technical devices. Together they articulate the specific qualities of the chair that the players are willing and able to construct and transact. At some point, the chair is objectified to be some kind of ‘thing’ to which everyone could refer. It is singularized or adjusted for a *specific* buyer so that both producer and buyer can value it. Consequently, the purchased chair (with all its desirable qualities and assigned value expressed in price) establishes its position in the buyer’s world such that future (chair) purchases are evaluated against this valued chair as a point of reference. Through further encounters with a variety of chairs, one eventually creates an ordering or positioning of qualities (Callon, *et al.*, 2002) among a list of known (and emerging) qualities, making it an inherently relational and active process (Muniesa, 2011). The defined and valued qualities are then used (and re-used) to refer to other products while establishing ‘relations of similitude or proximity’ (Callon, *et al.*, 2002: 198). Subsequently, through social institutions and coordinated practices

(Diaz-Bone, 2017), a system of qualification (e.g. product labeling, branding, certifications, etc.) emerges and facilitates the proliferation of similar ‘qualified’ products. Indeed, as Cochoy (2008) points out, when buyers are confronted with choices, they engage in the evaluation of goods to be purchased within a ‘socio-cognitive arrangement’ (Callon, *et al.*, 2002) that sets ‘similar’ products apart and, influenced by their social networks, further qualify their product choices. Hence, when things are qualified and re-qualified, categories and classifications emerge to allow producers and buyers to develop a collective interpretation of the qualified and coordinate their interactions (Diaz-Bone, 2017; Desrosières, 2011).

Qualification is a tedious process. It requires, as Callon, Méadel, & Rabeharisoa (2002) suggest, singularization of entities and mechanisms to enable the social world to accept (or reject) the qualification in specific situations. As the authors explain, the singularization is an iterative process involving a mix of actors with different perspectives or logics for qualifying entities. As perhaps one might expect, their potentially conflicting views would require negotiation as to which qualities (among a list of possible qualities) matter for a specific purpose or need, and collaboration to support the promotion of the agreed (combined) qualities. Sustaining the agreed qualities, however, demand huge investments on experts, instruments, and other mechanisms (e.g. certifications, stamp of approval, etc.) to frame, enact, and establish the rules and procedures for the continuing qualification of entities (Diaz-Bone, 2017). Hence, the entities that are made valuable by the rules and procedures that actors and instruments deploy are assumed to possess the qualities that matter to make them valuable. In essence, the rules and procedures that have been negotiated, formulated, and put in place are performatively constructing the value by ‘securing uptake and offering meaning’ (Roscoe, 2016: 140) in the valuable.

When these evaluative systems, processes, and practices are established, the qualities they collectively promote become the dominant criteria for the valuation of such entities, which in turn reinforce the systems and processes that value them like a recursively circulating (collective) entity (Latour, 1999a). Garcia-Parpet’s (2007) article, for example, describes the investments required to get *actants* (narratives, economic adviser, producers, buyers, strawberries, incentives, building, etc.) involved in the construction of a perfect market for strawberries. With the establishment of the

'13 commandments' (p. 30) for strawberry growing, growers were encouraged to produce strawberries that could earn the label of quality: *Strawberries from Sologne*. Acquiring this 'quality signal' (Diaz-Bone, 2017), which gave growers economic (growers receive 5% of sale price subsidy) and symbolic advantages (their strawberries match the quality of major growers), helped stimulate the production of the 'qualified good' and organize the marketplace for their valuation. In the case of French wines (Fourcade, 2012, 2016), the *terroir* logic, which puts a premium on the grapes' geographical origin while emphasizing the importance of tradition, became the basis for qualifying wines. Supported by the people who were keen to protect the social status of their land, this qualifying feature was enacted through a classification system that ensures the identification of the wines' origin, thus protecting the geographical brand of great wines. When classification systems become the "'status anchoring" device' (Fourcade, 2012: 527) that claim to 'objectively' identify the good, they can shape how people view the world, what they notice (Espeland & Lom, 2015), and what they consider as good.

Being among the 'qualified' (and valued), therefore, means possessing the qualities that matter and positioning itself as similar to some but different from the rest. When entities are made similar or lumped together under a category, their differences become visible. Thus, to capture their differences, a classification or ordering system based on the comparative attribution of the 'qualified' value emerges. When classification is established, new categories or types emerge (Fourcade, 2016; Fourcade & Healy, 2013) as it circulates and travels in different domains. These categories then lead to new possibilities and opportunities that enable the identification of newly qualified or valued entities, thus extending the qualification or valuation systems and the entities they value (Fourcade & Healy, 2017a). Hence, what may have started as a list of categories of diseases to help doctors diagnose so patients can receive the right treatment became the basis for insurers to accept or deny patients' coverage (Bowker & Star, 1999) and unwittingly structured their life-chances (Fourcade & Healy, 2013). This changing character of the valued, therefore, is inevitable as different people with different interests participate and bring their preferred logic of worth as they enact, and thus reshape and reformulate, the qualified. Which value prevails would depend on the mechanisms, practices, institutions, experts, and other *actants* that gather to support it in specific situations.

3.3.2 Quantifying the qualified as a form of valuation

Individuals, organizations, and societies use categories to make sense of and interact with the world. Categories (e.g. car types by engine size or hotel quality by star rating), which have been '*collectively* crafted, sustained, and enforced' (Fourcade, 2016: 176), often are held as fact and used for determining how things are similar and, by implication, different from others that have been excluded from a 'category'. They enable the ordering of things based on a general principle of worth (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006) and guide or format people's choices and actions. They are used to assess, compare, or assign values (e.g. price or scores) to things, and to interpret the social and physical world. When things or entities are qualified into some type of 'thing', their qualities are reduced to a finite number that will unify them, establish their 'equivalence' (Desrosières, 1998), and turn them into realizable and recognizable categories (Diaz-Bone & Didier, 2016). The qualities that make the 'thing' (e.g. engine size for car type) become the parameter for sorting and grouping entities into a category to which other entities could be assigned through a process of encoding. As Desrosières (1998) explained, coding signifies a 'reduction', a 'sacrifice', as other qualities have been disregarded. But by doing this, entities could easily be coded to discrete categories and compared to others based on their selectively compressed qualities (Espeland & Lom, 2015) that had been articulated through the coding's evaluative form. By making entities and their selective qualities visible, they become measurable 'objects of reference' (Centemeri, 2012) for interpretation, coordination and action, supported by huge 'investments in conventional forms' (Thévenot, 2015) – such as the use of indicators, statistics, ratings, etc. – to formalize the categories and classifications of information. It may be said therefore that while qualification defines categories, quantification formalizes them. The very forms that help name or construct them also reveal them; and by revealing them, they are made 'real' (Desrosières, 1998; Fourcade, 2016).

The repeated references to categories are reinforced and powered by quantification (Fourcade, 2016) as a performative act of stabilizing the categories. Everyday phenomenon might help illustrate this. A person conscious of his dietary requirements might look at the packaging labels of quinoa and pasta to compare the products' 'nutritional facts'. The 'nutrition' categories, which may have been

established by scientists, manufacturers, regulators, medical professionals, fitness instructors, etc. as the essential components defining a product's nutritional worth, prominently display the product's numeric values in a manner that has gained widespread acceptability. (Indeed, I rarely question the ratio of saturated fat content printed on a product's packaging.) These values summarize for consumers what society's experts have accepted to be the relevant information for making an informed decision and justify food choices. By coding and assigning values to nutrition categories (carbohydrates, sodium, protein, etc.), one can easily make the comparison between products that (although different) have been made similar by their shared nutritional codes. Hence, not only does quantification 'name phenomena' (or categories); it also 'commensurates' (Espeland & Stevens, 2008) as it draws attention to the qualities that matter (Espeland & Lom, 2015), consequently legitimizing the category's valuation and evaluation (Lamont, 2012) and giving it the conventional force (Roscoe, 2016) to keep acting. By using a common metric (Espeland & Stevens, 1998), it is assumed that the valuation of something is always in relation to something else, thus allowing people to compare and choose between objects based on their relative value. When assigning a price value or a score to each case within a category based on a quality convention, comparison can be made based on the 'difference' (in magnitude) between their measures (Espeland & Stevens, 1998, 2008; Fourcade, 2016). Thus while there is equivalence, there is also distinction (Espeland & Lom, 2015); and where there are distinctions, there are different valuations (Fourcade, 2016).

Rankings and ratings are forms of commensuration that have powerful influences in everyday life. They are performative acts that make visible and relevant specific qualities that others might take for granted, convey a standard to which objects being ranked or rated must adhere, and unify entities to facilitate judgment (Fourcade, 2016; Espeland & Stevens, 1998). For example, a student choosing a law school might refer to the *US News and World Report* to investigate law school rankings (Espeland & Sauder, 2007) if ranking is perceived to be associated with employability, which might be the student's top priority. Or, a family looking for accommodation in Paris with 'very good' or 'excellent' rating might use *TripAdvisor* to assist their selection as it provides an efficient way of comparing hotels according to price and other possible filtering features (Jeacle & Carter, 2011). Or, an academic

pressured to publish in a high-ranking journal might use the ABS (Association of Business Schools) journals list that privileges particular research topics or methodological approaches to guide his or her research activity (Willmott, 2011). Indeed, commensuration imposes a form of unity and relationship among entities based on a metrological principle that justifies their commensurability. However, commensurability can be challenged or rejected if it ‘denies the possibility of intrinsic value, pricelessness, or any absolute category of value’ (Espeland & Stevens, 1998: 324). This may be true when deciding who gets to be treated first or who should be entitled to welfare benefits. In such cases, new qualifications and classifications may emerge, which may lead to new forms of quantification seeking to capture the once excluded and regarded as ‘incommensurable’.

When valuing performance of figure skaters, a judge considers the qualities that matters (that is, what makes the performance of the object of valuation ‘good’) and assigns a value (a rating or score) to each. The value assignments are tied to the qualities or the goods that were singled out for the valuation purpose, which in this case has shifted from artistry to technical difficulty (Espeland & Lom, 2015). In the case of public sector performance, the valuation often focuses on some aspect of performance (i.e. measurable outputs or outcomes) that corresponds to a particular (market-oriented) understanding of performance (e.g. efficiency, productivity, or accountability), consequently ignoring other intangible, unquantifiable, and traditional values (Diefenbach, 2009) such as justice, fairness, creativity, or innovation. Because of the perceived authority and objectivity of numbers, and prestige of its methodological approach that transcend social, political, and geographic boundaries (Porter, 1995), quantification often drives the valuation of performance in the public sector. Although numbers appear to convey a sense of neutrality, rationality, and reliability that is free of personal judgment, and therefore the preferred language for accountability and democracy, they are bound up or entangled with the very objects they claim to objectively measure or quantify (Fourcade, 2016; Porter, 1995; Miller & O’Leary, 1987; Keevers, Treleaven, Sykes, *et al.*, 2012; Power, 1996). Indeed, as suggested by these scholars, measurement systems do not just measure but actually intervene in the making of the phenomenon being measured so evaluation can be carried out and give meaning and rationality to the whole process.

3.4 A performative valuation and construction of GP

Given that public sector performance has multiple levels, stakeholders, and logics (de Lancer Julnes & Steccolini, 2015), valuing and measuring GP are never a straightforward process, can be contentious, and can have lasting ripple effects on how the public good is promoted and delivered. Because multiple stakeholders are involved, public performance is often associated with multiple interests (including efficiency, justice, equity, economy, fairness, etc.), which could present challenges when the dominant (numeric or economic) value prevails and suggests its commensurability with other values (Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015c).

Based on the previous sections above, the measurability of performance relies on the negotiated knowledge that establishes what is worth counting and the environment that is framed to enable the measuring to occur. As Power (1996) suggests, things, entities, or services are not necessarily inherently auditable; rather, they are made auditable through a complex process of negotiation and creation of audit knowledge and an auditable environment. Through a qualification and quantification process, experts, lay people, professionals, managers, lawmakers, and other members of the public, and the devices they gather and install, articulate the valued good so they can be measured. Tools and devices designed to track, monitor, and measure performances serve as mechanisms for bringing together the measure and the measured. These tools do not just bridge the two but are constitutively entangled in the formulation and construction of the measurable and are crucial in ‘the very enactment of the values at stake’ (Helgesson & Kjellberg, 2013: 365). They shape the sociotechnical network of relations to enable the phenomenon of measuring the measurable to be performed. It is not surprising, therefore, for organizations or individuals operating within a performance measurement framework to consider their operations, decisions, and actions according to the negotiated measurement criteria and to formulate procedures and protocols to support and sustain them. Yet, the negotiated standards are never static because of other interests, logics, or concerns that emerge as the preferred standards of measures are enacted. This means that to keep measuring and enacting GP, other interests and concerns may have to be reconsidered through further qualification of the good and the reframing of devices to support it, consequently tweaking the initial good. Hence, following Callon’s (1998a)

idea of framing and overflowing, GP is likely to change as it attempts to enact the qualified and measured good.

The model below (Figure 3-1) is an attempt to capture the key concepts discussed above as a way of exploring and analyzing how measures intervene in the valuation and construction of GP. It attempts to relate the notion of performativity to valuation practices (i.e. qualification and quantification) to explain the shaping and enabling of a social phenomenon (in this case, GP) through a network of carefully negotiated and configured relations. The model suggests that GP is not simply captured by a measurement system but is actually defined and acted upon through quantification and qualification processes. These processes involve negotiations among agents (social) as they articulate what counts as GP, as well as the identification and framing of tools and devices (technical and material) to enable the circulation of the negotiated GP. The negotiation and the framing result in the configured network of relations (or *agencement*) that marks the boundaries of GP, making it visibly valuable and measurable. The circumscribed GP, however, is never static because the social and technical/material (or *actants*) are always part of or connected to other networks of relations. Such connections may present challenges, opportunities, or new valuations and categories of 'good' that would require a re-adjustment to current processes, practices, and tools, thus reconstituting the network of relations enacting the GP. This dynamic process of qualifying and quantifying, framing and reframing the sociotechnical *agencement* of GP explains the performative power of measures as they intervene in the valuation and construction of GP.

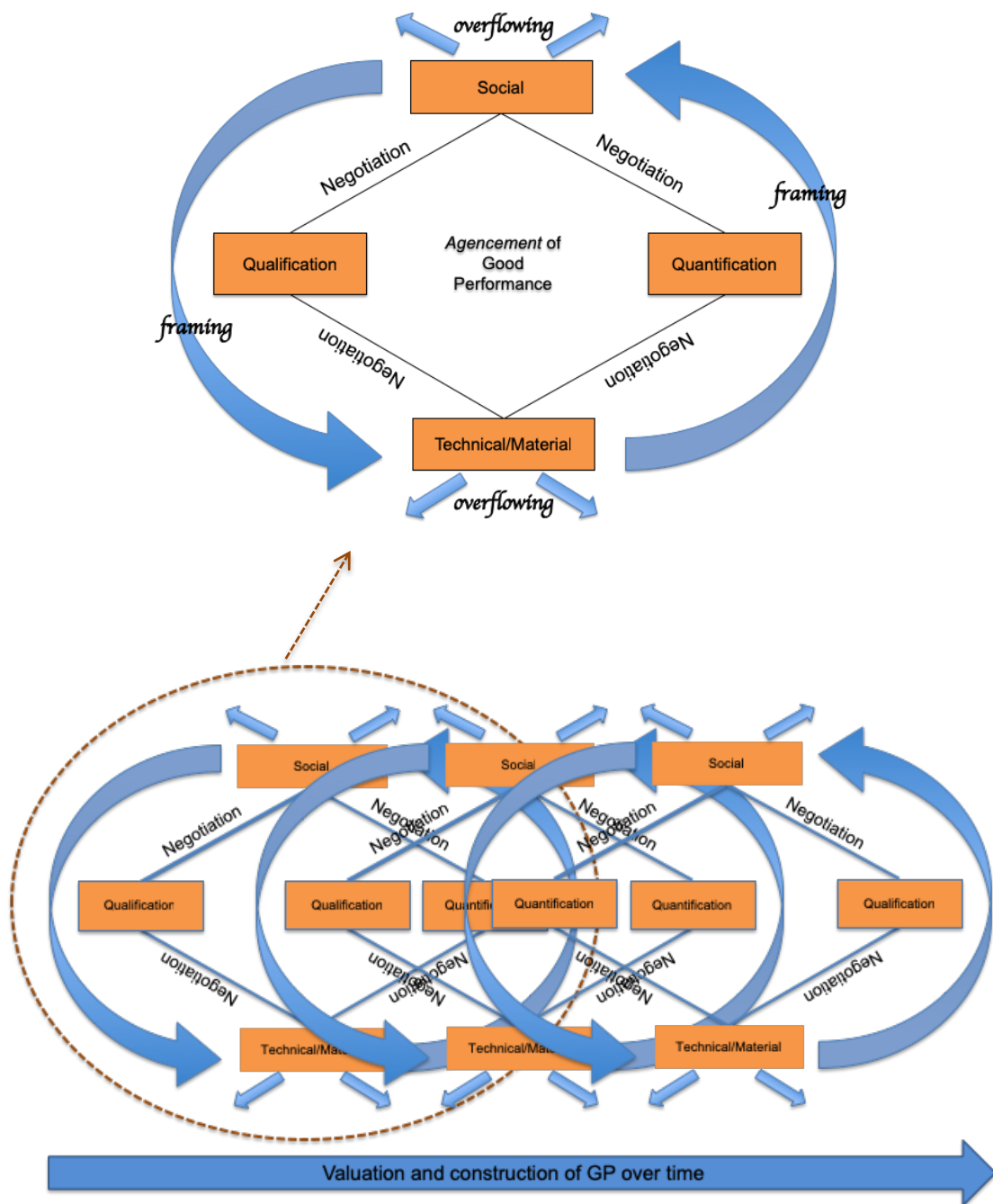


Figure 3-1 Theoretical model

Using this model to analyze the intervention of FPMs in a local child support agency would allow us to capture the shifting and changing practices and processes in the valuation and construction of GP. DAFS' improvement in performance scores, which led to an improvement in state ranking, is an indication of a transformation in performance over time. Motivated by this improvement, the research design intends to capture the empirical intricacies and practical realities of what gets valued and constructed as GP, the processes involved, and the consequences of this construction

(Fourcade, 2011a), as well as the relationships necessitated by this construction (Muniesa, Millo & Callon, 2007; Çalışkan & Callon, 2010) to respond to the resistance of the outside world. Although it is impossible to grasp neither all of the characters (both humans and nonhumans) involved in the construction nor the details of their relations, this research could offer a nuanced approach to our understanding of the complexities surrounding the construction of GP. Examining the performative effects of quantitative measures on organizational practices could illuminate the complexities involved in negotiating the preferred or valued ‘good’ and the apparatuses or devices required to secure it. Suggesting that the valued ‘good’ is negotiable implies that it is not predefined, assumed, or fixed but qualified, articulated, and unstable (Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015c). Hence, considering the notion that GP is made rather than measured might explain why scholars continue to question the effectiveness of PMM systems in the public sector.

The framework allows us to see that measures perform or act through a network of relations, enabling an organization to value and make valuable a qualified and quantified GP so it can be made ‘real’ and measurable. It allows us to consider the measures’ performative effects on the organization’s practices to keep the valued ‘good’ stable and predictable. Guided by this framework, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do the CSEP’s performance measures circulate among child support agents? What are the tools, devices, and other materialities used to mobilize them?

As shown in the previous sections, measures, like theories and models, do not just capture or present what is out there. They intervene in the making (Callon, 1998b, 2007, 2009) of the ‘object’ (i.e. performance) to be captured. Their intervention, however, demands huge investments in forms and material devices defining, qualifying, and coordinating what is ‘good’. This question, therefore, is aimed at identifying the human and nonhuman entities that enabled the measures to intervene in DAFS’ construction of GP so it can be known, valued, and acted upon.

2. How do the measures shape or transform the child support agents’ behaviors,

identities, and practices? What accounts for the child support agents' transformation?

When we say that measures are performative, we mean that they act or produce an effect (Callon, 2007). Their capacity to perform, however, is dependent on a network of relations (Callon, 1998a, 1999) to which they are connected. Exploring the network of relations that produces DAFS' GP could reveal how employees' behaviors, identities, and practices are transformed, modified, or shaped by their engagement with the measures in and through the network. This question, therefore, attempts to expose the transformations that employees' connection with the measures generated, the various entities involved in the transformation, and the shape and form of GP that their transformations encouraged.

3. How do child support agents transform the meanings of the measures? What accounts for the changes in the meanings of the measures?

DAFS employees' continuous engagement with the measures produces an *agencement* that defines the boundaries through which their GP can be determined, enacted, and thrive. When such boundaries, due to *overflows* (Callon, 1998a), threaten the enactment of GP, actors and devices reframe their boundaries of operation, consequently modifying, reshaping, and reformatting the GP they produce. GP, therefore, can be 'multiple and diverse' (Callon, 2005: 4), depending on the various forms of sociotechnical configurations that constitute it. The changing 'good' over time and the restructuring of the *agencement* to support it, thus, are the considerations of this final question.

In summary, the study focuses on how the measures shape or transform the behavior, identities, and practices of child support employees. It investigates the transformative, disciplinary, and authoritative power of measures, as well as the implication for the world these measures seek to represent. It explores how measures are inscribed in devices and drive the 'making' of employees' GP. It also examines how these measures are transformed as conflicts arise from competing valuations of the 'good'.

4 Methodology

In this chapter, I begin by making explicit the philosophical perspectives guiding my investigation. I then describe the research design and present my methodological approach. To contextualize my work, I then provide details of my preparation and planning efforts, which afforded me the opportunity to engage with experts in the field. I then proceed to describe my data sources and methods. To present a chronology of my investigation, I discuss each phase of my data collection. I then discuss my approach to data analysis and end with some ethical considerations.

4.1 Philosophical perspectives

The overarching philosophy framing my methodological approach is that of social constructionism (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009) as it considers social phenomena ‘in the making’ rather than ‘already made’. Generally, it regards the socially constructed as historically and culturally situated; thus, ‘the focus of enquiry should be on interaction, processes, and social practices’ (Young & Collin, 2004: 377). But more specifically, in the Latourian (1996) sense, the reality that is *socially* constructed treats the ‘social’ in its original sense – that is, attached or connected to something (Latour, 2005), and that ‘the social’ is always material’ (Law, 2008: 638). The constructionist does not particularly depend on theory for an explanation of social phenomenon; instead, she depends on the *actants* (Latour, 1996, 2005), which may include theories and frameworks, as they connect and align themselves with one another, ‘to identify who or what is involved’ (Cochoy, 2014: 111), understand what they mean in practice (Law, 2008), and provide the explanation (Latour, 1996, 1999a, 2005). As the interest is in the social construction of reality, the focus is on ‘disclosure’ of that process (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). In short, she is interested in the ‘connections’ and the ‘connected *actants*’ to tell the story of their co-construction of reality, of what that ‘reality’ needs in order to *subsist* (Latour, 2011). Hence, *actant* is a concept that is central to my study. They can be humans or nonhumans that have the capacity to act, give meaning to an action (Callon, 2005), or be a source of action (Latour, 1996). Technical devices, instruments, documents, and other artefacts, therefore, are viewed as *actants* that can have a life of their own and influence human actors (see Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). They are simultaneously

real, social, and discursive (Latour, 1993). On this point, therefore, it is important to allow them, through their interactions and the effects they produce, to provide the explanation (Latour, 2005) for their socially constructed world.

This research explores how measures, as a performative device, make certain performances valuable or ‘good’ to be enacted and measured through a complex web of relations (Callon, 1999). It examines the measures’ intervention in defining and constructing the GP they are meant to measure. It is particularly interested in the processes and the mechanisms through which measures are mobilized to make the GP ‘exist’. Consistent with the Actor-Network Theory (ANT), of which Callon is a proponent, it does not just consider *measures* as ‘a matter of fact (a noun) but a kind of action (a verb)’ (Cochoy, 2014: 110) enabled by and enabling a collective of humans and devices to which it is connected to perform. Action, therefore, is ‘distributed’ (Hutchins, 1995); it ‘can neither be contained in a human being nor localized in the institutions, norms, values, and discursive or symbolic systems assumed to produce effects on individuals’ (Callon, 2005: 4). Inspired by the Callonian perspective (Callon, 1998a, 1999, 2007; Callon & Muniesa, 2005) on calculative agents (and elaborated through the works of Callon and Muniesa (2005); Beunza and Stark (2004); Muniesa *et al.* (2007); Çalışkan & Callon (2009, 2010); Preda (2007); Cochoy (2008); Fourcade (2011a)), this research considers experts and lay members, tools, devices, protocols, policies, and other entities that collectively act in a coordinated and organized way to assemble a ‘good performing agency’. Indeed, as Latour (2005) claims, where there is action, there is a network of *actants*. While acting in unison, however, these *actants* are also sources of disruption that attempt to redefine and reconstruct the agency’s GP, thus suggesting its fluidity. Here is where Callon’s (1998a) idea of *overflowing* offers a window of opening into the world of politics as it brings to the surface the struggles and conflicts that the construction and stabilization of an assemblage generate, as well as the possibilities for the collective’s reframing and reorganization (Callon, 2010). A key feature of the performativity thesis is the *agencement* (Callon, 1998a, 2007) that enables a theory or model to act. Human and nonhuman actors have the capacity to act according to their arrangement or configuration. This means that agents and arrangements are not separated; rather both are constitutive of each other (Çalışkan & Callon, 2009), thus enabling their capacity to act. Therefore, using the concept of *agencement*, the study investigates the

human and nonhuman agents and their configuration in order to capture the relationships that are established, forms of action that this *agencement* is able to generate, and the adjustments that occur due to the overflows.

In this piece of work, instead of treating measures as a representation for the good (or bad) performance, I observe how as a ‘circulating reference’ (Latour, 1999b) they construct or produce, through a chain of transformations, the measurable performance and make it ‘real’. These transformations and the traces they leave behind can provide an explanation for ‘holding together’ (Latour, 2005; see also Czarniawska, 2014) the performance that measures are assumed to account, despite the controversies and politics they unleash. Thus, measures are *in* and *constitute* the world to which they refer (Callon, 2007). This network-like, relational world (see Law & Singleton, 2013), consisting of human and nonhuman actors that are linked to each other, produces an *effect* – a phenomenon – that we can then know (Callon, 2009). Out of this network of relations, or sociotechnical *agencement* (Callon, 1998a, 2007), can one begin to theorize about the social world (Latour, 1996). But to do so, one must engage with that same world.

Based on the foregoing and proposed theoretical framework, the philosophical perspective guiding this research is grounded on a relational ontology (Law & Singleton, 2013) that is epistemologically complex (Law, 2008). The ‘social’ is known through, explained by, and kept in place by a network of heterogeneous actors. These entities actively work together in building and establishing their connections to enable their social world to exist and be known. They take their form and character ‘only in relation to one another’ (Law, 2008: 631). But because networks are prone to disruptions, relations may change, thus changing the realities they enact (Law, 2008). Our understanding of social phenomena, therefore, demands an attitude of openness to better appreciate the limitations and possibilities of the constructed ‘social reality’. Indeed, our discovery and understanding of the world is never over. As actors and devices participate in other networks of relations, new discoveries and new configurations of realities can emerge. Hence, as part of this universe of possibilities, my own reflexive participation in re-constructing or re-formatting the reality I seek to understand could perhaps provide new possibilities for *re-presenting* the world I see. Although my *social* construction of reality has its limits, it could at least help put into

motion an understanding of and a theorizing about the social world as it begins to unfold.

4.2 Research design and methodological approach

Methodologically, given my epistemological and ontological assumptions, an actor-network approach to the investigation would allow me to explore the performativity of measures in the making of GP. To follow such an approach, however, it is recommended to observe the methodological principles of ‘agnosticism (impartiality between actors engaged in controversy), generalised symmetry (the commitment to explain conflicting viewpoints in the same terms) and free association (the abandonment of all a priori distinctions between the natural and the social)’ (Callon, 1986: 196). The first principle, agnosticism, suggests holding off any judgments or pre-conceived ideas about what is revealed or expressed by those observed. The second recommends the consistent presentation of (even conflicting) accounts without privileging one over another. The third principle, free association, encourages a view of the world that is flat, with no divisions, levels, or hierarchies (Latour, 1996) in order to allow the ‘observed’ to show the way they build and explain their world. These principles, though important, are difficult to maintain in practice as the researcher is never just a passive observer. But, by acknowledging and aiming to respect these principles, it is hoped that the reader of this investigation will consider it a convincing piece of work.

As an approach, ANT relies on recording devices that would allow entities to be identified, described, and tracked through their network-building (Latour, 1996). Based on ANT principles, the researcher explores the ways actors and devices are *linked* and *configured* through their situated, collective practices to determine what they are, want, and can do (Callon, 1999). Specifically, this includes examining how, in this case, measures are connected to a network of relations and what connects them, the processes and mechanisms involved, and the effects they generate (including the ‘good performance’ that came to be). To unravel the elusive relationship between measures and performance, it is important to expose the circulation and distribution of measures across actors, devices, and techniques (McFall & Ossandón, 2014) that allow (good or bad) performance to emerge. To do this, Latour (2005) suggests tracing and scrutinizing the connections that make up an assemblage of *actants* that

populate and enact a world that has settled. These ‘traces of association’, as Latour calls it, could provide an explanation for the measures’ ability to create an effect (Callon, 2007), which includes transforming DAFS into a ‘performing agency’ that the FPMs can capture and represent as ‘fact’. Thus, to theorize about performance measures, I chose to conduct the tracing of measures within a specific case – DAFS’ case – because it is by ‘working through the concrete’ that I can best ‘articulate and re-work theory’ (Law, 2008: 630).

To capture the performativity of measures, it is important to map out the measures’ network of connections and survey the processes (Çalışkan & Callon, 2009, 2010) that made DAFS’ performance ‘good’. This entails taking note of and listing the devices, techniques, and other materialities involved in organizing and structuring DAFS’ GP. It requires paying close attention to the movements and the traces that *actants* leave behind to explain their qualification and valuation of the ‘good’ that must be performed and measured. This means letting the actors and devices provide not just information, but also explanations for themselves and their connections, and for the phenomenon they collectively produce through their accounts (Latour, 1996, 2005). Hence, by deploying and extending the network through careful recording and rich descriptions, I am granting back to the actors their frames of reference to reveal their own explanations (Latour, 1996) for the connections they successfully established and those they failed to develop.

4.3 Planning and preparation

Conducting a performativity study in a local government agency demands special access to the *actants* that must be followed, observed, and recorded. My former affiliation with the chosen site, and everything attached to it, are possible explanations for having been granted that access. Before I get into the details of my entry into DAFS’ network, it is important to discuss briefly the planning and preparation involved prior to conducting the research, as this is where my role as ‘former affiliate’ could best be observed and provide an explanation for securing the access I needed.

My preparations began on the 20th of May 2015. I contacted the agency head by email and arranged a telephone conversation to discuss my research project and a

possible visit in September. Due to her imminent retirement, she included the incoming head in the email exchange while reassuringly expressed her full support for the study. Soon after, on the 26th of May, I had a telephone conversation with the incoming head. At the end of our conversation, I immediately sent an email correspondence summarizing the key points of our conversation: study objectives, proposed schedule of the site visit, and a general plan for data collection, storage, and handling. On that same day, the incoming head gave his full support, triggering the preparations and logistical requirements for the site visit. I also explored the possibility of meeting with the head of the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in Washington D.C. I sought the assistance of then incoming President of the National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA), the largest professional organization for child support professionals, and Director of one of the largest agencies in the nation for a possible introduction to the OCSE Commissioner. Pursuing this connection proved to be helpful as it enabled me to contact the Commissioner directly. On 14 July 2015, I sent an email to the Commissioner introducing myself and explaining my interest in conducting a study on OCSE's federal performance measures and incentive system. I inquired about a possible interview with her or her colleagues during my planned visit to Washington D.C. in October 2015. In less than half an hour, I received a favorable response and was passed on to a federal agent, who was asked to facilitate my request. To take advantage of my trip to Washington D.C., I also arranged a possible interview with one of NCSEA's representatives in Virginia (see Appendix for complete itinerary).

With the site visit arrangements looking very promising and while waiting for approval from the Ethics Committee prior to commencing research, I began to organize my travel itinerary and develop my protocols for data collection. By the 2nd of September, my Ethics Approval Letter (see Appendix) was obtained and travel arrangements were completed. Given the limited resources (both time and funding) for fieldwork, it was necessary to address as much of the logistical requirements as possible prior to my arrival. I sent an advanced copy of the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) (see Appendix) to the agency head's representative and informed her of my planned activities during the visit. A DAFS employee, assigned to coordinate my visit, sent me the necessary confidentiality-related forms to fill and sign prior to

engaging with a government agency handling confidential information. A week prior to my scheduled start date, the coordinating staff sent an email communication to all employees, copied to me, informing them of my arrival and the purpose of my visit. A copy of the PIS was attached to ensure that employees were aware of their voluntary participation in the study.

4.4 Data sources and methods

The empirical material for this research came from multiple sources collected in two phases. During the first phase, which ran from September 14 – October 16, 2015, I visited three sites: DAFS (local child support agency in Las Vegas, Nevada), OCSE (federal agency responsible for the program in Washington D.C.), and NCSEA (largest professional body advocating for the child support community with offices located in McLean, Virginia). I spent three and a half weeks at DAFS, the chosen site for my network-tracing. I then proceeded to the federal office, where I met with members of staff from both the Division of Policy and Training and Division of Performance and Statistical Analysis. The first phase ended with an interview with the NCSEA representative in Virginia. To explore further the emerging themes from my 2015 fieldwork, I secured funding from the Russell Trust to support my second phase of data collection held at a training event in Salt Lake City, Utah from October 1 – 6, 2016. The event was organized by the Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council (WICSEC¹⁴), a child support professional organization that holds annual training conferences for public and private child support professionals from the western states.

I relied on ethnographic and case-study methods for recording and exploring the measures' network of relations to explain their performative effects on DAFS' performance. I conducted 26 face-to-face interviews and 8 group interviews of two to six participants (see Table 4-1 and Table 4-2). A total of 51 study participants, which included managers, supervisors, team leads, analysts, caseworkers, lawyers, and heads of agencies, agreed to be recorded during the sessions, each averaging approximately an hour. I used semi-structured interviews (see Appendix) to help navigate the exploration but remained open to and pursued unexpected leads. This means that I

¹⁴ On 2018, WICSEC has changed to the Western Intergovernmental Child Support Engagement Council.

consciously used the interview schedule as a thematic guide, with a lot of flexibility, to allow the respondent to develop his or her own story (Meuser & Nagel, 2009). I conducted eight observations (see Table 4-3) involving staff across all levels of the organization. I also collected several internal and publicly available materials (in electronic and conventional forms). This research project, however, was not exempt from snags. When uncertainties cropped up or I realized that I could have done something better, I quickly changed gears and tried to respond to the situation (see Appendix).

Pseudonym	Classification	Venue	Duration	Yrs DAFS	Yrs CS	Transcribed	Coded
Andy	Leadership	My office	01:29:38	15	15	Y	Y
Erwin	Leadership	My office	01:14:58	8	8	Y	Y
Alison	Leadership	Conference Rm	01:31:44	21	21	Y	Y
John	Support Staff	My office	00:50:04	4	4	Y	Y
Rachel	Leadership	Interviewee's office	00:32:16	18	18	Y	Y
Marie	Leadership	Interviewee's office	01:17:45	11	11	Y	Y
Kristine	Leadership	Conference Rm	00:47:29	12	17	Y	Y
Bill	Leadership	Interviewee's office	01:17:39	5.5	15.33	Y	Y
Jim	Support Staff	Conference Rm	00:56:38	8	8	Y	Y
Lesley	Leadership	Conference Rm	00:49:35	17	17	Y	Y
Alyssa	Leadership	Conference Rm	01:16:59	10	16	Y	Y
Kathlyn	Support Staff	Conference Rm	00:50:36	3	3	Y	Y
Kati	Support Staff	Conference Rm	00:52:31	13	13	Y	Y
Eleanor	Support Staff	Interviewee's office	00:48:22	15	15	Y	Y
Tona	Leadership	Conference Rm	00:38:04	12	12	Y	Y
Paula	Leadership	Conference Rm	00:58:39	11	11	Y	Y
Sonia	Leadership	Interviewee's office	00:39:18	18	18	Y	Y
Suzanne	Support Staff	Interviewee's office	00:45:56	30	30	Y	Y
Daria	Support Staff	Conference Rm	00:59:38	14	14	Y	Y
Eddie	Leadership	Conference Rm	00:58:43	2.5	3.5	Y	Y
Andrea	Support Staff	Conference Rm	00:41:36	26	26	Y	Y
Marta	Leadership	Conference Rm	01:00:53	8	8	Y	Y
Kevin	Leadership	Interviewee's office	01:01:05	8	8	Y	Y
Trixie	Leadership	Conference Rm	00:56:33	1	1	Y	Y
Jessica*	NCSEA	External	00:34:01	N/A	5	Y	Y
Sally*	WICSEC	External	00:18:51	N/A	-	P	N/A

Table 4-1 Individual interviews

Focus Group	Pseudonym	Classification	Venue	Duration	Yrs DAFS	Yrs CS	Trans	Coded
FG1PatStaff	Simone	Support Staff	Conference Rm	00:38:16	15	15	Y	Y
FG1PatStaff	Nancy	Support Staff	Conference Rm		19	19	Y	Y
FG2EntfSup	Sarah	Leadership	Conference Rm	01:12:59	20	20	Y	Y
FG2EntfSup	Deb	Leadership	Conference Rm		16	16	Y	Y
FG2EntfSup	Donna	Leadership	Conference Rm		19	19	Y	Y
FG2EntfSup	Joanna	Leadership	Conference Rm		11	11	Y	Y
FG3EntfStaff	Jenny	Support Staff	Conference Rm	01:04:47	10	10	Y	Y
FG3EntfStaff	Edelyn	Support Staff	Conference Rm		16	16	Y	Y
FG3EntfStaff	Katrina	Support Staff	Conference Rm		10	10	Y	Y
FG4IntStaff	Veronica	Support Staff	Conference Rm	00:56:14	19	19	Y	Y
FG4IntStaff	Shiela	Support Staff	Conference Rm		13	13	Y	Y
FG5LegStaff	Alistair	Support Staff	Conference Rm	00:49:20	17	17	Y	Y
FG5LegStaff	Alex	Support Staff	Conference Rm		13	13	Y	Y
FG6Support	Judith	Support Staff	Conference Rm	00:38:03	21	21	Y	Y
FG6Support	Mariana	Support Staff	Conference Rm		18	18	Y	Y
FG7Mix	Lori	Support Staff	Conference Rm	01:18:25	8	8	Y	Y
FG7Mix	Kay	Support Staff	Conference Rm		5	5	Y	Y
FG7Mix	Sally	Support Staff	Conference Rm		16	16	Y	Y
FG7Mix	Jill	Support Staff	Conference Rm		12.5	12.5	Y	Y
FG8FEDS*	Graham	Leadership	OCSE Office	01:26:10	N/A	10	Y	Y
FG8FEDS*	Margaret	Leadership	OCSE Office		N/A	25	Y	Y
FG8FEDS*	Judy	Leadership	OCSE Office		N/A	8	Y	Y
FG8FEDS*	Ann	Leadership	OCSE Office		N/A	3	Y	Y
FG8FEDS*	Betty	Leadership	OCSE Office		N/A	5	Y	Y
FG8FEDS*	Steve	Leadership	OCSE Office		N/A	39	Y	Y

Table 4-2 Group interviews

Observation	Participants	Venue	Date
Management Mtg	Managers & Guest Staff	Meeting Room/Legal Library	21-Sep-15
Software Update Mtg	Managers & Analysts	IT Conference Room	24-Sep-15
Software Demo	IT Staff	Small Conference Rm	25-Sep-15
Management Mtg	Managers & Guest Staff	Meeting Room/Legal Library	28-Sep-15
Training Session	Supervisors & Managers	Large Conference Rm	29-Sep-15
Mailroom Planning	IT & Mailroom Staff	Large Conference Rm	29-Sep-15
Supervisors Mtg	Manager & Supervisors	Small Conference Rm	30-Sep-15
Drug Court*	DAFS Attorney, Court Staff, & Public	DAFS Court Room	2-Oct-15

Table 4-3 Observations

These methods allowed me to get to the ‘associations and assembling’ (Latour, 2005) that held DAFS’ network together, and the controversies that *actants* had to address and stabilize through their re-associations and re-assembling, or what Callon (1998a, 1999, 2007) refers to as framing and reframing. Knowing that it was not going to be easy to ‘catch up with [actors’] often wild innovations in order to learn from them what the collective existence has become in their hands, which methods

they have elaborated to make it fit together' (Latour, 2005: 12), I decided to begin by letting human actors deploy their 'world' through reflexive interviews (Denzin, 2001). I used the interview as a narrative device that lets actors tell their story, creating and giving meaning to the world they perform (Denzin, 2001). I also observed some of their practices (e.g. meetings and training sessions) to get a sense of how their narratives play out to express their concerns. I examined the traces they left behind by reviewing documents and artifacts (approximately 60) they produced, mentioned, or regularly consulted. I visited several websites to obtain a better understanding of their connections with the outside world. Without letting methodological standards or rules set the limits, I used these methods with flexibility, recognizing that the world I am trying to understand is a 'generative flux of forces and relations that work to produce particular realities' (Law, 2004: 7). But, like Law (2004), I acknowledge that there is a world out there, and it is how my knowledge, actions, and re-actions help generate that world.

4.5 Data collection: phase one

4.5.1 Settling in at DAFS

As a former member of DAFS' management team, this put me in a privileged position and helped me gain access to a field that would otherwise be difficult to enter or navigate upon entry. I was granted full access to all the agency's units and departments, internal documents, tools, meetings, and anything to which my key *actant* (i.e. measures) was connected. Perhaps my entry into the network could be considered a *re-connection*, as my ties with the agency were never fully dissolved given my continued interest in the sector. As a researcher, this is both good and bad. Good, because the issue of access was quickly addressed; bad, because keeping an open mind to the *actants'* accounts and wherever the 'network-tracing' (Latour, 1996) might take me was not going to be easy. Aware of the possible effects of my connection to the agency on my network-tracing, I proceeded with caution by maintaining a reflexive approach (Hibbert, *et al.*, 2014; Alvesson, *et al.*, 2008) to my research decisions and actions and allowing the circulating entity to display its movements through actors' accounts. I critically questioned the assumptions of those observed and my own, as well as remained cognizant of the influence that my research paradigm might have on my practice (i.e. fieldwork, analysis, and writing).

Upon my arrival at DAFS (which I referred to as my ‘Prep Day’), like all visitors, I went through security, reported to the Front Desk, and asked for my contact person (from hereon, Vicky). Vicky met me at the reception area and brought me to her office in Administration. I immediately thanked her for coordinating the administration requirements associated with my visit. During our brief chat, it was quite obvious that she was well informed of my previous role in the agency. When we were ready to leave to go to my assigned office and for a quick tour of the campus, I asked Vicky if I could pop my head into the Director’s office to let him know of my presence as a matter of courtesy and thank him for his full support. As he was in a meeting, I decided to meet with him the next day. Before leaving the area, an administrative assistant handed me a security badge with my photograph on it; the same one used at the time I was employed by the agency. This security badge gave me full access to almost all of the departments and units between the two campus buildings. Vicky then showed me to my office in the Legal department. The office, formerly occupied by one of the attorneys, was well furnished and equipped with a computer, two monitors, printer, and VoIP telephone system. The latter came in handy for getting in touch with any member of staff across the organization. On the wall of the office was a huge printout of DAFS’ organizational chart, which was eventually replaced with an updated version. Vicky then gave me a quick tour of the campus. She pointed out the general areas of the different units and departments of the organization. The familiar faces I met along the way greeted and welcomed me. Many gave me a hug, expressed excitement about my visit and how they missed my presence. Others conveyed their support and offered their assistance, if and when needed. I also noticed several new faces throughout the campus.

