



2018

From Frozen Turkeys to Legislative Wins: How Food Banks Put Advocacy on The Menu

Stephanie A. Galinson
University of the Pacific

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FROM FROZEN TURKEYS TO LEGISLATIVE WINS:
HOW FOOD BANKS PUT ADVOCACY ON THE MENU

by

Stephanie A. Galinson

A Thesis Submitted to the

Graduate School

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

College of the Pacific
Food Studies Program

University of the Pacific
Stockton, CA

2018

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by

Stephanie A. Galinson

APPROVED BY:

Dissertation Advisor: Alison H. Alkon, Ph.D.

Committee Member: Michelle Branch, Ph.D.

Department Chair: Polly Adema, Ph.D.

Dean of Graduate School: Thomas H. Naehr, Ph.D.

FROM FROZEN TURKEYS TO LEGISLATIVE WINS:
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by

Stephanie A. Galinson

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Gracious thanks to the faculty of the Pacific Food Studies Program who introduced me to food scholarship from a broad array of disciplines and perspectives. Extended conversations with Michelle Branch shaped my initial questions for this research, and her constructive feedback as a committee member greatly improved my final product. Thank you. Special thanks to Program Director Polly Adema, whose grounding questions, creative solutions and unwavering support gave me direction and peace of mind. Big thanks to Alison Alkon, teacher, advisor and thesis chairwoman, who's been in my corner since the first unsolicited question. Your regular feedback and encouraging questioning unearthed a clear path when I was lost, and your generous sharing of time, resources and ideas improved my thinking and my work while expanding my point of view. I would be remiss not thanking Janet Poppendieck for her work—which upended my thinking—and for her recommended reading when I first met her as a star struck graduate student two conferences ago. And last, but certainly not least, I owe a debt of gratitude to the food bank community who agreed to my interviews and patiently explained their work to feed the line, shorten the line, and maybe one day end it.

Thank you all.

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How Food Banks Put Advocacy on The Menu

Abstract

by Stephanie Galinson

University of the Pacific
2018

U.S. food banks emerged thirty years ago as part of a temporary, charitable food assistance safety net to address government welfare shortfalls. Over time their size and scope expanded significantly alongside growing food insecurity. As government entitlement programs continue to erode, the ensuing institutionalization of food banks secured their future. Yet scholars such as sociologist Janet Poppendieck argued over twenty years ago that these charitable programs inadvertently prevent the government from reassuming responsibility by providing the public the illusion of a solution despite their inability to adequately meet the need. This research argues that food bank advocacy can be used to reduce hunger and address its root cause—poverty. A case study analysis of the advocacy programs of the San Francisco-Marín and Alameda County Community Food Banks describes how their advocacy work, in practice, addresses both Poppendieck’s and contemporary food bank critiques. This analysis illustrates how both case study organizations built their advocacy programs on a foundation of public food program outreach—redirecting their clients to government programs—but now affect

change through divergent approaches. San Francisco employs a top-down government system reform and technical assistance model. Alameda's bottom-up social justice model reaches past food programs to broader anti-poverty advocacy. In the process, both food banks have positioned themselves as models for their peers and as bridges connecting food assistance scholarship to public policy and practice.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCFB	Alameda County Community Food Bank
AFDC	Aid for Families with Dependent Children
CalFresh	California's SNAP
CalWORKs	CA Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Program
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CFSC	Community Food Security Coalition
C4SSI	Californians for Supplemental Security Income
FA	Feeding America
FRAC	Food Research and Action Center
PROWRA	Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996
SFFB/SFMFB	San Francisco Food Bank/SF-Marin Food Bank
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
TEFAP	Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Programs
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WIC	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children

Chapter 1: Introduction

Our nation is two-and-a-half times as rich (measured in per capita GDP) as when Lyndon Johnson launched the war on poverty fifty years ago; twice as rich as forty years ago when the nation was launching programs like WIC and school breakfast; one-and-a-half times as rich as when Ronald Reagan left office. We have no excuses for leaving hungry Americans behind.

--Food Research Action Center (FRAC), *A Plan to End Hunger in America*, 2015

Thirty years before FRAC introduced *A Plan to End Hunger in America*, Mayor Dianne Feinstein sought solutions to the problem of hunger in San Francisco. “In this richest of nations,” she asked, “why does hunger persist and what can we do to prevent it” (“Feeding the Hungry” Foreword)? Her appointed Task Force on Food and Hunger researched local hunger levels and found that while San Francisco was in the forefront of U.S. cities providing human services to its low-income community, close to 25% of its residents were at or near the poverty line, putting them at risk of hunger (2). “Unlike [in] underdeveloped nations,” the Task Force reported, “hunger in San Francisco is not the result of food scarcity, rather, the result of poverty and other obstacles to available food”(3). The Task Force identified a gap between government support and demonstrated need and offered a menu of solutions including advocating for increased federal funding for public food programs (food stamps and commodity distribution) and increasing local funding for local public food programs serving vulnerable populations (women and infants, school children, and the elderly). The Task Force also acknowledged the growing role of private emergency food programs, such as soup kitchens, food pantries and the newly formed San Francisco Food Bank, “a last line of

defense for individuals and families without adequate resources” (13-15). These “safety net” programs were intended to be temporary, serving people in times of crisis or until they could access permanent forms of assistance such as food stamps, yet the Task Force recommended steps to ensure their permanence. Public funds were provided to the emergency food providers for coordination of pooled food purchasing and program management, all housed in city-funded warehouse space (16-18).