The first hour and a half of my visit reminded me of the territory I was about to enter, my role as a researcher, and my previous role as a practitioner. As an insider, I became even more aware of the need to maintain a balance between my knowledge and expertise in the area of study and good research practice. Although the former gave me that unique position and advanced knowledge on the site/sector, I allowed my network-tracing to expose the elements entangled in (and critique) that taken-for-granted knowledge. But for me to conduct the tracing, I immersed myself in their world and interacted comfortably with those who could show me the path as they told their story. Aware of the limits of how much I could trace within a given period of

time, I took advantage of the knowledge informed by my connections as a starting point, while recognizing that the story unfolds only after I let the actors provide an account of their ordering of the world (Latour, 2005).

The next day, I made a courtesy call to the head of the agency to express my appreciation for his support. As I knocked and stood at the door to get his attention, he immediately got up from his seat and greeted me with a big smile and a hug. We exchanged pleasantries. I sat down at the visitor's chair and expressed my profound appreciation for his support. As we chatted, the phone rang. The Assistant Director, who was attending a child support conference out of state, was immediately put on speakerphone and informed of my presence. I greeted and thanked her for her support. During our conversation, the Director conveyed the State's concern regarding my access to the case management system, which is the database containing clients' personal information. He reassured the State that I had no intention of citing specific cases nor making references to specific clients, and that I had signed all the required confidentiality agreements. He then told me to carry on with my observation as planned, knowing fully well the purpose of my study. Shortly before leaving the Director's office, one of the managers came in. As soon as he saw me, he said, "Well, hello!" and gave me a hug. After a quick exchange, I excused myself to let them get on with their business.

This brief account on my arrival at DAFS is important as it offers insight into my privileged position, the agency culture, and DAFS' support for my visit, which explain how I managed to follow the actors (Latour, 2005) at a reasonable pace within a limited period. The next section describes how I followed and engaged with the actors.

4.5.2 Network-tracing at DAFS

I began by exploring the offices, corridors, and open spaces in the two buildings to capture the agency's layout, get a sense of the work environment, and make my presence known. I took images of some of the offices and workspaces, particularly those directly involved in operations based on the organizational chart (an *actant*) displayed on the wall of my office. I captured several apparatuses and artifacts across the two buildings as potential leads to follow. Some of these objects were

brought up in individual conversations and group discussions, thus suggesting their importance in DAFS' organizational life. As I walked around the operational units, I engaged in casual conversations with some of the employees and tried to establish a comfortable relationship with them. Some were quick to provide the history behind some of the artifacts (e.g. posters and charts hanging on the walls) that caught my attention. Some offered more extensive insights, which I hoped I had digitally recorded rather than simply took note of. I then asked those who seemed keen to engage if they would like to participate in an individual or group interview. All those who were asked during that time expressed their willingness and excitement to take part in the study.

After completing my ocular inspection of DAFS premises, I went back to my office and reviewed the organizational chart to begin identifying people in specific roles and positions that might provide vital information on their transformation. I reviewed their contact information, exact location on campus, and reporting lines via DAFS' in-house application to which I had access. Between these two devices (i.e. organizational chart and in-house application), I was able to trace people's associations and specialized functional units. I made internal calls using DAFS' telephone system, which easily identified me to the receiver of the call. Having been assigned my own internal profile and email address within DAFS' systems, I managed to communicate seamlessly with staff across the organization and send out invitations via an office calendar sharing system. In all my communication with DAFS employees, I clearly stated the purpose of my study, reminded them of their voluntary participation, and sent them a copy of the PIS. Among those invited to participate in an interview, one declined, and another agreed but failed to show up. There was another one who, though keen, could not fit the interview into her schedule. Looking back, I realized that September was probably not the ideal month for a site visit as this marked the end of the fiscal year and was perhaps the busiest time for staff. However, it was probably the most dynamic as it was DAFS' last chance to deliver their GP for the year.

At each interview (whether individual or group), I handed each participant a copy of the PIS and asked if there were any questions about the study. I also handed a copy of the Participant Consent Form (PCF) (see Appendix) and gave participants

enough time to read it. I then encouraged participants to ask questions or raise any concerns they might have before signing the form. I reiterated that the material gathered would remain confidential and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any stage. I recorded all interviews using a small digital voice recorder with ‘intelligent’ noise reduction capability, a reliable companion throughout my network-tracing and co-producer of the empirical material for analysis. I used my interview guide and initially went through each question almost to the letter. I then realized that some questions could be collapsed, rephrased, or clarified with some follow-up questions, depending on how interviewees responded to them or how I reacted to their accounts to generate a common understanding of the phenomenon they (and I) were attempting to reconstruct. Although not all participants knew me, all seemed very comfortable and quite open during the interviews. They seemed uninhibited in talking about their concerns or misgivings and were quick to offer explanations to support their claims. Some were quick to assume that I knew what they meant each time they referred to an internal matter or protocol. I would then ask them to provide some background information on the topic before articulating their point.

My first face-to-face interview was with one of the managers – a comfortable starting point, as my connection with the interviewee was already established. There were no qualms about holding the interview in my office – just like old times. Two more individual interviews (one with a supervisor, and another with a support staff) were held in my office. Though both participants were quite comfortable during the interview, this reminded me of my previous role in the organization and made me reconsider the interview setting. I realized that it would probably be best to hold the interviews in neutral ground to create a more relaxed setting, especially for interviewees who might still associate me with the management team. Hence, except in those three occasions, all interviews were held either in a small conference room or the interviewee’s office.

In one of the first group interviews, an employee expressly assumed that my work was under the purview of DAFS management. This thought perhaps was due to my inclusion in DAFS’ systems network, which put me in the reporting line of the Director. This prompted me to clarify at that point (and all interviews thereafter) my position as an outsider/visitor with no current affiliation with the organization. The

group interviews were very dynamic. There was a lot of discussion and debate on certain issues, thus exposing their significance to the developing story. Both individual and group interviews provided valuable leads (e.g. meetings, court hearings, training, software, professional organizations, etc.) to explore further, enabling me to choose and prioritize the paths to follow given my limited time and resources.

I observed two management meetings in the Legal Library/Meeting Room, the venue of their weekly meetings. I sat at a corner to observe, rather than join them around the huge table. Looking back, it probably would have been better if I had sat with them, as this would have probably made my presence more discreet. I noted down points from their discussions that seemed central to their practice and worth exploring (e.g. recognitions, awards, conferences and best practices, year-end concerns, etc.). I followed up some of these points during face-to-face or group interviews. Those in attendance at the management meetings also informed me of other meetings or events that might be worth observing. I pursued some of these leads but excluded others due to time constraints or a conflict in scheduling.

4.5.3 DAFS' mediating partners: OCSE and NCSEA

After my time at DAFS, I continued my network-tracing at the federal office in Washington D.C. Upon my arrival at the agency, I was met by my contact person. He led me to a small conference room where the group interview was to be held. After a brief conversation about my project, I got my digital recorder, laptop, and forms out in preparation for the interview. Shortly after, staff from the two divisions (Policy and Training, and Performance and Statistical Analysis) entered the room. I introduced myself as they entered and, once settled, I thanked all of them for their time and for agreeing to participate in the study. Just like at DAFS, I handed each a copy of the PIS and PCF. I explained the project and encouraged them to ask any questions they might have with regard to their participation. After they signed and handed their PCFs, I began the interview. As with other group interviews, I asked each one to state their name, title, and years in the child support program for the record. Two of the participants had been with the program for a very long time and provided valuable insights into its history, how it has evolved and continues to evolve. The participants also provided a broad picture of the wider network to which DAFS is

connected and the complexity of a program that is heavily invested in technology. Their references to federal forms, regulations, and certifications prompted me to review some of these artifacts, which are all publicly available online. While the interview generated a lot of discussion among the participants and offered new paths to explore, I realized that I had reached the limit of my tracing and would have to put some of them on hold for future investigation. At the end of the interview, I thanked all the participants. They wished me well in return.

The following day, I went to Virginia to meet with the Executive Director of NCSEA. The interview was held in her office and proceeded as usual. The participant provided insights on NCSEA's role within the wider network of child support. She described the organization's effort to create a community of learners, practitioners, and supporters that are actively and continuously engaged in delivering efficient and effective child support programs. Her input gave me some insight into the possible links between the professional organizations' conferences and training programs and the child support agencies' sociotechnical assemblages. This led me to consider exploring these mediating activities, hence the second phase of my data collection.

4.6 Data collection: phase two

The first phase of my data collection encouraged me to explore the possibility of attending and observing a training event with DAFS presence. Having been informed of a major training conference in October 2016 organized by WICSEC, the professional organization serving child support professionals in the western states, I quickly searched for possible funding opportunities to help cover the cost of my travel and accommodation. On February 2016, I received an email announcement regarding the Russell Trust Awards aimed at postgraduate students requiring support for travel costs associated with their research project. With support from my supervisors, I pursued this opportunity and submitted an application on March 14. I was invited for the next round of review on April 17 and was ultimately awarded on May 23. I then explored possible assistance for accommodation and registration from the organizers of WICSEC. I reached out to the same person who put me in touch with the federal office, as he was already aware of my research project. I found out that he was also a board member of WICSEC and inquired about scholarships for research students. Although WICSEC scholarships were available, they were only awarded to

individuals employed at a child support agency. Nevertheless, I was encouraged to put in an application, clearly stating the specific support required in case the organizing committee considers my case an exception. I also stated my research interest in attending the conference. Although my WICSEC scholarship application was unsuccessful, the WICSEC Board of Directors voted to waive my registration fee. On September 2, I received an email from the WICSEC President informing me of the Board's decision. She also generously offered to share her Presidential Suite, with two *ensuite* bedrooms, to help with my accommodation, which I accepted.

The conference ran from 2nd to 6th of October 2016 and was held at the Salt Palace Convention Center in Salt Lake City, Utah. On my arrival, the President expressed the Board's support for my project and told me that she would be happy to put me in touch with some of the key players in the child support community. Informed in advance of my research objectives, she invited me to join her at the vendors-sponsored evening reception to meet the private sector representatives and WICSEC board and committee members. She also invited me to attend the luncheon meeting organized for the Commissioner and state directors. Both invitations were very much appreciated as they presented opportunities for engaging with high-level child support professionals outside the more structured conference sessions and for observing interactions that would not have been possible otherwise.

With "Peak Performance" as its theme, the WICSEC conference offered additional insights on the performative effects of the measures on the wider child support community and an opportunity to observe DAFS participation in the conference. At the opening plenary session, the President did a roll call of all the states and tribal nations; she also made my presence known to the attendees of the conference. I observed all the plenary and seven breakout sessions and attended the social events. The morning and afternoon coffee breaks were utilized to carry out informal conversations with child support professionals. I also managed to conduct a face-to-face interview with a private sector representative. Throughout the conference, I managed to speak to several attendees from different state and county agencies about the performance measures and obtained some insights on how the measures may have shaped their practices. I also interacted with representatives (e.g. CEOs, executives, and managers) of private companies to understand the nature and

extent of their involvement in the child support program. Throughout the conference, I took notes of my observations and insights. The role of technology in the program seemed to stand out. The general atmosphere of the conference was filled with a strong sense of performance and productivity. Organizers, speakers, and attendees seemed committed to promoting a collaborative environment, building relationships with clients, improving technology, and capitalizing on predictive analytics for greater program efficiency (see Appendix for Conference Program). Overall, the conference displayed a tight-knit community that is supportive of and eager to learn from each other, while remaining competitive; a phenomenon alluded to by one of the participants at DAFS during a face-to-face interview.

After each phase of data collection, I also spent a considerable amount of time searching and gathering electronic documents and websites to which study participants referred. These included news articles, reports, regulations, assembly meeting minutes, organization web sites, and others. These sources provided valuable insights into participants' accounts of their social construction of reality. I also jotted down my reflections and annotations on some of the dominant themes or tension-filled narratives emerging from the interviews and observations. Thus, initial ideas, thoughts, abstractions, and the like, became part of my tracing effort and eventually helped me write a rich description of DAFS' network of relations to explain DAFS' transformation.

4.7 Data analysis

After the first phase of data collection, I created a system for storing and naming my electronic files. I began transcribing my interviews, replaced actual names with pseudonyms, and used the 'anonymized' versions of my transcriptions for coding and analysis. I uploaded my interview transcripts in NVivo and organized them into document types (individual vs. group) to facilitate the analysis. I then worked on a sample set of interviews (16 files) and attempted to code sections of each document using the software's functionality. Guided by the notion of *actants* and using concepts drawn from the literature, I created general categories or codes for organizing my data. As I worked through each document, I began to realize that my initial coding structure was not very helpful as most of the sections were being coded repeatedly under several categories. I reassessed the categories and made some adjustments

based on my first coding attempt. I then decided to organize my data under four major categories, two of which were further broken down into subcategories. These were (1) Framing and Overflowing, (2) Logic, Perception, & Knowledge of FPMs, (3) Network, and (4) Values & Countervalues (see Table 4-5). These categories were chosen to capture activities, entities, and statements of logic or rationality. The first category, drawn from the literature, was intended to capture any references to a framing and reframing effort, as well as overflows due to tensions, conflicts, challenges, and others. The second category was intended to provide a placeholder for a standard question asked of all participants to situate the FPMs position in their world. The third category, Network, was further broken down into a manageable number of subcategories that emerged from the data. These were intended to capture the human and nonhuman entities in the network under investigation. The final category, also subdivided, was meant to capture *actants*' values and valuation statements.

Name	Description	Files	References
FirstRound		0	0
Communication & Information Flow		0	0
External		10	23
Internal		16	74
Components		0	0
People		14	76
Regulations, Policies, Rules		10	27
Structural entities	Commonly understood as units, agencies, institutions, organizations, etc.	13	51
Tools	References to tools, devices, apparatus, etc.	15	67
Configuration	Lay out of various components or elements in the organization; building set-up; etc.	10	27
FPM & Incentive System	Perception (e.g. policy instrument, position, rank, level of performance, standard, focus, evidence, etc.) and mechanics	15	109
Perception of CS		11	26
Tensions, Conflicts, and Negotiations	Anything that suggests inconsistency, uncertainty, a dilemma, or a tension	15	62
Work strategies & performance factors	Specific to individual work practices or factors affecting individual performances	16	72
SecondRound		0	0
Framing & Overflowing	Defining/setting boundaries, roles, positions, tasks, etc; possibilities and management of overflows	32	217
LogicPerceptionKnowledge FPMs	Any references to logic and understanding of FPMs	31	125
Network		0	0
Cases or Tasks	References to tasks, cases or case-related objects they work with (e.g. actual cases, mail, bench warrants, arrests, etc.)	18	43
Comm&Training	Includes emails, charts, meetings, newsletters, training, and all other forms of communication	32	165
Human actors	Heads, managers, supervisors, leads, employees	31	175
Policies&Regs	At federal, state, or local levels; Includes procedural guides, statutes, directives, etc.	18	38
Structure	Organisational structures and entities, groups, partners, etc. that contribute to the overall child support structural framework	29	115
Technology	Broadly understood as tools, devices, forms, pamphlets, reports, etc.	30	119
Values or Countervalues		0	0
EconomicQuantitative		33	311
Moral or Personal		28	89
Professional		18	51

Table 4-4 Coding scheme

Overlaps between these categories were inevitable given my ontological assumptions about the world that is entangled in a complex network of associations. But it is precisely these overlaps that allowed me to examine their associations. By using NVivo to organize and code my data, I was able to run queries and examine some of these associations without having to refer to the entire transcripts. But it also allowed me to refer back to them with a click of a button, if needed, or if new perspectives and dimensions suddenly emerged. The back and forth between specific coded sections and whole transcripts kept my analysis grounded and situated, thus enabling me to observe the ethnomethodological principle of learning from actors what, how, and why they do what they do (Latour, 1999a). Using the coded texts in each category as my starting point, I was able to explore their many connections and dimensions and trace the network that was gradually unfolding. Yet, unless the entire transcripts were uploaded and coded, it would have been difficult for me to retrace the connections that constituted their accounts. To cite an example, examining if and how ‘Policies and Regulations’ might have contributed to the formatting or shaping of DAFS’ network, I ran a coding query with the following criteria: texts coded at Category 1 (Framing and Overflowing) *and* Category 3.4 (Network/PoliciesRegs). This query generated all the texts coded at both categories and I used the results to examine their connections. I conducted further queries using different categories to explore other possible intersections.

NVivo, as a mediating device, offered ways of engaging with my data. Having used an earlier version of this tool in the past, I was cautiously aware of how it could be both a ‘constrainer and enabler’ (Baiocchi, Graizbord & Rodríguez-Muñiz, 2013). Again, if my intention was to follow the actors, I must refrain from ‘imposing on them an *a priori* definition of their world-building capacities’ (Latour, 1999a: 20, italics in the original). Thus, I deliberately chose to limit my use of NVivo to data storage and high-level coding to keep the tool from stipulating the rules of engagement with my data. My coding structure was kept simple so as not to be constrained by my categories. Nevertheless, categories were necessary to put some order in this messy process. Because I transcribed and coded my interviews, and repeatedly read them, I became familiar with the data and comfortable conducting text or document searches beyond my schematic ordering. This, of course, helped my analysis. I also reviewed my annotations and observation notes to provide dimensions

to the connections that were developing. I also relied on the external sources gathered to make sense of the accounts. This made up for the limited time I spent on site. Like working on a jigsaw puzzle, I embarked on putting the pieces together by providing a rich account of the connections that my *actants* deployed to make the movement of the social visible (Latour, 2005). I exposed the love-hate relationships between these heterogenous actors to unravel the beauty of a dynamic ‘social’. Although this reconstructed ‘partial’ puzzle might quickly shift or disappear, the accounts my participants generously shared will always be part of that long chain of translation (Callon, 1986) that carefully assembled, enacted, and temporarily stabilized DAFS’ network of relations, but not without my acting *in* and *on* their world with a sensibility that is distinctly ANT (Law & Singleton, 2013). Hence, the reality produced by my rich descriptions is a reality that is performative and limited (Law, 2008). It is a reality that is mediated by my writing (Latour, 2005) that could be extended and reconfigured further by those who wish to connect with it.

4.8 Some ethical considerations

Conducting fieldwork involving human participants requires ethical considerations before, during, and after the actual conduct of the research, from research design to dissemination of findings (Kara & Pickering, 2017). Far from a smooth narrative account, research (particularly qualitative) is a messy process that demands constant reflection and learning from practice (Kara & Pickering, 2017), as well as flexibility in research design and the collection of unstructured data in natural settings that usually are not fully captured by external formal ethical regulation (Ciuk & Latusek, 2018). Thus, negotiating ethics in practice is often inevitable.

In my engagement with study participants, I encountered an ethical issue that I had not anticipated. While I considered the confidentiality of individual study participants, I did not anticipate the confidentiality between participants in a group interview. This issue was raised in one of the group interviews. Before the start of the interview, while the participant was not particularly concerned about her own group interview, she asked how an individual could be assured that other participants in the group would keep the discussion confidential. I acknowledged that I failed to consider this and commended her for having brought up an interesting point. I took the

opportunity to let them know that this is an example of a potential risk, but that they are free to withdraw from the study if they feel uncomfortable about this risk.

Another ethical issue came up when the State director's position on systems access clashed with that of the agency head (see Chapter 4.5.1). Like all child support agencies, DAFS handles confidential information (e.g. social security numbers, tax information, etc.) stored in a central database (i.e. NOMADS) owned and managed by the State. DAFS employees, contractors, and other individuals who, through the course of their work, might access such information, must sign a confidentiality agreement with the State of Nevada prior to commencing their work. In addition, a prospective employee or contractor must submit to a background investigation by the Clark County, Office of the District Attorney. While I fulfilled both requirements, the State expressed some reservations about granting me access to the state system under the federal guidelines. Despite the agency Director's attempt to reassure the state that my interest was on employees' engagement with the system rather than on the information contained in it, the State Director, during one of her visits at DAFS, spoke to me directly about her reservations. I reassured her that I would not access NOMADS during my site visit. Thus, I deliberately avoided situations where I might be able to access or view personal case information. This, however, did not have a huge impact on my study as individual and group interviews revealed enough information on their engagement with the system.

Given the access that was granted to me by DAFS (whether knowingly or unknowingly), I was consciously aware of the limits I must impose on myself as regards sensitive (internal) documents that I could easily gather. Thus, I stayed focus on following the lead actant, instead of simply gathering anything I could access.

5 When ‘good performance’ turns ‘bad’: GP1.0 to GP2.0

5.1 Introduction

What counts as ‘good performance’ depends not only on *who* (or *what*) considers it, but also on *where* the ‘good’ performs. What is deemed ‘good performance’ for legislators might not be so for bureaucrats, taxpayers, business intelligence tools, or the media. In the context of the U.S. Child Support Enforcement Program, the 54 states and U.S. territories (hereon, ‘states’) manifest ‘good performance’ in different ways. Yet, using a common metric articulated in terms of performance scores, they are made commensurate (Espeland & Stevens, 1998, 2008) to represent one program delivering what is assumed to be the same public good. When measuring states in their delivery of the ‘good’, performance scores come in handy. While they gather states ‘under a shared cognitive system’ (Espeland & Stevens, 2008: 408), they allow comparisons between them based on a metric that can distinguish the high from the low (Espeland & Lom, 2015; Fourcade, 2016), the good from the bad. Hence, as a singular and ‘objective’ qualifier, the performance score is enough to make a case on a state’s good (or bad) performance.

The next three chapters offer an account of the federal performance measures’ (FPMs) intervention in the making or construction of GP. Tracking down the FPMs at the Clark County District Attorney’s Office, Family Support Division (DAFS), through actors’ accounts, devices in operation, and artifacts produced over time, the chapters examine how measures intervene and what GP looks like. It starts (this chapter) with an exposition of a version of the ‘good’ that diverged from the FPMs’ valuation of the ‘good’, putting the state close to or at the bottom of a ranking system. The next chapter (Chapter 6) provides a description of the chains of transformation (Dambrin & Robson, 2011) that structured and organized DAFS into a well-coordinated network to perform the FPMs valued ‘good’. Finally, in Chapter 7, the account shifts its focus on the battles that must be won to maintain DAFS’ newly articulated ‘good’ and preserve their rightful claim to the title, *Outstanding Program of the Year*.

5.2 Pre-2007: DAFS in a state of disarray

5.2.1 Focusing on the wrong measure

As the state's largest urban jurisdiction, DAFS is responsible for delivering child support services for more than half of the state's total caseload. This means that DAFS practically drives the state's overall performance. Nevada was one of the poorest performing states in the nation until around 2010/11 when it began to show some improvements in its performance scores. When the state was at its lowest in terms of state ranking, the FPMs were not known among DAFS' employees. They were focused on a different measure: *total collection* (an important component in calculating a state's incentive payment award, but not one of the five measures). Almost all of the study participants claimed they were not aware of the FPMs or their 'object' of measurement until a change in leadership occurred in 2008. Although the FPMs since 1998 had been the federal government's basis for evaluating child support programs across the nation, their circulation in DAFS encountered some difficulties. As one of the attorneys remarked:

...They've always been there. But I would say for the first five years I was at this office, maybe from 2002 to 2008, we didn't talk about federal performance measures much. Then all of a sudden, almost overnight, it became of utmost importance and we were getting training on federal performance measures. (Alex, FG5Attorneys)

Most of the study participants conveyed a similar message.

When I first started, I had no clue what a performance measure was. They never talked about it.... (Sarah, FG2Supervisors)

When I started here, when I worked here from 2000 to 2006, we did not know about federal performance measures. When I say we, I mean the staff, line staff. We had no idea. We would get emails saying, this is how much we collected this month, which apparently meant nothing... (Kristine, InterviewSrStaff)

In the 16 years that I've been here, I was never made aware that there is state ranking, including the US territories, until we were told that we are the 54th in the state rankings when it comes to collections. (Edelyn, FG3Caseworkers)

Indeed, with very few exceptions, employees across all levels of the organization shared the same opinion when asked about their awareness of the FPMs. Even those who claimed to have been aware of their existence acknowledged their lack of understanding of the FPMs. They recounted how that all changed when a new leader stepped in. But before I discuss the change in leadership, it is important to explain why or how the FPMs were not known back then.

Under the previous administration, the five measures were kept backstage and hardly mentioned. As Judith said, '*[t]hey kept us in the dark*' (Judith, FG6Support). When they described their previous work practices, they referred to a different measurement regime focused on a single measure: *total collection*. This measure translated to the total amount of child support payments collected within an FFY. They recalled how Mr. Smith, then Assistant Director, would send out an official email announcement to all staff at the end of each year stating the total dollar amount the organization managed to collect from noncustodial parents. This information was compared to the previous year to determine how much higher (or lower) the organization performed. If they exceeded the previous year's collection, '*[we] would get emails saying, 'good job, pat yourself in the back, you did an excellent job'*' (Edelyn, FG3Caseworkers). These regular references to an aggregated collection amount instilled in them a notion of a measure that conveyed magnitude to define GP, a representation of a 'reality' of the organization's state of affairs. It gave employees an opportunity to know and assess their collective performance against a moving standard that they themselves defined and tracked.

The underlying logic of the 'total collection' measure provided the focus and justification for employees' actions – that is, to collect as much child support payments as they could from those who could pay or hunt down delinquent or late payers in response to custodial parents' complaints for not having received their child support – to produce the outcome that counts. The sheer difference in magnitude of what was collected served as the criterion for valuing good action. The increasing collection amount was enough indication of their GP anchored on a quantitative dimension that corresponded to accumulation (Fourcade, 2016); 'more' simply meant 'good'. This process of aggregating and reporting on the total collection reinforced the notion of what is and must be valued. Hence, reaching a higher collection amount

that conveyed a measurable difference enabled the valuation of their performance according to the ‘total collection’ measure and made them a categorically good performer that was difficult to dispute. This precious measure turned into a ‘matter of fact’ (Roscoe & Townley, 2016) and a ‘fact’ worth knowing to situate themselves in their self-assessment. Because the ‘fact’ was based on a simple measure of count, it was accessible, knowable, acceptable, and stable for a very long time.

Despite the numerous tasks involved in securing child support payments, the articulated measure drew employees’ attention to what mattered most: collection. But what this meant or what it entailed varied. For Lesley and others, this meant focusing on establishing the highest possible child support obligation amounts because it meant increasing the possibility of collecting more dollars. If you ask for more, then you can collect more. As Lesley explained:

But back when I did not know about [the FPM], I was all about just making sure... You know, we used to set really high child support orders. For some reason, in our minds, we thought the higher the better. (Lesley, InterviewManagement)

For many, it was about collecting as much dollars as possible and not who or how many owed child support or how much was owed. Their focus was on demanding payments from noncustodial parents regardless of their circumstances. Rachel alluded to this as she described their practice back then:

So, when I first started, it was, ‘you’re not paying, you don’t have a job, I’m taking your license, I’m throwing you in jail’. ...Noncustodial parent...would say, ‘well, I’m not paying ‘cause I can’t see my children’. And we would say, ‘Family Court, that’s not our issue. Sorry, you can’t see your kids but you still have to pay your child support’. They don’t have a job. ‘Sorry, your problem. You’re going to jail’. They don’t have a license. ‘You better take the bus’. It was all about the hard core, banging him over the head. (Rachel, InterviewManagement)

Indeed, for years, DAFS seemed to have epitomized the traditional view of a child support enforcement agency due to its ‘punitive system’ that was ready to ‘beat

you up for not paying' (Eddie, InterviewManagement). This logic was held in high esteem and tied directly to their valued 'good' because each year that passed with a higher collection was enough to confirm their GP. As Allison, one of the managers noted, *'we were looking at just how much money we collected over the month, over the year. So, we would look at, 'oh, we collected \$100,000 last month; oh, we collected this; oh, we finally reached \$1M'* (Allison, InterviewManagement). The increasing collection amount, therefore, was a validation of their version of GP (or GP1.0).

5.2.2 Media intervention: a rude awakening and the collapse of GP1.0

For a long time, employees managed their caseload in a reactive way – that is, as cases came through or when custodial parents called to complain about missing payments. Their thought was *'if you didn't have any complaint calls and you were moving through the stuff on your desk'*, you were doing good work (Sarah, FG2Supervisors). No complaints meant that cases were moving along as they should and custodial parents were receiving (or patiently waiting for) their support payments. The regular email announcements they received from management served as a validation of their work and an indication of how well they collected. They used the information to situate their position in this measurement framework and determine if their hard work paid off, thus reinforcing the value they ascribed to this measure. As Nancy quipped,

...we didn't know about [the FPMs]. We were just told every time we got money was, woohoo, you know, we were celebrating all the money that we brought in, not thinking about federal performance.... (Nancy, FG1Caseworkers)

Supervisors in a focus group recalled the day they reached a record level high and management gave employees the recognition they thought they deserved for having reached an important milestone. But their rejoicing was short-lived. Within days, DAFS was in the media for being one of the poorest performers in the nation.

Sarah: We had a record-breaking year and they brought lunch for the whole Unit. They closed the office and took us all at the Government Center and they

did a big rah, rah session.

Donna: Big thank you...

Sarah: A big thank, and the whole thing, and they did lunch...

Donna: And then find out that...

Sarah: Then like a week later (laughter), oh by the way, just kidding, you're 54th! (FG2Supervisors)

The realization that their GP was not so good shook the organization from all sides because, according to Alyssa, '*[f]ederal performance measures were never referenced. So, the first time that I heard it was when we were in the newspaper'* (Alyssa, InterviewManagement).

In 2007, a local newspaper article cited a performance audit report putting the state at the '*bottom six of the 50 states*'¹⁵ in all of the FPMs. The article's promising title, however, may have downplayed the audit report's assessment of the state's poor ranking. With the heading '*Nevada improves child support effort*', the article acknowledged the organization's hard work and noted the increase in their total collection.

By the numbers, [Department Head's] effort to step up enforcement of child support orders in Nevada's most populous region is a success.... Clark County announced that [it] collected more than \$104 million in child support from 50,110 parents in fiscal year 2006-07. That represents a 10 percent increase in collections made during 2005-06. Overall, there's been a 45 percent gain since [Department Head] took office in 2003. (Las Vegas Review-Journal, 2007)

Hence, despite Nevada's poor performance in the FPMs, the 2007 news article gave the impression that the state's improvement in total collection was worth reporting.

By contrast, a 2009 media report was more direct and unforgiving, with a humiliating title that categorically marked out the state's ranking (i.e. '*last*'; '*ranks at bottom*') based on its performance in one of the five measures: the '*rate of collection*'

¹⁵ The audit report, commissioned by the Nevada Legislators, was conducted by MAXIMUS, private a consulting firm. The report's assessment of Nevada's performance was based on OCSE's FY 2005 Unaudited Incentive Performance Scores.

measure. Citing the Department of Health and Human Services' report¹⁶ to the legislators during a joint Senate-Assembly budget hearing, the news article articulated the collection measure according to the FPM framework by highlighting the '*percent of the potential support*' that Nevada collected. The media's articulation of the rate of collection measure put the total collection in perspective and underscored the state's poor performance relative to another poor performing state.

According to the Division of Welfare's Web site, the state collected \$179.7 million in support from noncustodial parents last year in 116,233 child support cases. But it collected just 47.6 percent of the potential support, placing the state just behind Guam's 48.5 percent and far below the 61.2 percent national average. (Vogel, 2009a, b)

Suddenly employees' valuation of what counts as GP collapsed when they discovered their performance score and what it meant in terms of state ranking under the federal government's measurement regime. Focus group participants expressed their astonishment in this way:

...we thought we were doing so well, and here we find out we were fifty... we're at the bottom of the barrel, you know. So, it was very disheartening. It was like starting a whole job all over again, you know...we never knew about it. (Nancy, FG1Caseworkers)

We all thought we were doing wonderful, just doing our job on a daily basis and giving kudos on a regular basis on what we were collecting. And all of a sudden, we were told we're under, we're like 49th in the United States in collections. And we were all very shocked by that.... It was a rude awakening, 'cause we thought we were doing wonderful.... (Jenny, FG3Caseworkers)

Through media's intervention, a new form of valuation was introduced, re-qualifying what counts as 'good', and ultimately changing what must be noticed and what must be measured (Espeland & Lom, 2015).

¹⁶ The State's report was based on OCSE's FY 2007 Unaudited Incentive Performance Scores.

Those ‘*pats on the back*’ and ‘*good job*’ emails suddenly became suspect. Employees began to question their performances and the reality captured by their valued measure. Although the faulty measure was a straightforward accounting of the difference in collection from the previous year, the public humiliation was enough to question the truth behind the measure and problematize DAFS’ articulation of the ‘good’. As Alex said,

I was here for years not knowing we’re doing a poor job when it comes to this, this standard that is imposed on all child support offices...Here we are thinking we’re doing a great job...We’re doing the right thing. But the right thing didn’t translate into good numbers for us and so after we learned about this, it was an eye-opener and we learned we’re not as good as we think... (Alex, FG5Attorneys)

These rankings had in fact emerged organically from the competitive positioning of states encouraged by OCSE’s incentive system and public reporting of individual state performances. The government’s publication of performance scores became an important device in enrolling (Callon, 1986) actors (e.g. states, media, legislators, consultants, etc.) to comply with the FPMs’ articulated ‘good’. The federal government does not provide state rankings, but it publishes annual ‘incentive performance measures’ reports¹⁷ showing individual state’s performance scores in the five measures and incentive payment awards. OCSE’s limited incentive payment funds (see Chapter 2 for an explanation of CSEP’s performance measures and incentive system) and the formula used to calculate a state’s incentive payment¹⁸ implicitly suggest an ordering of and competition among states. Despite the fact that the ranking has no real bearing on the incentive payment calculation, there is a notion

¹⁷ The OCSE releases a yearly ‘Preliminary Data Report’ with over a hundred data tables. The report also provides details about how incentives are calculated. See OCSE. (2017) FY 2017 Child Support Enforcement Preliminary Report [Online]. OCSE. Available: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/programs/css/fy_2017_preliminary_data_report.pdf?nocache=1529610354 [Accessed August 4 2018]. An official report, which includes audited ‘information on collections, expenditures, paternities and orders established, and other program statistics’, goes out to Congress two years after the end of a fiscal year. OCSE. (2018a) FY 2016 Annual Report to Congress [Online]. Washington D.C.: Office of Child Support Enforcement. Available: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/resource/fy-2016-annual-report-to-congress> [Accessed August 2 2018].

¹⁸ The incentive payment is based primarily on a state’s performance in each of the five measures and the total child support collection. These are then considered against the combined collections and performance scores of other states to determine a state’s share of the capped incentive funds allocated by the federal government. (For more details, see Solomon-Fears, C. 2013a. Child support enforcement program incentive payments: background and policy issues. Congressional Research Service.)

that a state ought to perform better than others to get a bigger slice of the incentive funds.

The mere publication of performance scores and incentive payment awards, despite the absence of a formal ranking, puts states in a competitive space (Pollock & D'Adderio, 2012) that encourages comparison amongst themselves based on a shared metric (Espeland & Stevens, 1998). Behind these publications (i.e. Preliminary Data Report and Annual Reports to Congress), however, is a whole assemblage of actors and devices (Callon, 1998c, 2009) shaping the states' reporting of their activities using federally certified automated systems and federal forms guided by rules and regulations. As one of the federal agents said, *'[o]ne of those requirements was that the state had to be able to generate off this system the [federal form], which has the data necessary to compute the performance measures'* (Steve, FG8Feds). With state compliance, OCSE is enabled to report the program's performance to Congress. The release of such reports, with their specific 'format and furniture' (Pollock & D'Adderio, 2012), provides visibility for the performance scores and makes it difficult to ignore who is higher or lower, better or worse (Espeland & Lom, 2015). This gives states, the media, and other entities the ability to investigate how other states are doing and reproduce the information in ways that encourage pitting themselves against each other (Espeland & Lom, 2015). For example, MAXIMUS, one of the consulting firms, provides through their website an incentive projection calculation model¹⁹ that the states can access (i.e. download the Excel spreadsheet) to estimate their portion of the capped incentive funds using unaudited data (i.e. prior to the official report) provided by OCSE. The model captures the interconnectedness of the states' performances in the incentive calculation – such that an improvement in one state impacts the amounts of incentives that all other states can earn – thus, encouraging competition. Like the 'magic quadrant' (Pollock & D'Adderio, 2012), ranking and calculative devices not only encourage reactivity; they also shape practices by defining the boundaries of their operation so they can be more aligned with the devices that rank or measure them. As Bill explained, OCSE's performance reports on states are further processed by some states and other entities (e.g. consulting firms) to determine a state's order rank in the nation, the result of which is

¹⁹ See MAXIMUS. (2015) *Decoding the Federal Funding Formula to Maximize Funding for Your IV-D Program* [Online]. MAXIMUS. Available: <https://www.maximus.com/blog/decoding-federal-funding-formula-maximize-funding-your-iv-d-program> [Accessed June 12 2016].

distributed to the child support community for further consumption.

OCSE won't rank the States collect... But the States have come up with a formula where they collectively rank themselves and then spout that to the newspapers and things and then to each other. And so, it's all based on... everything is based on how the federal performance measures, how well you do in those things and including what the public cares about. You know, how much money did you collect? Well, what portion of what's owed are you collecting? That current support measurement to the public is the most important to the newspapers, to the TV stations, and... (Bill, InterviewManagement)

It seems that the practice of ranking states had emerged from within the child support community as a communication device to demonstrate a state's performance relative to other states, an instance of another well-recognized phenomenon of market organization, when high status actors use their prestige to cement their position in the market hierarchy (Fligstein, 1996). Ranking makes states commensurable (Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Espeland & Stevens, 1998) and establishes a status system (Espeland & Lom, 2015) that makes winning and losing states visible. It puts pressure on the low-ranking states to change their practices and encourages high performers to take the lead. Ranking, therefore, is perceived as a valued mediating device to inform the public of how their state compares to the rest of the nation without having to articulate the details of the measurement framework. The hidden narrative that comes with the reporting of a state's position in the hierarchy suggests that all program participants operate on a level-playing field (Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Fourcade, 2016). Since some states are higher or lower, above or below, in the hierarchy of performance, the ranking mechanism can potentially shape the public's perception and judgment of a state, and thus generate pressure on the underperforming state to do better. Indeed, following the media report on the state's poor performance ranking, DAFS felt the pressure to look into the FPM framework more seriously, thus making the ranking system an 'openly performative' device (Muniesa, 2011). The ranking drew DAFS' attention to the top performers that enacted the FPMs' valued 'good', which DAFS obviously failed to deliver. DAFS' shift in focus on the FPMs' 'good', however, would not have occurred without the visible actors and forces that triggered it

(Çalışkan & Callon, 2010). With OCSE's yearly publication of performance scores, legislature's commissioning of an audit report, consultant's circulation of a ranking device, and newspapers' texts and narratives defining winners and losers, DAFS' 'good' took a radical turn. DAFS' discovery of their position in the ranking, shaped by a heterogenous collective of calculating agencies (Callon, 1998b), eventually changed how DAFS made sense of their performances and what they considered to be 'good'.

5.3 Articulating the new 'good': GP2.0

5.3.1 Gathering experts

When the new division head, Ms. Bridget Sanders, took office in the final quarter of 2008, she stated plainly what she regarded as 'fact' based on the audit report cited by the media. Given the numbers' perceived objectivity that distances one's personal judgment (Fourcade, 2016), it was not difficult for the new comer to use the reported measures to communicate the state's 'true' performance in collection and its relative position in the rankings. Conveying the state's position, however, would not have been possible if the audit report had not been commissioned by the legislators and disseminated by the media. Jenny, one of the caseworkers, explained how Ms. Sanders broke the news that drastically changed the organization's identity almost overnight. This unexpected encounter with the FPMs took them by surprise, triggering a variety of behavioral adjustments.

I didn't realize how little we were collecting. I thought we were collecting huge sums of money, 'cause we're like, 'your collections are higher than they've ever been. They're higher than...' We're like, wow, we're collecting tons of money for these children. And then Bridget came and she's like, 'you're 54th amongst all these states'... It was a rude awakening. It hit all of us; it kinda hit our demeanor. 'Cause we thought we were like these superstars (laughter) doing a great job. (Jenny, FG3Caseworkers)

Through the leader's utterance of the 'new' measure and the sociotechnical *agencement* (Callon, 1998c) supporting its visibility, the organization that was once branded as a 'superstar' was instantly transformed into an agency 'at the bottom of the barrel'. The reference to the FPMs and the audit report's state ranking, as well as

the leader's response to the audit report and media accounts, brought DAFS into the same competitive space (Pollock & D'Adderio, 2012) that enabled the comparison with other states. Such space allowed DAFS' position to shift harshly and be among the worst players. As Edelyn, one of the caseworkers noted, *'that's when we found out, oh, we kinda sucked on this aspect'* (Edelyn, FG3Caseworkers). But this combination of events, state actors, and material devices also served as a point of departure for the articulation of the new measurement regime. The media intervention, coupled with a change in leadership, were significant enough to trigger the organization's resolve to introduce change and reconstruct their stage for the FPMs performances. As Joanna stated,

... the biggest thing was when they told us that we were 54th in the nation. I think it was like shocking for most... I mean, everybody, 'cause who wants to be dead last, you know? I think just that shock factor was sort of like a wake-up call for everybody, like oh, we're all in this together. We need to figure out what to do and I think that's really what like started the ball rolling. (Joanna, FG2Supervisors)

Although new to the program, Bridget Sanders *'decided she was going to make a difference'* (Jenny, FG3Caseworkers) and get the organization out of its pitiable state. Responding to the pressure to perform, she took radical steps to make the FPMs known and put them in the foreground. Andy's account supports this:

...She took [the job] seriously. And when it came into the papers that NV's child support system was once again 54th in the nation, and that they can't seem to get anything right and other discouraging and disparaging phrases that were... she was quite incensed with this. It just really made her mad, and, rightly so. And so, she took very, very outrageous... you might say, steps to determine what can we do to get out of this rut. (Andy, InterviewManagement)

Sanders, a new entrant in the federal system of measurement, installed 'experts' to articulate and mobilize the meanings of the measures. Participants alluded to four key events that enabled experts to come in, thereby allowing employees to engage with this new measurement regime. First was the national search and hiring of a new Operations Director to lead the operations units. Second was the creation of

Innovation Teams involving frontline staff, supervisors, and managers to identify best practices that would generate good performance scores. Third was the formal training to help employees understand the meanings of the measures and incentives. Fourth was the development of a technological infrastructure to support DAFS' new measurement framework. Assembling these experts was an attempt to establish some order and make the FPMs a stable frame of reference for DAFS' valuation and construction of GP.

5.3.2 National search: Operations Director as expert

Sanders embarked on a major search effort to fill the position of Operations Director who can oversee the functions directly affecting the performance scores. The decision was made deliberately with performance improvement in mind. As Andy remarked, '*Bridget then went out nationally and grabbed the individual who was making the news*' (Andy, InterviewManagement). Mr. Colby's affiliation with a high performing state gave him the 'expert' title that Ms. Sanders was looking for and could use, if needed, to justify a national search. By choosing someone whose identity reflected GP, she communicated the importance and legitimacy of the FPMs and conveyed this measurement framework as the framework of choice under her administration.

With Mr. Colby's coming into the fold, the federal measurement framework became prominent. His representation of GP evoked new meaning for the FPMs, consequently destabilizing GP1.0. Although the total collection measure of the past was not entirely replaced, its ordering was temporarily displaced by rhetorical devices and a new program of action focused on outputs that are tied to the FPMs. A point often raised by study participants was the Director's repeated references to numbers, measures, and timeframes, conveniently summed up in one word – *stats*. As Kati confirmed:

Bill Colby came from a good state where he did very well with his state... And they came in and they started raising the numbers and they started... we had stats. Before we didn't have stats, so you came in, you did work, and no stats and they didn't keep track of anything; how many cases you touched, how many cases went to court. And now everybody has stats. (Kati,

Interview Caseworker)

Indeed, Colby's entrance into DAFS' developing network put the measures at the nexus of all operations. He provided mechanisms to make the measures known and situated them in every functional unit of the organization, and all the way down to the individual worker. As he claimed,

Oh, the other thing I did when I got here is I drafted written performance standards so that the work that they were doing was tailored to be able to meet those federal requirements. So, it wasn't answer your mail, answer your... not that we don't answer our mail, we do, but that's not all you do. That you'd have certain volume requirements, yet quality required, to hit or you won't hit numbers. (Bill, Interview Management)

The new management emphasized volume and quality around key tasks that would produce the new 'good' that counts. Mr. Colby's intervention would not have succeeded, however, had there been resistance from above. But because of their shared valuation for *excellence* and *competition*, elements constituted in the measurement framework, Sanders and Colby naturally reinforced each other's decisions and actions. As Eddie, one of the managers said, *Bridget wasn't gonna be last in anything (laughter)... Bill is competitive as well and he certainly wasn't gonna stay last... (Eddie, Interview Management)*. Given their affinity with market-oriented values and practices (i.e. competition and calculation), they were determined to take DAFS to the battleground and work their way up.

5.3.3 Innovation Teams: employees as experts

Once the FPMs were given the spotlight, experts were enlisted from within. Sanders assembled them into five Innovation Teams, each focusing on a single measure, and instructed them to use the measure as the evaluative principle to single out tasks that could produce the measurable outcomes. This response from leadership is a demonstration of the measures' reactivity (Espeland & Sauder, 2007) that mobilizes people to make sense of the measures and conform to the standards they impose. Hence, through a qualification and classification process (Callon, *et al.*, 2002; Fourcade, 2012), the Innovation Teams articulated the activities that were worth

knowing (Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015c) in light of the FPMs' logic of efficiency, inputs and outputs, and other predominantly economic values. Following a reflexive and negotiated process, they discussed what practices worked and what didn't; or, as one attorney put it, '[w]hat was stupid about what we're doing, to put it bluntly, and what we needed to change' (Kevin, *InterviewAttorney*). Some employees reached out to high-performing states to find out what they were doing. Through the sorting and clustering (Callon & Muniesa, 2005) of the good and the bad, certain practices stood out, some modified or introduced, and others discarded, giving rise to a cognitive infrastructure (Diaz-Bone, 2017) that served as a coordinating mechanism in DAFS' pursuit of organizational change. Hence, DAFS' 'good' or valued performance emerged from employees' engagement with and desire to make sense of the FPMs that they and the rest of the child support community were expected to account. This reflexive engagement with the measures by the people whose performances are expected to be measured democratizes (Power, 2011; Jeacle & Carter, 2011) the measurement system, but blurs its neutral command over those who are subject to them (Espeland & Sauder, 2007). Yet, it is this kind of engagement that grants the measures' their authoritative claim over their subjects, expecting them to make changes to their behavior and improve their performance. This sense-making of the FPMs, however, would not have unfolded had employees not been publicly humiliated, pressured, and organized into Innovation Teams. Thus, the FPMs, as inscriptions, created for DAFS the *performable space* (Busco & Quattrone, 2015) for employees' engagement in the articulation and qualification of GP that must be valued and made valuable. Granting them this space prompted employees to explore best practices locally and nationally. Locally, they examined their top 10% workers and determined that those who produced the highest collections made frequent telephone calls. A telephone call, after all, is '*a proven collection tool worldwide*' (Donna, *FG2Supervisors*); yet, until they learned about the measures, such worldwide practices remained hidden from their view.

5.3.4 Training: Management Analyst as expert

The Management Analyst, another expert from within, was tapped to develop and conduct a training program focused on the measures and their relation to employees' activities. By articulating the measures' meanings and exposing their

connections to the practice, the analyst helped employees acquire a deeper understanding of the measures and their movements, thus enabling them to engage with the measures in a deliberate way. Employees were shown how to approach their work differently to effect change in the performance scores. Defining the desired outputs in clear terms set the parameters of the measures and established what gets counted as the standard of measurement. According to Sarah, one of the supervisors, learning about the FPMs '*definitely refocused this office*' to do the things that really mattered.

The analyst did not simply state or describe the measures. Instead, she provided examples of specific actions that could produce the outputs that count and have a positive impact on the measures. Through these examples, employees were able to establish a mental picture of the connection between their tasks and the measures' reactivity. It

really made people aware of, I can spin my wheels doing this over here or I can have an effect on my number by working here. And I think a lot of people really kinda sat up and took notice of that... 'How do I personally as a case manager impact that number? What do I need to do everyday to impact that number?' And after seeing those presentations and having it literally in a chart, do this, not this, it made them be able to go back to their desk and say, okay, I'm not gonna do this, I'm gonna do this. (Donna, FG2Supervisors)

The tasks that were once good under the old measurement regime were made to appear as '*spinning one's wheels*'. Given the efficiency logic underpinning the FPMs and articulated through a process of translation (Callon, 1986), employees eventually learned which tasks were unproductive and a total waste of time, and which ones were more likely to generate good performance scores. A classification of tasks gradually unfolded into an ordering system (Fourcade, 2016) that later facilitated the redefinition of employees' responsibilities and the development and production of valuation devices that coordinated the valued tasks (more on this in the next chapter). Based on Donna's account of the training, the analyst made a deliberate effort to show the connection between the measures and the reality they were meant to measure. By illustrating this connection in a manner that employees could appreciate,

the analyst not only helped them know what counts but also showed them how to create opportunities for ‘what counts’ to emerge so they can be counted and measured. As Espeland and Lom (2015: 35) remind us, ‘[w]e cannot change what we do not see. We do not appreciate what we cannot represent’. Thus, presenting the connections in visual form (i.e. chart) singled out the valued tasks, legitimized employees’ efforts, and provided justification for the preferred or valued actions. The chart, as a visual device, offered employees a method of ordering (Busco & Quattrone, 2015) what are worth knowing and valuing so they can be acted upon. Establishing these links enabled employees to think about performance, appreciate why they do what they do, and prioritize the actions that mattered in the context of the FPMs. Through the visualization of the connections, employees realized how certain tasks could have substantially improved their scores had they not been pushed aside before. For example, closing cases became a task worth performing because it directly improved performance scores. As the measures occupied a more prominent position in the organization, they made certain cases and tasks more visible (Espeland & Lom, 2015), served as the point of reference for practice, and structured employees’ actions according to an ordering of worth (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). Strategizing became part of GP, but their strategy was defined by their understanding and engagement with the measures.

5.3.5 Technological infrastructure: IT programmers as expert

To ensure that employees acted systematically and consistently according to the qualified ‘good’, managers asked the IT Team to ‘reconstruct’ the tried and tested ‘*performance reports*’ that Mr. Colby used in his previous state. These reports, which were new *actants* (Latour, 1996) brought into the network, were adapted for DAFS’ use so employees could align actions and cases appropriately. They structured employees’ interaction with their cases and served as the basis for the development of automated tools and devices (more on this in the next chapter) to help promote these interactions. It all began with a simple list of cases that employees had to manually work. This gradually turned into a ‘cascade of inscriptions’ (Latour, 1986b: 17) acting as witnesses to the good performance being deployed, thus making the measured ‘good’ visible, measurable, and harder to challenge. With IT experts’ intervention, lists and charts were transformed into tools, process maps, and other technical devices

to ensure the mobilization and coordination of the measurable ‘good’. As more and more inscriptions were added and drawn together, the GP became noticeable and reproducible, helping DAFS employees to keep delivering only the ‘good’.

5.4 Laying the groundwork: a changing landscape

Gathering experts to communicate the FPMs and their valued ‘good’ was not sufficient to make a difference. Experts needed to latch on to structures, mechanisms, and other devices that they themselves had to negotiate and construct to make the FPMs known and their terms of reference observable. Through these mediating entities, experts could then objectify the FPMs and make them into a ‘thing’ (Callon & Muniesa, 2005) that employees could grasp and to which they could easily refer. But first, the condition must be in place to allow these entities to thrive and facilitate the circulation of the FPMs.

5.4.1 Clearing the path

With a competitive leader and determined experts on board, FPMs’ invasion prompted a major overhaul of DAFS’ collection philosophy. The FPMs became the organization’s guiding principle and central register of the valued ‘good’ – that is, what is ‘good’ must be measurable by the FPMs. But to make the ‘good’ measurable at DAFS, experts had to create an environment that puts the FPMs from backstage to center stage. Creating such an environment required huge investments and extensive work to establish a sociotechnical assemblage (Beunza & Stark, 2004; Callon, *et al.*, 2007; Mackenzie, 2006; MacKenzie, 2007; Callon & Muniesa, 2005) that could territorialize the FPMs so they could be known, performed, and acted upon. As one of the attorneys said, making the FPMs known was a way *‘to keep us on track for what’s important’* so they could walk down the path marked by the measures. After all, as Bill said, *‘[y]ou have to do the business based on how you’re measured’*. This path, marked by specific actions to generate the ‘good’, is constituted within the measures. Bill, in describing DAFS services, used the FPMs to articulate the scope of the agency’s work and the GP they convey. He defined succinctly the key functions of the organization and pointed out how they align neatly with the FPMs, as if to demonstrate the clarity of, logic behind, and justification for the GP they demand.

If I know where the noncustodial parent is and I turn him into a legal father

with genetic testing and a court order, and order him to pay child support, and he pays, and doesn't get behind on arrears, and I do that effectively on a number of cases, I've scored well on all those 5 performance measures and I've earned a decent portion of that incentive federal pot. (Bill, InterviewManagement)

With their attention focused on the FPMs, employees began to look at collection not just as an aggregated amount but also as a proportion or percentage of what must be collected. The former, which for years was their valued 'good', became meaningless unless the latter's 'newly articulated good' – GP2.0 – was taken into account. By shifting their focus on ratios, employees became conscious of what was owed by noncustodial parents and tried to collect the amount that would generate the highest possible rate of collection (FPM#3). Some of the caseworkers started making (and not just taking) telephone calls, a task that was previously dismissed or avoided²⁰, or actively used federally mandated enforcement tools on delinquent or non-paying cases. They also streamlined processes to deploy the necessary enforcement actions quickly so they could generate more 'good'. As Sarah said,

The processes are less complicated because of the Implementation Teams and the Innovation Teams. And they had said, why do I have a 50-page report and take some guy's license and give him 62 chances when it should be 1-2-3, you're out.... You don't give him, you know, 55 baby steps in the middle and a 45-page piece of paper that you got to track. Now it's like, you know, it's a phone call, it's a notice, it's a... get your butt in here and get something changed and if not, I'm taking your license. (Sarah, FG2Supervisors)

With a shift in focus and a change in logic, DAFS' path to GP was gradually clearing up.

5.4.2 Creating 'settlements'

Two operational models of case management dominated child support agencies. Practitioners referred to them as 'cradle to grave' and 'management by

²⁰ Caseworkers at DAFS, due to their large caseloads, rarely made or returned clients' telephone calls. As noted in the 2006 audit report: '[C]ase managers in Clark County in particular tended to prefer mail rather than speaking with customers on the telephone or in-person' (p. Section C, p. 7). MAXIMUS 2006. Performance Audit of the State of Nevada's Enforcement and Collection of Child Support.

specialized functions'. The former is a model where a caseworker manages the lifecycle of a case from the time it opens to the time it closes (a process articulated in the Code of Federal Regulations). This model provides a framework of operation encouraging caseworkers to act on a case based on their assessment of the history of the case to move it to the next stage. By contrast, under the specialization model by functional area, caseworkers do not have ownership of a case's lifecycle. Instead, they specialize on a particular phase in the life of a case and deliver specific tasks associated with that phase. This means that caseworkers are responsible for managing a number of cases (known as their caseload) that, based on certain parameters, belong to the same phase. These operational models, deeply inscribed with the FPMs' logic, therefore, offered ways to manage practices and shape organizational arrangements that would enable the measures to perform in predictable ways.

Prior to the change in leadership, DAFS was back and forth between the two operational models. As Sarah commented,

There was a lot of reorganizations. Got to be an old joke. When the music starts, grab a chair. 'Cause there was a... I changed teams 4 times. I was reorganized 4 times, and I think they finally called the last one, they didn't call it a reorganization, they called it reengineering, which was just a fancy term of going back to a specialized system that they had prior. (Sarah, FG2Supervisors)

Yet, the last restructuring seemed to have been a deliberate effort to frame and support the measured path and improve the organization's performance. Calling it 'reengineering' was indicative of this framing effort. Indeed, most study participants claimed that specializing allowed them to focus on deploying the tasks necessary to achieve the expected outputs that can be measured. For example, caseworkers assigned to the Establishment Unit focused their activities on establishing paternities (FPM#1) and child support orders (FPM#2), while Enforcement caseworkers concentrated on collecting support payments (FPM#3 and FPM#4) based on the ordered obligation amount. By organizing caseworkers into specialized units, caseworkers were expected to gain expertise in their area, repeatedly perform the valued actions, and keep delivering the measurable outcomes. As one manager

explained, *‘if you have enforcement workers all under the same supervisor who understands enforcement, then you’re gonna be more productive’*; otherwise, he or she would have *‘to be an expert in everything’* (Alyssa, InterviewManagement).

Alistair, one of the attorneys, offered a similar explanation.

Well, it’s obviously a complicated system and there are a lot of laws involved and a lot of different fact scenarios, and so to expect one person to understand not only the whole legal system but the whole computer system, how to work it as well, was a major undertaking. So, when someone is specialised in their area, they get very good at it obviously and more efficient, I think. So, it improves the timeframes, it improves the outcomes, it improves everything.
(Alistair, FG5Attorneys)

Through this renewed specialization effort, ‘professional boundaries’ were gradually established, allowing ‘settlements’ (Stark, 2009: 107-108) to emerge so caseworkers could get the job done.

The restructuring of DAFS’ employees into specialized functional units was further supported by their relocation to the current site. By 2009, DAFS’ relocated from a six-story building to a refurbished two-building office in a new location. The organization’s operations featured heavily in their use of building spaces. The interior layout of one of the buildings was designed to support the organization’s business model. Spread throughout the ground floor (as opposed to several floors), caseworkers are clustered and sectioned by functional areas, giving them a sense of their geographic boundaries (see Figures 5-1 and 5-2). Strategically located within each functional unit are supervisors’ enclosed offices (see Figure 5-3) with huge glass windows to maintain visibility and connection with their staff while demarcating their role and position within their unit. Other operations units are conveniently located within the same building floor, creating an impression of a well-contained business ecosystem. But rather than simply making case management work more efficient, these materialities or embodiment (Beunza, Hardie & MacKenzie, 2006) of the FPMs in buildings, sectional work spaces, individual offices, warm bodies of caseworkers with their specialized roles and technical devices, shaped how employees interacted with each other and how they thought about the measures. Thus, by creating the

material conditions for the FPMs to perform, DAFS' employees could be expected to enact the reality that the measures intended to measure.



Figure 5-1 Enforcement Unit



Figure 5-2 Paternity Unit



Figure 5-3 View from a supervisor's office

The relocation was extended to the judicial body. A space was created in the main building to allow the Courts to set up shop. The two courtrooms, dedicated entirely to child support, enabled cases to be heard quickly. Prior to the organization's relocation to this newly refurbished building, attorneys presented their cases at a courtroom located in a different part of the city. Their use of the facility was limited due to the fact that other family-related cases were also heard²¹, making it difficult for them to get all their cases in the court calendar for a hearing. Yet, the attorneys needed those court hearings to establish legal paternities or child support orders, enforce or modify existing orders, or present the status of delinquent cases that were ordered to participate in a drug court or employment program to get them back in compliance. Based on two focus group discussions, it was clear that having their own courtrooms on site facilitated the scheduling of court hearings and helped the organization produce the outputs needed to improve their performance measures.

We basically doubled our court space. We had one courtroom for a long time in the program that 2 hearing masters would share. When we moved to this building about 8 years ago, now we have 2 courtrooms that operate full time, day.... morning and afternoon, so that doubled our amount of court slots, doubled the amount of modifications and contempt hearings we can have and.... So, I think that was one thing that improved the numbers. (Alistair, FG5Attorneys)

Indeed, by bringing the judicial courts to their space, DAFS managed to create a one-stop shop to contain all those involved (i.e. caseworkers, parents, attorneys, judges, clerks, marshals, systems, tools, etc.) in the delivery of the new 'good'.

5.4.3 Building pipelines

The specialization, however, required more than just gathering and organizing caseworkers into specialized units to deploy the tasks that mattered. For one,

²¹ The Family Court of Clark County, with courtrooms in the east side of the city, presides over family-related cases involving 'divorce, annulment, child custody, visitation rights, child support, spousal support, community property division, name changes, adoption, and abuse and neglect'. Since the installation of the two courtrooms in DAFS' location, the Courts began hearing all DAFS' child support cases on site. See <http://www.clarkcountycourts.us/departments/judicial/family-division/>.

employees in each unit must have access to the relevant cases to be worked – for the Establishment Unit, these are cases that do not have on record the legal paternities of children born out of wedlock or child support orders reflecting the noncustodial parents' monthly obligation amount. Despite having a federally certified state-run case management system, the official database containing all case information for audit purposes, it was not set up to support DAFS' business model efficiently and effectively. The Nevada Operations of Multi-Automated Data Systems (or NOMADS), according to Andy, was *'designed to do this 'cradle to grave' type of a process [the business model of smaller offices] and does not support multiple layers of supervision...'* (Andy, InterviewManagement). Moreover, its design was not

...user friendly at all... there's over 400 screens that a case manager needs to know and understand in order to do case management for child support. The problem is that not only do you need to know those 400 screens, you need to know how to navigate through them, and you need to know all the codes that are associated with the values that go into the fields on those screens, and, uh.... The work effort to train somebody off the street to use NOMADS is between a 6 to 12-month training period. Now a good computerized system, somebody should be able to learn that within 2-3 weeks. (Andy, InterviewManagement)

To address this challenge and support the new measurement regime, DAFS IT programmers intervened and built pipelines to connect caseworkers to their cases so the relevant tasks could be deployed. Their intervention was critical because, according to Deb, *'part of our problem was that our computer system was not set up to work with the federal performance measures. So, we didn't have any way of pulling information and the number of cases we should work'* (Deb, FG2Supervisors). The IT Team, therefore, extracted the relevant case information from NOMADS and developed an ancillary system to transmit the relevant information to caseworkers according to their assigned units. As data links were established, data reporting was made possible. The system's technical affordances (Pollock & D'Adderio, 2012) enabled the production of *'super reports'* to help caseworkers get a sense of the status of their cases and act accordingly. The *'super establishment report'*, according to Nancy, was *'laid out to a T where you just took one look at it, you knew what you*

were gonna do'. As for the *'super enforcement report, ... each case manager could pull up their cases that had not paid'* (Donna, FG2Supervisors) so they know which cases to target. Without these devices in place, caseworkers would have had to contend with an ailing system that was not configured to deliver their 'good'. As an IT expert claimed, *'it's just an extra thing we have to do'* so that caseworkers can *'do their job, basically'* (Andrea, InterviewIT).

These reports were further supported by DAFS' paperless system. For years, prior to the relocation, case files were stored at the ground floor of the building with no system in place to track the movement of cases. As one of the caseworker said, *'we had no idea what other cases were out there. They were never being touched for years and years'* (Katrina, FG3Caseworker). If they needed to work on a case, caseworkers would either place a request for the actual paper case file to be sent to them, which took two to three days, or personally collect the files from the records room. Without a monitoring system, caseworkers and attorneys could spend days just trying to locate a case file. This was how Andy explained the process back then.

...people would send down sticky notes and it would say what the case number is, the case name, and who's requesting that. And so somebody down there would pull that and run it upstairs and get it or case managers would run downstairs and pull these cases off the shelf themselves. It was messy, it was inefficient, and there was no way to track a specific case. Daily emails would go out saying: 'I'm looking for this case. Do you happen to have it on your desk?' And occasionally you'd come back and two weeks later and say: 'I found it, thank you'. By that time, the court had come and gone. (Andy, InterviewManagement)

The document imaging of paper files facilitated the movement of cases between and across units and DAFS' partner agency (i.e. Clerk's Office). It greatly reduced the time spent accessing cases and minimized the risk of losing or misplacing case files. Having immediate access to their cases meant that they could act on them quickly and produce the 'good' that mattered. As one of the supervisors said, *'... when we did it through regular paper, it would take us about a week to get that paperwork back. Now it's only done in a matter of minutes'* (Erwin, InterviewSrStaff).

With a document management system in place, caseworkers were able to pull up documents for review easily without having to walk up to a filing cabinet or records room to access a physical case file. As Erwin said, they just had to *'type in the number, the case number and it's right there. All those documents are there'*. This allowed them to gather and process their paperwork quickly so they could pass it on to the relevant department for further processing (e.g. Investigations department to serve a noncustodial parent or Clerk's Office to sign the paperwork).

The shift to a paperless system, however, meant a shift in practice. This, for some attorneys, was sometimes difficult. Eleanor, for example, found the system more cumbersome particularly when having to review the history of a case, but admitted that *'it takes some getting used to'*. She explained how the system was restricting the way she should review cases, requiring her to go through the 'clicks' – a technical constraint (Pollock & D'Adderio, 2012) shaping the way she had to approach her work – rather than simply flipping through the pages of a physical case file. *'I can go through a file like this (flips through one of the remaining paper case file folders). What did that take me, 2 seconds? Going through it on there, I gotta click and then I gotta wait. Oh, wait, that's not the document I need. I gotta click and I gotta wait...'* Because her practice was not aligned with the system's operating model, it was difficult for her to make the adjustments required – an adjustment that meant not having to review the entire case history prior to a court hearing, an adjustment that meant selecting and prioritizing. As she explained, *'we have to prioritize. Is it important to go back 3 court hearings or 2 court hearings? Probably not. On every case, probably not. But are we missing some stuff? I know we are'*.

For Suzanne, another attorney, being dependent on technology presented problems during the system's occasional breakdowns or interruptions. Instead of being a support, the system became more of a hindrance. Indeed, as observed during the three and a half-week site visit, some of the technology-related emails (see Table 5-1) sent out to staff were notifications on the paperless system's (Compass) poor performance (i.e. 'very slow'). Hence, because of the absence of paper case files, Suzanne felt paralyzed when the system went down. As she remarked, *'without having a paper file, when things like these happen, there is nothing that you can do. And I really dislike that, to be locked in to technology such that I can't do anything*

unless I have it'. But, given DAFS' huge investment to create a paperless environment, Suzanne and others might just have to find themselves locked in for a very long time.

Email date	Subject line
Thursday, September 17, 2015 11:25 AM	E-Filing - HTTP 500 Error
Monday, September 21, 2015 9:40 AM	COMPASS AND PORTAL ARE VERY SLOW
Tuesday, September 22, 2015 7:38 AM	PORTAL AND COMPASS ARE STILL VERY SLOW TODAY
Wednesday, September 23, 2015 8:18 AM	500 error logging into Wiznet/E-file
Thursday, September 24, 2015 2:28 PM	COMPASS IS VERY SLOW
Monday, September 28, 2015 12:27 PM	COMPASS IS DOWN UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE
Monday, October 05, 2015 9:43 AM	COMPASS IS VERY SLOW
Monday, October 12, 2015 10:28 AM	Nomads PRSC Error

Table 5-1 Email notifications of system performance

5.5 Conclusion

In summary, DAFS for years operated under a different measurement regime. Employees focused on collecting child support payments and measured their performance based on the total amount they collected from year to year. An increase in total collection from the previous year was enough to declare their GP and for leadership to rally the troops so they can keep collecting more. Their version of GP collapsed when the media, citing a third-party audit report, announced their poor performance under the FPM framework and noted their appalling position in state rankings. This provocation from the media took DAFS employees by surprise, causing them huge disappointment and embarrassment. The media's reporting on DAFS' poor performance, however, was made possible by a consulting firm's processing of state-level performance scores published by OCSE. Although OCSE does not rank states, its public reporting of performance scores became a powerful device for enrolling allies who could circulate and mobilize the FPMs. The publication of performance scores, thus, enabled entities to notice the high and low performing states, encouraged their ordering, revealed differences captured by their distances in a shared metric (Espeland & Lom, 2015; Espeland & Stevens, 1998), and created the competitive space (Pollock & D'Adderio, 2012) that put DAFS at the bottom of the pit.

Using the media and audit reports, DAFS' new leader drew employees' attention to the FPMs, marking the beginning of DAFS' transformation so the FPMs'

GP can be valued and made valuable. It began by making the measures known through an assemblage of experts who articulated and mobilized the GP that must be enacted. The new Operations Director introduced individual performance standards or *stats* to encourage employees to focus on actions that count. Innovation Teams evaluated best practices to establish what matters so they can be valorized (Vatin, 2013). The management analyst provided training on the FPMs and offered a framework for knowing and acting the 'good'. DAFS IT developed reporting tools to help employees identify cases requiring their good work. Thus, through leaders and experts' articulation of the FPMs, a new measured 'good' finally emerged. For their articulation of the 'good' to hold, employees' roles and tasks were visibly organized into specialized functional units, framing the boundaries of their work in light of the measures. Tools and devices were installed to contain and steer people, tasks, and cases towards the FPMs' valued 'good'. DAFS' sociotechnical *agencement* (Callon, 1998a, 2007) gradually emerged, containing and supporting their GP. Hence, through experts' articulations of the 'good', employees' reorganization into specialized units, and the installation of systems and devices to contain cases, tasks, and people, these *values practices* (Gehman, *et al.*, 2013) helped DAFS' employees establish and define the GP that must be enacted.

6 Organizational ‘shake-up’ to produce the ‘good’

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter shows how DAFS’ ‘rude awakening’ triggered the introduction of the FPMs. Under the new leadership, experts gathered to organize employees, cases, and tasks, aided by tools and devices, and make the FPMs’ ‘good’ known and valued. In this chapter, I discuss how DAFS’ knowledge of the FPMs continued to evolve as employees, devices, and other entities reassembled and reorganized themselves into a coordinated and circumscribed entity to value and perform the ‘good’. Here I describe how the FPMs intervened in the local agency’s framing effort to qualify and position (Callon, *et al.*, 2002) the various entities or *actants* (Latour, 1996) that would allow a measurement network to emerge. The qualification and positioning involved a process of translation (Callon, 1986), where the measures’ meanings are articulated and inscribed in these *actants* to establish and shape their interactions and actively promote the construction of GP. The central point of this chapter is *how* roles, tasks, employees, activities, tools, and other devices are defined, negotiated, positioned, and coordinated to enable them to perform or enact the FPMs. I discuss the installation of mediating devices (e.g. process maps, flowcharts, tracking devices, and reporting instruments) that demarcated DAFS’ operational boundaries and bound together the measures and their prescribed GP so it can be valued and acted upon. I then present how these and other devices made the measures known and visible, formatted DAFS’ activities, and ‘put [the organization] in motion’ (Callon, 2016: 31) so they can keep producing a rearticulated ‘good’ (GP2.1). The increased visibility of measures and their circulation through various forms and accounting inscriptions (Qu & Cooper, 2011) helped in the mobilization of the FPMs so they can mediate action – i.e. GP. The measures’ intervention, however, never seemed to stop as new actors and devices get incorporated, requiring further qualification and positioning of DAFS’ assemblage. Thus, throughout these mobilization and framing efforts, I show how measures played a central role in shaking up the organization in pursuit of change.

The chapter is presented as follows. It begins with a discussion of the mobilization of measures through inscriptions to strengthen the connections between

the FPMs and newly articulated GP. It then describes the process involved in qualifying what counts as ‘good’ and establishing the context in which they are expected to occur. The chapter then describes the process involved in materializing the qualified good through the development of various mechanisms promoting and enabling the GP to be known, observed, and valued. Finally, it describes how the measures’ circulation and mobilization at DAFS transformed employees and their practices in ways that reflect their connections with the measures.

6.2 Mobilizing measures as objects of reference

As the FPMs gained entry into DAFS settlements, their circulation quickly gained momentum. Numbers reclaimed their status of authority as they proclaimed DAFS’ state of affairs. Like the previous Operations Director, Colby blasted out monthly emails to communicate the agency’s performance scores. This time, however, the emails focused on the five measures. At the end of each fiscal year, *‘he definitely sends a little bit more, a couple more emails out to say, ‘oh we’re almost there’ or ‘we need to reach this percentage’ and stuff like that’* (Veronica, *FG4Caseworkers*). This type of messaging reasserted the connection between employees’ work and the FPMs, and where they ought to focus their energies. The regular monitoring and communication of the centrality of the FPMs by supervisors and managers at each unit further supported this constant referencing to the measures. In the Establishment Unit, for example, supervisors met with caseworkers individually on a quarterly basis to discuss their progress in the performance scores. While at the beginning of each fiscal year, managers gathered to discuss the agency’s performance goals for each measure and used those to rally behind their units.

Inscriptions of the FPMs proliferated quickly throughout DAFS offices, turning them into a main character in the making of GP. As a powerful mediating device, inscriptions helped construct the object (in this case, the concept of GP) to which they refer and make it known (Qu & Cooper, 2011). At DAFS, the monthly wall chart served as one of the inscriptions that defined the specifics of GP through the classification of objects (i.e. counts and scores) requiring employees’ attention. In every area, department, conference room, as well as other common spaces throughout the two buildings, wall charts were mobilized to prominently display DAFS’ performance scores, as well as those of other counties across the state. Each month,

huge charts went up the walls revealing how well the agency performed in each of the four measures²², their year-end goals, the number needed to reach their goal, and the difference in performance since the previous month (see Figure 6-1). With their added features, such as a color-coding scheme, the information presented in the chart further framed the GP and provided the basis for employees' action. The 'format and furniture' (Pollock & D'Adderio 2012) incorporated into the chart contributed to the development of the analytical space for the formulation of the 'good'. Convincingly, in one glance, the chart as a 'portable judgment device' (Fourcade & Healy, 2017a) summed up and portrayed a 'reality' of DAFS' hard work and allowed those who chose to look at them to make a judgment of their overall performance. Given that performance scores of other counties were simultaneously presented, they imposed an ordering (Fourcade, 2016) that could not be ignored. Through this communication device, the measures became the object of reference (Centemeri, 2012) that conveyed the activities that mattered to the organization and what employees were expected to accomplish within a given timeframe (marked by the end of the fiscal year). And when scores were used to 'measure the underlying good', they sometimes became the 'good itself' (Fourcade, 2016: 178).

²² The fifth measure, which considers both collections and program expenditures, is tracked by the state. At the time of the site visit, DAFS was only focused on monitoring the four measures.

INCENTIVE MEASURES REPORT FOR: August 2015

Office	Number of BOW Children Established or Acknowledged YTD Line 5a	Number of BOW Children With Paternity Established YTD Line 6	Percent of Paternity Established YTD	Cases Open at End of Month Line 1	Cases Open at End of Month with Support Order Line 2	Percent of Cases with Orders	Amount Owed for Current Support Line 24	Amount of Current Support Distributed Line 25	Percent of Current Support Distributed	Number of Cases with Arrears Due Line 28	Number of Cases Paying Toward Arrears Line 29	Percent of Cases with Payment on Arrears
01 CHURCHILL CO DISTRICT ATTORNEY	254	369	144.09%	613	595	97.06%	\$2,029,620	\$1,477,391	72.79%	809	442	72.58%
02 CLARK CO DISTRICT ATTORNEY	40,774	48,035	117.81%	54,164	46,343	85.53%	\$121,689,331	\$79,621,656	65.36%	49,091	31,237	64.99%
03 DOUGLAS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY	279	345	123.66%	618	562	90.79%	\$2,288,288	\$1,521,935	67.10%	614	457	74.43%
04 ELKO COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY	888	1,154	131.08%	1,697	1,651	97.29%	\$9,090,048	\$6,231,257	77.02%	1,721	1,233	71.64%
07 HUMBOLDT COUNTY DISTRICT ATTY	577	706	122.36%	1,014	953	94.97%	\$3,043,952	\$2,532,650	83.51%	976	588	60.23%
10 LYON COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY	621	805	129.63%	1,161	1,054	90.78%	\$3,175,547	\$1,839,732	57.93%	1,108	670	60.47%
11 MINERAL COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY	259	303	116.99%	400	278	69.50%	\$661,660	\$343,494	51.91%	292	163	55.82%
12 NYE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY	1,048	1,238	117.94%	1,505	1,414	93.95%	\$2,834,102	\$1,575,935	55.81%	1,579	806	51.04%
14 PERSHING CO DISTRICT ATTORNEY	172	216	125.58%	254	252	99.21%	\$741,393	\$483,379	65.20%	287	176	61.32%
16 WASHOE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY	3,674	5,373	146.24%	7,092	6,887	97.11%	\$23,381,026	\$17,289,692	74.01%	7,380	5,674	76.88%
19 NIO	11,783	12,949	109.90%	16,041	13,148	81.96%	\$28,696,132	\$10,971,176	38.23%	13,169	6,012	45.69%
21 RENO PROGRAM AREA OFFICE	7,319	7,903	107.99%	9,810	8,100	84.23%	\$15,128,182	\$7,602,702	50.29%	8,380	4,159	49.76%
23 ELKO PROGRAM AREA OFFICE	601	688	114.48%	911	766	84.08%	\$2,533,508	\$1,778,078	70.10%	808	618	76.37%
99 DWSS IV-D CENTRAL OFFICE	30	22	73.33%	7	6	85.71%	6,380	1,458	23.33%	9	3	33.33%
State Total	67,643	79,230	117.18%	95,061	82,048	86.31%	\$214,740,847	\$133,168,464	62.01%	64,943	52,130	81.37%
Clark Goals FFY: 2015			100.00%			86.50%			63.65%			64.00%
This Month's Percentage:			117.81%			85.53%			65.36%			64.99%
This Month's Number:			48,035			46,343			\$79,521,555			31,237
Percentage Needed to Reach Goal:			0%			0.97%			\$0			0
Number Needed to Reach Goal			0			526			0.02%			0.86%
Percentage Increase/Decrease Previous Month:			1.62%			0.06%			\$7,990,518			794
Number Increase/Decrease Previous Month:			659			-5						
State Goals FFY: 2015			100.00%			87.00%			62.00%			62.00%
This Month's Percentage:			117.13%			86.31%			62.01%			81.37%
This Month's Number:			79,230			82,048			\$133,168,464			52,130
Percentage Needed to Reach Goal:			0%			0.69%			\$0			535
Number Needed to Reach Goal			0			655			0.07%			0.84%
Percentage Increase/Decrease Previous Month:			1.47%			0.06%						

Clark Goals FFY: 2015			100.00%			86.50%			63.65%			64.00%
This Month's Percentage:			117.81%			85.53%			65.36%			64.99%
This Month's Number:			48,035			46,343			\$79,521,555			31,237
Percentage Needed to Reach Goal:			0%			0.97%			\$0			0
Number Needed to Reach Goal			0			526			0.02%			0.86%
Percentage Increase/Decrease Previous Month:			1.62%			0.06%			\$7,990,518			794
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State Goals FFY: 2015			100.00%			87.00%			62.00%			62.00%
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Number Needed to Reach Goal			0			655			0.07%			0.84%
Percentage Increase/Decrease Previous Month:			1.47%			0.06%						

Figure 6-1 Wall chart of performance scores for August 2015

Mediated by and deeply bound up with sociotechnical agents, including managers, caseworkers, programmers, trainers, computers, discourses, emails, charts, and other devices, the FPMs gradually qualified and quantified what counts as 'good'. Their qualification and quantification of the 'good' perhaps would not have held together (Callon & Muniesa, 2005) if these actors refused to play their part.

6.3 Framing the production of 'good performance'

As FPMs circulated, boundaries were gradually being drawn. These boundaries marked the connections between and among the allies of the FPMs to create an environment that can collectively promote and construct the valued 'good'. Simply communicating the FPMs through emails and charts was unlikely to create much of an impact unless such texts and figures were linked to materials, properties,

and practices that gave them perspective and depth – dimensions that structured a common understanding of the FPMs’ ‘good’, ultimately reinforcing the strength of the circulating messages so the GP can be reproduced.

6.3.1 Mapping the process

One of the ways the FPMs defined the boundaries of GP was through process mapping. With the FPMs tied to employees’ work, IT developers and systems analysts developed a technological infrastructure that could support and control DAFS’ operational model of choice – case management by ‘specialized functional units’. Embedded in this model is the idea that cases go through phases, each of which require clear outputs that count towards the measures. To ensure that cases followed the presumed path to deliver the outputs, IT experts developed mechanisms to make the paths known to those responsible for moving the cases along. The IT systems analyst, in particular, conducted process mapping sessions with DAFS employees to graphically capture the specific steps involved to produce the desired outputs (i.e. have the child’s legal father on record, file a court order, collect a payment, etc.). Using conventional process mapping protocols, Daria, the systems analyst, collected information about the type of cases processed by functional units, specific tasks deployed, roles involved, interactions required, and forms, documents, and other devices used along the way. She used spreadsheets, charts, process mapping software, and other tools to organize the information into specific processes and defined a unit’s operational boundaries by visually framing the entities involved. By using process maps to articulate who does what and when on which case, she reinforced the unit’s functions, valued actions, and the measures they represent. Indeed, Daria’s deployment of the FPMs’ *attributes* through process mapping captured the ‘ecology of tributaries, allies, accomplices, and helper’ (Latour, 2011: 799) needed for the GP to *subsist*.

In an interview, Daria explained how she painstakingly guided caseworkers, team leads, and supervisors through several business process mapping sessions to objectify (Callon & Muniesa, 2005) the work of a specialized unit. Using probing questions, she tried to draw out from her audience the specifics of their work as cases arrive, move within, and leave their functional unit. She used a white board and some colored markers to draw industry-standard symbols to map out the steps involved in a

specific process. She helped her audience identify the individuals involved in every step of the process, specific tasks performed, documents handled, and tools and devices used on a regular basis. She encouraged her audience to think in terms of flowcharts with swim lanes, decision points, arrows, circles, diamonds, and other ‘symbolic tokens’ (Jeacle & Carter, 2011) to establish the boundaries of their work. Such symbolic tokens were used across units and processes and served as the language of choice for defining entities, actions, and boundaries of operation. At the end of the sessions, she used a process mapping software to produce electronic versions of the process maps and saved them in a shared folder. By generating maps of the valued processes, converting them into electronic inscriptions, and storing them in DAFS’ computer network, she made these immutable mobiles accessible and reproducible (Latour, 1986b) across the organization at different times. Showing one of her (more than 20) electronic process maps, Daria explained,

So I actually explain what the swim lane is because people don’t know ...everybody now knows... But at the beginning, I had to explain everything. I have to tell them what the swim lane is, how I do it, what groups do I need. We were kinda doing like a brain storming to put ideas first because they couldn’t tell, okay, clerk does this. So I said, okay, who’s involved, who’s working, what are the groups, you know. So I list them.... That’s how we start it. [...] there’s bunch of symbols in the flow chart world, but I figure these are the most simple ones, you know, like the step and then you have the decision point when you have to do, yeah, do I do that or no. (Daria, InterviewIT)

Making things visible allowed her to analyze the process with her audience and determine areas for improvement, because ‘*by knowing exactly what the process is, what steps, who does what, you can really create those timelines, you can really manage your employees to really be as efficient as you can.*’ She noted how the mapping exposed the connections, inconsistencies, and bottlenecks in the process. It showed them the possible leaks and channels of resources (Callon, 1998a) so they can make the necessary changes to improve their efficiency and effectiveness, and formulate a standard of practice. She highlighted the importance of establishing the beginning and end of a process, and the links between them, to define the boundaries of their work and ensure a focused approach to their case management. As Daria said,

'you have to have a start and the end, okay. ...And when you see the end, that means for that particular group or groups involved, this is it, that's all they do.' By breaking up a specialized group's business process into specific tasks and outputs, and capturing them in graphical terms, she reinforced the valued tasks that would produce the valued 'good'. She also managed to frame the unit that these individuals, cases, and tasks represent, increasing their potential to produce the social fact that can be counted. Consequently, following the mapping exercises, DAFS employees became consciously aware of the limits of their actions and began to establish expectations of their newly framed units. Any component that fell short of their expectations meant reviewing the process for possible adjustments, remapping, and reframing of the circumscribed unit. Hence, the maps became for them a 'visual performable space' (Busco & Quattrone, 2015) in which they could engage with each other and decide how they ought to generate the measures' GP.

To keep maps current, Daria conducted annual reviews of each process map. But conscious that office policies and procedures could change unexpectedly, she also sent out quarterly emails to each group requesting a notification of any modification to their process since their last review. This not only ensured that the process maps in the organization's shared folder were good representations of current processes for training or planning purposes, but also encouraged employees to keep re-assessing their production of GP. As Daria explained, the review process gave employees the opportunity to keep their process current as regards who and what should be involved in delivering GP,

because maybe we don't need to involve, I don't know, judge anymore, so we need to like remove this whole portion of the process. [...] If that document is being signed maybe now electronically, instead of like printing it, taking it to court, giving it to judge, taking it back, recording, e-filing, all of that stuff. So what's happening now? So do we need these people, you know, that they were involved in that little portion of that process, or can we reassign them somewhere else?

Through this exercise, groups, individuals, and other entities sometimes shifted or moved around. While some kept their roles within a process, others were excluded or

reassigned. The adjustments they made to the maps were their response to the leaks that flowed through the connectors and presented new possibilities to their operations. Maintaining this review process, therefore, was their way of managing their delivery of GP that was clearly prone to disruptions. This iterative process of mapping, reviewing, and re-mapping enabled the boundaries of the FPMs' measured 'good' to be 'disentangled, framed, externalized and internalized' (Callon, 1999) so that the 'good' can keep emerging and be measured. But for the drama to unfold, actors and devices had to articulate their script and define their position within DAFS' network so the measured 'good' can be performed.