Fast-forward three decades. The problem of hunger continues to exist, alongside an ever-expanding emergency food safety net. Feinstein’s Task Force on Food and Hunger dissolved decades ago to be replaced in 2005 by a similarly-charged Food Security Task Force. Their most recent assessment shows 23% of San Franciscans struggle with hunger, combined with a parallel growth in charitable food programs (e.g., food banks, meal programs, food pantries). The San Francisco-Marín Food Bank, the largest charitable food provider in the safety net, purports to end hunger in its mission statement. As the San Francisco Bay Area continues to struggle with hunger, new approaches are needed to address the gap between assistance and need, and to eliminate hunger. This research argues that food bank advocacy efforts should be used to create policies to address poverty rather than relying solely on food distribution programs that address only its symptom—hunger.

Two decades ago, sociologist Janet Poppendieck argued that charitable food assistance could not end hunger. Moreover, she stressed that the food assistance sector’s attempts to address hunger inadvertently perpetuate the problem it intends to solve by providing inadequate resources combined with a “moral safety valve” for the public—relieving pressure for a truly adequate solution, while providing a false sense of

moral accomplishment and cover for the government as it reduced entitlement programs. Similarly, social scientist Graham Riches argued that charitable fixes like emergency food “depoliticize” hunger rather than pushing responsibility back on the shoulders of government, where it belongs. Poppendieck and Riches instead advised charities to use their limited resources and community visibility to advocate for a return of food assistance responsibility to the state. These critiques form the foundation upon which contemporary food assistance scholarship, including this research, is built.

In the years since these critiques were penned, a number of food banks have heeded them, turning significant attention to advocating for policies that can reduce hunger. But scholars have not kept pace with the field and have yet to document and analyze these efforts. Thus, this thesis fills an important gap by exploring how food banks attempt to eliminate hunger through advocacy.

Because this research aims to capture the rationale behind institutional change, it employs a comparative case study approach. It describes the evolution and character of the advocacy programs of the San-Francisco Marin Food Bank and its Oakland-based peer, the Alameda County Community Food Bank, through interviews with key advocacy staff, and a review of their organizational documents, websites and social media platforms. My analysis revealed two similarly situated food banks using dramatically different advocacy approaches, in keeping with the scholarly recommendation for advocacy in addition to direct food assistance. San Francisco’s advocacy efforts are narrowly focused on creating administrative reforms for and boosting enrollment in the Cal-Fresh (food stamp) system as a means of pushing food assistance authority back on the government. The SFMFB works in coalition with its peers to improve government

assistance from the top-down. Alameda's broader advocacy agenda attempts to maximize all available public economic supports that include but are not limited to CalFresh, Supplemental Security Income and Earned Income Tax Credits. ACCFB's bottom-up social justice approach relies on a coalition of social service peers, food bank staff and trained client advocates who work to address the inequities that underlie hunger. Both approaches suggest creative strategies beyond straight service provision missions, appearing to heed the scholarly critique to spend limited resources advocating to return responsibility for food security to the government in the face of continued poverty and hunger.

In contemporary America, hunger persists despite heroic efforts from the charitable emergency food programs such as the food banks. Janet Poppendieck's warnings still resonate as income inequality grows and public support is threatened. As proposed government policies portend decreased services and increased barriers to participation, the food banks—as emergency food experts—have an opportunity to use their established voices to accept the scholar's recommendations to push accountability back on government through their advocacy efforts. Studying the role of advocacy has dual utility. It can provide an intellectual bridge connecting the scholarly hunger experts to their practitioner peers working in the charitable food sector. Further, in exploring the development of food bank advocacy programs, their approaches and practices, it addresses efforts within the anti-hunger movement largely missing from the scholarly literature.

The following chapters provide a road map to understanding the case study food banks' advocacy programs—their development and current characteristics. Chapter Two

builds the theoretical frame: defining hunger, analyzing the influence of neoliberalism, and outlining the scholarly critiques of charitable food assistance. It also describes the role of advocacy as a tool in food work. Chapter Three details the case study methodology used, and defines the interview subjects, observations, and document sources and methods. Chapter Four provides the historical context necessary to understand the food banks analyzed in this study, including their motivations and limitations. It also offers a summary of U.S. food banking history including relevant partners, and detailed case descriptions. Chapter Five uses the interview and document findings to describe and compare the food banks' advocacy programs. My thesis concludes by highlighting the unique contribution this research offers for scholars, practitioners and policy makers from the local food bank to their national stakeholders. Advocacy, in this context, can be used as a tool for hunger reduction, and for pushing food assistance back onto government via its entitlement programs. Progressive food banks often characterize their anti-hunger efforts as "working their way out of a job." I do not believe this to be a realistic goal. Rather, progressive, anti-poverty-based advocacy work can work them into a *new* job as a watch-dog, problem solver and policy partner.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

In the long run, neither a charity food system nor welfare as we know it is likely to eliminate hunger in the United States. As we debate the best ways to respond to hunger are we obscuring the structures that produce it?