6.3.2 Qualifying the good action

With processes mapped out and tasks objectified, IT programmers intervened to further mobilize the measures and fortify links within and across functional units. They developed web-based applications to facilitate the tracking of cases, deployment of specific tasks that matter, and outputs that must be counted and measured. One of the customized applications they developed was the Case Management Tool (CMT), which enables caseworkers to engage with their cases and perform the FPMs' 'good'. As soon as a caseworker logged into the system, the tool efficiently displayed, amongst others, the caseworker's list of cases, prescribed action on a case, and urgency of the action based on federal timeframes, enabling the caseworker to perform. But for CMT to prescribe the valued actions on specific cases and not on others, programmers and users had to gather and articulate the measures' preferred actions – actions that were likely to produce measurable outputs that would count towards the measures. Through a qualification process (Millo, 2007; Callon, *et al.*, 2002; Callon & Muniesa, 2005), they defined what counts as an action and identified the necessary elements or attributes (e.g. case status, processing time, available documents, etc.) that would prompt a caseworker to deploy it. As Jim explained,

... we standardized the interaction types and all the different interactions they had, and we did that across the Unit 'cause we got together and said, okay, what do you guys do over here? 'Oh, we do a phone call'. Okay, what do you do over here? 'We do a phone call to the grandmother'. Okay, well really, it's just a phone call, right? So, we just had to standardize things like that. Bring it down to a level that it's standard. You had an interaction, it's still an

interaction; it's still the same. (Jim, InterviewIT)

Since a telephone call was assumed to increase the likelihood of collecting a child support payment, its valuation justified its inclusion in the CMT's specifications. Given the expected outcome of a telephone call, the tool was further configured to track the noncustodial parent's payment behavior. When the payment outcome was tracked, the link was made, thus reinforcing the valued action. Indeed, as long as the tool makes the effects of a caseworker's action empirically observable, it can make that action valuable (Kornberger, *et al.*, 2015) and justifiable. But, as Kornberger, Justesen, Madsen, & Mouritsen (2015) might further argue (and as I will show in the next chapter), the valued action can be contested when caseworkers, restricted by the tool's frames of valuation, start drawing on other principles of worth (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006) presented by their connections to the outside world.

The development of the CMT demanded several iterations to ensure that only the valued actions were made visible and encouraged. IT programmers carefully defined, through a qualification process, the tool's functionality that would promote the measures' GP. Based on a shared logic of efficiency and probability, they established the parameters that must be included, framed caseworkers' transactional boundaries, wrote the codes to plot the trajectories of users' interactions with the tool, and promoted the valued actions so they can be performed, tracked, and measured. With the measures' frames of valuation clearly defined and inscribed in the tool, the CMT became a valuable inscription device for controlling the conceptual ambiguity (Qu & Cooper, 2011) of the 'good'. Soon, CMT's *agencement* was gradually formed and caseworkers, as long as they engaged with the tool, were expected to perform the same actions consistently on cases that required them. The FPMs inscribed in the tool were enabled to perform by their connections to other *actants* (i.e. caseworker, computer screens, keyboards, mouse, codes, graphical user interface, server, etc.) that allowed the 'good' to be determined so it can be performed. As caseworkers executed the valued actions, the web-based application tracked and counted them, thus enabling the accounting and evaluation of performance and the creation of a new system of control. For CMT to promote and track the valued actions, the intended users must interact with the tool in a specified manner. Only by engaging with the tool can the valued action be captured and counted, thus giving shape to caseworkers' actions and

their production of the measured good. Hence, after passing a series of tests to see if the programming codes performed as written, CMT was released, providing the arena for caseworkers to act and deliver the ‘good’. By creating an arena of ‘measurable facts’ (Power, 1996), comparisons between caseworkers, units, and other entities could be made to further qualify what is ‘good’. Indeed, as Jim remarked, *‘So now when we have the playing fields level, then we could compare what case manager A was doing to case manager B’*. However, their assessment and valuation of the tracked actions would not have been possible if the actions had not been valued, built into the tool, and constituted in an ensemble of social relations (Vatin, 2013).

CMT, however, continued to evolve due to changes in the environment in which it operated, disrupting the connections established within the tool. This explains why IT developers used what they call the ‘agile approach’ to software development. Aware of possible *overflows* (Callon, 1998a) due to the fact that ‘not all ties [could] be cut’ (Callon, 1999: 189) when defining the boundaries of operation, programmers allowed for possible adjustments to the tool. Given that each element within the transactional space could be a potential leakage point for the overflows (Callon, 1999), the tool, the process, and the practice should be ready for a possible change. As Jim said,

But, you never gonna have something that’s a perfect... that is why we’re so agile here, agile in our methodology of software development. Because, we can be dynamic in that we can change our focus to the changing... changing the trend of what’s going on with a process. So, we might have some new directive or some new procedure that we might need to implement. (Jim, InterviewIT)

Given that changes are inevitable, then what qualifies as ‘good’ is also likely to change. Thus, there is not just one ‘good’ that naturally and compellingly imposes itself on DAFS. The ‘good’ that matters is the ‘good’ that can be valued and made valuable by the sociotechnical assemblages that DAFS manages to construct. Technology certainly played a crucial role in mobilizing the measures that framed cases, people, and actions to collectively produce the GP they were meant to capture. A technological infrastructure built around the measures offered a convenient way to

delineate the organization's operations, but only with the participation of a whole army of actors who gathered to make their interactions known and construct consensus on GP so it can emerge and be measured.

6.3.3 Classifying and reporting on the 'good'

Since the risk of non-performance was ever present, CMT was designed to motivate caseworkers to keep producing the measurable 'good'. In addition to the logics of efficiency and probability, CMT incorporated the logic of compliance to ensure that cases were addressed timely and appropriately. Built into the tool's functionality was a feedback and reporting mechanism requiring the deployment of the valued action based on information about the status of a case and on the user's interaction (or non-interaction) with the tool. A caseworker's previously recorded action (or missed action) generated and signalled the next recommended action based on the child support program's policies and DAFS' procedural guidelines. Hence, based on these bureaucratic and technical considerations, a classification system (Bowker & Star, 1999) of cases and actions was conveniently established.

The classification was further enhanced by a color-coding scheme that suggested an ordering and valuing of cases and caseworkers' actions so that the FPMs' 'good' could be performed. The color-coding, as a valuation device, alerted employees to prioritize their work and ensured that attention was given to the case that needed it most based on the measures' frames of valuation. Kathlyn, a caseworker, described it in this way.

'So, [cases] would come up, you know, they're color-coded. So, it will tell me which cases I've worked, which cases I haven't worked. When something's due, say if I do a contempt action or I make a phone call on a case to find out what the issue is, why he's not paying the full amount, there's a time limit according to whatever guidelines, whether it's State guidelines, our office policies, or the federal guidelines as to when we're gonna call them back or when we're gonna follow up on that specific task. So, it will tell me, it's color-coded, so there's green that no action's been taken on that case yet. It could be a new case or maybe they were paying before and all of a sudden, they stop paying. So, the green ones are very important to look at. Then there's the red

cases, which means that there's been an action taken and there's something due. A yellow one is like the yield, so it's kinda like the yield sign, you know. It's yellow, meaning something's coming up.' (Kathlyn, InterviewCaseworker)

From a supervisor's perspective, CMT indeed made a big difference in helping caseworkers deliver DAFS' GP timely and appropriately. As Paula explained, *'so, it's really helped the case managers manage their cases where it's just not random actions, putting out fires. It is strategic and much more manageable'* (Paula, InterviewSrStaff). The technical rationality behind these color codes was enough to convince CMT's users of the importance of the tool's prescribed actions that must be performed, tracked, and reported. Because specific actions were deemed worth coding, counting, and reporting, both frontline staff and managers focused on them. Their constant engagement with the tool further reinforced the values assigned to these codes, the actions these codes promoted, and the operational boundaries they imposed. Consequently, caseworkers were encouraged to pursue the color-coded classified actions, thus allowing the tool to count and produce reports on those actions. The data reports that provided an account of caseworkers' outputs made visible the actions that mattered, suggesting what must be noticed and what could be ignored (Espeland & Lom, 2015). Caseworkers' repeated engagement with the tool reinforced the tool's classification and ordering (Espeland & Stevens, 1998; Fourcade, 2016) of cases and actions, consequently shaping both caseworkers' production of GP and the moral order (Krenn, 2017) in DAFS' approach to case management (more on the latter in the next section).

The availability and accessibility of data reports further supported the valued actions that articulated the measures. The Investigations Unit, for example, could choose from a number of reports (see Figure 6-2) to get a sense of their unit's performance, track their progress, and identify areas for improvement. Employees could also drill down to the individual level and find out the number of actions deployed, tasks accomplished, or cases handled by a caseworker within a given timeframe simply by using these parameters that had been incorporated into the tool. Such mechanisms enabled employees to run a query, display the results, and position themselves in their delivery of GP. Thus, these tools, devices, and practices became

part of DAFS' developing assemblage that made specific actions valuable and worth pursuing.

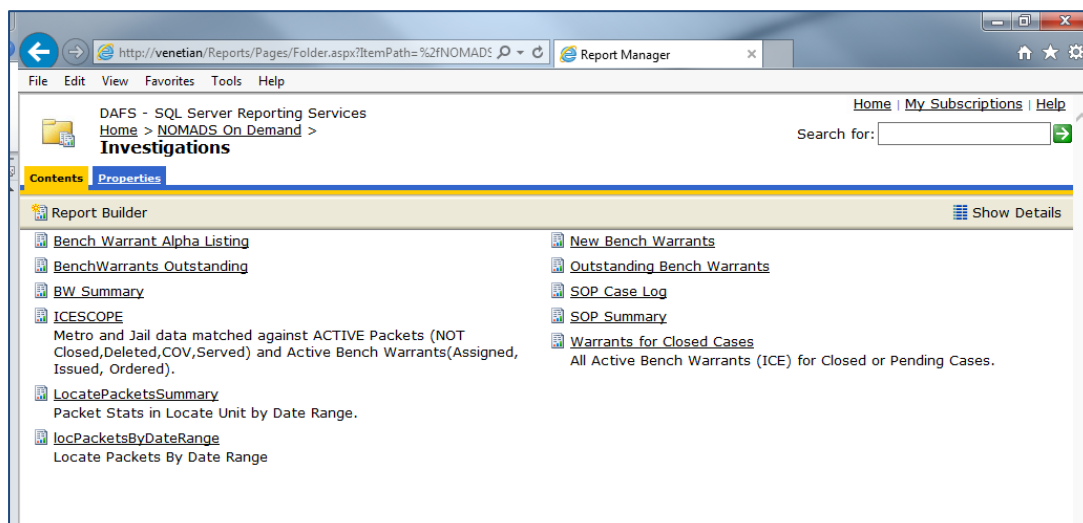


Figure 6-2 Reports available to Investigations

Data reports, therefore, did not just inform but also shaped the reality of DAFS' GP. They facilitated DAFS' continuous referencing to the measures and the measured actions, thus contributing to the construction of a 'circulating entity' (Latour, 1999b). They provided the supporting evidence that the tool and actors, through their interaction, helped contain to produce the evidence they sought. Through their repeated interactions with their devices, caseworkers helped strengthen the links between the measures and the qualified GP, thus firmly establishing what counts as the 'good' that must be performed.

Arguably, DAFS' circulation of data reports contributed to the framing that kept the boundaries of actors and devices intact and held DAFS' measurement framework together. While serving as mediating instruments (Miller & O'Leary, 2007) for the production of facts behind DAFS' GP, the reports represented a reality that employees accepted and believed to be true, unless an overflow (Callon, 1998a) intervenes, giving them reason to doubt the truth.

6.4 Using numbers to make the good 'exist'

6.4.1 Monthly quotas

Like language, the meaning and purpose of quantification are revealed through

their use in specific contexts (Espeland & Stevens, 2008). At DAFS, managers used numbers to define and classify employees' responsibilities so they could refer back to them for their evaluation. Articulated in terms of monthly quotas or production outputs, these numbers signified discrete actions (e.g. telephone call), stripped of any features other than what their protagonists consider to be fundamental to those actions. These actions, as I have already discussed (see Chapter 6.3.), were first qualified so they could be counted and measured (Power, 1996; Kalthoff, 2005) by tracking devices and ultimately classified and reported based on their relationship to the FPMs for which the organization must provide an account. To illustrate this point, management determined that maintaining regular contact with 'paying noncustodial parents' through telephone calls or using enforcement strategies (e.g. filing contempt hearings or suspending driver's licenses) on 'delinquent payers' would increase DAFS' chances of making a collection. Summarizing the logic behind this, Alyssa said, '*Collections is kinda like collections in any organization; even in the private industry. Calls, demand payment, take action*'. Management's expectation of increasing payment collections through these interventions led to the introduction of monthly goals. Alyssa, one of the managers, referred to some of the goals expected of enforcement caseworkers.

Enforcement case managers are held to production and percentages...So, there's, they're required to do 12 driver's license suspensions a month. Well, actually 25 driver's license suspensions a month, 12 contempts a month, a 160 phone calls a month, collection calls to the noncustodial parents... (Alyssa, InterviewManagement)

The use of monthly goals promoted the importance of these tasks in relation to other possible tasks that caseworkers might choose or be more inclined to do. It communicated a standard expected of caseworkers and offered a definitive path to DAFS' production of GP.

Introducing monthly goals to ensure the prioritization of preferred actions, however, was not a simple process; nor did it spare the organization of any tensions in labor relations. Promoting this radical shift in perspective – from '*just doing the job*' to being accountable for a number of tasks – meant that management had to face some

'disgruntled people who hate what the job has become'. This, however, did not stop them from asserting the need for performance goals to improve the organization's performance scores. As Andy, one of the managers recounted, Sanders and Colby had to negotiate with the Union to come up with a better way of evaluating employees' performance. Instead of simply evaluating them based on *'whether they got here in work on time'*, they negotiated with the Union and

'they were able to implement specific measures. And what are these... were based on some of the reports that we were able to pull through. As I've mentioned to you, the four specific... the four performance measures that the State is measured off of and how that money is distributed...' (Andy, InterviewManagement)

Invoking the measures and the federal financial incentives in the negotiation was their way of dealing with the controversy associated with the introduction of performance standards. Once they were accepted by the Union, the monthly goals became a significant component of DAFS' assemblage that performed the good. As the Operations Director explained,

So, I first did a survey of everybody in terms of every unit and every team... Based on that survey, I drafted the performance standards and then added, hey you needed to do this tool, that tool, this tool, and you work these reports to be....and they're required to. There was some initial resistance to that by the Union. The management can create performance standards. And then they were created. The Union signed off on it and we've had them ever since. (Bill, InterviewManagement)

To counter the resistance, management used evidence to support the reasonableness of the monthly quotas and make their case. One of the managers explained how they used the initial data reports to determine what was deemed an acceptable goal for each task. As Allison said, *'my highest producer can do this much a month and my lowest producer did this much a month and my average did this; here's kind of what an average is of what everybody could accomplish within the month'* (Allison, InterviewManagement). Thus the perceived objectivity of numbers takes away the personal judgment and biases (Porter, 1995; Espeland & Vannebo,

2007) that may be leveled at management and reassures caseworkers of a fair assessment.

6.4.2 Performance evaluation

Incorporating monthly goals into caseworkers' job descriptions and yearly evaluations was management's way of encouraging the deployment of the valued actions to improve DAFS' performance. With newly hired employees, supervisors were required to inform them of their monthly quotas as a matter of protocol. Although new employees were not held accountable for those numbers during their probationary period, they were used as a basis for their '*progressive improvement*'. As Alyssa explained,

Supervisors are required to give them the performance standards so they can sign off and have an understanding of what they're gonna be evaluated on... So, as soon as you come on board, you're receiving a copy of an evaluation and you're getting the performance standards that say how many widgets you must meet every month. But, that's in writing. You're supposed to communicate and tell them, 'you're new, these numbers will come along; our goal is just to say that you've progressively improved over and over. (Alyssa, InterviewManagement)

Reviewing the job description of enforcement caseworkers, it is clear that performance standards featured heavily in the document. Goals were explicitly stated and exerted a sense of discipline (Espeland and Stevens 2008) on those who were subject to them. As stated in the 2012 version of their "Duties and Responsibilities", Enforcement caseworkers must adhere to certain standards and failure to do so could lead to disciplinary measures.

*In order to meet goals on the Enforcement federal performance measures each year, each member of the Enforcement Unit must fully understand their major duties and responsibilities in terms of critical Unit priorities as well as necessary work volumes and quality of work to be maintained at all times.... **Failure to abide by these priorities, work quality and work volume requirements shall be a basis for progressive discipline and placement on a***

Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). Compliance (or lack thereof) by the case manager with these priorities and requirements shall be a part of all annual evaluations of case managers by Supervisors, the Unit Administrator, and the Assistant Director. (Enforcement Unit, Duties and Responsibilities, revision 06/11/2012, emphasis added)

Immediately following the introductory section of this document is the ‘Specific Priorities and Volume Requirements’ section. Listed in this seven-page document are the monthly quotas for the specific actions that Enforcement caseworkers are expected to accomplish. References to these actions and quotas are made to stand out through formatted text (e.g. boldface and underscore), thus further emphasizing their significance by incorporating additional semantic elements. This document, therefore, is an important *actant* in the framing of the measures. It is a mechanism for delineating the actions of caseworkers and establishing the link between their actions, the measures, and the valued good.

When numbers were used to define the actions that mattered, they became a convenient referent (Dambrin and Robson 2011) for the actions that caseworkers had to carry out. Such referencing, however, required the monitoring and reporting devices so managers could track, count, and measure their activities and determine whether monthly goals were being met. These devices, therefore, were indispensable in providing ‘objective’ representations of the outputs that caseworkers knowingly and deliberately produced. Without them, caseworkers’ good performance would have been non-existent. As John explained,

So, if I go by...pull a case on John Doe 1, it's gonna tell me on the very top, last action taken was a phone call on this date to tell him to make a payment. And I know to look at the notes on that day, what happened on the phone call. And then let's say I decided to suspend his license. On the bottom there's a whole list of actions I took. And, I'll select that I called him, 'hey, make a payment', and then I'll select, you know, suspended his license. And that automatically notates under my name on the file. And at the end of the month, my supervisor's able to go and pull from day 1 to day 30, how many calls I made, how many licenses I suspended, how many contempts did I send to the

court. And then that's what they'll put on my final record, so that way when it comes time for my review, they'll look at all my months and they'll say, 'you made each month'. (John, InterviewCaseworker)

With the monthly goals and devices in place, caseworkers focused on performing the actions that count, thus enabling the measures to perform. Their engagement with the tools further reinforced the valued actions because they (i.e. the tools) knew exactly *'how many orders we established, how many people we served, how many cases we touched'*. Caseworkers, therefore, became strategic in their approach to case management. As Kathlyn said, *'[t]hese are all targets and tells me what to do next. So, these numbers, when they're coming through on our reports, I'm knowing where to look'*. At the end of each month, the reporting devices gave them a snapshot of their progress to inform them of how well they performed. Meeting their quotas not only meant meeting the standard of GP; it also indicated their level of competence that the assemblage of actors and devices successfully established. Hence, for John, knowing where he stood was all that mattered: *'My thing is I look at the last month and this month. I went up, that's all I care about. That's how I look at myself'*. This 'emotional attachment' (Espeland, 2016) triggered by the numbers, which served as 'powerful symbols of belonging, identity, and status' (p. 288), propelled the making of GP at DAFS. Emotionally attached to them, caseworkers began using numbers as proxies for their good (or bad) works and as vehicles of investments for directing action (Espeland, 2016).

6.4.3 Rewards and sanctions

In an effort to promote the FPMs, management introduced a performance-based incentive system that would encourage caseworkers to produce the measured 'good'. With the systematic reporting of caseworkers' activities firmly established, the incentive mechanism was readily implemented. DAFS' non-financial incentive came in the form of an alternative work schedule (AWS) offered to employees who performed well. During their annual reviews, employees who met their monthly goals were given the option to be on an AWS. Employees could choose to start at 7 a.m. and end at 4 p.m., instead of the traditional 8 to 5 job. Alternatively, they could follow a '9/80 schedule' every two weeks, which would allow them to work a 9-hour day for 4 days and an alternating 8-hour day and a day off for the 5th day. Their preferred

schedule was valid for the entire year and reassessed in their next annual review. If they failed to meet their targets, they would lose their preferred schedule and face a Performance Improvement Plan²³ (PIP) that would put them under close monitoring and coaching. Failure to demonstrate improvement according to the plan could potentially lead to their termination. While some employees might not value the AWS, the PIP was a heavy sanction they could not ignore.

Although the monthly outputs were important components for the evaluation, management also considered other factors before imposing sanctions on an employee who failed to meet the goals. Indeed, as indicated in the job description of Enforcement caseworkers,

...the employee should not be held responsible for work deficiencies to the extent they are caused by things outside of their control. Further... management will consider the totality of the circumstances relating to the employee's overall compliance with the standards when making the assessment/evaluation. (Enforcement Unit, Duties and Responsibilities, revision 06/11/2012)

This clause in the document, which a caseworker, immediate supervisor, and Unit Administrator attest with their signature, indicates that the evaluation and incentive system in place can be disrupted by leaks (Callon, 1998a), causing a shift in their implementation and a readjustment to what can be considered GP. In the case of Simone, she explained how her AWS was taken away from her because she *'didn't meet the standards'*. But the following year, despite her low outputs, she managed to reclaim her schedule.

I don't recall making the stats that they wanted me to make, but I was going to something called PCO, which is Welfare Office, every Wednesday. I had to go, and it took a few hours of your day to go. So, you go over to the Welfare Office

²³ During the site visit, DAFS was transitioning into a new process for dealing with employees subjected to a 'progressive discipline'. According to Allison, under the new approach, supervisors and managers would no longer be required to either prepare a Performance Improvement Plan or hold weekly meetings with the employee to monitor progress. If an employee does not show improvement after a *'very strong coaching and counseling'*, the following steps are required to establish a case for termination: month 1, documented oral warning; month 2, admonishment; month 3, written warning; month 4, final written warning; month 5, suspension or termination.

and you help them in the office to fill out their paperwork that's needed for this office, okay. So, that took away from my day. They also put me on the phones to help the Contact Center. So, that took away from my day, 'cause I was on the phone from 1 to 4, okay. So, you know, if you cannot do what you are supposed to be doing because they got you filling in slots everywhere, then I mean they gave me back my hours. (Simone, FG1Caseworkers)

Simone's case captures the murkiness of measures as a means for sorting and valuing the good. Nevertheless, despite the measures' elusive character, employees continued to expect and accept the strict application of the performance standards and incentives. Hence, for some caseworkers, keeping their AWS was a strong enough incentive to deliver the outputs. As Nancy said, *'So, I work hard to keep that schedule, because if you do not keep your stats up to help with the federal performance measures, you lose that...they take that away from you'* (Nancy, FG1Caseworkers). Indeed, as Sheila expressed, *'I always make my numbers because I don't want my schedule taken away from me'* (Sheila, FG4Caseworkers). But to meet her quota, Sheila pointed out that she had to refrain from volunteering for non-work-related activities. She also quipped about her hesitation to participate in this study as it meant taking time away from her work, but later expressed satisfaction for having been given the opportunity to contribute to the discussion on these issues.

That's why I was questioning why I was coming here because this takes away from my production, you know, and I got to make my numbers. I've got to make my numbers and I've never missed my numbers because I don't volunteer for anything outside of the office. When they put the... I used to be involved with Club Ride, and I'm involved with the Union but that's off the clock, and anything else to do with volunteering for anything, I do not do that because I have to make my numbers. (Sheila, FG4Caseworkers)

In a focus group of supervisors, Donna confirmed caseworkers' strong response towards the AWS, while another confessed sharing their reaction.

Donna: They live and die by the schedule, sorry (laughter).

Joanna: Yeah.

Sarah: Well, I think a lot of it was...

Joanna: And so do I.

All: (Laughter). (FG2Supervisors)

The AWS, however, was not something new to DAFS. Sarah, one of the supervisors, explained that the practice had been in place since she joined the organization 20 years ago. At that time, employees on an AWS were either on a 4/10 or a 9/80. To be on it, they simply had to arrange and negotiate their work schedules with members of their teams. *‘If you want to work the schedule, hey, if it fits on your team, you can. And really, the only time that you would not work that schedule is if you asked to come off it or if it didn’t jive with somebody on the team where you need to switch it up or something like that...’* However, when Sanders and Colby came on board, they took away the AWS, required all employees to work on a standard schedule, and eventually reformulated the AWS as an incentive mechanism to support the monthly goals – a clear indication of the measures’ intervention in the valuation and construction of DAFS’ GP. Edelyn recalled how the removal of the AWS *‘became a big issue between the management and the Union and the employees in general’*. But, as Jenny remarked, *‘the Union fought it’*, which led to the reinstatement of the 9/80 schedule as an incentive to employees who met their performance standards, presumably a strong negotiating component in the establishment of the latter. And because it was highly valued by caseworkers, such incentive was enough to get them to focus and keep performing the measured ‘good’. As Nancy remarked,

Nancy: ...before [the measures], it was all about my client, getting money for the child... Now, it’s all about, ‘oh my God, I gotta get this many OUCs to get all my numbers up. I gotta keep my stats up’. (Nancy, FG1Caseworkers)

Reframing an old practice as incentive, however, could have failed had monitoring devices and other mechanisms not been configured to support them. But given that the different entities involved in producing and communicating the quantified ‘good’ were firmly established, the coordination, valuation, and evaluation (Diaz-Bone & Didier, 2016) of GP were likely to survive. Hence, just as states must meet the performance standards to earn federal financial incentives, so employees must meet their performance goals and monthly outputs to earn their AWS.

With processes, tools, and inscriptions (e.g. monthly goals, job descriptions, annual reviews, PIPs, AWS) circulating, formulating, and claiming to capture the measures' domain, knowledge about the FPMs at DAFS gradually settled. Such knowledge, which was integral to the measures' exercise of power in the processes and mechanisms through which they intervened, became a disciplining mechanism (Townley 1993) and ultimately provided the basis for DAFS' decisions and actions.

6.5 Measures changing practices

6.5.1 When numerators and denominators become visible

With FPMs known, settlements settled, and actors and devices well placed and connected, DAFS' assemblage was enabled to perform a rearticulated version of the 'good'. From desktops to wall charts, and all the way down to employees' personnel files, the FPMs' presence and the good they proclaim could not be missed. As a 'matter of concern' (Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015c; Latour, 2005), DAFS' employees began considering not just the tasks that counted as dictated by the monthly targets, but also the tasks that improved their scores. Through their constant engagement with their monitoring devices and data reports, they gained new knowledge about how specific actions were affecting (or not) the FPMs and made some adjustments to their practice. For example, despite the fact that caseworkers were making their telephone calls to noncustodial parents and meeting their targets, improvement in the rate of collection did not automatically happen. As Deb said,

...when we first got production and knowing about the performance numbers, we were... it was a hit and miss on what worked to get that performance number to move. ... I had people that were hitting production, calling different people but that number still wasn't moving, that performance number... (DEB, FG2Supervisors)

They realized that unless they considered the number of cases they were managing or the total amount of child support they needed to collect, the performance scores were unlikely to respond and make significant improvements. Thus, they started focusing on not just delivering outputs (i.e. the 'numerator') but also managing inputs (i.e. the 'denominator') to allow measures to respond and improve DAFS' performance scores. They began making adjustments to the way they handled their

caseload to ensure that both components of the measures were taken into account. Deb cited two specific concrete actions to improve their scores: closing cases and modifying child support obligation amounts.

...okay, closures and amends. Those were the things that really... you tried to reduce the number of cases because that was your, you know, your denominator. You wanted to reduce that number, so you get the other number over... the collection money, you know, larger and that other one smaller. So, you may not have collected any more money, but you got the denominator smaller. So that affected your performance percentage so we kind of a hit and miss and now you can.... we have a much better idea now because we've been doing it a while. (DEB, FG2Supervisors)

By closing cases that were eligible for closure, caseload sizes dropped. This reduced the measures' input, thus enabling caseworkers to have a better handle of their caseload, attend to the tasks that produced the outputs, and ultimately improve DAFS' performance rates. To ensure that cases eligible for closure were indeed closed, a specialized closure team was created so cases did not just '*linger in the system*' (Alistair, FG5Attorneys) and prevented DAFS from improving their scores.

Amend or modification was another approach they quickly adopted. According to the statute, a child support obligation amount must be based on reported income using the state's preferred model (in this case, the *percentage of income model*, which is one of three models used by states across the country (see NCSL, 2016)) . If income went down or the noncustodial parent became unemployed, the established amount could be modified to reflect the parent's new economic standing. By modifying the monthly ordered amount (often downwards), the noncustodial parent would have a better chance of meeting his obligation and the caseworker would more likely collect payments. Therefore, when dealing with cases that were eligible for modification, DAFS' employees knew that they must follow through; otherwise, continuing to enforce a high-dollar order might not result in a collection and would negatively impact the measures. As Sally argued,

if you're a person that the best you're ever gonna do is earn \$10 an hour, there's no point in me, in our office trying to collect \$1,500 in amount of child

support from you. There's just no point to it... and plus if you have an order that's just way out there where they're not gonna pay, your numbers are just...you're just shooting yourself in the foot. (Sally, FG7Mixed)

Continuing the practice of specialization, DAFS created a Review and Adjustment team focused solely on modifying child support orders. It used to be, as Alyssa said, that

Review and Adjustments were assigned to the Enforcement workers. And mind you, they never got done. Because they took so long, you didn't do them. Now you have a Team that does it, and they contribute to our numbers. If they reduce an obligation, that has a positive impact on us. (Alyssa, InterviewManagement)

Hence, with numerators and denominators gaining widespread visibility in DAFS' assemblage, new entities were formed to strengthen their existing connections and build new ones to bring DAFS' performance rates up.

6.5.2 When 'fairness' becomes good practice

Modifying existing orders was one thing, but setting an initial order was another. As attorneys became more engaged with the measures, their actions had also taken new forms. As previously noted, the organization used to set the highest possible ordered amounts thinking that the higher the obligation, the higher the collection (see Chapter 5.2.1.). This practice extended even on cases with unverified income information. Kevin, one of the attorneys, explained how the ordered amounts on those cases were usually set at the state's average wage, which tended to be higher than what a typical noncustodial parent in their caseload earned. Yet, in the absence of income or asset information, a provision in the statute allowed them to set the obligation amount at the minimum. When they became more aware of the measures, attorneys took notice of this statutory clause and began re-articulating it in light of the rate of collection measure (FPM#3) and their caseload population.

Now Nevada average wage is what the statute says that you, you should do unless a minimum order is appropriate. And, you know, so it took a while...that really took a lot of talking across the agency to get people to

agree with it. But we don't have Nevada's average population here because 50% of our cases, I don't know how many, you probably know better than I do, but say 50% of our cases come from Welfare, ...they were probably at or below the poverty level anyway, whether or not the other parent is in the household. So to impute Nevada average wage to all these people was ridiculous. (Kevin, InterviewAttorney)

He further claimed that back then, *'there wasn't as much of an urgency to make an order a right-sized order'*. Looking back, he recalled how modifying orders was not a priority. He described how a case would be heard in court for an 'Order to Show Cause' and the Hearing Master would order the noncustodial parent to pay \$100 on a \$500-order. Despite the Hearing Master's decision, which was an indication of the noncustodial parent's inability to pay the whole amount, the attorney presenting the case would not necessarily act on a modification unless the noncustodial parent requested it. In the meantime, the parent continued to pay 20% of his current support and arrears continued to accumulate.

If noncustodial parents do not have the capacity to pay the ordered amounts, this results in poor compliance and consequently low collection rates. But if attorneys establish orders that reflect a noncustodial parent's social and economic conditions, it is assumed that the prospect of collecting payments increases, which then leads to a higher rate of collection. Realizing the impact of their actions on the measures, attorneys began establishing and enforcing *fair* orders. The fairness they espoused was not just towards the parent that was expected to pay but also towards the organization that was expected to perform. As Alex explained,

Orders have to be published fair because if it's set fair, as compared to the top dollar amount possible, then you're more likely to have success in a particular case. You'll have a paying person. You'll have somebody who feels that he's been treated right... So, yes, I think [the measure's] there for a good purpose. Overall, it serves a good purpose. (Alex, FG5Attorneys)

For Enforcement caseworkers, making sure that orders are set appropriately is highly critical because it helps them meet their collection goals. If orders are set at the right level (at least from the obligor's point of view), caseworkers' demand for a full

payment is feasible and collection goals become achievable. Indeed, as Lori said, ‘*when we establish something reasonable, we’re more likely to get money, period*’ (Lori, FG7Mixed).

The notions of fairness or reasonableness at DAFS were clearly shaped by the measures. It translated to an obligation amount that a noncustodial parent could potentially pay, which in turn could generate better performance scores for the State. Fairness to others (e.g. custodial parent, child, or community at large) became invisible or temporarily displaced, while reasonableness was narrowly defined to what is practically collectible. Thus, fairness and reasonableness at DAFS became part of the circulating discourse supporting the rationality behind the numbers and imposing a standard of practice amenable to the FPMs.

6.5.3 When attorneys turn into calculative agents

When managers, supervisors, caseworkers, lawyers, process maps, tracking devices, statutes, monthly goals, incentives, and other entities were gathered and assembled to elaborate and implement the FPMs’ ‘good’, they enabled GP to be an object of knowledge and intervention (Callon, 2009) at DAFS. Shaped by the FPMs, their elaborations and implementations created for DAFS an analytical and operational space needed to let their GP survive. In the case of Eleanor, one of the attorneys at DAFS, her engagement with the measures and other actors shaped her decision to act and preserve the FPMs’ GP. She discussed how she explored other attorneys’ experiences and articulations of the ‘good’ to inform her how best to handle a welfare case. She referred to a case that had unpaid support due to the State. Since the case involved a custodial parent (usually a mom) receiving welfare benefits from the State, the parent by law must assign her rights to the noncustodial parent’s payment back to the State. The case in question owed around \$3,000. Despite her initial assessment pointing towards a demand for payment, Eleanor chose to act differently. She decided against ordering the payment of back support based on the discourses surrounding the arrears measure. Because the arrears measure translated to the *number of cases* with arrears (as opposed to the dollar amount), she assessed the situation based on the probability of collecting the *full amount*. She explained how she initially considered acting on the principle of service but eventually changed her decision and course of action on the basis of the discourses surrounding the FPMs.

'Now there's reasons, you know, that are given; but to me we need to keep [the arrears] on the books and we need to do whatever we can to try to collect it. Will we ever collect it all? Probably not, but by wiping them out because we may not ever collect it all, I don't think that's right. I think we're doing a disservice to our client, who is the State of Nevada'. (Eleanor, InterviewAttorney)

With the FPMs as her guide, backed by her network of associations (Latour, 2005) articulating the 'good', she weighed and calculated the cost of pursuing the arrears against the prospects of collecting them. Although she was confident that she could 'win' the case and prove that the noncustodial parent owed the State, she hesitated to pursue the fight because of the time, effort, and resources required to collect what she presumed to be uncollectible. Because the uncertainty of a positive outcome was high, the decision to collect was weakened and ultimately toppled over. She explained her reasoning as follows:

The parties went to family court... And the court, district court judge, wrongfully, in my opinion and I could prove it (laughter), wrongfully got rid of all of the arrears that dad owed. I had a choice, and I spoke with many of the different Deputies (i.e. attorneys) to get, you know, their ideas on best way to handle it. Their first thought was, 'we don't go after those because it's too much time and effort to collect money that we're probably never gonna see'. Okay, so then I didn't pursue it. Some Deputy said, well you could, and I had a really good argument. I was pretty, I was fairly certain I would win it and I would get our State arrears back... and it came down to 'was it gonna be worth it? \$3,000?' (Eleanor, InterviewAttorney)

She further argued, in defense of her decision and action, that

...I didn't know if the chances of us actually collecting the \$3,000 was good but without a definite, 'yeah, we're gonna collect this money; he's got a job working here; I can do an income withholding', it was a risk and I didn't pursue it just because of the federal performance measures. (Eleanor, InterviewAttorney)

The *agencement* of the collective (attorneys, noncustodial parent, job, dollar amount, time, effort, income withholding system, theories and assumptions, measures, etc.) involved in the elaboration of the ‘good’ enabled Eleanor to decide and act accordingly. Without these connected entities in place and her personal connection with them, it would have been difficult for Eleanor to trace the trajectory of GP and decide how best to contribute to the production of the ‘fact’ about the measured ‘good’.

For Sonia, another DAFS attorney, her personal connection with the measures triggered a reflexive transformation of her practice in support of the FPMs’ valued ‘good’. She recalled her moment of conversion that led her to believe in the measures and be an agent (among many) that could *effect* and *be* part of the change. She described how she first felt alienated by the measures. There was, as she claimed, a sense of ‘*being outside of those measures*’. But when boundaries were drawn and connections were made, perspectives and practices changed, making her change as well. As she indicated, ‘*it was like us against the numbers, and then we realized, no, we’re the numbers and what we’re doing impacts the numbers... so even though this is a number and this is a numerator, denominator...I see how I fit in that, even though I’m just tiny, tiny portion of it.*’ Converts, however, could face challenges along the way, thus testing their perseverance in acting the ‘good’. Whether or not they carry on would depend on the intensity of the connections supporting their construction of the ‘good’.

6.6 Conclusion

Through the FPMs’ intervention, DAFS’ accounting of GP prompted the assembly and formation of connected entities (Latour, 2005) to mobilize and act the ‘good’. The new leaders, caseworkers, IT experts, analyst, attorneys, supervisors, and managers, as well as the monthly targets, charts, statutes, job descriptions, work schedules, and a whole array of material and technical devices that emerged from their interactions, qualified the valued ‘good’ so they could produce, track, and measure it. The circulating notion of the ‘good’ flowing through the links connecting these entities made it possible for the ‘good’ to spread and reproduce. But each time a new *actant* (Latour, 1996, 2005) appeared to further elaborate the ‘good’, a rearticulated ‘good’ emerged, consequently transforming actors’ understanding of the

‘good’, their practices, and DAFS’ organizational life. They reassembled and reconnected themselves as they elaborated and implemented a rearticulated ‘good’ (or GP2.1). Throughout these reconnections and transformations, employees’ activities acquired new meanings, professional discretion was reformulated, and case management turned into performance management.

Numbers played a central role in DAFS’ organizing work of transformation and GP that the FPMs sought to measure. Given the leaders’ desire to improve DAFS’ standing, FPMs were constantly communicated through various channels, making them the organization’s matter of concern. Their visibility in charts, job descriptions, and reporting mechanisms provided a format for organizing what counts as ‘good’ and making it valuable. Inscribed in these various devices, measures made cases and actions noticeable (Espeland & Lom, 2015) and classifiable (Diaz-Bone, 2017) so they can be valued. The introduction of production goals and incentive mechanisms, and the use of tracking devices became part of the organizing work that drew employees’ attention to what mattered most in powerful ways. The numbers, and the mechanisms through which they circulated, directed and persuaded (Espeland & Stevens, 2008; Espeland & Vannebo, 2007; Porter, 1995) the production of GP that ought to be measured. Through the use of numbers, employees were prompted to notice certain tasks and act upon them. Their engagement with the measures led them to adjust their practices so they could deliver the GP that must be measured.

DAFS’ GP, therefore, was the product of a collective; that is, a coordinated network of *actants* (Latour, 1996, 2005) that constantly framed their connections through discussions, negotiations, and calculations (Callon, 1999) of the FPMs’ valued ‘good’. Through the framing and reframing of their connections guided by the FPMs’ logic, the GP was made to exist and recognized. By producing a ‘good’ they could point to and speak about, the ‘good’s’ reach extended far and wide. Its value and valuing quickly traveled across the organization, producing and transforming entities that represented and validated the ‘good’. But the more complex the network of connections became, the more adjustments and negotiations were required of DAFS to keep their GP intact. In the next chapter, the discussion focuses on the innovations, conflicts, and tensions that arose as DAFS’ GP forced actors to change gears.

7 The politics of organization and construction of GP

7.1 Introduction

When the FPMs' valued 'good' (focused on measured outputs and ratios) became DAFS' matter of concern, actors, cases, systems, devices, processes, and other entities configured themselves in and through their enactment of the GP that the measures were expected to measure. The entities' coordinated and collective action produced the GP they themselves, through their interactions, defined and negotiated in light of the measures' market-oriented logic of efficiency and probability. Their qualification of GP, as I have shown in the preceding chapter, constantly shifted as new devices were introduced and new methods of knowing the measures were incorporated. These heterogeneous actors of humans and nonhumans, through a dynamic and iterative process, determined what was worth counting and measuring, and framed their network of operations so they could produce the measurable GP. Measuring DAFS' GP, therefore, demanded the synchronized participation of actors and their devices so they could perform the 'good' within their organized frames of operation. In some instances, which I will show in a while, attempts to enact the FPMs' 'good' were hampered by actors or devices that were not included in DAFS' initial rules of engagement. Their visibility emerged because of participating actors' strong connections with the outside world that offered new insights into the organization and production of GP. When DAFS' sociotechnical *agencement* was gradually framed to perform a qualified 'good', other possible framing of the 'good' was effectively silenced. The silencing of the alternative framing inevitably overflowed, causing a misfire to occur (Callon, 2010) – that is, a disruption in DAFS' performance of the measured 'good'. In other instances, however, the misfire appeared due to actors' competing interests and concerns with DAFS' preferred 'good'. Because these concerns were not represented in DAFS' framed network, conflicts emerged causing some actors to reluctantly or perversely produce DAFS' valued 'good'. Managing or containing these potential overflows required a reframing and reconfiguring (Callon, 1998a) of DAFS' network. Whose and what version of 'good' prevailed depended on the *agencement* that managed to survive (provisionally, at least), including the processes and the products that successfully embodied that version of 'good'.

This chapter discusses the overflows, including who or what triggered them, and the inevitable framing and reformatting of DAFS' measurement network as a way of containing them to keep producing a version of a 'good' that can be measured. Examining the overflows does not only make the framing process more visible (Zhang, 2017); it also allows the tensions and the politics to emerge and be empirically observable. Indeed, as Callon (2010) might argue, politics is involved in the framing of GP because it implies that one version of the 'good' was favored over another and some entities were included but not others. Its presence lies among those that were left out, insisting to be considered in the debate of what counts as 'good'. In examining DAFS' efforts to enact the FPMs' GP, I will describe the overflows that emerged, as well as the attempts to silence or incorporate them. I will show how stakeholders' ongoing framing of the measures' GP obscures certain overflows to sustain DAFS' collective action and fortify the network. As DAFS' sociotechnical *agencement* navigates the overflows (Callon, 1998a, 2007), I will demonstrate how it continuously shifts and reconfigures itself to suggest that the network is fairly stable, seemingly unprovoked, and performing as expected.

7.2 Engaging new *actants* as co-producers of the 'good'

When operational boundaries are framed to enable measures to perform, that boundary-setting implies that some elements are 'inside' it, while others remain 'outside' (Skærbæk & Tryggestad, 2010), through a process of 'selective inclusions and exclusions' (Zhang, 2017; Çalışkan & Callon, 2010). Because not everything can be accounted for when establishing a network of relations, overflows (or leaks) are inevitable (Callon, 1998a). Overflows' visibility emerges as 'intermediaries' (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2005) or mediating devices (Callon, 1998b; MacKenzie, 2007) present their possible connections to the network, demanding adjustments to the frames and a reconfiguration of the network to keep them *in* or *out*. Here, I will discuss the overflows that were enrolled or internalized (Callon, 1999) successfully to allow the measurement network's continued 'performance' (Callon, 2009) – that is, the continued intervention of the measures to produce or act DAFS' version of GP. Their inclusion in the network exposes the social, economic, political, and legal discourses that led to the reframing and reconfiguration of the network's *agencement*, its activities, and consequently the GP.

7.2.1 Letters of encouragement

Kathlyn, a caseworker, provides a good example of how her connection with the past (as a former recipient of child support) generated a response that triggered a change in her practice and led to the enrollment of a new *actant* (Latour, 1996) in DAFS' measurement network. She recalled the time when she opened a child support case with DAFS prior to joining the organization. Speaking from her experience, she conveyed the value of receiving regular support payments and noted the difference this could make to a family's *'quality of life'*. She recounted how the monthly payments she received gave her the means to give more than just the necessities of life, thus making life more *'fun'* for her and her children. She explained what it was like to have financial support in this way.

...when my kids say, 'hey, can we go out to dinner?', I got to say yes, 'cause all of my money was not going to the necessities. I had a couple hundred dollars extra a month that I could do certain things. Mom, can we go to... ride go-carts? And I was able to do those things, whereas before I wasn't. ... I got to do the fun things with them and go on a vacation every once in a while, where I could do something. It was just... it was a better quality of life for my kids. (Kathlyn, InterviewCaseworker)

Recalling the time before she applied for DAFS' enforcement services, she expressed her frustration over the child support that never came. Having personally experienced the lack of support from the children's father for more than 10 years, she understood the impact this could have on a family and was determined to find ways to get non-paying parents to pay. Her connection with families who were dependent on the noncustodial parents' financial support was *'overflowing'*, causing enough disturbances in her evaluation of such cases and encouraging her to consider new approaches to turn delinquent cases into paying cases.

When dealing with difficult cases, such as those of incarcerated noncustodial parents, Kathlyn's immediate reaction was one of *'action'* as opposed to *'do nothing'*. According to her, based on DAFS' business process and the case management tool or CMT, such cases would be color-coded as *'white'* indicating that *'there's nothing that we can further do on that case at that time. So, like if they're incarcerated, it will*

usually turn up 'white' until their release date'. Hence, if *'white'* cases appear on their computer screens, caseworkers would generally ignore them until the circumstances surrounding these cases change. A change in circumstance would trigger a change in the monitoring tool's color-coding of the case, which would then trigger a different response from caseworkers. Such were the constraints promoted by the tool that defined the operational boundaries of caseworkers for managing their cases. DAFS' tool, therefore, played a mediating role in DAFS' enactment of the measures by shaping caseworkers practices through the affordances and constraints (Pollock & D'Adderio, 2012) it offered.

But Kathlyn's logic, when handling difficult cases, differed from the logic of efficiency inscribed in the tool. Despite the performative mechanism in place to coordinate and track caseworkers' management of cases, Kathlyn acted in a way that she believed would produce the FPMs' GP. Driven by her own valuation of GP linked to a notion of *'quality of life'*, she took the initiative to address the *'white cases'* immediately and not wait for their circumstances to change. Because of the noncustodial parents' circumstances (i.e. being in prison), she decided to send out personal letters informing them of how they could still make payments while in prison, a performative act in response to a constraint that triggered an overflow (Callon, 2010) in the tool's configured operational framework. According to Kathlyn, she received a reply from one of the parents saying, *'I didn't know I could release my funds. Thank you. Here you go. Here's \$10'*. Such reaction from the parent provides justification for Kathlyn's action and opens up the political and ethical debate on and action to support (Callon, 2010) what counts as good.

Using Callon's (2010) perspective on the politics of performativity, we can see how the framing of DAFS' GP generated controversy over what was included in the framing that defined and performed the *'good'* and what was disregarded. DAFS' framed business process and tools urged caseworkers to act in a particular way and, as implicitly suggested by Kathlyn, provided an explanation for why things should be carried out the way they should. The sociotechnical *agencement* in place, while it successfully framed the efficient deployment of activities and enabled caseworkers to perform accordingly, produced a misfire when the *'excluded'* was eventually discovered (Callon, 2010). The now visible gap between Kathlyn's valued GP and the

action promoted by the *agencement* triggered a matter of concern requiring her attention and calling for a different course of action. Reminded by her own experience, she went on to say, ‘[...] *it doesn’t seem like a lot, but think of what \$10 can buy. Yeah. You could definitely take the kid to a movie where he wasn’t able to go before.*’ Her decision to make adjustments to her framed operation by sending a personal letter (an overflow) led to an adjustment in the noncustodial parent’s behavior – from not making a payment to actually paying (another overflow, since based on the tool’s assumption and configuration, white-coded cases were unlikely to make a payment and therefore did not require caseworker action). Further extending Kathlyn’s logic, we could assume that her action would have had an effect on the child’s wellbeing after benefitting from a parent’s financial support regardless of the amount paid.

Kathlyn’s decision to send a letter and the incarcerated parent’s response to the information she provided confirm that ‘there is no one best way, no single form of organization that imposes itself naturally and compellingly, so to speak, as the only one able to ensure the optimal functioning of [in this case, GP]’ (Callon, 2010, p. 163). Although the tool was developed to assist caseworkers in managing their caseload efficiently, its capability to identify cases demanding action exposed the gaps and opened up opportunities for the ‘exploration and exploitation’ of possibilities (Callon, Lascoumes & Barthe, 2009), just like in a well-functioning market (Callon, 2010). By visibly displaying cases, a connection was triggered, causing Kathlyn to explore through trial and error how to generate a payment among the ‘excluded’ possibilities. Had it not been for the tool inscribed with the measures’ logic that tracked and classified cases in a particular way, the incarcerated parents would have remained unidentified and Kathlyn perhaps would have remained unaffected.

This was not Kathlyn’s first and only attempt at letter writing. She alluded to several others that she and her former colleague developed and tested on noncustodial parents that could not be reached by nor would respond to telephone calls. When one of their letters elicited a positive response from noncustodial parents, it became a legitimate *actant* in DAFS’ network of relations. Eventually acquiring a position in the *agencement*, the letter became an agent in the production of GP. When asked how

this happened, she further explained,

Her and I actually sat next to each other for quite some time and we would bounce ideas off each other and letters and what's working for me, what's working for you. This is the feedback I got from clients and what's happening in the caseload. So, we would watch all of that and see how it's working. And so, we had a couple letters and we shared it with our Supervisor and then she took the final copy to the Unit Administrator to have it approved and it got put into flexi-form. (Kathlyn, InterviewCaseworker)

Acting like ‘researchers in the wild’ (Callon, 2007), they conducted their social experiment, tracked and documented their letter’s impact on their clients’ payment behavior, and shared their results through an organized forum. As Kathlyn said, ‘...it seems to work, I get a response from it. So, because I get a response from it, I’m gonna share it’. And this, she said, is ‘best practice’. Although the decision to implement the letter within the department did not involve all actors within the network, the approval process leading up to the letter’s conversion into a ‘flexi-form’ (a mechanism within DAFS’ operating system that automatically generated a pre-defined and pre-formatted document) created a space for its inclusion and reconfigured DAFS’ operational framework. Converted into a flexi-form, the letter acquired a new status and made connections with Enforcement caseworkers handling white-coded, incarcerated parents. With a click of a button, a caseworker could easily generate this pre-formatted letter that passed the test to claim its position in the network’s *agencement* and participate in DAFS’ enactment of GP. Hence, because of the framed entities that exposed the excluded, Kathlyn’s past was revived, giving rise to a letter that enabled her (and others) to keep producing the ‘good’. With links seamlessly connecting caseworkers, tools, systems, and cases, the letter’s enrollment in DAFS’ measurement network quickly became an active supporter and producer of GP.

7.2.2 From social worker to community partners

As actors played their parts according to the FPMs’ script, gaps and challenges emerged, posing a threat to the organization’s ‘conditions of felicity’ (Austin, 1975); that is, conditions necessary for a successful performance (MacKenzie, 2007) of the

valued good. For DAFS to perform the ‘good’, the social, political, technical, and material conditions had to be in place; otherwise, the GP might not always be ‘good’. But just when conditions seemed to securely frame DAFS’ enactment of GP, overflows began to emerge, causing a disruption in the production of the defined and known ‘good’. When conditions appeared stable for the sociotechnical *agencement* to perform, the frames defining the boundaries of GP made visible those that were excluded or denied by the framing (Callon, 2007, 2010). The excluded, however, were not limited to incarcerated parents; they extended to other non-paying cases and experts who knew how to deal with them better. Their identification and inclusion caused DAFS’ *agencement* to shift and be reconfigured so conditions for performance could be re-established.

In creating the condition for the ‘*most difficult cases*’ to perform, DAFS decided to make room for a social worker. Although not a practice in the child support program, DAFS management took the initiative and hired a full-time social worker to address the concerns of these difficult cases. Her inclusion in the network, like all the rest, was driven by the measures. As Bill said,

We’ve created a Social Work Unit, hired a licensed social worker in order to... those cases where the people are saying, I’m disabled, I can’t pay. Well, let’s steer... we’ll do the social security process, there might be a benefit in lieu of child support available for the kid. Or, if there is not, they end up with SSI and the case closes. That helps statistic... so we’ve left no stone uncovered. But, everything we do, every report we work, every...the CMT tool, Case Management Tool, those filters for different parameters, everything we’ve set up are based on those performance measures. (Bill, InterviewManagement)

The so-called ‘*difficult cases*’ are the cases that have barriers to making regular payments, like homelessness or a permanent medical disability, thus affecting DAFS’ capacity to produce GP. If carefully and appropriately assessed, these cases may be eligible for social security benefits that could go towards their child support obligation or may satisfy the criteria to have their cases closed. By having a dedicated person with the expertise to review these difficult cases, DAFS could channel the

right resources to help these cases perform or keep them out of DAFS' network by closing them. One particular case²⁴ involved a noncustodial parent that had not made a payment for 11 years due to 'chronic homelessness' after suffering from a brain injury. Despite his repeated attempts to apply for social security benefits, the Social Security Administration kept denying his case due to insufficient documentation in support of his application. When his case was reviewed by DAFS' social worker, he was referred to the appropriate services that could perform the necessary medical examination to determine his overall health condition. After securing the medical records he needed to serve as supporting evidence for his social security application, he received a favorable response and his child support case was eventually closed. This illustrates how the inclusion of a social worker to conduct a thorough assessment of cases, the appropriate agencies to address the noncustodial parent's concerns, and the established protocols to coordinate their work created the right condition for the non-paying case to be closed, be counted as 'good', and contribute to the performance of the measures. Indeed, by having a social worker on board, DAFS was finally able to 'assess these cases and help them get social security benefits so we can garnish that money; or the kids can get derivative benefits, we can count that as paying cases 'cause we can credit the [noncustodial parent]' (Kay, FG7Mixed).

Hiring a social worker proved to be beneficial to DAFS' overall standing in the child support community. Not only did the organization manage to deal with non-performing cases; they also gained a reputation for being innovative, as indicated in a featured article in a major child support publication. Indeed, as Paula said,

Nevada was the first State that got a licensed Social Worker to help our homeless population, our population who was disabled but social security denied them because they didn't fill out the paperwork correctly...So we got a Social Worker to help this section of the caseload find a resolution so child support wasn't spinning their wheels trying to collect money from people who just couldn't pay it (Paula_InterviewSrStaff)

Prior to their understanding of the FPMs, caseworkers did not give top priority to cases with difficulty making regular payments. Since these cases did not have the

²⁴ This story was reported by DAFS' social worker in a major child support publication published monthly by the Office of Child Support Enforcement.

ability to contribute to DAFS' 'total collection measure' (i.e. GP1.0), they were often disregarded or pushed aside. But when DAFS' turned into an entity that began performing the FPMs' 'good', it started tracking and classifying cases, as well as monitoring measurable outputs and outcomes. Management and caseworkers, after noticing the '*difficult cases*' and their impact on DAFS' performance scores, were prompted to consider possible solutions to turn these cases into a measurable 'good'. They began noticing community organizations that could help non-performing cases acquire the necessary conditions to perform. Soon, a new network of actors (i.e. tracking devices, 'difficult cases', social worker, community organizations, specialized knowledge and expertise, etc.) was formed and, through their collective action, generated the FPMs' GP. With their new links and connections, employees began adopting a culture of assistance towards delinquent payers and developed a more favorable opinion of noncustodial parents. Consequently, the once '*deadbeat*' became a person desperately needing support in order to produce the measured 'good'. As Kay remarked,

...We do so much outreach with Salvation Army, and the Project Homeless Connect, and the...Hope for Prisoners, where we have a whole Outreach Team, where there's people from all the different Units that are part of this team to try to intercept cases and really coordinate with the other agencies. 'Cause they end up here anyways. My understanding is we didn't use to have that. So, we've really grown and shifted the mindset from one that's punitive and saying, 'how come you're not paying your child support or you're a deadbeat', where it's more, 'okay what can we do to help you. There's gotta be issues. There must be some barriers and problems. Let's try to do what we can to help you and move towards a solution-focused model', instead of just throwing people in jail. We really give them a lot of chances. (Kay, FG7Mixed)

Hence, with the new community partners brought into the fold and a new sociotechnical *agencement* created, DAFS' difficult cases were no longer being set aside.

7.2.3 Call center and the friendly voice

Investigating the performativity of the FPMs allows us to examine how a network of actors and devices is continuously framed or new networks are created to collectively perform the ‘good’ that the measures are designed to measure. Each time a new entity emerges or opens up a possible link to the configured network, its coming into the fold almost becomes a necessity. Its entry, however, must be made known to establish its position within the coordinated network so the measures can continue to intervene and keep measuring what is ‘good’. Such was case with the establishment of DAFS’ Call Center and its network of connections that quickly followed. The creation of a Call Center was perceived as a necessary co-producer of GP in DAFS’ already configured network. For its inclusion to be productive, additional *actants*, such as state-of-the-art equipment, consultants, MAGIC (a customer service training program), processes, scripts, scorecards, and discourses on ‘good customer service’ geared towards improving the measures, had to be incorporated – in short, a considerable investment in forms – to support the enactment of GP.

At DAFS, roundtable discussions and team meetings served as forums for the identification of possible entrants. According to a caseworker, these meetings provided employees the opportunity to discuss gaps in their practice, challenges they face in delivering the GP, and possible solutions to their problems. In one occasion, for example, they noted how telephone calls and cases were being missed, ignored, or forgotten. These overflows would not have been identified without the network’s intermediaries (Callon, 1998a), such as the telephone, Internet, and tracking devices, that firmly settled in DAFS’ bounded network. Caseworkers, as part of their job, made and received telephone calls or corresponded with their clients by mail to remind them of their payments and court dates, respond to queries, or offer program information – actions that were expected to produce outcomes that count towards the FPMs. Without a proper address or information on a client’s whereabouts, they also conducted searches using a search engine or some web-based application to locate the individual. Due to the volume of telephone calls or the time it took to conduct a search, staff noticed an increase in dropped calls, complaints, or missed opportunities, thus affecting their production of GP. Missed or delayed communication meant late

payments, missed court dates for the establishment of paternities or child support orders, or delayed enforcement of an order. Realizing the impact of these overflows on DAFS' performance, two entities emerged to keep the overflows under control.

The Customer Service Department (CSD), which included the Call Center, was the new addition to DAFS' network that gathered the overflowing calls back into the bounded frames of DAFS' operation; while the centralized Locate Team was introduced to free up caseworkers from having to spend time locating parents. The former was prompted by the growing tension between meeting targets and providing 'good customer service'. Indeed, as Rachel said, '*...the Feds care about our performance; the County cares about how we treat our customers*'. Andrea, one of the IT specialists, described the tension in this way:

So, for 4 or 5 years, yeah, it was all about the numbers. It was not about anything else. And I think customer service hurt from that. So, we kinda took a step back [...] If it's all about the numbers, what can I do so that these people do their job without worrying about mail and phone calls and everything else and all the customer service they have to do, because then they can't focus on their numbers, right? There's not enough time. One is gonna suffer; either the numbers or the customers. [...] So, I think that's when the Call Center and some of those things came into play that, you know, we need to take that off their plates and have somebody else answering the phone calls and doing that type of stuff...' (Andrea, InterviewIT)

But its inclusion was strengthened by the circulating discourse on the measures, which were linked to 'good customer service'. As the Operations Director argued, '*great customer service*' meant focusing on the program's mission, '*and, that's the federal performance measures*'. He continued to establish their connection and said,

But we also have gone so far as to create a whole customer service unit, that whole thing, so that concept's very important. It's not a federal performance measure, but if you don't provide good customer service, I don't know how you do all the other things that involve the federal performance measures. (Bill, InterviewManagement)

Hence, both groups (CSD and Locate) were linked to the network to allow caseworkers to focus on their valued tasks. Their entry into the network was quickly accommodated given their potential impact on DAFS' collective action in delivering GP. As Jenny remarked, both the Locate Team and Call Center *'took a load off us 'cause we didn't have to sit and work on cases that were on 'locate'. We didn't have to sit and work on the... phone calls on a regular basis. I mean we do still have to make phone calls, but we're not answering our phone all day too'* (Jenny, FG3Caseworkers). The entities' inclusion and the subsequent restructuring of DAFS' organizational setting intensified the coordinated work of DAFS and their production of GP.

According to Paula, one of the senior staff members, DAFS used to rely on a Call Center that was operated and managed at the state level *'but it didn't work out and so we scrapped it. But when (the Director of Operations) came in, because (his state's) Call Center worked, he knew it could work'*. With support and encouragement from the new Director, DAFS established their own Call Center. Located in the main building, the Call Center, which formed part of the CSD, helped the organization in big ways. As Paula said, *'...the Call Center is containing 80% of all of the calls. So, they're able to resolve 80% of everyone's issue when they call in'*. To contain the huge volumes of calls, Customer Service Representatives (CSR) had to have their devices in place, thus further adding to and extending DAFS' sociotechnical *agencement*. Their ability to contain overflows required the support of a networked computing system that gave them access to a variety of information on the cases so they could address clients' enquiries or concerns appropriately. Paula described it in this way.

When the Call Center representative takes the call, they have all of our systems up. They've got [payment records system] up, they've got [document management system] up, they've got NOMADS up and they're able to check everything. 'Cause the case managers have been told to be specific in their notes and what they're calling the parties for. And that way, when they call in, the... CSR can read the notes and give the information right back so that person doesn't have to wait 2 days for another call back. (Paula, InterviewSrStaff)

Hence, creating the CSD involved huge investments and required reformatting of the *agencement* to ensure that dissatisfied clients, persistent callers, and uninformed parties were addressed immediately so they could perform the FPMs' 'good'. As a '*first point of contact for the office*', the CSRs made a huge difference in supporting the network's production of GP. As Paula explained,

They educate the callers, the customers, the parents with child support when they call in with a question. They give out information. They can mail out pay histories. They can update addresses, employers; they send wage withholdings. They send copies of orders; they can talk to attorneys or other States, jurisdictions. (Paula, InterviewSrStaff)

But to perform their role and act in coordination with DAFS' networked operation, CSRs had to be fully equipped with computers connected to databases that fed them with the correct information entered by caseworkers. Their successful assistance, therefore, depended on caseworkers' good documentation of case interactions, the stability of their material and technical devices, and their effective delivery of customer-friendly scripts. A combination of these elements, or this localized sociotechnical *agencement*, had to be in place so CSRs could manage the calls and free up caseworkers to deliver the 'good'. Caseworkers' detailed notes and other system information, therefore, were extremely valuable for CSRs' flawless operation. Navigating databases while taking telephone calls also meant that CSRs had to rely on their hands-free headsets, telephone devices, and computer monitors conveniently contained within their personal spaces. Their *agencement* enabled them to respond to customers' queries and guide them through the child support process suitably well. Within seconds, they could access and display case files on their computer screens to get a glimpse of the history of a case and provide clients with the relevant information (e.g. court dates, payment information, legal implications of non-action, etc.) to enable them to enact the measured 'good'. With these social, material, and technical elements properly configured, CSRs were able to assist caseworkers, guide clients through DAFS' services, and ultimately contribute to the production of GP.

The Call Center, as a regulator of the overflows, was an important extension to DAFS' network. CSRs, acting as conduits, directed the flow of the overflows coming

from telephone calls through a triage and contained potential disruptions to caseworkers' operations. Depending on the nature of the telephone call, CSRs either redirected the call to the appropriate caseworker or addressed it, the latter being the majority of the case. For example, if a noncustodial parent called inquiring about a letter he received from the agency or a voice message left by a caseworker, the CSR would go into the system to determine the status of the case based on the caseworker's notes and advise the caller accordingly. As Paula remarked, *'the Call Center is really that filter through the rest of the office. And the rest of the office is specific to a federal performance measure'* (Paula, InterviewSrStaff). Through this filtering process, DAFS' network responded and adjusted accordingly so the FPMs could be enacted.

CSRs' filtering work observed a particular code of conduct defined by a customer service training and scoring program called MAGIC (Make a Great Impression on the Customer). MAGIC was brought into the fold by the CSD head, who was *'trained on it 20 years ago'* while working for a Call Center in the private sector. He expressed his love for the program because *'it kind of breaks it down into the science of the call as well'*. The CSD head got permission to buy the program and have three of DAFS' employees trained to be certified trainers. Paula, a member of the CSD, explained MAGIC's program in this way:

...this MAGIC training course, there's a 33-point scorecard that is graded while you're on the call. So, it's everything from how was your greeting? Was it upbeat? Did you say your name? Did you say, 'I can help you'? Did you provide empathy? To the middle of the call, did you ask enough questions to get to what they're really calling about? Did you say please? Did you say thank you? If you had to put the caller on hold, did you say, 'would you mind if I put you on hold because', whatever the reason is. And then when you came back to the call, did you thank them, did you use your name, did you apologize for the wait, did you provide accurate information. (Paula_ InterviewSrStaff)

By providing CSRs with the right words and the right phrases to be uttered at the right time, MAGIC enabled CSRs to deliver good customer service and engage callers in a quick but pleasant exchange. As long as they remembered their script and garnered 26

on a 33-point scorecard, they can be assured that they made a *'good call'* and helped DAFS deliver the GP. Eddie, one of the managers, summed up the connection between good customer service and DAFS' GP in this way: *'if we provide better customer service and we do a better job of building relationships with our customers, especially our noncustodial parents, we have a higher pay rate'*. Hence, if they failed to deliver good customer service, DAFS' GP would likely be threatened.

CSRs, however, were not exempt from their own misfires because when callers *'get under your skin, you may snap at someone'*. Hence, to contain possible overflows, surveillance of telephone calls and computer screen navigations, as well as regular coaching, became part of the practice to ensure that good customer service was always delivered. As Paula explained,

So, while they're on the phone, I can hit, there's a listen button, I can hit listen and I can listen in on the live call. There's also a feedback button. I can talk to the CSR without the caller hearing me, and I can coach them. But then it also has another feature where I can look at an older call and I can open up the call and yet I can hear the recording of it. But I can also see all of the screens that they went in. All of their screens were recorded as well. So, I can make sure that the quality control aspect is there so we're looking for quality assurance. (Paula, InterviewSrStaff)

The surveillance of CSR phone calls captures Foucault's notion of disciplinary power (see Miller & O'Leary, 1987; Townley, 1993). In DAFS' case, the measures penetrated into a web of relations involving supervisors, tools, devices, and scripts for the management and control of individuals. This mode of power emerged through the practices, techniques, and procedures generated by DAFS' *agencement*, established a standard of behavior, and made individuals visible and governable (Miller & O'Leary 1987) – all of which enabled the measures to perform.

Investing on client communication software, devices, and services, therefore, enabled CSRs to support the numerous client-caseworker encounters and promote the performance of the measures. This, according to Paula, was the right thing to do because customers *'deserve a government agency that is working hard for them. These kids deserve the government to work hard for them to help them up financially*

so they can have a good childhood. [...] It's all to make sure that they're financially secure, that they stay off State assistance'. If DAFS can keep children and families off welfare, then the child support program must be doing something good, at least from the federal government's perspective.

7.2.4 Connecting the marginalized

Since that 'rude awakening' in 2007/2008, a culture of performance measures and management gradually developed at DAFS. FPMs became constant guests in team meetings, roundtable discussions, and strategic planning sessions. They intervened in DAFS' pursuit of organizational change through the number of connections they established and commanded to create an *effect* (Latour, 1996). Their intervention was made visible through the processes, reports, charts, and other technical and material devices that DAFS produced, circulated, and attested to be significant elements for the delivery of GP and improvement of performance scores. Conversations about the measures, hence, became part of organizational life. When new hires joined the network, they immediately were made aware of the measures' existence in one form or another. Speaking to Trixie, a senior staff, one could detect the pervasiveness and communicative force of the measures in shaping DAFS' organizational structure, processes, devices and, ultimately, individual behavior.

I've seen the charts that we have up and I've looked at them and I've...I guess maybe it's through osmosis and just being, sitting at the table when conversations about the numbers and the federal performance standards, and... 'oh, when you write your employees' evaluation, you need to include that we're all working towards the federal performance standards'. 'Oh okay, alright, I can do that. Sure'. (Trixie, InterviewManagement)

But not all departments immediately got on board, perhaps because of their poor connection with the rest of the organization. For example, employees in the Investigations department saw themselves as minor players in the organization. They operated in the periphery and did not consider their roles to be directly contributing to the performance measures. As Trixie explained,

Investigations is on the org chart and by custom, it's been separate from the

operations. So, people on the operation side of the house, they're very much about the numbers and striving to meet those goals. The numbers are very much in front of them. Whereas Investigations, I don't know that it's been as obvious that our work supports, that there's... there's not a direct connection between our work and the numbers; although obviously there is. (Trixie, InterviewManagement)

DAFS' Investigations department served as critical connectors to the operations units (i.e. Establishment and Enforcement). Their role often involved face-to-face interaction with noncustodial parents. Based on the state's child support manual, 'the case manager must issue and serve a notice and finding of financial responsibility upon the NCP pursuant to NRS 425.3822 within 90 days of locating the NCP' (Nevada Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). At DAFS, caseworkers prepared the paperwork associated with the 'Notice and Finding' (NAF), while process servers from the Investigations department served or gave legal notice to the noncustodial parents that a child support case was filed against them. If process servers did not act on the NAFs quickly, caseworkers' measurable outputs would be affected severely. In a focus group, caseworkers responsible for establishing paternities and child support orders emphasized the importance of the process servers' role in delivering DAFS' GP.

Simone: [...] There's nothing guaranteeing if I do 30-40 NAFs that month, that that many are gonna get served and that that many are gonna respond or they're not. You don't know which way things are gonna fall.

Nancy: We have no control...I mean, we don't have control of how...when they're gonna be served, so we have no control of when it's gonna come time for an order and, you know, we don't have control of that. We can just keep moving along and hope that they... other people are doing their jobs to help us do our job.

KM: So, they're all connected.

Nancy: All connected. It's just one big... (FGICaseworkers)

To manage or contain possible leaks due to delays or inaction, Trixie brought the Investigations department into the fold and helped them appreciate their role

within the wider network. With encouraging words, she reframed the department's identity by underscoring their specific contribution to DAFS' performance scores and stressing the importance of their work to the production of the good. As Trixie said,

[...] there was a theme that I heard in every group and it was, 'wow, we're just the Process Servers. Oh, well we're just Security, we're just the Clerks, you know. We, you know, we just do investigations'. I mean, it was very lack of confidence, lack of... being marginalized and being minimized. And so very early on, I sat down with all of them in one big group and I said, 'this stops now. We are Investigations and we are an integral part of DAFS. And everything that we do supports the mission. [...], and I congratulated them. I said, 'we moved up, right?' I didn't even say we, I said 'you moved up from 54th in the nation to 29th in the nation. And it wasn't just Enforcement'. I said, 'you served the papers that got the people into court. It wasn't just Establishment. You're the ones that got the guys in here to do the DNA tests. It wasn't just, you know, the front service people'. I said, 'you're the ones that made the arrests on the bench warrants and collected \$30,000 last month'.
(Trixie, InterviewManagement)

This performatively narrative approach was Trixie's way of repositioning the roles and identities of the Investigations staff within DAFS' measurement network and establishing the link between their work and the measures. She explained to the process servers that because they served '*1,000 pieces of paper... there were 500 paternities that were established... and 500 more children are receiving child support*'. Serving the noncustodial parents with a legal notice was often the first step to get a paternity (FPM#1) or child support order established (FPM#2). If they failed to serve them, caseworkers and attorneys would not be able to proceed with the establishment process. To investigators, she explained how the number of bench warrants they served generated \$50,000 in collection (FPM#3 or FPM#4) as a result of an arrest or a collection to avoid an arrest. By establishing the connection between their work and the FPMs, Trixie brought the department fully in line with DAFS' network. Had she ignored the department's sense of isolation, its fragile connection with the network could have further weakened or snapped. But by clarifying their connectivity and building their emotional attachment (Espeland, 2016) to the

measures, Trixie allowed them ‘to construct a collective identity, be recognized, and transform their position of exclusion into one of inclusion’ (Callon & Rabeharisoa, 2008: 236) so they can diligently produce the ‘good’.

As they developed a better understanding of their connection with the network, process servers began to appreciate the importance of their role in meeting DAFS’ performance goals, modified their interactions with customers, and altered their overall demeanor. Generally perceived by the public as adversarial due to their affiliation with court proceedings, process servers started maintaining a positive relationship with noncustodial parents to encourage them to perform DAFS’ articulated ‘good’ (i.e. making regular child support payments). They began tapping into DAFS’ experts and partner agencies to fill the gaps in their practice, thus reinforcing the organization’s network of connections. As Sally, a member of the team, explained:

A process server can be a very first person, as an example of a child support agency; and their professionalism, their courtesy, their knowledge, their ability to answer questions and be helpful and not adversarial, because we want people to come. We want them to see what we’re about, what programs we have and...if it’s a contempt and they’re not paying and they don’t have a job, well here’s a pamphlet. We have social workers and we have Goodwill, and we have Ask a Lawyer, and we have this and that, and this and that, we... We’re very mindful of that too. (Sally, FG7Mixed)

With their reframed tasks, roles, and identities, process servers (and the rest of the Investigations department) began delivering DAFS’ preferred ‘good’ (i.e. quickly serving legal notices to noncustodial parents so orders can be established and counted). Because their configured position in the network was made fit for purpose, their engagement with the network further enabled DAFS’ GP to be valued and made valuable. They began to appreciate their contribution to DAFS’ performance scores and state ranking, which served as a validation of their GP. Hence, from passive supporters to active performers, their reconfigured roles had turned them into co-producers of the ‘good’.

7.2.5 Courts, statutes, and ‘orders’

Understanding the FPMs at DAFS was a continuing process of defining and articulating what was worth performing through an assemblage of actors and devices interacting to perform the measures. Employees, devices, meetings, targets, email communications and other actors organized themselves to make the GP visible so the measures could perform. Each time a new *actant* entered DAFS’ practice, actors involved in this ‘epistemic project’ (Knorr-Cetina & Brügger, 2000; see also Roscoe, 2015a) had to adjust or shift the boundaries of their organization and articulation of GP. Otherwise, simply ignoring the new entrant could threaten the coordinated, tightknit network of interactions and cause a disruption in the production of the ‘good’.

At DAFS, the Courts may be considered a ‘new’ entrant. Although involved in child support enforcement, they were not fully ‘enrolled’ (Callon, 1986) in DAFS’ bounded network of articulation early on. The rationality guiding their engagement with DAFS’ sociotechnical *agencement* was not aligned with the existing narrative around measures and GP. Hence, DAFS actors (attorneys, in particular) had to bring them in to stabilize their collective action, allow the measures to perform, and let the ‘good’ emerge through a carefully crafted and recursive dialectic (Roscoe, 2015a). To illustrate this, it is necessary first to understand the Courts’ interaction with DAFS.

Establishing a child support order at DAFS is primarily a judicial process²⁵. This basically means that ‘the court sets the order’ (NCSL, 2017). Even if parties come to an agreement outside of court, in which case DAFS prepares an ‘Order Upon Consent’, the order would have to be signed by the Courts. Hence, while the Courts operate independently, their connection to DAFS is built into the child support process and made visible by their co-location²⁶. Co-locating the courts with DAFS has

²⁵ The process of establishing child support orders can be judicial, administrative, or quasi-judicial. These classifications are based on a study commissioned by the Department of Health and Human Services to examine states’ process for establishing child support orders. (See Gardiner, K., Tapogna, J. & Fishman, M. E. 2002. Final Report: Administrative and Judicial Processes for Establishing Child Support Orders. The Lewin Group, Inc.). Nevada’s classification can be found in the National Conference of State Legislatures’ (NCSL) recent (2017) compilation of state child support process. See <http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/child-support-process-administrative-vs-judicial.aspx>.

²⁶ The decision to have DAFS, the courts, and other child support-related agencies in the same premises appears to have been leadership’s strategy to improve the organization’s performance. This eliminated the need for a customer to travel from one agency to another to get an order established or even make a payment. According to a county press release in 2013, the year DAFS received an award for program

huge implications for DAFS' business operations because it means having full access to the courtrooms, thus increasing the number of cases that can be heard and processed. Although the courtrooms are assigned exclusively to DAFS cases, the delivery of GP is not guaranteed because the Courts' decision may or may not promote DAFS' valued 'good'.

To manage the potential overflows in the judicial process, DAFS attorneys, along with their technical devices (i.e. statutes and procedural guides), brought the Courts into the FPMs' performative discourse so they could participate in the delivery of the 'good'. Attorneys in a focus group discussion offered a good example. Because cases heard in court could result in decisions that could potentially harm the organization's performance, Alistair claimed that *'trying to educate the bench about, you know, the decisions they make and how that affects our federal performance measures is also a big part of our job, I think. They don't realize how their decisions... they think they're doing the right thing, like Alex mentioned.'* When asked how the education would be carried out in the presence of litigants, Alex was quick to provide clarification on the matter.

Alex: It's... it's something that.... it's very touchy because.... may I, may I say....

Alistair: Yeah, please...

*Alex: Because you don't wanna come right out and tell a court in front of a courtroom full of litigants and parties that we're focusing on meeting these numbers, uhm because then the whole concept of jurisprudence is **justice is blind**. You don't make decisions based on meeting the needs of an organization and their performance measures. You make decisions based on statutes and fairness and law and precedent. So, you can't come right out and say, 'Your Honor, I'm asking for this because it's gonna help our federal performance measures', okay. That would get us in deep trouble if anyone was paying attention. [...] It should have no bearing on their decision. Okay? But, **a decision needs to be made according to law**, and I think that if the law is*

improvement, '...The improvements are attributable to a variety of factors such as the relocation of [DAFS] to the [new site], which allows customers a "one stop shop" for all agencies involved with child support cases.'

followed, the federal performance measures will take care of itself.
(FG5Attorneys, emphasis added)

While we might think that ‘*justice is blind*’, once measures intervene, it fails to be so. Measures make certain statutes and laws more visible and valuable. As implied by another attorney in a separate interview (see Chapter 6.5.2), when a statute presents opportunities for delivering the good, its value emerges and makes the possible application to a case appealing. As discussed in the previous chapter, DAFS attorneys for years set monthly obligation amounts for cases with no verified income information at Nevada’s average wage (a figure that tends to be higher than what an average DAFS noncustodial parent might earn) despite a provision in the statute allowing them to set it at the ‘minimum order’ of \$100 a month. Establishing a high obligation amount on a noncustodial parent with no income information could be setting the case for failure if the parent does not have the means to make the payments. But, when the measures took a prominent position at DAFS, attorneys began noticing and interpreting the statute within the context of the FPMs, thus shaping their order establishment practice according to the measured ‘good’. Hence, while the statute had been in existence, it remained a dormant ‘enactor’ until the FPMs intervened in DAFS’ legal process.

Both Alex and Alistair then went on to explain that educating Hearing Masters meant helping them understand how certain decisions, if presented or articulated differently, could help DAFS’ FPMs. Alex brought up the example of a Hearing Master’s tendency to modify retroactively the monthly obligation amount of cases whose children had already emancipated. If a non-paying case had been found to have a child that had already emancipated²⁷ (i.e. the child is no longer considered a minor), the noncustodial parent would no longer be responsible for supporting that child (except for the unpaid support before the emancipation). Retroactively modifying the ordered amount (i.e. a downward adjustment in the monthly obligation amount to reflect the time when the child emancipated) would help the noncustodial parent but would not necessarily have an immediate impact on the FPMs due to the federal

²⁷ Based on the legal definition of emancipation articulated by the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Welfare and Supportive Services, a child is considered emancipated ‘when the child turns 18, or, if the child is still in high school, until graduation or age 19, whichever comes first’. See https://dwss.nv.gov/Support/1_0_0-Support/

reporting period. As Alex explained, the ‘unpaid’ amount during those years that the child emancipated would have already been recorded and reported to the federal government and used to calculate their rate of collection measure (FPM 3) and corresponding incentive payment. Therefore, his approach was to propose to the Hearing Master to include language in the court orders that would authorize DAFS to modify the obligation amount automatically when a child reaches the age of emancipation. This would save them from taking the case to court for a modification, stop the system from counting what should no longer be counted, and increase their chances of collecting due to the downward adjustment in the dollar amount. As Alex said,

You can't just change the numbers in the system to reflect the lower child support. You need a court order. So, the Master might, and I stress the word might think that by going back in time, let's say we're now in 2015, saying I'm gonna go back to 2010 and make his obligation instead of \$500 a month, I'm gonna make it \$325 a month, [...] Well, the Master thinks perhaps that this benefitted us, okay? But, all those months, that \$500..., if he wasn't paying \$500 a month, the Master's reduction to \$325 a month going back 5 years in time didn't help the way the Master may think it did help. What would have helped is at the moment of that emancipation, the [initial] order had authorized us to drop current support in our system to \$325 and then we had a much greater chance of collecting the full child support amount... (Alex, FG5Attorneys)

Assisting the Hearing Master in their interpretation and application of the law could make a huge difference in delivering the measures’ ‘good’ because, as Alistair said, ‘*there's more than one way to make a decision, to make an outcome*’. Hence, for Alistair, it was important that Hearing Masters, statutes, and orders were brought into the FPMs’ performable space (Busco & Quattrone, 2015) so the ‘*better way*’ could be deployed. When brought into this space, measures became a matter of concern for everyone involved. They were valued and made valuable.

In another example, Alistair explained how he proposed to the Hearing Master to modify an order to reflect a noncustodial parent’s ‘good faith payments’, instead of

enforcing a high-dollar order that could never be paid. He argued that his recommendation ‘*causes a similar outcome but would better help our federal performance measures without saying that in court of course; but we get to the same end result but with a better way of doing it.*’ If a noncustodial parent consistently paid \$100 a month on a \$300-order, Alistair thought that it would be better to just modify the order to the minimum amount²⁸ of \$100 (assuming the case was eligible for a modification). This, he explained, would not affect the noncustodial parent’s payment practice (i.e. monthly payment of \$100), but it would improve DAFS collection rate from 33% (\$100 paid vs. \$300 owed prior to the modification) to 100% (\$100 paid vs. \$100 owed after the modification). Modifying the order, he argued, simply reflects the noncustodial parent’s payment capacity while enabling DAFS to obtain a higher performance score. Hence, Alistair’s proposition, the Courts’ engagement, and the statute that enabled the ‘reframing’ of an order turned the same payment phenomenon from bad to good, from partial payment to full payment, in support of the FPMs.

Both examples above show how attorneys, in their attempt to contain court overflows, passed on their knowledge of the measures by framing the rationality of their proposed recommendations according to DAFS’ qualified ‘good’. Their discourses naturally flowed into the courtrooms and, slowly shaping court proceedings, became their communication device to gather *actants* that could generate the GP. Through carefully articulated propositions, DAFS attorneys shaped court decisions and enabled judges to settle in comfortably into the FPM space.

7.3 Conflicts in delivering the ‘good’

Although DAFS’ performance scores continued to improve, suggesting a more or less stable measurement network, tensions and conflicts were not lacking. Tensions emerged when some employees did not entirely agree with the framing decisions of the valued ‘good’, questioned the fairness of the production goals, or felt constrained by their framing devices. With the added pressure to secure their prized possession (i.e. alternative work schedule), some caseworkers either engaged in unacceptable behavior or performed meaningless actions just to meet their numbers. Others, whose

²⁸ According to state statutes, ‘the minimum amount of support that may be awarded by a court in any case is \$100 per month per child, unless the court makes a written finding that the obligor is unable to pay the minimum amount’ Amount of payment: Determination. *NRS 125B.080*. United States: Nevada Legislature.

preferred ‘good’ competed with the measured ‘good’, expressed dissent by pursuing the former or subverting the latter. Still others, though silent, internally struggled as they reluctantly performed within their framed environment, opening up possibilities for an internal revolt. Yet, because of their weak position in the network and poor framing narratives, their contestations could not alter the hegemonic discourse surrounding the measures. Key actors and devices within the network commanded more connections and plaited the weak ties (Latour, 1996), thus making it difficult for the conflicts and struggles to break DAFS’ intricately connected and integrated topology. But someday, perhaps, dissenters might gather enough allies to re-qualify GP, re-configure DAFS’ network, and ultimately enact yet another ‘good’.

Examining closely the ‘relations of domination’ (Çalışkan & Callon, 2010) in DAFS’ measurement network, one can observe the ‘powerful’ emanating from the connectedness of the network and managing the tensions in and through DAFS’ sociotechnical *agencement*. Relying on their positions and ‘technical attachments’ (Callon, 2016), *actants* reinforce their articulations of the measures, contain unwanted deviations from the defined ‘good’, and secure the network’s collective action. The cognitive and agential effects produced by the network’s connections keep DAFS’ production of the ‘good’ unperturbed. Nevertheless, as the network continues to evolve, the configured entity’s relations of domination are far from permanent and may open up a number of possibilities to allow a shift in and a reconfiguration of the network.

7.3.1 Straying from the path of GP

Despite the convergence of newly appointed and existing *actants* to intensify the production of GP, DAFS did not always deliver the good due to overflows that continued to appear. For example, although Kathlyn’s letter was welcomed in DAFS’ enforcement process, it did not always generate a positive response from ‘white-coded’ cases. This means that caseworkers handling such cases had to temporarily ignore them, wait until their circumstances change, and focus their energies on the potentially ‘productive’ ones (i.e. cases that were likely to make a payment). In the meantime, however, the obligation amounts of these ‘white-coded’ cases would continue to accrue, affecting caseworkers’ performance in the two measures: the collection rate (total amount collected versus total amount owed) and the arrears

measure (number of cases that made a payment towards arrears versus number of cases with arrears). With monitoring and reporting tools on hand, caseworkers could tell which cases were affecting their performance. Thus, their visibility could put undue pressure on caseworkers who are trying to meet their production outputs. For example, if the incarcerated (non-paying) cases were becoming a threat to their evaluation and prized possession (i.e. AWS), caseworkers might just decide to ‘silence’ them. They might do this by manually ‘inactivating’ the ordered obligation amount, an unacceptable practice, to stop it from calculating and reporting. This would require logging into the state’s certified automated system (i.e. NOMADS) so the caseworker, as one supervisor explained, could ‘*flip one thing*’.

To provide context for the above misbehavior, a brief description of the process is required. When a child support order is established at DAFS, a caseworker is required to enter the order information in NOMADS. This includes the monthly obligation amount that must be paid and other relevant information²⁹ for reporting purposes. As the state’s official database, NOMADS is the system used by caseworkers to enter, modify, or update any case information according to federal and state guidelines. It serves as the data source for reporting so the federal government can calculate the state’s performance scores and corresponding incentive payments, subject to a data reliability audit. Having access to the system enables caseworkers to perform DAFS’ GP, but it also presents possibilities and allows them to act inappropriately. Supervisors in a focus group alluded to a situation where a caseworker, in violation of protocols, decided to inactivate a child support order for fear of losing her AWS. Joanna described it this way:

*Let’s say for instance I find one of my NCPs in prison. And the case manager would just go in and inactivate the current support because she knows that she can’t collect on it and.... **so, she would just go in and inactivate ‘cause that’s gonna help her numbers out.** And she’s so worried, just throughout every month, I hear like, ‘I can’t lose my schedule, I can’t lose my schedule’.*
(Joanna, FG2Supervisors; emphasis added)

²⁹ See Nevada’s Child Support Enforcement Manual, Chapter V, Support Obligations, for more information: <https://dwss.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/dwssnv.gov/content/Support/C0500.pdf>

As Joanna seemed to suggest, by inactivating the order, the caseworker effectively disconnected the case from DAFS' algorithmic accounting process and made its 'poor performance' non-existent. Her decision to modify her case management practice by silencing a case that was unlikely to support DAFS' GP was driven by her desire to preserve her valued 'good' (i.e. AWS). Given that the case in question involved a noncustodial parent who was in prison, the caseworker, according to a supervisor, could have achieved the same outcome without violating the process. As Sarah said, *'[o]fficially, it takes a little while, but you can do that officially and do it right. You just don't turn [the order] off'*. But perhaps because it does take a while, the caseworker decided to take the quicker route to get the performance numbers she needed for the year and secure her AWS.