Janet Poppendieck, *“Dilemmas in Emergency Food: A Guide for the Perplexed,”* 1994.

In her seminal book, *Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement*, sociologist Janet Poppendieck argues that, in contrast to food provisioning, policy advocacy has the power to reduce hunger by addressing its root cause—poverty. To understand how advocacy efforts influence policy change, this chapter will situate advocacy in the scholarly literature on hunger and food assistance. I will describe the current thinking in the field, organized in response to the following questions: How is domestic hunger defined? How has the government responded? What is the charitable sector’s role, and what challenges does it raise? Finally, advocacy will be defined and connected to food work. The answers to these questions describe my contribution to food assistance scholarship.

Redefinition of Hunger

Addressing hunger requires understanding the framing and the motivations of the decision-makers, as the problem definition has evolved over time. The U.S. government defines hunger as a “physical sensation resulting from a lack of adequate calories” (United States, ERS “Definition”). Over the past twenty years the term “hunger” fell from favor, replaced by “food insecurity,” a condition marked by “limited, uncertain or

inadequate access to adequate food” (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2-4; San Francisco Food Security Task Force 3). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)’s four-point food insecurity scale further facilitates specific targeting of resources based on severity of need (USDA, ERS “Food Security”; Coleman-Jensen et al. 2-4; Oliveira 1-3). Federal policymakers stress that the change reflects a necessary reconceptualization of the issue. Food insecurity connects the immediate food need to larger structural problem, shifting emphasis from symptoms and sensations to root causes, namely the societal structures inhibiting food access (USDA, ERS “Food Security”). In noting this change, sociologist Patricia Allen highlights the challenge to policymakers to prevent the people experiencing hunger from becoming invisible as the existence of hunger becomes normalized (Allen, “Disappearance” 19). Shifting the measuring stick from hunger to food security, she notes, eliminates hunger as a label and data point (22). Both scholars and activists warn that the relabeling of hunger as food insecurity was not a policy change but a political one, minimizing the appearance of hunger, depersonalizing those affected, and limiting advocacy efforts (Poppendieck, “Sweet Charity” 80; Allen, “Disappearance of Hunger” 22; Fisher 13-14). There is consensus in the scholarly literature that inequalities surrounding poverty must be the essential frame for scholars, policymakers and activists recommending hunger solutions within the larger political context. Reframing poverty as a central issue situates hunger as a symptom of that want, repositioning policy and advocacy efforts toward structural solutions that would eliminate hunger, and thus the need for emergency food (Sen 7-8; Riches and Silvasti 12). Much like its definition, the ways in which hunger is addressed has evolved over time, from scarcity to social problem, marked by neoliberal government policies.

Shift from Scarcity to Social Problem

Social scientists frame the persistence of hunger not as a result of scarcity but as a problem of distribution. This approach is rooted in the work of political economist Amartya Sen, who suggests that the problem of hunger is rarely one of food shortage, but rather the inability of the hungry to gain access to available food (Sen 1, 7-8). Food scholars across the disciplinary spectrum echo this view (Lappé 1977; DeRose et al. 1998; Davis 2002; Kent 2005). Food security scholars Anne Bellows and Michael Hamm caution that even “the legal availability of an economic right to food is usually insufficient to assure food security” (Bellows and Hamm 33). With a nod to Sen, they stress that the hungry require agency to claim their food entitlements, with true food security requiring availability, stability and access to food (36). Emphasizing distribution and access reframes hunger not as a problem of sufficient production, but as a social problem, a “manifestation of structural violence that is mediated through social systems,” warns social scientist George Kent (23). It continues because of the widening power and wealth gap between the rich and the poor, and the relative indifference of the powerful, in other words, a lack of political will; the systemic problem of hunger and poverty persists because it serves the material interests of the powerful (Kent 19-22; Holt-Giménez 313-320).

Neoliberal Influences in Food Assistance

Understanding the influence of neoliberalism is critical to charitable food assistance efforts. Geographer David Harvey defines neoliberalism as:

a theory of political economic practice that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial

freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices (2).

Harvey asserts that there was a turn toward neoliberal public policies in the 1970s, which continued relatively unchecked through the deregulation of the Reagan and Clinton administrations, creating a hospitable climate for government retrenchment and welfare reform (2). Geographers Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell extend Harvey's logic, drawing attention to a gradual normalization of North American neoliberalism, an economic effect whose transformative power, they stress, is underestimated (Peck and Tickell 380). Peck and Tickell describe Reagan-era neoliberal "roll-backs" as being characterized by the deregulation and the dismantling of programs; government policy in this period was "preoccupied with the active destruction and discreditation of Keynesian-welfarist and social-collectivist institutions" (384). Entitlement reductions and tighter restrictions, such as work requirements, signaled this roll back. Clinton-era reforms marked a shift that Peck and Tickell labelled a corresponding neoliberal "roll-out," illustrated by "the purposeful construction and consolidation of state forms, modes of governance and regulatory relations" (384). PROWRA (welfare reform) was a hallmark of the roll out. Its dramatic restructuring of welfare programs signaled the beginning of a new era of non-governmental assistance in the public space, an era marked by what writer/activist Arundhati Roy called the "NGO-ization of resistance" (Roy). Roy's description of a parallel shift in her native India demonstrates the danger of Peck and Tickell's neoliberal roll-out, whether domestic or international:

As the government abdicated its traditional role the NGOs moved in to work in these very areas. NGOs give the impression they are filling the

vacuum created by the retreating state. And they are, but in a materially inconsequential way. Their real contribution is that they defuse political anger and dole out as aid or benevolence what people ought to have by right. They alter the public psyche. They turn people into dependent victims and blunt the edges of political resistance (Roy).

Roy's 2014 essay voices political concerns similar to those documented by scholars Poppendieck and Riches during the Clinton Administration reform period (to be discussed later in this chapter). The NGOs, for all their good work, cannot be held harmless. Geographer Julie Guthman applies the neoliberal critique to food movements, suggesting that even projects that were created to oppose the neoliberalization of food issues (e.g., food banks) unwittingly reproduce neoliberal forms and structures (1172,1180-81). Decreasing support of government entitlement programs (particularly food assistance) was supplanted by a charitable food banking structure largely dependent on market surplus (corporate food donations), entrepreneurial fixes, and cost-offsetting volunteer labor. Each of these characteristics is consistent with and reinforces a neoliberal political economy that favors the growth of markets above all, reduces the government safety net and replaces it, often only in part, with the efforts of an underfunded, private, non-profit sector.

Governmental Response to Hunger

Since the Great Depression, the U.S. government has engaged in hunger relief, crafting a permanent, if fragile, economic safety net. The U.S. food system has long been characterized by both agricultural overproduction and uneven consumer purchasing power. The extremes of the Great Depression, however, pushed the federal government to create new food assistance programs. Prices for agricultural commodities such as corn

and wheat had fallen, incentivizing farmers to produce more in order to offset lower returns per pound with greater volume. Ironically, this further reduced the per-pound price. To stabilize prices, the government initiated a program that purchased agricultural surplus from the farmers often discarding or destroying the excess. Surplus wheat—the staff of life—rotting in the fields at the government’s expense became a potent symbol (Poppendieck, “Breadlines” 249). Sociologist, hunger and food assistance scholar, Janet Poppendieck, notes it was not the presence of need (hunger) that precipitated the government programs. Instead it was popular awareness of the paradox, and the anger and pain caused by the unconscionable waste while so many were starving. (2, 250-252). Federal food stamp programs authorized the purchase of food stamps for food expenditures, with additional restricted food stamps earmarked for surplus food purchases. Ironically, food stamps were created to feed the poor, but supported farm income far more, most notably the larger commercial farmers, capable of growing the volume of foods required to meet government requirements (131).¹ The original food stamp program ended in 1939, having served over twenty million people in half the counties in the United States (USDA, FNS 2017). As the United States economy stabilized after WWII, emergency food programs ended.

But hunger never went away, it just disappeared from view. Robert Kennedy’s walks through the Mississippi Delta in the 1960s re-introduced awareness of the existence of domestic hunger to the American people and Congress, despite the Department of Agriculture’s acknowledgement that there was no shortage of food

¹ Small farmers shared in the hardship. Large commercial farms ultimately benefitted then and continue today through Agricultural Act (Farm Bill) programs such as price supports and crop insurance.

(Poppendieck, “Breadlines” 246). Public outcry and activism contributed to the creation of a food stamp pilot at the beginning of the Kennedy Administration, expanded and made permanent by the Food Stamp Act of 1964 (MacDonald 646). President Johnson declared a War on Poverty in 1968, and federal food programs grew as the primary source of public support (Poppendieck, “Sweet Charity” 134-35). In the ensuing three decades the U.S. government introduced a variety of targeted programs: The National School Lunch Program, Special Milk Program, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and Summer Food Services Program, culminating in the (re) introduction of the two largest public programs, the Food Stamp Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Children and Infants, now known as WIC (Fox et al. 2). By 2015, the last measure available, the USDA spent \$104.1 billion annually on fifteen different food assistance and nutrition programs (USDA, ERS “Food Security and Nutrition Assistance”).

Charitable Response to Governmental Gaps

Faith-based organizations, community groups and charities have a long history of providing food relief when the government falls short. (Eisinger 4-5, 107-08; Poppendieck, “Sweet Charity” 4-7; Daponte and Bade 668-690). When Depression-era farmers went hungry with no market for their crops, private agencies such as the Red Cross provided food (Parrish 251). Decades later, church-sponsored soup kitchens and informal community networks provided assistance to those unable to access public entitlements due to high barriers to entry such as upfront cash purchase (Poppendieck,

“Sweet Charity” 2).² A drastic reduction of domestic government welfare programs in the 1980s and 90s, however, created the need for a stable source of emergency food. The charitable community mobilized quickly calling on partnerships formed in earlier civil rights-era organizing.