The idea of inactivating orders, however, would probably not have emerged had production goals and incentives not been introduced and enforced. But because of the pressure to meet the goals, which are tied to valued incentives, and the presence of difficult cases defying those goals, conflicts arose causing the caseworker to resist DAFS' preferred path for delivering GP. Given that some noncustodial parents' behavior did not always support DAFS' goals, a leak emerged causing a caseworker to manage the perceived threat to her valued 'good'. As Deb said,

because meeting goals and production standards is on your.... On your eval period, if you've met the goal and if you've met production standards for the year, then you can have an alternative work schedule. And if you don't meet production and goals, you can lose your schedule and so that being tied together really affected us. We're trying to get people to work better and smarter and yet they're just doing things to meet standards so that they keep their schedule. (Deb, FG2Supervisor)

Working '*better and smarter*', however, meant different things to different *actants*. For DAFS' tracking device, it meant systematically identifying and classifying cases to alert caseworkers when to deploy the appropriate action. For Kathryn, it meant overriding the tracking device's prescribed action and encouraging incarcerated parents to meet their financial responsibility. For another caseworker, it meant deviating from protocol and disconnecting the unresponsive case to meet her

targets and secure her AWS. Hence, what is ‘*better*’ is never settled. The actors and devices that were framed to enact the qualified ‘good’ that can be counted revealed other values, concerns, and possibilities that triggered a disruption and demanded a reframing of DAFS’ configured network. Some caseworkers attempted to establish and control the value (Reinecke, 2015) that mattered to them (either by sending encouraging letters or inactivating orders) in defiance of the prevailing good. Some succeeded and others failed, forcing a shift in the network and a restructuring of the *agencement* to deliver a re-adjusted and reformulated ‘good’ that can both be valued and measured. It is through this process where the qualification and quantification of the ‘good’ merge, where values and value are co-constituted (Skeggs, 2014), so the GP can continue to exist and be judged as such by the FPMs.

7.3.2 Counting but not producing the ‘good’

At DAFS, monthly goals and business intelligence tools are ‘routinely embedded’ (Dambrin & Robson, 2011: 443) in caseworkers’ practice, guiding their decisions and next plan of action. Acting as enablers, these monthly targets direct employees’ actions towards the production of the valued ‘good’. Through the coordinated work of tracking and reporting devices, the organization’s non-financial incentive system, and employees’ yearly performance reviews, the monthly targets are made to exist so management could refer to them for their supervision and control of caseworkers’ activities. Tracking devices capture caseworkers’ activities and generate quantitative reports that managers use to prepare Employee Performance Reports (EPR). The EPR, a standard form used for an employee’s yearly evaluation, conveniently presents the reported numbers as a matter of fact and acts as a third-party judge mediating between caseworker and supervisor. These facts, however, are sometimes contested when the supposedly coordinated network generating the so-called facts is breached due to an overflow challenging the numbers’ underlying logic. The number says one thing, but the expected reality suggests another. Hence, to sustain the integrity of the facts behind the numbers, managers and supervisors must skillfully regulate these overflows by reconfiguring the sociotechnical *agencement* so it could keep delivering acceptable facts.

The contested facts appeared when the developing laser-focused attitude towards the monthly targets (Bevan & Hood, 2006; Lewis, 2015; Ridgway, 1956), or

what Smith (1995) calls ‘measure fixation’, caused some caseworkers to focus on meeting the targets rather than the ‘good’ underlying them. In the Enforcement department, for example, caseworkers were required to produce a certain number of actions (e.g. phone calls) to generate the assumed outcomes (e.g. payment) that could count towards the FPMs. Due to the pressure to meet their targets, some caseworkers started performing actions that count rather than actions that produce the ‘good’. According to Alyssa, some caseworkers were simply deploying the prescribed actions so they could be counted, but with little regard for the underlying conditions of cases or the potential outcomes their actions might generate. The excessive attention to the numbers, in her view, ‘*kind of creates people taking actions unnecessarily*’. This ‘gaming’ behavior is what Bevan and Hood (2006) describe as ‘hitting the target and missing the point’ (p. 521). Rather than being engaged in a thoughtful process to determine the best possible enforcement action on each case, some caseworkers were carrying out actions perfunctorily. Consequently, as Alyssa explained, senseless actions were being performed, thus affecting the production of the ‘good’ that counts.

If you do contempts on someone who has no ability to pay, are you really gonna get an action? If someone is indigent and they are in rehab or something and you’re doing contempt on them, they’re not going to pay. Contempt is not gonna get them to pay. They can’t get money from nowhere. So, you’ve just taken an action that means nothing.... We have people who would do a whole bunch of driver’s license suspensions. Why? You should be really looking at the case and see what the case needs... (Alyssa, InterviewManagement, emphasis added)

Aware of the unintended consequences of target setting, Allison and Alyssa in separate occasions explained management’s approach to managing such overflows through a quality control process (a new *actant* in DAFS’ network). They started conducting audits on randomly selected cases to monitor and contain misconducts or negligence and relied on the tracking and reporting devices to identify suspected ‘wrongdoers’. Using the data reports provided by these devices, they would compare a caseworker’s production outputs (e.g. number of telephone calls or driver’s license suspensions) and performance rates (i.e. rates of current collection and arrears collection). A huge discrepancy between the two (i.e. high monthly outputs and low

collection rate) would be an indication of a possible anomaly. As Alyssa explained, *‘if you do those target goals, we’re hoping that your percentages would go up. If your percentages don’t go up, but you reached those target goals, then we would evaluate you’*. A discrepancy would then trigger a review of a sample of cases to determine the appropriateness of the actions deployed by the caseworker. If actions appear legitimate, other programmatic or operational factors (e.g. caseload changes or temporary reassignment) might explain the discrepancy; thus, managers must hold off on their judgment. As Alyssa remarked, *‘if you can find a reason to justify it, it seems to be okay’*. Hence, given the logic behind the review process, some caseworkers learned *‘how to work the system’* by producing legitimate outputs in anticipation of poor outcomes. As long as they could prove that they performed the prescribed actions, they are confident that their poor performance could pass for good. Indeed, as Alyssa noted,

...when you talk to those people, what they start doing is doing all these widgets, the productions, and surpassing the production number to justify why they’re not... ‘I’ve done all these and I can’t get my number to move’, so you can leave them alone.

But as John, a caseworker, pointed out, the performance rate has an element of ‘luck’ based on the type of cases that a caseworker ends up managing. He argued that the composition of a caseload, which is alphabetically distributed, could significantly affect a caseworker’s performance rates. A caseload with several ‘regular paying cases’ versus one that has a number of ‘never-paying cases’ with high obligation amounts would require very different approaches to case management and would likely produce different outputs and outcomes. As John explained,

‘Cause sometimes the numbers, the performance measures, the good thing about those is part of it is luck. And I have to say that...And the reason I say that is, if I have a caseload and all of my cases are \$100 a month guys, which is really not big but... I get them each to pay or most of them to pay. It’s fairly simple. I’m gonna look good. I’m gonna have a nice little 70% or whatever. And then all of a sudden, I have, you know, Mr. Charlie Stokes moved to Vegas and he has a \$12,000 child support amount a month and he’s on my

caseload and he doesn't pay, all the work that I did for these other guys goes away. 'Cause his \$12,000 just shot me down. So, it's kinda.... It's partially luck... but if I have one guy who's just not gonna pay, he will...he has no problem going to jail for 10 days every 6 months...he can affect my numbers... So, partially it has to do with luck (laughter).... The office probably doesn't want to consider that, but I personally do. (John, InterviewCaseworker)

The assumption that a rise in output would lead to a rise in outcome is therefore contested given that the former depends on a caseworker's action, while the latter depends on the case's response to the action. All targets (i.e. outputs) may be met, but outcomes may not necessarily be achieved especially in situations where a caseworker manages a caseload with a number of difficult cases. Yet, if caseworkers are held accountable for both outputs and outcomes that are tied to a valued incentive (i.e. AWS), this indeed could be very stressful. As Alyssa articulated,

Enforcement, no matter how much enforcement actions you do... how many times you can call someone, how many threats you make to them, they still ultimately have control of whether or not they're gonna pay that child support, you know. So, I can't say I'm gonna collect 100% of the time on all my cases because there's that outside element that I can't control. I can influence, but I can't control it. Whereas, if I'm establishing an order, you participate, it will move faster, if you don't, I still can get that order. So, they feel there's some kind of unfairness relating to the numbers. (Alyssa, InterviewManagement)

However, as Alyssa admitted, it also works the other way. If a caseworker has consistent payers (e.g. noncustodial parents who are fully employed and make payments through automatic income withholding), outputs become immaterial. In such situations, caseworkers do not feel compelled to perform the prescribed actions, unless the conditions of their cases change. Alyssa cited an example where a caseworker did not produce the outputs required, and yet managed to meet the required outcomes.

I have one worker that had 5 actions the entire month, but her caseload has a production... collecting in the 70% with very little actions taken. So, you can't say that if you do this, it results in the numbers because you have some people

that don't do any of that and the numbers are still high. (Alyssa, InterviewManagement)

Alyssa acknowledged the loopholes of the accountability system they have in place. The system, in her view, does not provide an accurate assessment of caseworkers' performance because of the variety of factors that come into play and cause an overflow in the production of the 'good'.

So, you have some people who work hard, work hard, work hard, their numbers go up, but it doesn't necessarily mean they're going to be the greatest. And then you have people who don't do a lot and the system.... It just works for them. (Alyssa, InterviewManagement)

Yet, such overflows are made 'inactive and invisible' (Callon, 2010: 164) by the intricately entangled actors and devices that continue to enact the preferred 'good' and produce the good scores for DAFS. Although the quality control process was management's way of containing possible discrepancies, it also elaborated and reinforced the importance of the numbers in the production of DAFS' GP. It acquired its own performative force by pointing to discrepancies as exceptions and reinforcing the connections between the numbers and caseworkers' actions in order to hold the network of articulations together. Hence, despite the 'imperfect numbers' circulating DAFS' measurement network, a *bricolage* of inscription devices and their enabling features supporting caseworkers' practical everyday action (Dambrin & Robson 2011) allowed the measures to keep performing and caseworkers to reframe their meaningless action.

7.3.3 Subverting the valued 'good'

DAFS' production of GP was occasionally threatened due to actors' competing valuations of the 'good' to be performed. Veronica's case is an example. Sensing a conflict between her personal and DAFS' valuation of GP, she decided to re-articulate the latter to justify her preferred 'good'. Her decision, which diverged from management's definition of the 'good', the business process, monitoring tools, procedural manuals, and other such devices, caused an imbalance in the configured network. As an Intake worker, Veronica conducted initial reviews of child support

applications and case referrals. When confronted with a case requiring further review, rather than passing it on to the next team, Veronica decided to carry out the assessment. Her decision to go beyond the confines of her work, an indication of an overflow, was triggered by her familiarity with case management work. The knowledge and experience she acquired having worked in different departments compelled her to address the case immediately instead of allowing it to drag on. But because her decision meant delaying the processing of other cases in her caseload, she failed to meet her production goals, was put on a Performance Improvement Plan, and consequently lost her AWS. Management was not supportive of her decision. Backed by workflows, devices, and data reports on production outputs, they expressed their disagreement with her decision and reminded her to keep the cases flowing according to DAFS' business process. Veronica, annoyed by the reprimand, felt like a prisoner of her own devices that tracked her every move. She felt that her professional discretion and valuation of 'good case management' were being discounted by the prevailing 'good' inscribed in and imposed by the devices and procedures to which she as a caseworker was attached and 'locked in' (Callon & Rabeharisoa, 2008; Dambrin & Robson, 2011). Her professional boundaries established by the specialization, along with the operational tools, presented constraints to the delivery of case management work. Veronica, in a focus group, described the conflict in this way:

....so my Supervisor will say, 'Veronica, don't do Locate's job, don't do Establishment's job.' And I'm like, I'm just doing the job. If I see something, whether it's a social security.... If he's in jail, I'm gonna look Google and see if he's in inmate search. I'm gonna at least make that attempt. Now Locate can do a fuller, you know, research on it if I can't find him right away. But, why would I not do that? I'm in the case already. [...] I don't know. And I guess just sort of my experience, I know more, I see more. I mean, I was a clerk, I'm in the... a court clerk. I worked for Enforcement for just a brief time, and Intake. I just... I don't know, I feel I'm well rounded so... that's hurting me with my numbers, but yet I'm getting the cases done correctly. (Veronica, FG4Caseworkers)

Supporting Veronica's views, Sheila jumped in and expressed a similar sentiment.

Sheila: We're both on the same page in that when a case leaves Intake, we want it to be perfect for the next person that touches it. I don't want anybody coming behind me having to clean up a mess or having to do any unnecessary work, for example, a pseudo is assigned to the case. All you have to do is look in DMV and get the 'social' and update it. But that's too much work.

Veronica: It's an extra step.

Sheila: It's an extra step. But the person that comes behind me, if I update that 'social' in the system and it hits the interfaces overnight with the different computer systems that we have, the next person that picks it up is gonna probably have an employer, an address, whatever. But all I had to do was update the 'social' to help them do their job.

KM: But that's not encouraged because that's not what you need to do.

Sheila: It takes too much time. I'm doing somebody else's work.

(FG4Caseworkers)

Considering herself a 'good worker', Sheila's attempt to immediately address the issue at hand was her way of expressing and mobilizing her preferred 'good'. But, like Veronica, her decision to act in this way was not well received by management because of the disruption to the process and tracking devices supporting the organization's strategic approach and coordinated work. Indeed, such deviations would be perceived as a betrayal of DAFS' network to act as one (Dambrin & Robson, 2011). But, the disruption to the reproduction of the circulating 'good' was perhaps Veronica and Sheila's prefigurative form of organizing through which they could express and enact their desired change *in the present* (Reinecke, 2018) and challenge DAFS' developing structure and number-driven public service.

For these caseworkers, using their professional discretion meant putting their monthly targets (and preferred schedules) on the line. Veronica, in particular, struggled to meet her goals because of the time required to perform tasks that were not expected of her. But for her, these tasks formed part of what she considered to be 'good case management work'. She was annoyed by how some caseworkers ignored

what she thought were important steps in the processing of cases just so they could meet their ‘stats’. Because of the potential tradeoffs that the monthly targets imposed, she expressed her frustration and said that ‘*[the number] doesn’t allow the worker to work the cases*’ – an indication of a weak connection between the numbers’ articulated ‘good’ and her version of the ‘good’. Despite management’s constant reminder to spend less time on each case, Veronica persisted in delivering her ‘quality’ work.

[...] So, they have to do whatever they need to do. But in the meantime, I’m working the cases after you, and I’m doing the quality part because I’m not gonna let this case just go [...]; and so, I’m taking longer on this case, but you’re getting your easy stat. (Veronica, FG4Caseworkers)

The establishment of specialized functional units to contain the production of DAFS’ GP was bound to overflow due to caseworker lifers who had worked on cases from ‘cradle to grave’ and acquired the cross-functional knowledge and experience to handle cases differently. The restriction imposed by their specialization made their connections to the ‘outside world’ (Callon, 1998a) – that is, outside their specialized unit – more visible, offering them a broader landscape for their own framing to help in their decisions and actions on specific cases and urging them to deliver the good work that at one time was highly valued. Hence, such lifers, like Veronica, found it difficult not to step out of bounds. As Allison said,

*... because some of the ones that have been here longer when we were the ‘cradle to grave’, there’s some of that stuff they know, so they wanna dig in deeper. So, it’s that constant reminder to them that... and the way we’ve kind of explained it is ‘**the cakes come in, you’re doing the icing on it**; somebody else is really going into the meat of it, because you get the case in, you figure out the general information, when you send it to Paternity Establishment or Enforcement, they’re going to take it from here to figure out what’s needed,...* (Allison, InterviewManagement, emphasis added)

If Veronica’s views were shared across the wider unit, this could cause major disruptions and encourage a disgruntled group to emerge. Allison’s language, therefore, was an attempt to contain the overflow. ‘*Doing the icing*’ was her way of

re-articulating the boundaries of an Intake caseworker's job under the specialized model. This rhetorical device was her way of reproducing the model that the employee perhaps could appreciate. By using this language, she further framed not just the employee's role, but also the actions that constituted that role. Hence, the employee, the role, and the actions were 'reformulated' to better align with the area of specialization and enable the enactment of the measures within the established network of relations. Whether this would change Veronica's approach in the long run remains to be seen. For now, at least, the subversive behavior seems to be under control.

7.3.4 Struggling to act amidst competing 'goods'

A worker's valuation of a situation that is not aligned with the prescribed action could lead to an internal conflict that may affect the delivery of the good. Based on employees' accounts, this phenomenon seems to emerge when employees' and numbers' valuation of GP are at odds. In the case of Sonia, one of the attorneys, she recalled how she was caught in a dilemma when working on a case that required her signature in order to complete the establishment of an order. She noted a conflict between DAFS' office policy and the statutory requirements as regards serving noncustodial parents with a legal notice for child support. She pointed out the importance of the statutes and her professional obligation as an attorney to preserve them. In accordance with state laws (NRS 425.350 and NRS 425.3824)³⁰, DAFS must serve notice on a noncustodial parent with the necessary paperwork stating the monthly support for which the parent is responsible within 90 days of locating the parent. The parent then has 20 days to respond or request to discuss the amount before the order is established by the court. If the statutory time period for service has passed (which starts from the date of filing a 'complaint') and the parent was not served, DAFS must restart the whole service process and file a new complaint. But, to avoid restarting the process, DAFS introduced a policy extending the time frame for service process. Sonia felt strongly about this change, stating that serving noncustodial parents '*within the statutory time period*' is '*...protect[ing] his constitutional right*' and '*that's what I've sworn to do*'. Sonia explained that in the past, '*I might actually check this service more. I might actually be concerned about the date of filing of a*

³⁰ See <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/nrs/NRS-425.html> for more details.

complaint and stop the process, if necessary, based on this legal detail. Instead, because of the FPMs, she was pressured to just sign the order even if the process has exceeded the statutory time period.

*So, I could stop the process and say, the statute says, or I could sign the order because ultimately **the office position was that it's not really a problematic order until respondent comes to court and challenges this legal detail. For most, these people aren't represented. They're not gonna do that. So, I think that's... I think it's an ethical dilemma**, but I've learned to overcome that and allow these noncustodial parents, for example, or even petitioners in some cases, to raise their own defense later on down the line. But my job is to get this order signed, if possible, so it can be submitted to the Judge for final signature. (Sonia, InterviewAttorney, emphasis added)*

Despite what her professional values dictated, she decided to sign the paperwork back then to support DAFS' valuation of the FPMs. Although the office policy had changed since then, she still recalls the anxiety this had caused her.

There's no statutory authority for it. We just did it because we needed to enter these orders. So, I have a conflict with that, you know, I'm still internally conflicted when I talk about it, but I understood my new role was to help the office with the federal performance measures... (Sonia, InterviewAttorney)

The account of Sonia demonstrates the political and ethical struggles she encountered when office policies and procedures influence and control what value (or 'good') should matter (Reinecke, 2015) and be pursued. Because the promoted 'good' collided with her professional values, she was reluctant to act in support of the former. Yet, she knew that there was very little she could do given how DAFS' assemblage supported the prevailing good. Moreover, as she recounted, '*if the head of the organization says, look, the buck stops with me, I'll take all responsibility. What do you... what does one say?*' She then explained how the practice eventually changed when a new attorney came in and questioned the policy, and '*within weeks everything was scrapped, and we were following the law*'.

Looking back, Sonia explained how the Legal Team used to play a significant role in formulating DAFS' office policies precisely to avoid such conflicts. Back then, when the Operations group introduces a new process, an assigned attorney would conduct research on the possible legal implications of the proposed idea and present the findings at a Legal Team meeting for discussion. The Team's legal opinion on the matter would be presented to the Operations Managers for discussion so they could arrive at the appropriate decision. But, as Sonia said, the new head

decided to get rid of that layer and work through her Unit Managers and they would decide on what they thought was best and put those policies in place without an attorney input.... it made those of us who are trying to follow the law, sworn to uphold the law, feel like we weren't part of the organization.... I think that there was a perception that the attorneys... were a problem. And so that was the go around so that the performance measures could increase.
(Sonia, InterviewAttorney)

Because the Legal Team was perceived as a hindrance to DAFS' efficient pursuit of the measured 'good', their participation in policy formulation was curtailed. Control over operational policies was taken away from them³¹ and shifted over to the Operations Units, a move that stressed the importance of making decisions quickly and creating an environment that supports the valued good. This adjustment in the decision-making process was a huge support to the monthly quotas that Operations Units were expected to produce. By allowing them to have more control over the formulation of policies and processes, Unit Managers were able to manage their performance expectations better, justify their target settings, and apply the rewards and sanctions comfortably.

The centrality of the FPMs prompted the Legal Team to make some adjustments to their work in support of the measures. Reflecting on her own adjustments, Sonia described how she became less meticulous when reviewing cases and learned to work quickly when processing cases. While she admitted to making

³¹ Based on Sonia's account, it seems that this practice had changed since the head of the agency had left and the Operations Director (OD) took over as new head of DAFS. Sonia further expressed that this would not have been allowed had the OD known about this back then: *'I think he would shield it from some of these things. But if he would actually hear these legal issues, he would have never agreed to them. But now he hears them, he's like... 'holy moly, we're doing what? No, we need to change that''*.

some allowances for cases that demanded greater scrutiny to speed up the establishment of child support orders, she also acknowledged feeling internally conflicted with the idea. She expressed the difficulty of transitioning into DAFS' measurement framework but realized that she needed to make the adjustment to support DAFS' pursuit of organizational change. Demonstrating her frustration, Sonia explained her struggle in trying to reconcile the value of efficiency conveyed by the measures with the value of accuracy that her legal profession demanded.

And now I was accountable to the volume as we were changing. And so I couldn't be as careful. I just had to learn to work faster and work towards getting those cases established, not caring so much about all the legal issues necessarily. What can I do to sign it? What can I do to sign this document? So, and it was made clear to us that accuracy wasn't gonna be as important anymore. We were to trust all layers of the organization to become experts. And so that's disheartening. I still have a huge issue with it today, but I understand that I'm accountable to those federal performance measures. Those cases have to be, they have to be processed as soon as possible. (Sonia, InterviewAttorney)

Although she felt very much conflicted about pushing 'accuracy' to the sideline, Sonia knew that the rhetoric surrounding the measures and the sociotechnical *agencement* supporting it could not be silenced. As long as DAFS' setting is organized to allow specialized units, evaluation mechanisms, devices, and other entities to enact the measured 'good', Sonia must find her place in DAFS' network to stay connected and act her part. As Sonia remarked,

If the Chief says, 'I don't care about accuracy. There's gonna be mistakes made in this new process, you need to get up to speed, you need to be quicker and you need to trust that Audit, our experts, and Enforcement, our experts, and the information they're giving you is good, you don't need to dig, you need to trust it', then you know....that's, that was what the boss was saying. And if she had control over your evaluations, then you know, really, it was just, it was difficult. (Sonia, InterviewAttorney)

DAFS' *agencement*, however, would not have held together unless someone (or something) had the key that lends credence to the efficiency logic behind the measured 'good' and ignites the engine so all the components could play their part. Indeed, had it not been for the new leader, supported by an Operations Director from a top performing state, DAFS' network might have evolved differently.

Caseworkers shared a similar struggle in enacting DAFS' GP. Both Sheila and Veronica described their dilemma over a policy that did not support the automatic reinstatement of arrears when a child support case reopens. According to the caseworkers, they were instructed not to '*solicit arrears*'. This means that they should not voluntarily provide information on how to request the arrears back when a custodial parent (e.g. mom) asks to reopen her case; nor should they send out a letter with the necessary form and instruction booklet to instigate a request. But for Veronica, '*if the case reopens, give her a chance to say, 'hey, if you want your arrears back, you need to fill out this form*'. Sheila agreed and, in support of Veronica, further argued:

They don't have the knowledge that we have in knowing how to fill out the paperwork and... they do not know that if they don't fill that out, they don't get their arrears. And so, what they determine how we should handle the amount that's actually owed is to start calculating the arrears from where she starts on the application, okay. The order could be 3 years old, but she just started it from 6 months ago. So, we assume that he paid everything and just start it from 6 months ago, okay. And in the past, when I have sent out letters with the forms saying fill out this section so we can correctly calculate your arrears, I was told not to do that. Don't solicit arrears.... (Sheila, FG4Caseworkers)

This directive, however, excluded cases where the custodial parent attempted to fill out the form (regardless of completeness or accuracy); in which case, the caseworker could send out the form with instructions on how to fill it out properly. Although she generally refrained from soliciting arrears, Sheila pointed out that this exception to the rule left some room for interpretation (a potential overflow) and allowed her to continue her practice when the opportunity arose.

...when they gave us that leeway of saying it's your call to determine if she attempted to fill out, well, that can mean a lot of things to a lot of people. So, if I see just the big zero there, I send her the form because she attempted to fill it out. (Sheila, FG4Caseworkers)

Adding an exception to the policy perhaps was management's attempt to reconcile potentially competing values – the value of obtaining good performance scores and the value of providing service to the public. With the introduction of the exception, Sheila found some discretionary power to pursue her valued action of soliciting arrears. Otherwise, such action could be considered a subversion of the directive.

From DAFS' perspective, soliciting arrears was generally not considered good practice as this could potentially affect their performance. Once arrears are requested and calculated, they are recorded into the system, thus affecting the arrears measure (FPM#4). DAFS must then attempt to collect payments towards the arrears on those cases to get a count towards the measure. This could be a challenge if noncustodial parents have difficulty meeting their current obligation amounts. But for Veronica, serving the clients means doing what is good for them (i.e. the custodial parents and their children). She expressed her frustration about what seemed to be an excessive focus on the numbers at the expense of doing the right thing for the clients.

.... if we're here for the parties, then we need to be here fully, not what's gonna help us; you know what I mean? I don't just help us look good on paper 'cause you just see numbers. You don't see the people behind these numbers. You don't see that they're struggling... If they have a court order, they're entitled to their arrears. Not to look good in numbers for the federal government. (Veronica, FG4Caseworkers)

Like Veronica, Eleanor, one of the attorneys, struggled with the idea of allowing the FPMs to dictate DAFS' priorities and principle of operation. Because of the incentives attached to the FPMs, she felt as if the organization was caught up with performing for the measures so it can earn the incentives to keep performing. As an *'advocate for [her] client'*, Eleanor in an interview expressed her desire to collect every possible dollar, whether *'it's gonna make our numbers look bad or not'*. But if such desires do not generate good outcomes, DAFS might not receive the financial

rewards it expects to support some of its initiatives. Yet, for Eleanor, the FPMs should not be DAFS' *raison d'être*. Her frustration with the reality that the measures seemed to have created could not be ignored.

Eleanor: ...these federal performance measures basically are a way for us to ...to keep ourselves up and running with the sole purpose of keeping ourselves up and running (laughter). Does that make sense? As opposed to keeping us up and running to service the community of Las Vegas. Do you understand that distinction?

KM: Yes (laughter).

Eleanor: (Laughter) Yeah, we're making decisions so that we can look good so that we can get money so that we can keep making decisions that make us look good and give us more money... (laughter). Right? Years ago, it wasn't like...the attitude wasn't like that. Yes, it was important, we needed to look good because we needed the funding, but we needed the funding not to keep our doors open so that we can get more funding. It was so that we can actually get these orders and enforce these orders and collect \$10, \$5, \$1000 for these kids, for these you know, these parents. (Eleanor, InterviewAttorney)

But for DAFS employees to establish and enforce orders, collect payments, and receive incentives for their GP, they must create an environment that will allow them to act so they can be measured and rewarded for the 'good' they produce. Hence, DAFS must not only measure and report their GP, but also establish the processes, policies, and devices that will enable their GP to exist so it can be measured.

7.4 Conclusion

DAFS' attempt to produce GP is a never-ending process of framing and reframing a sociotechnical *agencement* that can enact the FPMs' 'good'. Just when DAFS thought it had everything framed and configured to keep producing GP, overflows emerged, attempting to impose their own valuation of what counts as 'good'. The frames that DAFS' actors and devices, through their interaction, established could not permanently settle due to the overflows that their framing produced. Those included in DAFS' *agencement* exposed those that were excluded with their own versions of the 'good'. As some versions supported the FPMs' 'good',

DAFS renegotiated the organization and production of their GP. Shaped by the FPMs' economic 'goods' of efficiency and trade-offs, DAFS' *agencement* was reconfigured to accommodate some of the overflows' demands for quality of life, justice, fairness, and customer service. They brought the excluded into the fold and enabled DAFS to enact different versions of the 'good' that can be counted and measured. Some overflows, however, generated behavior that threatened DAFS' measurable GP and presented alternative 'goods' that collided with the FPMs' preferred 'good'. To contain such overflows, DAFS' assemblage intensified its web of relations through actors' reflexive and recursive articulation of the FPMs' valued 'good'. A quality control process was introduced, justifications for discrepancies emerged, and reframing of roles and responsibilities occurred, giving rise to new descriptions (Roscoe, 2016) and performances of the 'good'.

Despite the overflows, DAFS constant framing and reframing of their network of relations seemed to have maintained the conditions that allowed them to keep producing the 'good'. Their efforts seemed to have paid off as their performance scores kept increasing and their state ranking kept rising. Their success story may be difficult to challenge given the significant improvement in their performance scores³² (see Appendix) on the FPMs. DAFS' story did not remain hidden. Their practices, initiatives, organizational and technological improvements, and ultimately their performance scores were proudly projected on a wide screen at a major conference³³ for child support professionals. Indeed, as the last slide of the presentation showed, Nevada quickly moved up the ranks from being 54th in the nation in 2009 to 23rd in 2015. Their public display of their version of the 'good', supported by the FPMs and state ranking, left little room for debate on what counts as 'good'. Fortunately, this time, DAFS' GP was applauded and rewarded. Conference organizers, in recognition of this significant turnaround, awarded DAFS the Outstanding Program WICSEC Excellence Award (see Figure 7-1), which *'recognizes a state, regional, county, or*

³² Based on OCSE's performance audit reports, Nevada's scores between 2008 and 2015 significantly improved. There was a slight increase in two of the five measures in 2009. But from 2010, almost all of the measures kept rising. See appendix for details.

³³ The Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council (WICSEC), one of two major child support professional associations, held the 2016 WICSEC Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah. Six DAFS representatives (two senior members, one attorney, one supervisor, one lead, and one process server) attended the conference. Four of the attendees made a presentation or moderated a session. According to one of the senior members, the process server's attendance at the conference was DAFS' way of rewarding employees that have been recognized for their exceptional service by the Employee Appreciation Committee.

tribal program that has consistently and comprehensively exemplified the best in child support enforcement' (WICSEC). There is no doubt that DAFS is aiming for the top. Perhaps one day it will reach it, unless a major overflow shifts DAFS' assemblage away from the FPMs' articulated 'good'. But for now, DAFS can celebrate for producing the GP that the FPMs could measure, the professional association could applaud, and the federal government could reward, thus reassuring the public that the measured 'good' is indeed 'good'.

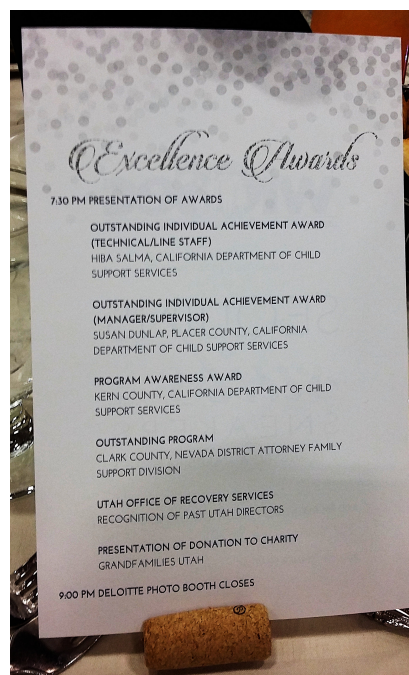


Figure 7-1 Outstanding Program WICSEC Excellence Award

8 Discussion

8.1 Introduction

This research set out to examine how the U.S. child support enforcement program's FPMs circulate and intervene in the construction of GP at a local child support agency (DAFS) so it is made valuable, enacted, and measured. It begins with DAFS' discovery of their poor performance in the FPMs. With provocations from the media citing an audit report on state rankings, a practice that organically emerged out of the struggle between states competing for financial incentives, DAFS made a radical shift towards the measures. The public humiliation, coupled with the newly installed leader, triggered the mobilization of the FPMs in DAFS' organization and production of GP. The study then provides a rich account of DAFS' transformation into a sociotechnical *agencement* that frames (Callon, 1998a) people, roles, cases, tasks, devices, and other entities, and sums up their interactions into a circulating entity (Latour, 1999a) that enables the measures' GP to exist. It captures the processes and mechanisms involved in making the GP visible and valuable so it can be acted upon. Finally, the study reveals the struggles that the framing produced and the need to re-negotiate and reframe what counts as 'good'. But reframing is never settled. Hence, what succeeds is the pragmatic construction of situated goods that can be enacted and measured so DAFS can be a 'good performing agency'.

Inspired by Callon's performativity (Callon, 1998c, 2007, 2009, 2010), along with the sociology of quantification (Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Espeland & Stevens, 1998, 2008) and valuation studies (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006; Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015b; Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015a), DAFS' case offers a powerful illustration of how measures intervene in the construction and re-*presentation* (i.e. making present), or 'appresentation' (Knorr-Cetina & Brügger, 2000), of the 'good' so it is valued and made valuable. The case captures how measures are mobilized through a network of actors and devices that, through their interaction, qualify and quantify a notion of 'good' that can be measured. Their qualified and quantified 'good', however, is never stable due to competing 'goods' that become visible in the valuation process. This causes their current 'good' to extend, shift, or change, consequently reshaping and reformatting DAFS' 'good performance'. Hence, the study shows how DAFS turns

into a collective that keeps rearticulating the GP that counts. But what gets counted and who decides what gets counted depend on how actors and devices are configured and positioned within the network, and the developing relations of domination (Çalışkan & Callon, 2010). Their interactions and the products (e.g. tools, management reports, wall charts, etc.) they produce in the process make visible the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’, what is worth counting and what is worth ignoring, or what must be supported and what must be silenced. The constant framing and shifting of the network reveal the politics of performance measurement and the *battle of the agencements*, where one wins at a point in time but is eventually displaced as new challenges and opportunities arise. Indeed, behind each ‘measured good’ is a complex web of relations through which the GP is made valuable so it can be valued, performed, and ultimately measured. But, when other ‘notions of good’ emerge, the framed entity may shift and generate yet another version of the ‘good’ that can be measured.

Measures, therefore, are not passive instruments that simply capture the ‘good’ that is ‘out there’; rather they encourage, stimulate, and promote the articulation and production of what is considered GP so it can be measured. Yet, the GP that is measured is never final. There is constant discussion and negotiation of what counts as GP as the network of actors and devices, in delivering their agreed version of the ‘good’, keeps introducing and producing new rationalities, new forms of expertise, and new materialities that signify a re-qualified ‘good’. Each time a new version of the ‘good’ presents itself, it is folded in, ignored, or compromised, thus creating a reconfigured network that performs a reconstituted ‘good’.

8.2 Beyond representation

DAFS’ case shows how measures do not just capture or represent but help shape and constitute (Callon, 2007), through their interaction with actors and devices, the GP they seek to measure. In a coordinated and collaborative way, leaders and managers at DAFS gathered and assembled actors and devices to mobilize the FPMs and establish the condition necessary to enact (Law & Urry, 2004) GP so it can be measured. Establishing the condition for the GP to occur required an agreement on and acceptance of what qualified as ‘good’. Through a qualification process, these human and nonhuman actors, including the measures, defined a notion of ‘good’ that

they were willing and able to perform given the context in which the performance must occur. The process implied that other considerations or valuations of the ‘good’ were set aside, at least for the purpose at hand (which was articulated by these actors to reach an agreement).

Triggered by the provocation from the media and state rankings, DAFS’ purpose was clear. The FPMs’ judgment of their performance, categorizing them as a poor performer, needed to be addressed. Such judgment immediately put the FPMs in a prominent position within the agency that DAFS’ managers, and eventually the rest of the staff, could not ignore nor resist. The FPMs gradually made their way into DAFS environment, gathering and assembling actors to elaborate and implement the FPMs’ ‘good’ that must be performed so it can be captured and measured. DAFS’ elaboration and implementation of the ‘good’ involved huge investments in human resources, technology, outreach programs, and training, as well as trade-offs. Driven by a crisis that had to be addressed, DAFS management appealed to a principle of logic that everyone could accept and use as the basis for articulating and mobilizing the measured ‘good’. With federal funding and incentives closely tied to the FPMs, the logic of economic efficiency was high in their list. But, as a public agency, they could not ignore the logic of civic duty to fulfill the program’s mission. Hence, DAFS’ management framed their narratives and discourses around both, suggesting that as long as they focused on the FPMs, the program’s aims will be met. Indeed, as Bill remarked, *‘you could kinda see why those measures are what they are. Because, if you hit and score percentage-wise well on those measures, you’ve achieved the mission and mandate of the program’*.

In an attempt to elaborate and implement the FPMs’ underlying logic, DAFS’ management allowed experts to make the measures known and valued. Through the use of technology, accounting techniques, and managerial processes, the FPMs and their derivatives (i.e. monthly outputs and performance standards) eventually spread throughout the agency, making their presence and their connections visible. Flowcharts, process maps, tables, emails, job descriptions, tracking devices, employee evaluations, and a whole list of mechanisms, one after another and each influencing the other, gradually emerged claiming to be a necessary component in the delivery of GP. These entities, together with their developers, users, and advocates, created a

political space through which the FPMs could intervene to assign and construct the ‘good’. Their intervention, facilitated by the actors’ investment in these technical and social forms (Desrosières, 1998), allowed the ‘good’ to be objectified and made into a ‘thing’ (Callon & Muniesa, 2005) that can be valued, produced, and managed. Hence, it was through the interaction of these human and nonhuman actors or their network of relations that GP was defined, enacted, and measured.

8.3 From one measure to the next

Different measures constructed different realities and different versions of quantified ‘goods’ that different networks of relations actively promoted and pursued. Prior to their understanding of the FPMs, DAFS operated on a different measurement regime (GP1.0). They evaluated their performance in terms of the difference in the total amount of child support collected between one year and the next. Collecting more child support payments this year than the previous year for the sake of the children was a clear indication of their GP. Guided by this qualified and quantified ‘good’, employees’ actions were geared towards seeking ways to collect as much as they could. Tapping on existing enforcement tools (e.g. driver’s license suspensions, contempt filings, etc.) and policies, they deployed different strategies that they assumed would generate the highest possible payments. Their valuation of the ‘good’ based on the logic of efficiency (and public service towards children) was translated in various ways. For some, this meant establishing the highest possible child support obligation amount allowed by law to enable them to collect more money; for others, it meant attending to the custodial parents who are complaining about not receiving their support or employing the harshest enforcement action (including jail time) to squeeze out every cent from noncustodial parents – all for the good of the child.

When DAFS employees had a personal and humiliating encounter with the FPMs, nearly everything changed. Their valued actions and assumptions, and preferred mode of interaction with noncustodial parents, were suddenly reconsidered due to their low performance scores. The ‘good’ they thought they produced was ‘in fact’ not good. Media reported the ‘facts’ about their poor performance in the FPMs and, using a third-party report, noted their incredibly low state ranking. Despite the federal government’s refusal to rank states, the program’s yearly publication of performance scores was enough to encourage other entities to develop a ranking

system that puts states in a competitive space (Pollock & D'Adderio, 2012), enabling their comparison based on a shared metric (Espeland & Stevens, 1998). As Pollock and D'Adderio (2012; see also Pollock, 2012) have shown, the sociomateriality of ranking mechanisms (whether it be in a form of a list, table (Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Kornberger & Carter, 2010), or graph (Pollock & D'Adderio, 2012)), can mediate a competition amongst those ranked based on their positioning within a given space afforded by the 'ranking device' and consequently shape the very domain they seek to rank. The reactivity these ranking mechanisms generate is closely linked to the way the ranked entities are made commensurable by the mechanisms' affordances (Pollock & D'Adderio, 2012) that obscure and simplify their differences based on a common metric (Espeland & Sauder, 2007). Indeed, as an 'openly performative' (Muniesa, 2011) device, the child support community's circulating ranking mechanism shaped the public's perception of Nevada's performance in the nation, thus generating enough pressure on DAFS to do better.

The media reports alone, however, might not have radically changed DAFS' course of action if a new leader had not been installed. The leader's competitive trait and disdain for being at the bottom of the rank gave the FPMs the extra nudge to become the central register of value in DAFS' environment. Refusing to be last, she deliberately gathered experts to articulate the measures so they could be known, valued, and acted upon. Through staff training, management reports, and introduction of best practices, experts slowly disentangled the assemblage of ideas, processes, policies, tasks, communication devices, logics, and other mechanisms enabling employees to perform the 'unwanted good'. As Latour (2005) might say, their articulations helped clear the way for the redistribution of the FPMs, reformulation of the entities to constitute them, and reassembling of the reformatted entities so they could collectively generate the FPMs' valued 'good'. In and through the process of reconstructing DAFS' network of relations, the FPMs' 'good' (GP2.0) became known, acquired new meaning, and generated the valued action that could be measured. The emergence of the known and enacted 'good' (i.e. establishing legal paternities and child support orders and collecting current and past support) enabled the FPMs to measure and capture the GP that DAFS carefully and successfully (but not always) produced.

8.4 Reassembling a good performing ‘agency’

So how was DAFS’ assemblage reconstructed? What and who changed to produce the ‘new good’ (GP2.0)? What mediating processes and mechanisms enabled the change to occur and the GP to emerge? As the empirical data show, DAFS’ GP was made valuable in and through an assemblage of heterogeneous actors or *actants* (Latour, 1996) that were carefully identified, qualified, and circumscribed so the GP could take place. Through framing processes (Callon, 1998a), these actors and their connections were contained so their interactions could predictably produce the GP that can be valued and measured. But such framing and valuation efforts often require huge investments and significant work (Callon, 1998c, 1999), as some empirical studies have shown in the creation of an olfactory tasting device for luxury perfumes (Trébuchet-Breitwiller, 2015), the development of an honor code for a business school’s values practices (Gehman, *et al.*, 2013), or the establishment of a ‘status anchoring device’ for quality French wines (Fourcade, 2012), amongst others. Given the organizing work involved in enacting luxury, integrity, or quality, one might wonder how such work can be successfully performed and sustained. The case presented here sheds light on the framing efforts involved to reassemble an agency that can value the FPMs’ GP and improve their performance scores. Building on Callon’s (1998b, 1999) work on framing, and studies on valuation as practice (Kornberger, *et al.*, 2015; Muniesa, 2011; Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015a), DAFS’ case offers some useful insights into the processes and mechanisms through which measures are mobilized to generate activities that could produce GP. Its radical transformation from ‘poor’ to ‘outstanding’ provides an interesting case for examining how measures participate in the pursuit of organizational change. By tracing the measures’ movements through DAFS’ network of relations, we can observe how they frame GP, configure the organization’s setting, and shape DAFS’ practices to pursue the ‘good’ that will make them ‘good’.