Renewed hunger awareness dovetailed with civil rights advances in the late 1960s, as a newly formed “hunger lobby”³—a public interest group devoted to food—the anti-hunger movement’s preferred moniker, advocated for expanded charitable food programs while simultaneously pressuring the federal government to address hunger by increasing access to federal programs (12). The Johnson and then Nixon administrations believed Great Society relief programs such as food stamps, were on track to make hunger a “thing of the past” (Eisinger 83). Yet the severity of Reagan-era public food assistance cuts drove large numbers of hungry Americans back to private soup kitchens and food pantries for needed assistance. In 1983 the federal government shifted its policy focus from food stamps to commodity purchase through the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) (Daponte and Bade 679). This new food assistance approach, using charitable organizations (food banks) to distribute TEFAP food surplus, marked a significant shift of government support to the charitable sector to accomplish public policy goals (679). Government reliance on food banks for distribution created a new, stable role for food assistance charities as a predictable part of the emergency food network.

² The Early Food Stamp Program had great barriers to participation, requiring the poor to purchase a month block of food stamps at a time. Those without the available up-front dollars could not afford to use the program for which they were eligible.

³ The term “hunger lobby” defined by Jeffrey Berry (“Consumers” 69) as “one that seeks a collective good, the achievement of which will not selectively or materially benefit the activists of the organization.” Early hunger lobby members include FRAC (Food Research Action Center) and WHY (World Hunger Year).

Poppendieck refers to this charitable assumption of government responsibility as *institutionalization*; she argues that the anti-hunger advocates inadvertently helped promote it as they marshalled their resources to formalize a network of food assistance programs—the emergency food “safety net” (Poppendieck, “Sweet Charity” 106; “Dilemmas” 70; “Breadlines” 71). Social scientist Graham Riches agrees that the hunger lobby’s efforts were misdirected. His critique, which foreshadowed the U.S. hunger discourse a decade later, stresses the need for food advocates to advance the United Nation’s language around food as a human right, while pushing food assistance accountability back to the state, which would both integrate policy and increase public action to eliminate hunger (“First World Hunger” 173-77)⁴. This approach resists neoliberal solutions, dispelling the conservative ideology that ‘trickle-down’ economics adequately distributes wealth to the poor (Riches and Silvasti 206). Food-rights framing challenges the poverty stereotype of a self-induced reality brought upon by individual choices but Riches concedes that in the current political climate food rights are “still a distant goal waiting to be fulfilled” (206-07). Poppendieck points to an inherent structural conflict for those advocating for rights-based justice: Is it better to use activists’ skills, energy and resources to improve the emergency food system, or rather, to advocate for policy reforms and governmental expansion? (Poppendieck, “Sweet Charity 5-6).

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PROWRA) made sweeping cuts to welfare entitlements, putting increased pressure on food charities to fill the gap. Food stamp programs, previously needs-based and blind to

⁴ A 1948 UN Declaration on Human Rights (UN G.A.R. 217A) and related 1966 covenant provided rights language and protocols for administering rights to food. As of this writing, Congress has not ratified the food rights covenant, which Riches and food community food security expert Andrew Fisher interpret as agreement without accountability (Riches, “First World Hunger” 61; Fisher 34).

age or family status, were reduced (Poppendieck, “Sweet Charity” 284-87). Families, who traditionally received the most benefits, saw decreases with food stamp values frozen despite inflation, and long-term aid converted to temporary assistance (157-58). Non-citizen immigrants fared the worst as they were removed from assistance all together (64, 67-68). PROWRA cuts extended beyond food assistance to housing subsidies and a host of other welfare benefits during this period. Coupled with the decreasing value of the minimum wage and purchasing power, the poor grew poorer and looked to non-governmental sources of support (4-5). With an emphasis on food provisioning, few food assistance charities devoted resources (time or money) to the advocacy work Poppendieck and others recommended (Poppendieck “Sweet Charity” 276; Winne 25; Berg 197).

Poppendieck’s assessment of the net effects of charitable involvement remain her sharpest and most poignant criticism. Giving food may be a “tangible, ‘feel-good’ action,” she wrote, and one that is easily understood by the public, yet it is a token solution that again addresses only the symptoms, not the underlying poverty (“Sweet Charity” 4-5). Governmental reliance on charitable emergency assistance programs acts as a “moral safety valve”, she argues, removing the pressure on the federal government to adequately respond to and eliminate sustained hunger and poverty while providing it both economic (cost shifting, waste management) and altruistic (halo-effect) benefits (5, 150-52, 298).⁵ By prioritizing the symptoms, Poppendieck concludes, the non-profits prevent

⁵ Relying on charitable food assistance programs shifts costs away from government food programs to the charities, whose labor costs are artificially low due to reliance on volunteers. It also allows corporate tax advantages (tax deductions for the surplus donations to charity), rather than the costs of storage and disposal. Charitable food programs’ visibility in the community attach good/virtuous feelings to food assistance efforts despite their relatively small net effects on hunger-reduction (relative to government programs).

the reduction of hunger, through “normalizing destitution, and legitimizing charity and personal generosity as the response” (6). Most troubling, this charitable transfer leaves critical societal needs to volunteer organizations that may not have the stability, capacity or efficiency to adequately meet the need (286). In sum, Poppendieck recommends charitable food assistance providers focus their resources on advocating the return of ownership of hunger (and poverty) to the government, applying organized activism to turn the pressure back on federal programs through (1) lobbying for support of government programs, (2) routing clients back to entitlement programs for relief, (3) engaging the larger community to keep food insecurity visible, and (4) encouraging them to demand action from their elected officials (312-13).

In the years since welfare reform, demand for food assistance levelled off, but peaked again during the Great Recession period, 2007 to 2013 (Poppendieck, “Breadlines” 257). According to the USDA, food insecurity remained between 10 and 12% from 1995 to 2009.⁶ It spiked to 14.9% in 2009 at the peak of the Great Recession; Post-Recession food insecurity remains elevated (14.3% in 2013, 12.3% in 2016) despite significant reductions in unemployment, particularly among families with children (16.5% in 2016) due to inflationary pressures and high food prices (USDA, “Inflation”; USDA “Household Food Security 2015” v; USDA, “Household Food Security 2016”). Looking forward, are the aforementioned critiques still valid? What does contemporary scholarship and practitioner literature propose?

⁶ 1995 was the first year the USDA collected food insecurity data.

Contemporary Food Assistance Scholarship and Activism

As anti-hunger community groups were expanding charitable food programs in the early '90s, a subset of food activists calling themselves the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) reframed the hunger debate around a modified version of the UN's food rights language (36).⁷ Patricia Allen noted the parallels between community food security activity and traditional social movements—citing economics and governmental retrenchment as a central obstacle to change—as they focused their efforts on community goals and democratic empowerment at the local level (“Reweaving” 117). The CFSC approach addressed both production and consumption, using a food systems approach to affect change—a radical departure from the residual New Deal entitlement programs and charitable partners whose *raison d'être* was emergency. CFSC programs such as community gardens, community-supported agriculture, food policy councils and locally-based food sourcing have received USDA funding since 1996, and have continued to receive government support through 2017, even though the CFSC itself dissolved in 2014 (USDA “CFPCGP”; “CFSC”). CFSC principles have influenced the sourcing and offerings of food banks (e.g., local sourcing, greater priority given to whole foods), but it is CFSC's community organizing strategies that would have a greater impact on the food bank's advocacy efforts. Co-founder Andrew Fisher applied his years of CFSC experience to a blistering food banking critique in *Big Hunger: The Unholy Alliance between Corporate America and Anti-Hunger Groups* (2017).

⁷ The Community Food Security Coalition's food rights definition read “all persons obtaining at all times, a culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through local, non-emergency sources.”

As early as 1993 Fisher and his fellow researchers identified food security as the “premier social justice issue of its time” (Ashman et al. 22). At CFSC he encouraged the growing food-bank sector to advocate for greater sustainability and local food system self-reliance. In 2017 Fisher used *Big Hunger* to broadcast his assessment of the anti-hunger movement—which holds the food bank at its center—criticizing its cozy relationship to corporate America, a partnership he labels the “anti-hunger industrial complex” (31). He points to the inherent conflicts in the existing system, one that rewards corporate food interests over the hungry.

Fisher offers both a cautionary tale and a call to action, advising charities to move away from responding to hunger in isolation, which “fails to address root causes and limits possibilities of solutions”(4). Instead Fisher challenges food scholars, activists, and practitioners to *occupy* hunger—to recast the anti-hunger movement using contemporary social justice constructs—acknowledging the root cause (poverty) and committing to the complex work of structural change by again reframing food as a right, not a need (36).⁸ He admonishes food banks for being stuck in perpetual hunger relief maintenance—favoring program growth at all costs (70), driving growth to rationalize excess capacity, measuring output (“pounds and people”) instead of outcomes (68), and giving corporate donors (e.g., Walmart) undue influence through strategic donations of dollars and in-kind gifts (e.g., trucks, warehouses, program materials). Fisher positions the food banks’ corporate partners as case studies in conflict of interest. His analysis maps how the combination of strategic food assistance donations, cause marketing, and tax incentives

⁸ Fisher borrows “occupy” from the occupy movement, an international social justice movement focused on growing incoming inequality (the wealth gap) and the corruptive power of money in politics. The occupiers represent the 99% of society who did not cause or benefit from the precipitating event—the 2008 economic crisis—versus the 1% elite that did. To “occupy” is to pursue economic justice and true democracy.

directly improve corporate bottom lines, while offsetting their reputation-damaging policies (e.g., questionable labor practices).