To explain the unfolding intervention of measures in the construction of DAFS’ GP, the model below (see Figure 8-1) summarizes the four analytic categories of performative framing: organization, articulation, production, and validation. This taxonomy of performative framing provides a framework for explaining how measures stimulate the organizing work at DAFS to create an environment in which

the FPMs can be situated, referred to, enabled, and acknowledged. It reveals the ordering required to make the FPMs known, the rhetorical devices to make them a matter of concern, and the mediating instruments to encourage their enactment and establish their presence. But, as DAFS' organizing work gradually constructs and generates the FPMs' GP, 'good' remains a contested and politically charged concept (more on this in Section 8.5). Hence, managers, lawyers, caseworkers, and other actors involved in the construction of GP constantly negotiate what counts as 'good' while using the same measure to value it.

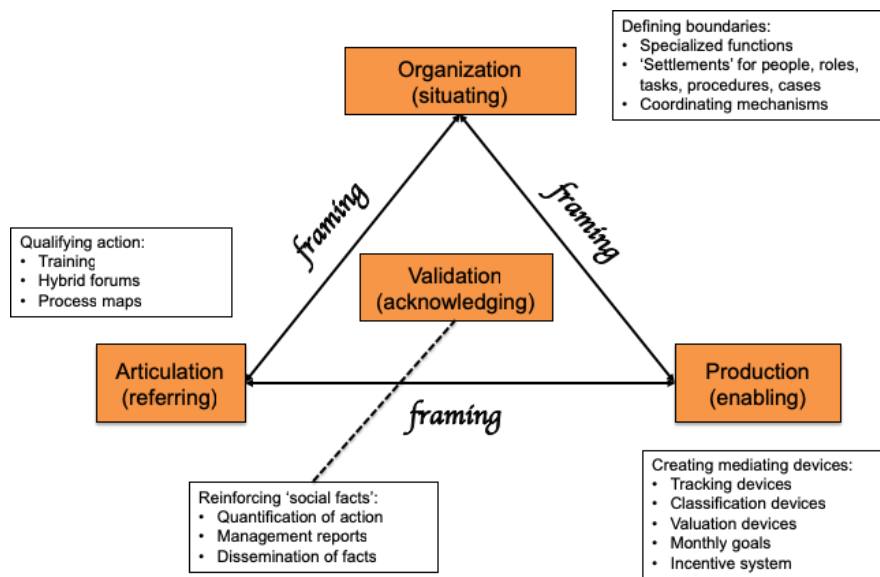


Figure 8-1 Taxonomy of performative framing

The measures' intervention in DAFS' construction of GP, based on the reflexive accounts of actors and the observable traces they left behind, can be summarized into these four categories of performative framing that created the environment for the GP to be enacted. They are intricately connected and build on each other to formulate DAFS' circulating entity (Latour, 1999a), where every element is connected to each other to make the GP known so it can be acted upon (Callon, 2009). These framing efforts involve the organization of the elements necessary to establish a setting for the production of GP, the articulation of the meanings of the measures and their connection to DAFS' practices, the production of mediating devices to encourage the repeated enactment of GP, and the validation of their existence to which the organized elements could refer and be held together (Latour, 2005). The first three capture the processes and mechanisms that give

meaning and structure to what counts as ‘good’; while the fourth reinforces the constructed ‘good’ to keep it stable (at least temporarily). Below is a discussion of each.

8.4.1 Performative organization

When measures took center stage at DAFS, they served as the guiding principle for their activities. Measures became part and parcel of their interactions, such that nothing seemed to be accomplished without making any references to them. Their intervention in conversations, activities, or devices, however, developed gradually. At a time when actors, tools, cases, tasks, and other entities at DAFS were loosely connected to (or even disconnected from) the FPMs with no clear boundaries of operation, leadership made a deliberate effort to establish some order. Through a restructuring effort, employees were organized into specialized functional units, with each unit focused on a particular FPM. With measures as their referent, the functional units were recast into ‘measurable spaces’ where GP could be performed and measured. This organizing effort provoked new meaning for the functioning of units. People, tasks, procedures, and cases within each unit were eventually tied to and evaluated based on the measure they represented.

A physical relocation supported DAFS’ reorganization efforts. DAFS offices moved from a six-story building to two newly refurbished buildings just a few miles from the old site. The new premises allowed management to physically cluster caseworkers into functional groups in a single floor plan. This helped frame and reinforce the boundaries of their specialization, while maintaining a sense of connectivity through technological improvements. To enable caseworkers to perform their specialized roles and produce the FPMs’ ‘good’, IT experts built ancillary systems to ensure that individual cases were correctly assigned to the relevant unit and caseworker for proper processing. A document management system was eventually installed to facilitate access and tracking of case files across the organization for greater efficiency in the production of the ‘good’. With its built-in workflow mechanism, the paperless system enabled the coordination and movement of digital case files from one functional unit to the next, encouraged the deployment of the appropriate action on cases, and reduced the risk of misplacing case files, which could cause huge delays in the processing of cases. Hence, when the system went

down, it presented a major challenge to those whose job fully depended on it.

The new site also supported DAFS' interaction with the Courts, which is the entity that 'signs off' on the legal orders that can be counted and measured. Co-locating the Child Support Court with DAFS gave the latter exclusive rights to the courtrooms, thus eliminating the need for both DAFS' attorneys and clients to travel to a different location for court hearings. The impact of the co-location enabled DAFS to schedule more cases for hearings, which in turn enabled the establishment of paternities, and the establishment, modification, and enforcement of child support orders that could count towards the FPMs. The physical space they shared encouraged and improved the coordination of their practice for the production of measurable 'goods'.

Looking back at DAFS' transformation efforts, its specialization, relocation, and co-location, as well as the technological infrastructure that supported its daily operations, established the 'performable space' (Busco & Quattrone, 2015) within which units, offices, courts, people, digital case files, tasks, and signatures could interact and perform the measures. These layers of organizing mechanisms enabled a system or network of associations (Latour, 1996) to emerge. It created some order to allow the valued 'good' to be known and acted upon (Callon, 2009). Hence, while these mechanisms facilitated DAFS' engagement with the FPMs, they also helped establish an organized organization (D'Adderio & Pollock, 2014) that allowed the FPMs to gather strength and promote the 'good' they intended to measure. Indeed, consistent with D'Adderio & Pollock's (2014) findings on 'modularity', the materialization of DAFS' specialization gradually shaped employees' practices and allowed them to produce GP, but (as we shall see later) it also generated controversies that demanded reinforcements (e.g. quality control and review process) to preserve the specialization.

8.4.2 Performative articulation

Gathering strength and promoting the FPMs' 'good' required an assemblage of experts who could communicate in a logical and convincing way the measured 'good', how to construct it, and why it is needed. Driven by the measures' incentive structure and the ranking mechanism that circulated in the child support community,

the new leader hired a new Operations Director who came from a top performing state to share his expert knowledge and practice in delivering the FPMs' valued 'good'. She also tapped experts from within to help make sense of the measures, identify activities that generate GP, and draw links between the two.

Among the in-house experts was the management analyst who used the training sessions to articulate the measures. Using a visual device (i.e. table), she presented scenarios to capture the tasks needed to generate the measures' GP and produce better scores (i.e. actions that would increase the numerator or decrease the denominator to improve the measure). Aided by such inscription device (Busco & Quattrone, 2015; Qu & Cooper, 2011), she described each of the five measures, discussed how certain tasks could produce the outputs that count, and how employees, through their work, could positively impact the measures. The scenarios, hence, gave meaning to the analyst's discourses around the FPMs (and vice versa) and visualized for employees the world in which their GP could thrive. Through her training sessions, she established the connection between the measures and GP, brought them into being in a way that her audience could observe and appreciate (i.e. in 'table' form), and encouraged them to enact the 'good' within their specialized functional units. The assumptions about the measures' response to certain actions and the language (i.e. numerator and denominator) used to articulate their connections helped shape the favorable actions that would generate better measures, thus gradually establishing the normative order (Ferraro, Pfeffer & Sutton, 2005) for the management and operations at DAFS. Hence, the training became a useful communication-framing device for making both the FPMs and GP known and for reiterating the logic behind the measures within DAFS' setting. This enabled the FPMs to circulate across the organizing entity and eventually claim authority (Roscoe, 2016) over DAFS' operational units to produce the measures' valued 'good'.

Other attempts at articulating the measures and their GP took place in various hybrid forums (Callon, *et al.*, 2009; Callon, *et al.*, 2002), where experts and laypersons, managers and support staff discussed and debated what counts as 'good' in light of the measures. Such forums were avenues for the democratization of expertise through the collaborative work of hybrid groups of experts and lay people seeking to address the uncertainties that DAFS' FPM-world was beginning to unfold.

Early on, the new leader formed Innovation Teams composed of staff from different departments across the organization. She instructed them to engage with the measures and understand the GP that the measures valued. They did this by assessing DAFS' current practices, identifying what worked and what didn't according to the measures' presumed logic, and tapping into the high-performing states' 'best practices' to justify their evaluations. Because different views were heard, discussed, debated, and negotiated within these forums, everyone who had a stake in it mobilized the valued 'good'. Their engagement with the measures enabled them to articulate and qualify the 'good' that was worth knowing (Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015c) and worth promoting based on the standards that the measures imposed. Their elaborations of the measures' 'good' spilled over into roundtable discussions and team meetings, consequently reproducing the articulated 'good'.

A collaborative culture developed at DAFS and new hybrid forums emerged, generating new ways of interacting and articulating. The process-mapping session was one such forum. These sessions gathered together DAFS' business systems analyst, caseworkers, and supervisors to discuss the tasks and processes involved within their area of specialization. With the analyst's prodding, employees deliberated and negotiated as they singled out the key tasks and steps needed to produce the outputs that count, consequently eliminating or disregarding others. Using process-mapping devices and industry-standard flowchart symbols, the systems analyst drew the boundaries of specific business processes to create the context for the GP to emerge. Each actor's decision, action, and expected output were mapped out to provide an explanation for how GP could be delivered. By reducing the complexity of a process into a standardized flowchart, the business analyst, in close collaboration with operational staff, managed to arrange actors' positions and connections within each process and define the arena for their GP. These process maps, hence, served as a cognitive infrastructure (Diaz-Bone, 2017) for the valuation of GP that employees could refer to and act upon so it could be accounted for (Callon, 2009). The conversion of these maps into electronic files and their storage in a shared network drive made them accessible, distributable, and reproducible – or what Latour (1986b) might call *immutable* (until a new version takes over) *mobiles* – so they can present and declare all at once the boundaries of their actions. Enabling employees to view, print, and circulate these maps was a way of impressing upon them the elements and

steps required to execute the GP.

While experts' articulations of the FPMs made visible the tasks needed to produce GP, management and support staff, through their exchanges, identified and established mechanisms for encouraging and promoting the execution of GP. A new unit (i.e. Customer Service Department) was created to support caseworkers' efficient deployment of the valued tasks and an old department (i.e. Investigations) was inspired and revived to support the delivery of GP. The formulation of GP, however, would not have emerged had it not been for the intervention of a leader who, through experts, introduced and promoted 'a process of inquiry, reflection, and exploration' (Busco & Quattrone, 2015: 1252) to allow the FPMs to be known and intervene in employees' discourses of GP. The qualities of GP that they collectively discussed, negotiated, and agreed upon eventually gathered steam and became the dominant criteria for evaluating people, cases, tasks, and tools participating in the FPMs' social world. Their discourses around GP quickly spread and took over corridors, walls, devices, employee awards, emails, newsletters, and other entities, enabling DAFS' organized setting to gradually turn into a 'good performing agency'.

8.4.3 Performative production

Articulating the FPMs was not enough to keep the GP alive. The context through which they ought to act must exist. In short, it required the world (Callon, 2007) in which the FPMs could make sense of, perform, and generate the valued 'good'. Creating physical spaces, organizing people, cases, and tasks into specialized entities, and defining roles and processes were important steps towards creating that world. Yet, the world needed mediators (Latour, 1993, 2005) to ensure that the FPMs' 'good' kept performing. Discussions and deliberations about GP in training sessions and hybrid forums could easily be forgotten and ignored, unless mediating instruments were in place to remind, encourage, and *enable* employees to 'see' and enact GP at all times. Hence, as a result of their organizing work and articulation of the FPMs, technical and material devices were produced, further framing DAFS' growing network of interactions. These devices, including the logics and conventions that shaped their production, were mobilized to account for the valued 'good' they intended to measure (see Fourcade, 2011a, b). They not only facilitated the representation of employees' GP; they also participated in shaping it (Busco &

Quattrone, 2015; Pollock & D'Adderio, 2012).

The mediating devices were varied, ranging from static devices to interactive technologies. Among them were the huge printouts of monthly tables displayed on walls throughout the buildings in individual offices, open spaces, conference rooms, meeting rooms, mail room, break rooms, and in every department across the organization, drawing attention to what counts. The table provided a visual display of the current month's scores of DAFS (and other counties within the state), expressed in monthly outputs and measures, as well as the state's goals for the year. The information was organized to underscore the gap between DAFS' current performance score and year-end goal for each measure (see Chapter 6, Figure 6-1). It used conventional (traffic light) colors for visual effects to highlight DAFS' current position relative to the goal. This coloring 'furniture' (Pollock & D'Adderio, 2012) supporting DAFS' table of information was a clear and simple way of offering its reviewers an ordering of the measures and framing decisions (Pollock & Campagnolo 2015) that required action. While the table, as a visual device, was a good representation of DAFS' current state of affairs, it was also a powerful mediating instrument prompting its audience to generate the GP that mattered and to create an effect where effect was needed. Hence, both the table's 'format and furniture' (Pollock & D'Adderio, 2012) – the organization of information within the table's bounded frames and the use of traffic light colors to track progress – contributed to the shaping of employees' interpretation and valuation of the measures' GP that must be deployed.

Embedded in the table of scores and traffic light color scheme was a logic suggesting an ordering of worth based on quantities and performance ratings. Just like the media's report on state ranking, DAFS' table listing made the specialized units' performances visible and noticeable (Espeland & Lom, 2015; Fourcade, 2012). The listing revealed differences that might not have existed before (Fourcade, 2016; Fourcade & Healy, 2013). While at first glance the listing might be considered an effective tool for simplifying information, it actually offered a valuation mechanism so readers of the listing could easily make judgments about performances. As each unit was directly tied to a measure, their performance score, coupled with the assigned color signifying its relative position to the year-end goal, were enough to define a

unit's GP. A score's corresponding color easily captured the unit's position (i.e. red is underperforming, yellow is meeting expectation, green is exceeding the goal) with hardly any guesswork, thus enabling the immediate comparison between the units' level of performance. DAFS' listing, however, did not just reduce but actually *added* the right amount of information (i.e. three colors) to make a difference. It is this 'subitization' (Pollock & Campagnolo, 2015: 104) of a simple table, along with the rules and conventions of a 'traffic light', that allowed DAFS' employees to know exactly where they stand 'in the time span necessary to point a camera'. Thus, as scores turn 'green', units immediately turn into 'good performers', consequently setting the stage for the establishment of a status system of winners and losers (Espeland & Lom, 2015), for strategizing (Kornberger & Carter, 2010), and for triggering the emergence of competing valuations (Reinecke, 2015; Roscoe, 2015b) of GP. Tables or listings, therefore, became part of the political contest. Encouraging competition based on a shared metric, they persuaded employees to react by reorienting their efforts and activities (Kornberger & Carter, 2010; Scott & Orlikowski, 2012) that the measures and their added features promoted.

Employees also relied on web-based applications to enable, track, and record the deployment of GP. Among them was a case management and tracking tool developed by IT programmers. The tool was designed to assist caseworkers to execute the appropriate action based on the specific qualities or circumstances of a case. It was also intended to monitor, record, and count caseworkers' actions and outcomes to allow DAFS management to account for the agency's GP. For the tool to perform its functions, however, it had to be designed and developed for the purpose of tracking and accounting the valued actions. In collaboration with its users, developers sought to identify the actions and outcomes that must be tracked and counted. Similar to the process mapping sessions, these actions and outcomes were reduced to their simplest forms (i.e. a telephone call to a custodial parent or a telephone call to a grandma was tagged as a telephone call) to facilitate the tracking, and ultimately the accounting. But in order to track the actions, they must be deployed. IT programmers, therefore, did not just create a tracking device; they also created an *enabling* device. The tool gave caseworkers the information they needed to deploy the prescribed actions. Additional mechanisms were incorporated into the tool to ensure caseworkers prioritize their work and produce the necessary 'good' within a given timeframe. A

color-coding system was introduced, classifying cases based on the missing ‘good’ (e.g. no legal father, no child support order, no payment, etc.) and taking into account the last recorded action on the case to capture the federal timeframes required to act on a case, so caseworkers could decide and act strategically. These ‘facts’ about the case became the bases for grouping cases into categories. Cases within a specific category were then treated as similar cases that required similar actions. Hence, DAFS’ case management tool became a mechanism for classifying (see Fourcade & Healy, 2013, 2017b, a) cases, actions, and consequently caseworkers based on their production of the ‘good’.

With the codification and standardization of DAFS’ roles, tasks, processes, and tools that constitute the FPMs’ ‘good’, caseworkers began focusing on performing the prescribed ‘good’. But to manage and control the execution of GP, management introduced production outputs (or what employees referred to as ‘stats’) to reinforce the valued tasks (e.g. telephone calls, driver’s license suspensions, filing of contempt hearings, etc.). They assigned monthly targets for each task and incorporated them into employees’ yearly performance evaluation. They also introduced a non-financial incentive mechanism that was tied to the monthly goals to ensure that the valued tasks were given top priority. Those who met their targets were rewarded with an ‘*alternative work schedule*’ and those who failed to meet them were subjected to the dreaded *Performance Improvement Plan*. Yet, to determine who succeeded and who failed, management had to rely on the same devices that monitored and recorded caseworkers’ activities to generate performance reports on caseworkers’ outputs. Information from these data reports were then used to populate the Employee Performance Report, the official form used for employees’ yearly evaluation. With official reports completed and filed, employees’ performances became matters of fact (Latour, 2004) .

From visual representations to interactive devices, DAFS’ mediating valuation devices, along with their ‘format and furniture’ (Pollock & D’Adderio, 2012), intervened in imposing the FPMs’ world of GP. They visualized and mobilized the measures through maps, tables, software applications, performance reports, incentive mechanisms, and other devices inscribed with, and thus constituting, the FPMs’ ‘good’ that must be performed. Their presentation and functional design defined what,

how, and when GP must be deployed so they can be counted and measured. Hence, these mediating devices helped construct DAFS' GP *in* and *by* their design and operation.

8.4.4 Performative validation

The organization, articulation, and production of the FPMs' frames established for DAFS a sociotechnical *agencement* (Callon, 1998a, 2007, 2009) needed for the GP to exist. With employees settled in their specialized units and roles, tasks contained within clearly demarcated boundaries of operation, cases flowing through tributaries established by workflows, software applications, and databases, and mediating devices classifying employees' GP, the FPMs' world gradually emerged. Every element and every link within that world, through their collective action, produced the GP that DAFS could deploy and measure. To keep the GP stable, however, DAFS management needed to add into their world other mechanisms and processes that could validate and reinforce its existence. Some of these mechanisms, while mediating, were also validating the enacted GP. These included the monthly tables, data tracking tools, management reports, and Employee Performance Reports. Their mediating effects were such that they turned DAFS' GP into something that was not only '*perceptible*', but also '*believable*' (Svetlova, 2016). They served as a confirmation or validation of the 'good', making it a 'thing' (Callon & Muniesa, 2005) that can be known, referred to, and acted upon (Callon, 2009). Indeed, the reports and tables, as validating instruments, turned DAFS' GP into a social fact, which then served as employees' justification to keep delivering only the measurable 'good'.

Validation mechanisms were abundant, diverse, and came from all directions. Top management sent monthly emails to staff (and more frequently towards the final stretch of the fiscal year) conveying DAFS' latest counts and scores, and the GP they represent. The same information was circulated in 'Quarterly All Staff', team, and one-on-one meetings, and beyond DAFS' premises through conference presentations and child support publications. Awards went out to employees for their good work and '*alternative work schedules*' were granted to those who met their monthly '*stats*', thus reinforcing the value of DAFS' quantified 'good'. The presumed transparency and visibility (Espeland & Lom, 2015) that the quantified 'good' provides helped in

the validation of DAFS' production of GP. But what were made visible and transparent were the elements that were singled out to frame the GP and make it happen. The quantification helped stabilize (temporarily) the underlying 'good' of the measured GP, thus granting it the political strength (Fourcade, 2016) to mobilize employees to keep doing what they were doing. Hence, while the quantified 'good' validated the valued GP, it also reinforced the network of relations that produced it.

Measuring GP is a performatively constitutive process. In DAFS' case, the FPMs participated in organizing, articulating, producing, and validating the GP that can be made valuable and measurable. With FPMs actively intervening, DAFS' employees and devices, through their interactions, managed to formulate a notion of the 'good' and generate behavioral scripts (i.e. what is worth knowing and doing) 'to produce regularities and repetition' (Callon, 2007: 326) in their performance of the valued 'good' that can be measured. This measured 'good', therefore, became a reality for DAFS not through a simple declaration of the FPMs, but through a deliberate and thoughtful process of organization, articulation, production, and validation of a sociotechnical *agencement* that qualified and quantified the 'good' to make the GP 'exist'. Mobilizing the FPMs through these processes gave format and shape to an assemblage that could establish, generate, and measure DAFS' GP. Management and experts mobilized the FPMs through processes and mechanisms designed to encourage decisions and actions that would produce their specified GP. Therefore, the valued GP was successfully constructed and executed *in practice* (Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015a) through the collective action of actors and devices that were framed to contain it.

Based on the discussion above, these multiple and successive layering (Latour, 2005) of framed entities (from physical structures and spaces to roles, tools, and devices) were linked to each other by the FPMs and through which the FPMs' 'good' could be produced. Actors, and the mediating devices that they themselves constructed and framed, were enabled to enact or perform the 'good' that could be measured and make them 'good'. Their construction, however, was a gradual and evolving process that seemed settled one moment, but quickly shifted the next moment. As new actors entered, new devices and mechanisms emerged, adding more layers to an already intricately connected network and requiring a reconfiguration of

their associations. But always, they ‘acted’ as one coordinated and orchestrated network. Hence, unless one looks at it closely, one only sees what seemed like a coherent whole (Latour, 2005).

8.5 Measures’ performative struggles

DAFS’ case allows us to appreciate the dynamic relationship between the orderings of worth (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006), on the one hand, and value-making (Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015b), on the other, in the framing of the ‘good’. When qualifying what counts as ‘good’ according to the FPMs, the circumstances in which the FPMs exist drive the logic of worth for the qualification of the ‘good’. In DAFS’ case, the logic of the market plays heavily in the construction of the ‘good’ due to the incentive system and the ranking mechanism that are tied to the measures. This market logic gives the measures the conventional force (Austin, 1975) to enable DAFS actors to qualify and construct the FPMs’ ‘preferred good’ so it can be valued and made valuable at DAFS. Yet, in the process of enacting such market-driven ‘good’, other logics of worth intervene due to actors’ commitments to other worlds of justification (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006) that shout for justice, citizen’s rights, and professional values. These competing logics of worth generate controversies that disrupt, and overflows that interrupt, what is intricately bound together (Callon, 1998a, 1999), thus threatening the measures’ performance (Callon, 2009) of GP. Such disruptions and interruptions trigger negotiation and compromise in the construction of a re-qualified ‘good’, causing a shift in DAFS’ network of operations and a change in the meaning of the measures’ valued ‘good’. Hence, what is made valuable is never stable because other concerns and interests get in the way, forcing DAFS to reconfigure its network and bring different versions of measurable GP to life.

To explain the overflowing (Callon 1998) and counterperformative (MacKenzie, 2007) effects of the measures’ GP, the model (see Figure 8-2) offers a taxonomy of counter-performance, summarized into uncertainties, multiplicities, and rivalries. These performative struggles are triggered as unexpected events, multiple meanings of ‘good’, and collision of frames of valuation emerge, prompting DAFS’ sociotechnical *agencement* to be reconfigured to allow the measures to perform. Discussion of each follows below.

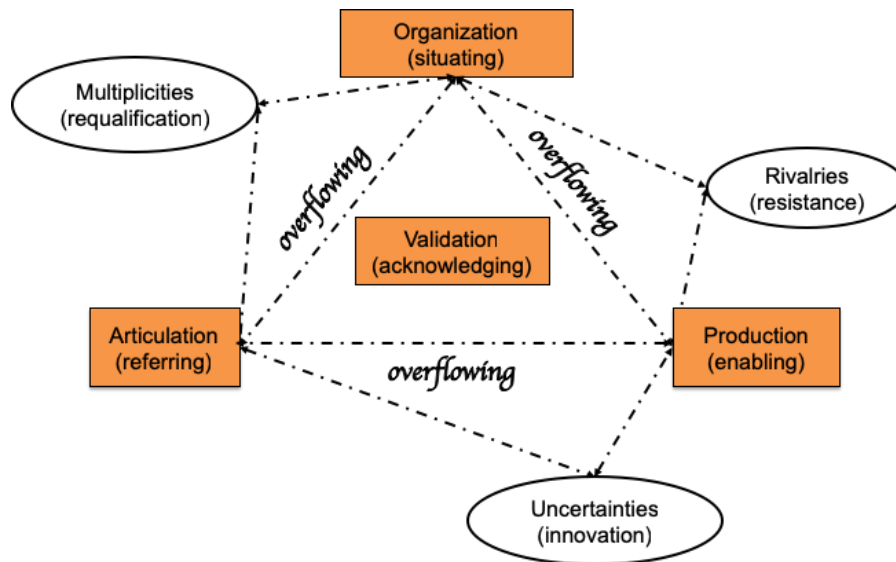


Figure 8-2 Taxonomy of counter-performance

8.5.1 A world of uncertainties

DAFS' *agencement* was negotiated, debated, and schematically circumscribed through sociotechnical chains of transformation (Dambrin & Robson, 2011), mapping out possible trajectories to secure the GP. Yet, despite attempts to contain it, DAFS could not keep the GP entirely nor permanently stable and predictable. As DAFS' assemblage performed the 'good', its configured and connected world generated uncertainties that required further framing of its sociotechnical *agencement*. Each actor (human and nonhuman) in DAFS' circumscribed network became a convenient opening to a world of uncertainties (Callon, *et al.*, 2009), prompting DAFS to explore further possible trajectories and transformations. Such opening, triggered by actors' connections within the network, made visible those disconnected from it, introduced unexpected actors into the scene, and provoked new interests, new discoveries, and new implementations of GP.

Amidst these uncertainties in delivering the 'good', however, sprung the very dynamics through which DAFS' innovation and transformation emerged. A striking example was Kathlyn's unexpected response to incarcerated noncustodial parents who were made visible by her tool's color-coding scheme. The tool's framing mechanism, which prescribed specific actions for specific cases to produce the 'good', raised some concerns for Kathlyn with regard to certain types of cases. The white coding of cases, which provided one worldview, was enough for her to bring forward her past (i.e. her

own child support experience as a parent and valuation for any possible amount of support), test and present a different ‘good’, and modify her interaction with incarcerated noncustodial parents – from inaction to outreach. Hence, while the tool shaped her case management practice, it also destabilized it by opening it up to other possibilities. This is consistent with Vinnari and Skærbæk’s (2014) findings on the effects of inscription devices on the framing and stabilization of risk management in a municipality; rather than managing uncertainties, they became conduits for the *overflows* (Callon, 1998a) and uncertainties that must be managed. This kind of opening enabled new entities (i.e. actors, ideas, and devices) to emerge and hook up with DAFS’ circulating entity (Latour, 1999a). Yet, their emergence might not have occurred without DAFS’ configured network that enabled caseworkers to perform certain (known) activities that would produce the ‘good’, but not others (yet unknown). It was this ‘unknown’ (or what they failed to do), triggered by the known (or what they were enabled to do), that DAFS employees were encouraged to explore.

Given the uniqueness of each child support case, caseworkers’ framed production of GP was constantly being disrupted, dislocated, and redistributed (Latour, 2005). Some cases were resisting the *agencement*’s valued actions, while others did not have the capacity to participate in delivering DAFS’ GP. Among such cases were the permanently disabled noncustodial parents whose circumstances presented barriers to making child support payments. As the prescribed actions were proving to be ineffective on these cases, a reassessment of the situation led DAFS to consider the noncustodial parents’ needs. Shifting their focus from the child to the noncustodial parent eventually led to the identification of a social worker assumed to have the knowledge and skills to handle socially-challenged cases. With the inclusion of this new actor, other difficult cases (i.e. homeless, drug abusers, perennially unemployed, mentally disabled, etc.) and possible mediators of the ‘good’ became noticeable, causing a redistribution of the FPMs’ GP. Soon thereafter, community organizations assumed to assist the disadvantaged sectors of society became valuable collaborators of DAFS. Consequently, DAFS’ network of GP was extended. The extensions (i.e. difficult cases, social worker, and community partners), however, might not have been considered had DAFS’ previous ‘good’ (GP1.0) prevailed. But, when the FPMs interfered and made a difference (Law, 2010) in DAFS’ child support enforcement services, employees started *‘think[ing] of more creative, innovative ways*

to handle cases that would just sit on the caseload and be dead'. As DAFS established links with community organizations, caseworkers began adjusting their practice. They started sending difficult cases to their new partners that could help make their condition 'felicitous' for the successful delivery of GP. Community partners, therefore, became co-producers of the 'good' even among the 'bad' and the 'ugly'. Noncustodial parents, once hounded and labeled as *deadbeats*, acquired a new 'ontological status' (Callon & Rabeharisoa, 2008: 231) from delinquent parents to disadvantaged parents. Consequently, DAFS not only collected support, but also *provided support*. Who knows what DAFS' future 'good' might be? One thing, though, is clear. It would depend on DAFS' organization, articulation, production, and validation of – or practices and procedures shaped by – what there *is* in their world. But it will always be 'messy, multiple, heterogeneous' (Law, 2010: 279) because it is uncertain of what there is not.

8.5.2 Multiple versions of the quantified 'good'

The uncertainties generated by DAFS' organizing work required a renegotiation of their GP. But what was counted as 'good' and who decided what counted depended on how actors and devices configured and positioned themselves within the network. Their positioning and configuration, however, did not randomly emerge. Through the measures' intervention, actors were assembled and framed to coordinate their interactions that would produce the agreed measurable GP. It is this morphology of their relations (Callon, 1999) that shaped what and how they performed. Their interactions and the products produced by their interactions (tools, monthly *stats*, management reports, AWS, etc.) made visible the preferred 'good' and the 'not so good', what was worth pursuing and what was worth disregarding, or what must be supported and what must be silenced. Yet, DAFS' morphology or configuration could not be sustained due to the uncertainties they produced and the *overflows* (Callon, 1998a) they generated. From one measurement regime to another, DAFS' collective GP radically shifted as its operational boundaries exposed gaps in its existing frames. New actors and devices were enlisted (Callon 1986), thus causing an adjustment in DAFS' network of relations and their production of GP.

Under DAFS' old measurement regime, the circulating 'good' focused on DAFS' total child support collection. This 'good' was expressed in terms of quantity,

focusing on the accumulated counts of money collected from noncustodial parents to determine the dollar value of their GP. Simply put, more is ‘good’. To produce this known ‘good’, employees attended to collecting as much as they could from any case that crossed their path. As there was no systematic way of knowing the status of cases in their caseload, caseworkers simply responded to complaints and demands from custodial parents. Those with the loudest cry were dealt with, as long as nothing else got in the way. But no matter how loud they cried, caseworkers did not always respond due to the volume of incoming telephone calls and lack of infrastructure to support their work. Hence, given the conditions of their operations, DAFS employees focused on establishing the highest possible order amount allowed by law, on communicating with noncustodial parents primarily by mail, and on taking punitive actions to extract every cent they could from the obligors. These were the GPs they assumed would generate the financial support *for the children*.

When media reports and state rankings put the FPMs to the fore, positioning Nevada ‘*at the bottom of the barrel*’, DAFS’ valued ‘good’ (GP1.0) was radically displaced almost overnight. Their known GP was no longer ‘good’ when a new measurement regime intervened. The five measures conveyed a new ‘good’ (GP2.0) defined in terms of productivity ratios, which reflected the statutory purposes of the child support program (OCSE, 2016b) and were assumed to improve the financial well-being of children and families. The GP imposed by the five measures included establishing the legal paternity of the child, setting the noncustodial parent’s monthly obligation amount, collecting the monthly obligation, collecting past due support, and operating a cost-effective program. Through experts’ articulation and mobilization of the FPMs, DAFS’ ‘new good’ began to take shape, changing employees’ knowledge of what counts as ‘good’. Learning how measures actually performed (i.e. *what* were measured and *how* the objects of measurement were measured), employees discussed and defined the GP that must be valued and accounted for to improve their performance scores. People, tasks, tools, processes, cases, and other entities were gathered and organized to make the qualified ‘good’ noticeable, valuable, and executable – in short, it must be able to ‘exist’ (Callon, 2009) – so it can be counted and measured by the FPMs. The developing ‘infrastructure of attention’ (Espeland & Lom, 2015: 19) on which the FPMs’ power rests enabled DAFS employees to take notice of the measure’s *rate of collection* (FPM#3) and shift their focus from the

amount collected to amount owed. Consequently, DAFS' GP was gradually altered – from establishing the highest possible order to establishing more reasonable and fair orders, from 'avoiding' to 'making' telephone calls, from randomly managing cases to systematically and strategically targeting cases, and from carefully reviewing cases to moving them quickly through the conveyor belt of specialized units. To ensure that their GP was kept alive, evidence of the 'new good' circulated through data reports, wall charts, emails, and other communication devices, thus making it real and keeping it stable (at least temporarily). DAFS' 'new good', therefore, was supported by the developing technological infrastructure that became part of the political contest organizing the GP that must prevail and shaping what employees ought to notice (Espeland & Lom, 2015).

As employees enacted their 'new good', other ways of executing the FPMs' 'good' (GP2.1, GP2.2, and so on) became visible, calling for a readjustment and renegotiation of DAFS' assemblage. New possibilities were explored and tested; new experts were tapped and deployed; new identities and partnerships were forged. Cases that were once put on hold due to their unproductive state, as in the case of incarcerated noncustodial parents, were reframed as cases requiring friendly letters informing them how they can still make payments. Cases that were considered 'dead', as in the case of the permanently disabled, were brought back to life to prepare them for their final and permanent closure and help DAFS reduce its caseload size. Community organizations that were once non-existent became significant allies. Delinquent noncustodial parents, who were once punitively judged and punished, were being encouraged and supported. A state statute, that for years had been interpreted one way, was reconsidered and rearticulated to enable the establishment of minimum (and even 'zero') orders, instead of the highest possible orders, so DAFS could manage its child support collections. Soon, DAFS employees became aware of not just *how much* was owed but also *who* owed. With their tracking devices in place, they noticed the non-regular paying and never-paying cases, as well as cases that were unlikely to make any payment. They began to distinguish cases by their payment capacity; they let the 'dead cases' be permanently dead; and they helped the 'sick' heal before allowing them back into the game. Thus, by helping cases achieve their performing state (i.e. reviewing cases that can be closed, modifying orders of eligible cases with high obligation amounts, and assisting cases with barriers to making

payments), they improved their performance scores and eventually moved up the ranks.

Although DAFS' performance scores improved, there was not just one version of GP that prevailed. Different executable 'goods' were deployed in different *agencements* 'respond[ing] to particular orientations and requirements' (Callon, 2010: 163) (i.e. whether in court or outside of court, with regular paying cases or with delinquent cases, at the beginning of the fiscal year or at the end of the fiscal year, with white cases or red cases, etc.). A permanently disabled noncustodial parent called for a GP that involved specialists, while a regular paying case called for the GP prescribed by the Case Management Tool. The former required the participation of a social worker and community partners, while the latter did not. Yet, despite their difference, both 'goods' (and other 'goods' for that matter) were captured by the same FPMs, making them simply 'good' based on a shared metric (Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Espeland & Stevens, 1998). Their differences were made invisible by this process of simplification but made visible by their quantification. Thus, those that met their performance goals were rewarded and those that did not faced sanctions.

The multiple versions of GP at DAFS, concealed under the same metric, capture the merging of values and value into one (Adkins & Lury, 2011; Fourcade, 2011b; Pallesen, 2015; Reinecke, 2015) – although not without controversies and significant consequences for DAFS' organizing work. Their incorporation into the measures' frames of valuation resulted in the flattening, homogenizing, and collapsing (Fourcade, 2011a) of what were *in practice* qualitatively different executions of GP. The integration and merging of multiple 'goods' under a single system of valuation, however, demanded considerable reassembling and reframing of DAFS' *agencement* to allow the measures to keep performing. Indeed, when multiple interests or principles of judgment are merged into a single value, as evident in the valuation of hotels (Scott & Orlikowski, 2012), law schools (Espeland & Sauder, 2007), cities (Kornberger & Clegg, 2011), or even 'honesty' required by an honor code (Gehman, *et al.*, 2013), the evaluative space must be readjusted so what is re-qualified as valuable can be valued, consequently extending the qualification and valuation systems and the entities they value (Bowker & Star, 1999; Fourcade & Healy, 2013, 2017a).

8.5.3 Competing valuations of ‘good’

When the quantified valuation of GP became DAFS’ matter of concern, employees’ activities and outputs became the focus of attention. DAFS’ assemblages encouraged and mobilized employees to perform the ‘good’ that can be tracked, measured, and evaluated. Management introduced and enforced production outputs and performance standards, or what employees called ‘*stats*’, which became valuable components of employees’ yearly performance evaluation. Managers, IT experts, analysts, and outside consultants installed valuation technologies (e.g. CMT, management reports, workflows, wall charts) to direct, monitor, and capture employees’ activities, and produce the facts that would give meaning and effectiveness (Callon, 2009) to the FPMs’ quantified ‘good’. Hence, the FPMs shaped DAFS’ rhetoric of GP, the processes and practices to produce it, and the products to reveal it.

But, when the quantification of GP seemed to dominate devices, processes, and practices, DAFS encountered conflicts and challenges along the way. As DAFS’ assemblage performed the measurable ‘good’, its frames of valuation overflowed (Roscoe, 2015b), engendering controversies (Callon, *et al.*, 2009; Callon, 1998a) and revealing dissonance in evaluative principles of what counts as ‘good’ (Stark, 2009). When DAFS’ network of actors, devices, statements, processes, and tools developed, framed, and produced the quantifiable GP, other valuations of ‘good’ gradually emerged and challenged it. Motivated by personal, professional, and civic interests and concerns, some employees began to question the prevailing number-driven ‘good’ and attempted to pursue what they believed should constitute GP.

In the case of Veronica and Sheila, when the monthly *stats* became the driving force behind the processing of cases, they felt that cases were not receiving the ‘quality work’ and attention they deserved. Their desire to make a change and challenge DAFS’ structural frames moved them to enact the change they want accomplished *in practice* (Reinecke, 2018). As they performed a re-qualified ‘good’ in an organizational setting that did not support their frames of valuation, tensions emerged. They felt that their specialized roles, devices, and processes were restricting their professional discretion and curtailing their delivery of what they considered to be ‘good case management work’. Hence, resisting the processes and technologies

offered by their specialization, they performed the ‘good’ they knew and valued (based on their experience) – that is, carefully reviewing and doing as much as could be done on a case before passing it on to another specialized unit. Their choice of action however competed with the valuation infrastructure, causing a disruption in DAFS’ production of the quantified ‘good’. In the case of Veronica, engaging in activities outside of the confines of her specialized role led to her unsuccessful delivery of DAFS’ preferred ‘good’ (i.e. meeting the expected volume of reviewed cases), which is a *misfire* (Callon, 2010) in the performance of the FPMs. But, Veronica’s (like many others) long history of case management work was making it difficult for her to disentangle from her past web of relations that gave her the ‘ability’ to have control over her cases. Yet, because such relations were no longer intact, that ‘ability’ was now compromised. While the past gave her the knowledge, skills, and justification for managing cases and enabling her to act one way, the reconfigured network in which she was now immersed and forced to connect presented another way. For her to perform the other way, however, demanded further framing and disentanglement from the past. Perhaps, with monthly *stats* tied to her performance evaluation, Veronica might just be forced to connect and enact DAFS’ quantified ‘good’ once and for all.

Professional discretion, however, was not the only concern of Veronica and Sheila. They also had misgivings regarding a DAFS’ policy that did not support the automatic reinstatement of arrears when cases re-opened. They felt that it denied custodial parents the financial support that was due to them. Moreover, they saw the policy as a way of preventing the potential negative impact an automatic reinstatement might have on DAFS’ performance scores; an indication of the measures’ control over their operations. As the policy and material mechanisms in place dictated what mattered, Veronica and Sheila expressed their objection by taking the initiative of informing custodial parents about the process for requesting the arrears. Their decision to act ‘outside the frames’ was motivated by their concern for fairness and civic duty (fairness towards custodial parents who have the right to request those arrears and duty to inform them how to exercise that right). The behavior displayed by these caseworkers urged the network to reinforce its connections through further framing to resist their command. In an attempt to contain this *overflow*, management issued a directive instructing caseworkers to refrain from

voluntarily sending out information to custodial parents about the requirements for requesting arrears, unless an attempt was made to fill out a form. While this directive might have contained a potential threat to DAFS' GP, the exception to the rule presented a 'leakage point' (Callon, 1999; see also Zhang, 2017) for Sheila to continue her practice. Hence, this battle between management and their performative mechanisms on the one hand, and caseworkers and their frames of valuation on the other, is a political battle of the *agencement* to establish and command the value that ought to prevail. As Fourcade (2011a) might argue, the valuation of GP is highly contingent and political, and makes sense only in relation to the discourses, processes, rules, social relations, and technical systems and arrangements in place. These systems and arrangements frame and direct the GP that must be valued, and how and why it must be valued. When these arrangements provoke other conflicting values seeking to be re-attached to value (Reinecke, 2015) or challenging the institutional authority behind the prevailing value (Reinecke, 2018), the re-valuation of what must be valued becomes messy and complex. Indeed, as scholars have shown, the qualification of 'fairness and equality' in organ allocation (Roscoe, 2015b), Fairtrade pricing (Reinecke, 2010), monetary compensation for damages to nature (Fourcade, 2011a), or water development projects such as the Orme Dam (Espeland & Lom, 2015) is a contentious process that is deeply bound up in sociohistorical contexts defining the what, who, how, and why of valuation. To bring a (temporary) closure to the contestation, considerable investment in experts, devices, protocols, and other materialities is needed to shape what must be noticed and what must be put aside (Espeland & Lom, 2015).