While largely damning, Fisher's evaluation does acknowledge progressive food bank approaches. He calls out the Oregon Food Bank, Toronto's The Stop, and the Alameda County Community Food Bank (one of my cases) as practitioners that engage clients as advisors, advocate for anti-poverty issues such as minimum-wage increases, and approach programming with client dignity and economic security as drivers. Standing squarely on the shoulders of Janet Poppendieck, Fisher advocates for progressive reform over the corporate-dominated Band-Aid® approach that perpetuates rather than reduces hunger. His ambitious recommendations suggest anti-hunger organizations must work to "create a more just, healthy and equitable society through improving individuals' health, bettering their economic condition, catalyzing their participating in shaping their own destinies, and fostering a more just and democratic food system" (218). Fisher's recommendations call for advocacy over charity, but what does advocacy look like in food work?

How Advocacy in Food Work Affects Change

To understand the role of advocacy in food banking, I reviewed both academic and gray literature with the following questions in mind: How does advocacy in food work affect change? And how does advocacy goal setting define both strategy and partners? Advocacy is commonly defined as "public support for, or recommendation of a particular cause or policy," stemming from the Latin *advocare* to summon or call to one's aid ("Advocacy"). Starting with this broad definition, I reviewed public policy, human

services, and non-profit management theories in combination to provide a workable definition of food bank advocacy.

Advocacy means supporting an idea or defending a cause, but how and for whom? The human services define advocacy as the process of working with or on behalf of clients to directly or indirectly provide resources. (Ezell 22; Hepworth and Larson 569). In public policy, advocacy is “a tactic for achieving social or policy change, such as framing the issue, developing alliances, gathering and disseminating data” (Gardner and Brandis 31; Reismann et al. 14). Community organizing uses education and outreach to encourage individuals to advocate for themselves. (“Evaluating Community Organizing”). What these definitions all share is the creation of a process to achieve a goal of making change for the improvement of a defined individual or group. Why is this important? The impact of the advocacy efforts, the process goals, and the targeted other, provide the roadmap for policy change and, subsequently for structural change (Reismann et al. 14).

Advocacy Goals Define Choice of Methods. There are as broad an array of types of advocacy as there are definitions. Considerable research on non-profit advocacy sheds light on advocacy research, strategies, tactics and impacts (Ezell 2000; Salamon et al. 2008; Mosley 2004; Suárez and Hwang 2008). While studies vary by industry and focus, types of advocacy tend to be grouped according to function and client characteristics. My case study food banks employ a range of advocacy types, centering around administrative policy advocacy, community organizing and civic engagement.

Policy advocacy is the process of calling for changes in public policy (laws, regulations and administrative practices), and the attempts to influence those who develop the policies, laws or practices that affect the given group. (Bolder Advocacy “What is Advocacy”). Policy advocacy also involves gathering background information and stories or educating a legislator or staff member about an issue. Legal, legislative and administrative advocacy are types of policy advocacy, and can be considered strategies, or subsets of the larger policy advocacy category. They differ by the parties one is trying to influence.

Community organizing—grassroots lobbying—is a time-consuming but effective form of advocacy that attempts to move the public to contact policy makers directly to express their views (“Evaluating Community Organizing”). Political scientist Marion Orr describes community organizing as “a process that engages people, organizations and communities toward the goal of increased individual and community control, policy efficacy, improved quality of life and social justice” (3). An important distinction of community organizing is that it is both a process and a strategy designed to do more than persuade. When successful, it also builds political power. Finally, civic engagement, though broad in scope, is typically enacted individually through voting or other forms of direct political participation (Suárez and Hwang 93). In each of these cases, the targeted decision-makers and desired outcomes determine the type of advocacy and strategies used.

Multiple forms of advocacy can be used in combination to amplify one’s message and increase the likelihood of success in achieving policy change goals. Alongside the “advocacy explosion” political scientist Jeffrey Berry observed in the late sixties and

early seventies (i.e. exponential growth of special interest and pressure groups), policy scholars also point to an increase in both advocates and strategies in the non-profit sector starting at this time (Berry, “Feeding Hungry People” 367-394; Salamon et al. i-ii, 1). To understand the forms being used, consider Johns Hopkins University Listening Post Project research. It found approximately three out of four non-profits (73%) engage in policy advocacy or lobbying, across a broad range of activities, depending on the level of effort and commitment involved (Salamon et al. i-ii).⁹ Public policy scholars Annette Gardner and Claire Brindis studied best practice tools, strategies and advocacy evaluation approaches. Their findings revealed that the goals, targets and capacity of a given organization typically determine the chosen approach (Gardner and Brindis 59).¹⁰

Advocacy Partners. Everyone can be an advocate, from the CEO to the client in the pantry queue. Who advocates is determined by the issue, audience, tactic and setting. The Johns Hopkins’ study suggested nonprofits advocacy tends to fall to a narrow band of staff members, relying most heavily on the executive director (Salamon et al., 1). Most clients of their organizations are rarely or never involved in advocacy (1). Yet Berry’s observed “advocacy explosion” and Gardner and Brindis’ research suggest broader participation, considering the effects of community organizing in creating client advocates who have been given the platform to advocate for themselves. Legislative or policy advocacy, the type most common to the food banks, require knowledge of the issues and advocacy tools, but those skills can be taught and acquired. A more

⁹ See Appendix A for a summary of frequent forms of lobbying and advocacy.