When monthly quotas and performance standards became a formal mechanism for control, conflicts emerged as caseworkers experienced undue pressure to meet targets. Lawyers, on the other hand, struggled to satisfy multiple hierarchies of worth (Lamont, 2012) – economic, social, and professional. In the former, the conflict provoked 'gaming' and 'cheating'; in the latter, it led to the justification and survival of the economic – perhaps unsurprisingly, given the market logic circulating in and through DAFS' network. As one of the managers observed, some caseworkers, due to their strong interest in DAFS' incentives (i.e. AWS), became focused on meeting their monthly targets with little regard for the effectiveness of their actions. This kind of behavior perhaps was inevitable given that caseworkers did not have full control of

the type of cases they eventually managed. Hence, for some, it was a choice between gaming it or leaving it to chance and risking the loss of their prized possession – their AWS. But for one caseworker, a more drastic choice was made – ‘inactivating the order’ – to ensure that the measure did not report a poor performance in collection (FPM#3) on an incarcerated noncustodial parent. This was her way of controlling the value that mattered, though not for long. Having discovered the breach, management added a further component in its already intricately connected network. With the establishment of a quality control process, they managed to plait the weak ties (Latour, 1996) in their assemblage and reinforce the ‘truth’ behind the numbers.

Not all conflicts, however, triggered a reaction that threatened DAFS’ GP. In Sonia’s case, tensions arose when an office policy that directly affected her work clashed with her professional values of upholding the law and protecting the constitutional rights of citizens. Internally conflicted, she was reluctant to perform the ‘good’ defined and promoted by the policy, triggering a disquieting intimation of reassurance from the leader. To assuage her concerns, the head claimed to take full responsibility for DAFS’ policy, further strengthening the encroachment and hegemonic influence of the FPMs and their performative capacity. Because Sonia’s position in and attachment to DAFS’ network did not wield enough power and influence to allow her to fight for her professional values, she ultimately claimed subordination and performed according to the FPMs’ ‘good’. Although the policy was eventually modified, Sonia also struggled to negotiate the ‘good’ that demanded ‘accuracy’ on the one hand and efficiency on the other. But to stay connected to DAFS’ network, she opted for and adopted the latter.

Like Sonia, Eleanor learned to embrace the numeric valuation of the ‘good’. Frustrated with the ‘reality’ that the FPMs ‘created’, she knew that her frames of valuation were difficult to justify in a setting where the FPMs had naturally settled. She realized that being ‘locked in’ (Callon & Rabearisoa, 2008; Dambrin & Robson, 2011) a network of relations that imposed a specific valuation of GP would make it difficult to pursue other competing valuations of ‘good’. As long as the FPMs’ valued ‘good’ was deeply embedded in and circulated through actors, devices, and other entities, its performance (though occasionally disrupted) would be kept alive. The FPMs, therefore, became the dominant force that structured the organization’s

operations and justified its every move. Their power, as Townley (1993: 520) would argue in Foucauldian sense, was the effect of DAFS' organizing work, which included the 'practices, techniques, and procedures', that made the measures known and be noticed. Indeed, as Eleanor observed, DAFS had turned into an entity that kept performing the FPMs' 'good' in order to earn incentives and keep performing the FPMs' 'good'. But by turning into a collective entity that kept performing according to the measures, DAFS' GP was successfully captured, making DAFS' a 'good performing agency'. Whose and what 'good' ultimately prevailed? Whose voices were heard? Whose voices were silenced? How were actors' positions and identities altered? One must examine the measures, the traces they left behind, and the associations they forged to discover the who, what, and how of DAFS' valuation and construction of the 'good' that led to their transformation.

8.6 Conclusion

The FPMs do not just capture or represent DAFS' GP but intervene in qualifying and determining the 'good' that must be valued and performed so it can be measured. Their intervention is a participation in the construction of the reality they intend to capture by acting on it (Callon, 2007) – that is, by putting the reality of GP into action through the mobilization of actors, cases, devices, processes, and other entities that frame the GP so it can be acted upon. The mobilization of this world of *actants* (Latour, 1996) is not a linear and predictable process, but a negotiated, heavily invested, and constantly challenged process. Through framing and reframing (Callon, 1998a), DAFS' world of GP is gradually organized, articulated, produced, and validated. Consequently, a sociotechnical *agencement* develops and makes the GP known, draws actors' attention to what matters, and subsequently enables the GP to 'exist'. The *agencement*, however, is prone to *overflows* (Callon, 1998a) due to actors' connections to other worlds. When *overflows* happen, new possibilities emerge, encouraging the *agencement* to adjust and shift for the continued production of GP. But when this happens, a different *agencement* ultimately develops and a different version of a measurable GP is produced. The 'deadbeat' is befriended, the 'difficult case' is encouraged, and the 'hopeless' is assisted so they can all deliver the 'good'.

Overflows, however, can also reveal competing valuations of GP that can lead

to conflicts. When economic values collide with professional, ethical, or civic values, challenges and tensions arise. What and whose values then matter? As long as the FPMs' *agencement* is intact, the economic/numeric valuation of the 'good' is likely to prevail. The competing values are reframed and enmeshed with the economic, thus giving it the moral force (Roscoe, 2013) to keep producing the economic 'good'. And when measures take control, they generate a reactivity (Espeland & Sauder, 2007) that strategizes or prioritizes what is worth encouraging, discriminates or filters what is worth ignoring, and reinforces or strengthens what is worth incorporating so that only the GP that can be measured prevails. After all, measures are inseparable from the reality (Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015c) they intend to measure.

9 Conclusion

Performance measures do not just represent performance that is ‘out there’; they intervene and ‘make it’, so they can ‘represent it’. This is the starting point of my thesis. In order to examine *how* the intervention happens and *what* is being constructed in a local site, I had to start somewhere; and where else, but *in medias res* (Latour, 2005). Slowly unraveling and disentangling what could be an intricately connected web of relations (Callon, 1999), I expected to capture the details of the intervention and the construction of DAFS’ GP. This thesis, therefore, is a reconstruction and textual account (Latour, 2005) of what has been revealed by the investigation as a (provisionally) coordinated representation of a world that has come to be.

Using Callon’s performativity thesis (Callon, 1998a, 2007, 2009) and drawing on valuation studies (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006; Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015b; Dussauge, *et al.*, 2015a; Kornberger, *et al.*, 2015) and the sociology of quantification (Espeland & Lom, 2015; Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Espeland & Stevens, 1998, 2008; Fourcade, 2016), I examined how measures perform – that is, contribute to the construction and valuation of GP – in a local child support agency. Guided by an ANT approach (Latour, 1996, 1999a, 2005), I followed the actors and their traces to figure out what their intervention entailed. As I gathered information and examined the traces left behind by the measures’ effects on DAFS’ organizing work, I gradually uncovered the measures’ intervention through the sociotechnical *agencement* (Callon, 1998a, 2007, 2009) working to establish the conditions for the measures to perform. This *agencement* of human and nonhuman actors, and the interactions they promoted, mobilized the measures in and through people, devices, cases, tasks, and other entities that collectively performed the measures’ GP. Despite my attempt to put a closure to the measures’ intervention in this written account, the investigation was resisting the need to do so. Indeed, as I had observed, DAFS actors were constantly immersed in negotiations and framings of multiple *agencements* that kept shifting, adjusting, and ultimately constructing new versions of GP.

This thesis offers a rich account of DAFS’ transformation as an effect of the FPMs’ performativity. It starts with an exposition of a version of the ‘good’ that

disagreed with the FPMs' 'good', putting the state close to or at the bottom of a ranking system. It then provides a description of the chains of transformation (Dambrin & Robson, 2011) that assembled DAFS into a well-coordinated network to perform the FPMs' valued 'good' – a 'good' that is fundamentally based on economic values of efficiency and trade-offs. In enacting the valued 'good', new actors and devices (e.g. social worker and tracking devices) were enrolled, while old ones (e.g. simple list of cases) were dis-enrolled or temporarily displaced; new articulations and justifications of the 'good' were considered (e.g. efficiency), while previous ones were gradually subdued (e.g. accuracy). Some were supportive of the prevailing 'good', but others were not. Some were folded in; others were barred from entry. Their inclusion or exclusion, hence, required further framing and configuration of DAFS' network so the measures' GP could keep acting and be measured – ultimately resulting in multiple versions of the 'good'. But, when these multiple versions of 'good' were made similar under a shared metric (Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Espeland & Stevens, 1998), their differences quickly disappeared. What remained was simply 'a good performing agency'. The dominance of the quantified 'good', however, triggered controversies (Callon, 1998a; Callon, *et al.*, 2009) due to some actors' justifications for an alternative metric of 'worth' (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006; Fourcade, 2011a). With competing professional, civic, or moral values disrupting, challenging, and threatening the production of DAFS' GP, the sociotechnical *agencement* was forced to reconfigure its frames of valuation to ensure that the quantified 'good' was preserved. Management introduced new protocols, policies, and discourses, which became mechanisms for plaiting the weak ties (Latour, 1996). The *agencement* was settled once more, but not for long as uncertainties never stopped. The measures' performativity persisted, urging DAFS' sociotechnical *agencement* to extend its links and connections, venture into new territories, and produce newer versions of 'good'.

Thus, the account exposes the continued enrollment of new actors and devices, including the marginalized, and the formation of multiple *agencements* due to *overflows* (Callon, 1998a) in the network. It presents the battles that must be won to maintain the FPMs' preferred 'good'. Through a complex web of relations (Callon, 1999), measures were mobilized and circulated in DAFS' units, departments, meetings, courtrooms, tools, emails, charts, tables, training activities, reports,

employees, and other nonhuman and non-individual entities. Their movements in and through these entities produced effects and unexpected events (Callon, 2009) that provoked changes to DAFS' practices. These same entities became part of the political contest defining whose and what 'good' should prevail. The relations of domination (Çalışkan & Callon, 2010), thus, served as the organizing framework for the GP that must be valued, enacted, and measured. But, their network of alliances was often disrupted, dislocated, and redistributed (Latour, 2005) as some entities were resisting DAFS' valued and constructed 'good'. So, while there might not seem to be an end to this intervention account, this thesis offers a provisional ordering of a performance measurement network to which future work could connect or that others could utilize as a framework for understanding the construction and valuation of other GPs.

This account is both 'artificial *and* accurate' composed of artifacts that were allowed 'to *object* to what is said about them' (Latour, 2005: 124-125, emphasis in the original). Objects and subjects were given the chance to provide their own explanation for their social world, thus enabling me to produce this textual account and allow the social to appear. By following these actors and their traces, I was able to capture their movements and provide their explanation for the GP they produced. But, the materiality of this account (presented in a PhD thesis format) offers the possibility of extensions for the exploration of social connections well beyond this particular case. As the social is a network or 'traces of associations' (Latour, 2005), it is hoped that what has been traced and accounted for in this thesis would help others continue with the tracing and reassembling of, and theorizing about the social world.

Drawing on my analysis, I offer a conception of performativity that comprises four overlapping layers of framing: organization, articulation, production, and validation. These framing efforts contribute to an understanding of the organizational work required in the construction and valuation of GP, and the uncertainties they generate. They expose the processes and mechanisms required to manage and sustain the measures as the organization's circulating reference (Latour, 1999b) for the construction of the preferred 'good'. These framing activities show how actors and devices are relentlessly involved in elaborating and explicating their modalities of action through their *agencements* (Callon, 2009) that could both manufacture and

represent GP. The layers of framing also offer an analytical framework for understanding the relations of domination (Çalışkan & Callon, 2010) fueling the ‘good’ and prompting strategic alliances to address gaps in the practice. They make visible the differences and asymmetries – the actors that must be ‘in’ and those that must be ‘out’, the ‘connected’ and ‘disconnected’, and the worthwhile and worthless – and the politics they engender. They bring to the surface the competing interests and concerns provoked by the assembling and organizing of heterogenous actors through which measures are made *present* (Latour, 1999a) and the multiple versions of the ‘good’ that challenge or reframe the prevailing ‘good’. Hence, this study provides insights into the disputability and multiplicity (Kjellberg & Mallard, 2013) of GP and the organizing work required to construct what is ‘good’. It opens up the politics of values (Reinecke, 2015) as multiple *agencements* attempt to establish and control the values that matter. Finally, the study also offers a powerful illustration of a form of *agencing* (Cochoy, 2015) that grants specific *agencements*, and the entities that make and constitute them, the capacity to act or perform. Hence, for organizational research, this empirical case provides an example of the work involved in assembling, organizing, and shaping *agencements*, with each element participating in the pursuit of organizational change.

As performativity suggests that phenomenon exists in ‘singular and variable concrete forms’ (Callon, 2009: 23), the question of generalizability is immediately brought to the fore. As the study’s aim is to provide a rich account of the performative character of performance measures, it does not intend to establish its applicability to other contexts or settings. But since the ‘local never occurs in one place only’ and is redistributed through a ‘chain of connected localities’ (Czarniawska, 2014: 100; see Latour, 2005), this non-exhaustive, yet plausible and trustworthy account (Covaleski, Dirsmith, Heian, *et al.*, 1998; Ahrens & Chapman, 2006) suggests that the performative processes and mechanisms described could *possibly* hold true in similar settings ‘even if [they] are not actualized in similar ways’ (Peräkylä, 1997: 215). Notwithstanding this possibility, there is a need to keep an open mind for potential offerings from atypical cases or settings that could provide a more nuanced understanding of similar phenomena (Gehman, *et al.*, 2013).

The aim of the ANT approach is to offer a framework for understanding *how*

social phenomena appear, the *processes* that make them, and the type of connections they muster to spread across multiple sites and cases. Thus, the specificity of the findings offered by this study can contribute to the developing patterns that are emerging to broaden our understanding of a phenomenon that is continuously performing (Latour, 1986a; Callon, 1999; Hansen, 2011). Perhaps the more pressing concerns of an ANT-inspired investigation are focus, time, and breadth of the network-tracing. What does one focus on, for how long, and how far? Indeed, following the actor can present challenges for the researcher due to the many choices of actors and relations that can be pursued (Hansen, 2011). Yet, by allowing both human and nonhuman actors to ‘speak’, one can identify the key actors that mediate and define the relations that hold the phenomenon together (Latour, 1986a). This could then address the issue of time spent following the actors. As Hansen (2011) explains, longitudinal studies are not a necessity ‘because a translation’s heterogeneity and relationality can in some cases be seen by the researcher after only a few interviews with key actors or a short period of data collection’ (p. 126). So, how much of the account could I possibly provide? While there is always a desire to describe more movements, this provisional staging of the connections (Latour, 2005: 139) I managed to deploy within the textual limit of a thesis might serve as a framework for others who wish to explore further the same world that we share.

Looking ahead, I intend to explore further the FPMs’ orderings or forms of organizing that give voices to the marginalized and excluded. It would be interesting to explore what the impact of giving voices to them might have on those for whom the child support program was intended, and on the meaning and significance of public services. Finally, it might be worthwhile to examine closely how performance-based incentive systems might be subverting the ‘publicness’ of public services and the factors (or actors) contributing to their success or failure.

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Appendix

§305.2 Performance measures.

(a) The child support incentive system measures State performance levels in five program areas:

Paternity establishment; support order establishment; current collections; arrearage collections; and cost-effectiveness. The penalty system measures State performance in three of these areas: Paternity establishment; establishment of support orders; and current collections.

(1) *Paternity Establishment Performance Level*. States have the choice of being evaluated on one of the following two measures for their paternity establishment percentage (commonly known as the PEP). The count of children shall not include any child who is a dependent by reason of the death of a parent (unless paternity is established for that child). It shall also not include any child whose parent is found to have good cause for refusing to cooperate with the State agency in establishing paternity, or for whom the State agency determines it is against the best interest of the child to pursue paternity issues.

(i) *IV-D Paternity Establishment Percentage* means the ratio that the total number of children in the IV-D caseload in the fiscal year (or, at the option of the State, as of the end of the fiscal year) who have been born out-of-wedlock and for whom paternity has been established or acknowledged, bears to the total number of children in the IV-D caseload as of the end of the preceding fiscal year who were born out-of-wedlock. The equation to compute the measure is as follows (expressed as a percent):

$$\frac{\text{Total \# of Children in IV-D Caseload in the Fiscal Year or, at the option of the State, as of the end of the Fiscal Year who were Born Out-of-Wedlock with Paternity Established or Acknowledged}}{\text{Total \# of Children in IV-D Caseload as of the end of the preceding Fiscal Year who were Born Out-of-Wedlock}}$$

[View or download PDF](#)

(ii) *Statewide Paternity Establishment Percentage* means the ratio that the total number of minor children who have been born out-of-wedlock and for whom paternity has been established or acknowledged during the fiscal year, bears to the total number of children born out-of-wedlock during the preceding fiscal year. The equation to compute the measure is as follows (expressed as a percent):

$$\frac{\text{Total \# of Minor Children who have been Born Out-of-Wedlock and for Whom Paternity has been Established or Acknowledged During the Fiscal Year}}{\text{Total \# of Children Born Out of Wedlock During the Preceding Fiscal Year}}$$

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(2) *Support Order Establishment Performance Level*. This measure requires a determination of whether or not there is a support order for each case. These support orders include all types of legally enforceable orders, such as court, default, and

administrative. Since the measure is a case count at a point-in-time, modifications to an order do not affect the count. The equation to compute the measure is as follows (expressed as a percent):

$$\frac{\text{Number of IV-D Cases with Support Orders During the Fiscal Year}}{\text{Total Number of IV-D Cases During the Fiscal Year}}$$

[View or download PDF](#)

(3) *Current Collections Performance Level.* Current support is money applied to current support obligations and does not include payment plans for payment towards arrears. If included, voluntary collections must be included in both the numerator and the denominator. This measure is computed monthly and the total of all months is reported at the end of the year. The equation to compute the measure is as follows (expressed as a percent):

$$\frac{\text{Number Dollars Collected for Current Support in IV-D Cases}}{\text{Total Dollars Owed for Current Support in IV-D Cases}}$$

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(4) *Arrearage Collection Performance Level.* This measure includes those cases where all of the past-due support was disbursed to the family, or retained by the State because all the support was assigned to the State. If some of the past-due support was assigned to the State and some was to be disbursed to the family, only those cases where some of the support actually went to the family can be included. The equation to compute the measure is as follows (expressed as a percent):

$$\frac{\text{Total number of eligible IV-D cases paying toward arrears}}{\text{Total number of IV-D cases with arrears due}}$$

[View or download PDF](#)

(5) *Cost-Effectiveness Performance Level.* Interstate incoming and outgoing distributed collections will be included for both the initiating and the responding State in this measure. The equation to compute this measure is as follows (expressed as a ratio):

$$\frac{\text{Total IV-D Dollars Collected}}{\text{Total IV-D Dollars Expended}}$$

[View or download PDF](#)

(b) For incentive purposes, the measures will be weighted in the following manner. Each State will earn five scores based on performance on each of the five measures. Each of the first three measures (paternity establishment, order establishment, and current collections) earn 100 percent of the collections base as defined in §305.31(e) of this part. The last two measures (collections on arrears and cost-effectiveness) earn a maximum of 75 percent of the collections base as defined in §305.31(e) of this part.

§305.31 Amount of incentive payment.

(a) The incentive payment for a State for a fiscal year is equal to the incentive payment pool for the fiscal year, multiplied by the State incentive payment share for the fiscal year.

(b) The incentive payment pool is:

(1) \$422,000,000 for fiscal year 2000;

(2) \$429,000,000 for fiscal year 2001;

(3) \$450,000,000 for fiscal year 2002;

(4) \$461,000,000 for fiscal year 2003;

(5) \$454,000,000 for fiscal year 2004;

(6) \$446,000,000 for fiscal year 2005;

(7) \$458,000,000 for fiscal year 2006;

(8) \$471,000,000 for fiscal year 2007;

(9) \$483,000,000 for fiscal year 2008; and

(10) For any succeeding fiscal year, the amount of the incentive payment pool for the fiscal year that precedes such succeeding fiscal year multiplied by the percentage (if any) by which the CPI for such preceding fiscal year exceeds the CPI for the second preceding fiscal year. In other words, for each fiscal year following fiscal year 2008, the incentive payment pool will be multiplied by the percentage increase in the CPI between the two preceding years. For example, if the CPI increases by 1 percent between fiscal years 2007 and 2008, then the incentive pool for fiscal year 2009 would be a 1 percent increase over the \$483,000,000 incentive payment pool for fiscal year 2008, or \$487,830,000.

(c) The State incentive payment share for a fiscal year is the incentive base amount for the State for the fiscal year divided by the sum of the incentive base amounts for all of the States for the fiscal year.

(d) A State's maximum incentive base amount for a fiscal year is the State's collections base for the fiscal year for the paternity establishment, support order, and current collections performance measures and 75 percent of the State's collections base for the fiscal year for the arrearage collections and cost-effectiveness performance measures.

(e) A State's maximum incentive base amount for a State for a fiscal year is zero, unless a Federal audit performed under §305.60 of this part determines that the data submitted by the State for the fiscal year and used to determine the performance level involved are complete and reliable.

(f) A State's collections base for a fiscal year is equal to: two times the sum of the total amount of support collected for Current Assistance cases plus two times the total amount of support collected in Former Assistance cases, plus the total amount of support

collected in Never Assistance/other cases during the fiscal year, that is: 2(Current Assistance collections + Former Assistance collections) + all other collections.

DAFS Vision and Mission Statements

Vision Statement:

*Be The National Leader
in Providing
Superior Child Support Services.*

Mission Statement:

*Improve the lives of families
by engaging and empowering parents
in providing continuous support for their children
through improved
Communication, Integrity, Accountability, Results,
Commitment, Conflict Resolution, Trust,
and Innovative Ideas.*

Customer Service Statement:

*Quality Customer Service is
being responsive, respectful,
and providing knowledgeable information
while striving for customer satisfaction.*

Travel Itinerary

Site Visits	Places Visited	From	To
Site Visit 1	Las Vegas, NV	Monday, 14 September 2015	Tuesday, 13 October 2015
	Washington D.C. / Virginia	Tuesday, 13 October 2015	Friday, 16 October 2015
Site Visit 2	Salt Lake City, UT	Saturday, 1 October 2016	Thursday, 6 October 2016



2nd September 2015
Ana Carolina R Macatangay
School of Management

Ethics Reference No: <i>Please quote this ref on all correspondence</i>	MN 11751
Project Title:	Performativity of Measures and Incentives in the U.S. Child Support Enforcement Program
Researchers Name(s):	Ana Carolina R Macatangay
Supervisor(s):	Philip Roscoe

Thank you for submitting your application which was considered by the School of Management's Ethics Committee. The following documents were reviewed:

1. Ethical Application Form
2. Participant Consent Form Coded Data
3. Participant Information Sheet

The University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC) approves this study from an ethical point of view. Please note that where approval is given by a School Ethics Committee that committee is part of UTREC and is delegated to act for UTREC.

Approval is given for three years. Projects, which have not commenced within two years of original approval, must be re-submitted to your School Ethics Committee.

You must inform your School Ethics Committee when the research has been completed. If you are unable to complete your research within the 3 three year validation period, you will be required to write to your School Ethics Committee and to UTREC (where approval was given by UTREC) to request an extension or you will need to re-apply.

Any serious adverse events or significant change which occurs in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration, must be reported immediately to the School Ethics Committee, and an Ethical Amendment Form submitted where appropriate.

Approval is given on the understanding that the 'Guidelines for Ethical Research Practice' (<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/UTRECguidelines%20Feb%2008.pdf>) are adhered to.

Yours sincerely

Dr John Desmond
Convener of the School Ethics Committee

cc Shona Deigman



Participant Information Sheet

Project Title

Performativity of Measures and Incentives in the U.S. Child Support Enforcement Program

What is the study about?

You are invited to participate in a research project that will investigate how the U.S. Child Support Enforcement Program's federal performance measures and incentive system are circulated in a child support agency, as well as the impact these may have on the way employees/leaders think about or do their work as they interact with each other, their tools, and their devices. To accomplish this, the investigation will involve observations of daily operations; interviews and focus groups; and a review of operational tools, devices, policies and procedures, and other relevant documents that convey or support the performance measures and incentive framework. It may also involve taking photographic images of work areas, staff meetings and interactions, devices, tools, and other activities. Follow-up Skype or phone interviews may also be carried out, if and as needed.

This research project is being conducted as part of the researcher's PhD Thesis in the School of Management of the University of St Andrews.

Do I have to take Part?

This information sheet has been written to help you decide if you would like to take part. It is up to you and you alone whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be free to withdraw at any time by simply informing the researcher before the completion of the study without providing a reason.

What would I be required to do?

Unless you are invited for an interview or to be part of a focus group, you are not expected to do anything outside your usual activities. However, during observation of daily operations, the researcher may ask you about the specific task you are performing and the tools you are using to carry it out in order to acquire a better understanding of your work. As your participation is voluntary, you are free to inform the researcher if you do not wish to be observed.

Prior to or in the course of the site visit, some of you may be invited for a one-on-one interview or to be part of a focus group. These conversations will help the researcher gain a deeper understanding of how the measures and incentive system become part of the child support service operations. If you agree to be interviewed or be part of a focus group, you will be asked to sign a Consent Form. You can expect the interview/focus group to last between 30 minutes to an hour.

Will my participation be confidential?

Only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to your data, which will be coded and kept strictly confidential. Photographic images taken during the site visit will be kept secure and stored with no identifying factors. Images of individuals will be blurred to ensure confidentiality.

Storage and Destruction of Data Collected

The data collected will be accessible only by the researcher and her supervisors. Your data will be stored on a computer system that is encrypted/password protected for a period of up to 5 years from the conclusion of the study before being destroyed by the end of December 2022, and kept as 'coded data' with personal identifiers removed.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will be finalised by 2017 and written up as part of my PhD Thesis and other scholarly work.

Questions

You will have the opportunity to ask any questions in relation to this research project before completing a Consent Form or at any time during the researcher's site visit.

Consent and Approval

This research proposal has been scrutinised and been granted Ethical Approval through the University of St Andrew's ethical approval process.

What should I do if I have concerns about this study?

A full outline of the procedures governed by the University Teaching and Research Ethical Committee is available at <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/utrec/Guidelines/complaints/>

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University of
St Andrews

Participant Consent Form Coded Data

Project Title

Performativity of Measures and Incentives in the U.S. Child Support Enforcement Program

Researcher

Ana Carolina “Kelly” Macatangay
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Supervisors

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pir10@st-andrews.ac.uk
Dr Shona Russell
shona.russell@st-andrews.ac.uk

The University of St Andrews attaches high priority to the ethical conduct of research. We therefore ask you to consider the following points before signing this form. Your signature confirms that you are happy to participate in the study.

What is Coded Data?

The term ‘Coded Data’ refers to when data collected by the researcher is identifiable as belonging to a particular participant but is kept with personal identifiers removed. The researcher retains a ‘key’ to the coded data, thus allowing individual participants to be re-connected with their data at a later date. The un-coded data is kept confidential to the researcher (and supervisors).

Consent

The purpose of this form is to ensure that you are willing to take part in this study and to let you understand what it entails. Signing this form does not commit you to anything you do not wish to do and you are free to withdraw at any stage.

Material gathered during this research will be coded and kept confidentially by the researcher with only the researcher and supervisors having access. It will be securely stored in a computer system and external drive, both of which will be encrypted (i.e. password protected), for a period of up to five years from the conclusion of the study.

Please answer each statement concerning the collection and use of the research data.

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| I have read and understood the information sheet. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| I have had my questions answered satisfactorily. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without having to give an | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

explanation.

I understand that my data will be confidential and that it will contain identifiable personal data but that will be stored with personal identifiers removed by the researcher and that only the researcher/supervisors will be able to decode this information as and when necessary. Yes No

I understand that my words may be quoted, but that my real name will not be used to maintain anonymity. Yes No

I understand that my data will be stored for a period of up to 5 years from the conclusion of the study, and will be destroyed by the end of December 2022. Yes No

I have been made fully aware of the potential risks associated with this research and am satisfied with the information provided. Yes No

I agree to take part in the study. Yes No

My research may involve audio recordings to ensure data accuracy. These audio recordings will be kept secure and stored with no identifying factors.

I agree to be audio recorded. Yes No

I agree for my audio material to be included in research outputs. Yes No

Participation in this research is completely voluntary and your consent is required before you can participate in this research. If you decide at a later date that data should be destroyed we will honour your request in writing.

Name in Block Capitals _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Version 1 – Individual Interview Guide

	Interview Guide for Employees	Interview Guide for Management/Leaders
Bio sketch	Could you tell me a little about yourself? (e.g. How long have you been working here? What is your job title? What do you do? Have you worked somewhere else? Educational background/training?)	Could you tell me a little about yourself? (e.g. How long have you been working here? What is your job title? What do you do? Have you worked somewhere else? Educational background?)
Child Support Programme (Overall)	What is the CS programme about? What is its mission or goal?	What is the CS programme about? What is its mission or goal?
	How does the agency meet the programme's goal? (How do you know if it does?)	How does the agency meet the programme's goal? (How do you know if it does?)
	How does your role in the organisation contribute to that goal?	What is the structure of the programme? How is it funded/supported?
Child Support Programme (Services)	What are the services offered by the agency? Can you describe each?	What are the services offered by the programme? Can you describe each?
	Are there standards of service delivery being followed? (If yes, does this mean that I can expect the same service in two different states?)	Are there standards of service delivery being followed? (If yes, does this mean that I can expect the same service in two different states?)
	Who defines these standards? How are they communicated?	Who defines these standards? How are they communicated?
	Is there flexibility in the way services should be delivered?	Are there ways of monitoring or evaluating service delivery?
	Do you get feedback on your work? Do you have a sense of how your work contributes to the agency's goals?	How flexible are agencies in their administration of the programme?
	Are there services this agency provides that others might not? If yes, how were these services identified?	Can they introduce or provide other services that they think could help achieve programme goals? If yes, how prevalent would this be?
Federal Performance Measures (FPM) and Incentive System	Can you tell me about the FPM and incentive system? (Describe, explain, etc.)	Can you tell me about the FPM and incentive system? (History, selection, design, logic, purpose, goal, people behind/against it)
	How critical are the FPM and incentive system to the organisation? Are they discussed/talked about? In what context?	How critical are the FPM and incentive system to the programme?
	Is everyone in the organisation aware of the FPM and incentive system? How are they informed?	How are they communicated? (How well do agencies/employees understand the FPM and incentive system? Does this matter?)
	How is performance captured?	Describe/Explain the implementation (data collection and reporting, incentive calculation, use of incentives - maintenance, etc.)
	How are performance data used?	How are performance data used? In what context?
	Are data collected by counties/states comparable? (Or do the measures represent the same phenomenon being measured?)	Are data collected by counties/states comparable? (Or do the measures represent the same phenomenon being measured?)

	<i>What kind of support do you get to help to improve performance?</i>	What kind of support do you provide to improve performance? (And do they avail of it?)
	Do you think the current FPMs are relevant to the programme's goal/mission?	Do you think the current FPMs are relevant to the programme's goal/mission?
Development	How have the FPMs and incentive system changed over time?	How have the FPMs and incentive system changed over time?
	Have the meanings or interpretations of the measures changed since it was introduced? If yes, in what way and what caused these changes?	Have the meanings or interpretations of the measures changed since it was introduced? If yes, in what way and what caused these changes?
	Do you think the FPMs provide a good picture of the current state of affairs? Are they good indicators of the organisation's performance?	Do you think the FPMs provide a good picture of the current state of affairs? Are they good indicators of the organisation's or programme's performance?
	Has there been a time when you thought the FPMs were irrelevant, but later thought that they all made sense or at least found them acceptable? Can you comment on how the 'change' or transformation happened?	Has there been a time when you thought the FPMs were irrelevant, but later thought that they all made sense or at least found them acceptable? Can you comment on how the 'change' or transformation happened?
	Has your notion of child support changed over time? If yes, do you think the FPMs contributed to the change? How?	Has your notion of child support changed over time? If yes, do you think the FPMs contributed to the change? How?
Outcome/Impact	<i>What impact do the FPM and incentive system have on the agency and its operations?</i>	What impact do the FPM and incentive system have on the agency? (any major changes - programmatic, operational, roles, functions, etc.?)
	<i>How do they affect your work? Do they affect your dealings or interactions with others?</i>	What impact do they have on child support professionals? on you personally/professionally?
	<i>Have you observed a shift in the programme's/management's focus in the last ten years or so (or during the time that you've been here) due to the FPM?</i>	Has there been a shift in the programme's/leadership's focus in the last ten years or so due to the FPM?
	Have new practices or ways of working developed or evolved?	Have new practices or ways of working developed or evolved?
	<i>What distinguishes the high performers from the low performers? What do they do differently?</i>	What distinguishes the high performers from the low performers? What do they do differently?
	<i>Have the FPM and incentive system brought about unexpected outcomes?</i>	Have the FPM and incentive system brought about unexpected outcomes?
Bonus question	If you had a clean slate and could design a new CS programme, what changes would you introduce?	If you had a clean slate and could design a new CS programme, what changes would you introduce?
CLOSING	Thank you... Do you have any questions? (keep recording ON!)	Thank you... Do you have any questions? (keep recording ON!)

Condensed Version – Individual Interview Guide

Interview Guide (Staff) Condensed
Brief introduction (name, title, time in CS/DAFS)
How critical are the FPM and incentive system to the organisation? Are they discussed/talked about? In what context?
Is everyone in the organisation aware of the FPM and incentive system? How are they informed?
What kind of support do you get to help to improve performance?
What impact do the FPM and incentive system have on the agency and its operations?
How do they affect your work? Do they affect your dealings or interactions with others?
Have you observed a shift in the programme's/management's focus in the last ten years or so (or during the time that you've been here) due to the FPM?
What distinguishes the high performers from the low performers? What do they do differently?
Have the FPM and incentive system brought about unexpected outcomes?
Have the FPMs made you think about CS differently?
If there were no FPMs, what would CSP look like?

Interview Guide (Management) Condensed
Brief introduction (name, title, time in CS/DAFS)
Can you tell me about the FPM and incentive system? (History, selection, design, logic, purpose, goal, people behind/against it)
<i>Have they changed over time? If yes, in what way? What caused it?</i>
How critical are the FPM and incentive system to the programme? Why?
Do employees have to know and understand the FPMs? If yes, <i>why</i> and <i>how</i> does management ensure that they do?
Do people here talk about/discuss the FPM and incentive system? In what context?
What kind of support do you get and what tools or infrastructure do you rely on to help your organisation meet the performance goals?
Let's get to some of the specifics: how does the organisation capture/measure performance? what kind of information do you collect and how?
Once you've collected and measured the information, what do you do with it? What do you do with the data?
Have the FPMs made you think about CS differently?
What impact do the FPMs have on the agency? (roles/positions, organisational structure, management approach, tools/technology, etc.)
Have you noticed a change in the way the agency does business?
In the time you've worked in CS, have you noticed a change among child support professionals (e.g. how they think, how they view the industry, how they approach their work, or in whatever way)?
What distinguishes the high performers from the poor performers? What do they do differently?
If there were no FPMs, what would CSP look like?

Group Interview Guide

Group Interview Guide
Brief introduction (name, title, time in CS/DAFS)
What is the logic behind the FPM and incentive system? How critical are they to your work and to CS as a whole?
Do all employees have to know and understand the FPMs? If yes, why and how does management ensure that they do?
Do you talk about/discuss the FPM and incentive system? In what context?
Have they had an impact on the organisation/unit or on the way you carry out your work? In what sense?
Do the measures have a negative impact on the org, management, staff? Any unintended consequences?
How do employees meet their performance goals? Tools used, training, any support, etc?
What distinguishes the high performers from the poor performers? What do they do differently?
Have the FPMs made you think about CS differently?
If there were no FPMs, what would CSP look like?

Notes of Experience

Category	Wish I hadn't...	What did I do
Scheduling	Organized back-to-back interviews – Did not have enough time between interviews to process information, which could have helped with succeeding interviews.	Listened to recordings at the end of the day; jotted down key messages for further exploration
	Ignored time zone difference – Did not account for time zone difference to stay alert during interviews; overall fatigue.	Relied on interview schedule
Interview and Focus Groups	Interrupted interviewees – Interrupted thought process with follow-up question (although in some cases, this led to more interesting stuff).	Asked for further thoughts on any topic at the end of the interview
	Assumed all ethical considerations were accounted for – Did not consider confidentiality among participants in group interviews (Participant raised a question: how do I know that other participants will keep conversation confidential?)	Clarified potential risks and gave participants the opportunity to leave the room before the session began
Observation	Missed important activities – Failed to check in advance scheduled office activities/events worth observing before finalizing travel arrangements.	Explored other opportunities (Phase 2 data collection)
Data Management	Delayed updating activity log sheet – Did not always populate log sheet at the end of each event; this could have saved me a lot of time.	Spent time at the end of each week updating information; relied on audio recordings, emails, or calendar of events to populate log sheet.

Agenda-at-a-Glance

Start	End		
Sunday, October 2			
12:00p	5:00p		Registration – Second Level Upper Mezzanine
4:00p	5:00p		First Timer’s Orientation – 355 E
5:00p	7:00p		President’s Welcome Reception – Exhibit Hall (255 DEF)
Monday, October 3			
7:30a	8:30a		Continental Breakfast – Exhibit Hall (255 DEF)
8:30a	10:00a		Opening Plenary Session (P-1) – Plenary Sessions (255 ABC)
10:00a	10:30a		Break/Fundraiser Winners Announced – Exhibit Hall (255 DEF)
10:30a	12:00p	M-1	Setting the Tone: Practical Customer Service Techniques – 355A
		M-2	Understanding Millennials in the Government; grooming a new generation of leaders – 355B
		M-3	CLE Enhancing Collections: Eliminating QDRO Misconceptions and Enforcing Additional Support Orders – 355C
		M-4	CLE Interstate Child Support for Beginners – 355D
		M-5	Soup to Nuts - How Has Planning, Implementation and Training Evolved for Child Support Systems – 355E
		M-6	CLE Social Security and Child Support - What Does it All Mean? – 355F
12:00p	1:30p		Lunch (on your own)
1:30p	3:00p	M-7	CLE Unintentional Intolerance – 355A
		M-8	Perception is Reality: Changing perceptions of child support through branding and outreach – 355B
		M-9	From SSNs and ITINs to the Portal- How to Make the FPLS data Work for You – 355C
		M-10	CLE Implementation of the Hague Convention: What Can the International Child Support Community Learn from Each Other? – 355D
		M-11	Tribal Child Support 101 – 355E
		M-12	What are you going to do with that big fat debt? – 355F
3:00p	3:30p		Break/Fundraiser Winners Announced – Exhibit Hall (255 DEF)
3:30p	5:00p	M-13	Building Stronger Teams: Increasing Accountability and Decreasing Dysfunction – 355A
		M-14	Inspiring Women in Leadership – 355D
		M-15	CLE UIFSA 2008 - Are States Getting it Right? – 355C
		M-16	Providing Job Services - CSPED Shows the Way – 355B
		M-17	A Town Hall Discussion: Undertaking and Sustaining Change in a Child Support Organization – 355E
		M-18	Innovative Approaches to Improving Services to Families Making Technology Work for Families – 355F

Agenda-at-a-Glance

Tuesday, October 4			
7:30a	8:30a		Continental Breakfast – Exhibit Hall 255 DEF
8:30a	10:00a		Plenary Session (P-2): Thurl Bailey – Plenary Sessions (255 ABC)
10:00a	10:30a		Break/Fundraiser Winners Announced – Exhibit Hall (255 DEF)
10:30a	12:00p	T-19	CLE Legal Ethics - Family Feud – 355A
		T-20	Assisting Incarcerated NCPs with Successful Re-entry – 355B
		T-21	Just a "Nudge" in the Right Direction: The Application of Nudge Theory in Child Support Programs – 355D
		T-22	Developing Customer Focused Service: Greeting with Empathy (Part 1 of 2) – 355C
		T-23	Critical Thinking for Child Support Professionals – 355E
		T-24	Implementation Science: Beyond Change Management – 355F
12:00p	1:30p		Lunch (on your own)
1:30p	3:00p		Inter-Jurisdictional (IJ) Fair – Plenary Sessions 255 A
3:00p	3:30p		Break/Fundraiser Winners Announced – Exhibit Hall (255 DEF)
3:30p	5:00p	T-25	CLE Taking Inventory of Your Program's Domestic Violence Response – 355A
		T-26	Who's Your Data? – 355B
		T-27	Developing Customer Focused Service: Communicating for an Effective Closing (Part 2 of 2) – 355C
		T-28	Leadership Chat and Tweet – 355D
		T-29	The Future of Your IT Organization – 355E
		T-30	The Latest Innovations from Federal Grants – 355F
Wednesday, October 5			
7:30a	8:30a		Continental Breakfast – Exhibit Hall (255 DEF)
8:30a	10:00a		Plenary Session (P-3) – Plenary Sessions (255 ABC)
10:00a	10:30a		Break/Fundraiser Winners Announced – Exhibit Hall (255 DEF)
10:30a	12:00p	W-31	Project Management Tools and Techniques – 355A
		W-32	Performance Measures - State and Tribal Comparisons – 355B
		W-33	Time Management – 355C
		W-34	CLE Procedural Justice, Civil Contempt, and the Low Income Obligor – 355D
		W-35	Innovation and Automation Involving Case Management – 355E
		W-36	Hello, My Name is Millennial: Meeting the Online Needs of Today's Child Support Customer and Beyond – 355F
12:00p	1:30p		Lunch (on your own)

Agenda-at-a-Glance

1:30p	3:00p	W-37	Innovative Incentives for State Arrears Reduction – 355A
		W-38	CLE Two Moms - Two Dads: Adapting Law and IV-D Policies to Work for Same Sex Families – 355B
		W-39	Innovative Intergovernmental Practices Using Electronic Communications – 355C
		W-40	Everyday Text Messaging in Child Support – 355D
		W-41	Child Support Introspectives Powered by Pecha Kucha – 355E
		W-42	Child Support’s Role in Supporting Economic Opportunity and Income Mobility – 355F
3:00p	3:30p		Break/Fundraiser Winners Announced – Exhibit Hall (255 DEF)
		W-43	Prisoner Reentry Simulation – 260
		W-44	Mandatory Paternity Testing or Not – 355B
		W-45	CLE Text Messaging - A Tool for Child Support? – 355D
		W-46	Social Media Strategies – Outreach in the Modern Age – 355C
		W-47	Avoiding Communication Pitfalls – Best Practices for Current and Future Leaders – 355E
6:00p	9:00p		WICSEC Awards Banquet “Celebrating in Salt Lake: Sequins, Suits & Sneakers” – 255 ABC <i>Sequins, suits and/or sneakers are encouraged</i>
Thursday, October 6			
8:00a	9:30a		Breakfast Buffet and WICSEC Business Meeting – Plenary Sessions (255 ABC) <i>All attendees are welcome and encouraged to attend.</i>
9:30a	11:00a		Plenary Session (P-4): Just Keep Swimming! – Plenary Sessions (255 ABC)

Nevada's Performance Scores in the Five Measures

Nevada's Performance Scores								
Performance Measures	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Paternity Establishment (%)	83.59	85.63	100.30	109.30	117.24	117.53	116.48	118.66
Order Establishment (%)	68.32	69.67	76.48	80.96	81.62	82.92	85.44	87.02
Current Support Collection (%)	48.11	48.05	49.10	51.11	55.59	58.11	59.55	62.10
Arrearage Collection (%)	52.77	51.82	56.80	59.91	57.13	58.55	60.07	62.23
Cost-Effectiveness (\$)	3.49	3.88	2.92	3.98	4.05	3.90	4.00	4.13

Data source: OCSE performance audit reports