¹⁰ See Appendix B for a comprehensive list of advocacy best practices—tactics and targets.

challenging constraint to increased advocacy is available time and technical assistance (Reynolds and Cohen 97-101). Time spent advocating, particularly at a resource poor non-profit, translates to time not spent providing direct service (97-101).¹¹ Taken together, these examples show that there is no prevailing standard for food bank advocacy efforts.

Research Relevance

I believe Poppendieck and Riches decades-old critiques are still the standard against which charitable food assistance should be evaluated. My cases are significant because they are living examples of organizations that are attempting to fulfill the scholars' recommendations. My research seeks to understand the motivations and processes through which the food banks have moved toward advocacy. The food banks I studied acknowledge that addressing the symptoms alone will not eliminate hunger. Their policies and practices have shifted resources from direct service to advocacy as a means of returning hunger accountability to the public sector, focusing on the income inequities that sustain hunger.

As of this writing, as the Trump Administration and Congress threaten a third wave of welfare contraction and reforms reminiscent of the 1980s and 1990s, the food banks will be challenged to resist the temptation to grow their direct service programs in the absence of corresponding advocacy work. Providing the government and private sector cover through highly visible but insufficient charitable programs will exacerbate the hunger problem by once again letting government off the hook. Neoliberal policies

¹¹ 85% of those surveyed spent less than 2% of their budgets on advocacy work.

continue, and the corporatization of food banking complicates the solutions. While Fisher's indictment of the food banks for putting their own growth over food assistance reform is instructive, I believe it is one-dimensional.

My case study food banks are examples of charitable food programs who employ advocacy to return food assistance responsibility to the government. In my research I have observed a progressive food bank finding new ways to partner with corporations, the government and the community to influence the system and address the root causes of hunger. I have also witnessed its less progressive—but reformist—peer working to improve the government's ability to manage entitlements from inside the system. The practices of these food banks in a large and complex state like California can and should serve as replicable models for other food banks and their anti-hunger partners. It also offers further research opportunities for public policy scholars and social scientists. In the chapter that follows I will outline the methodology used to study the San Francisco-Marin and Alameda County Community Food Banks' advocacy programs—their history and contemporary practice.

Chapter 3: Methodology

How do food banks attempt to reduce hunger through advocacy? I explored this question by studying the evolution and character of two contiguous food bank advocacy programs—the San Francisco-Marin and Alameda County Community Food Banks. Using a comparative case approach, my research consisted of collecting and analyzing (1) interview data, (2) conference and meeting observations, and (3) document, website and social media content. Data collection occurred over a six-month period from June to November 2017. The case study method, defined by sociologist Joseph Feagin et al. as “an in-depth, multifaceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon...conducted in great detail [using] several data sources,” is well suited for this purpose (Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg 2). It is effective at extracting qualitative information when considering sociological issues, particularly those involving community-based concerns such as poverty, the root cause of hunger (Zainal 1). To those who claim this method presents challenges to generalization, Feagin et al. counter that the case study is “usually seen as an instance of a broader phenomenon, as part of a larger set of parallel instances” (Feagin et al. 2). Social scientist Robert Yin adds that the case study approach is powerful precisely because it looks at “contemporary phenomena within its real-life context,” a method uniquely appropriate for organizational analysis (Yin 23). To address the generalization critique, this research was configured into a multiple-case design, selecting the SF-Marine Food Bank (SFMFB) and its urban Bay Area peer, the Alameda County Community Food Bank (ACCFB) as a second case.

Multiple cases provided evidence replication and ensured a more robust analysis allowing for generalization on theory, rather than on the small sample populations (Campbell 178; Feagin et al. 16; Yin 48).

The SF-Marin Food Bank was selected as the primary case for three reasons: access, context, and curiosity. SFMFB operates in the city where I live and work, providing easier access to staff and facilities. My prior research on San Francisco-based food recovery efforts raised questions about how the SFMFB can be situated as both a charitable provider and a quasi-governmental actor in its relationships with public programs, its partner non-profit agencies, and the public. Can it truly accomplish its stated mission—to eliminate hunger—and thus ‘work itself out a job’, to use common food bank parlance? This research considers the viability of the above claim, by exploring SFMFB’s advocacy program, and comparing it to the Alameda County Community Food Bank (ACCFB). Why Alameda? ACCFB serves a neighboring geographic area to San Francisco with similar urban challenges: high cost of living, poverty and food insecurity. San Francisco and Alameda also share similar state and regional elements such as public assistance inefficiencies, funding limitations, and food assistance support organizations. Trends across both organizations suggest generalizability.

Interviews

As private organizations, the food banks do not have open data archives with mandated reporting requirements like their public food assistance partners (e.g., SNAP/CalFresh, WIC etc.). Individual interviews were the most effective way to gather

specific information on their histories and advocacy programs. Ten interviews were conducted, including the Executive Directors of both food banks, their senior managers overseeing advocacy, direct advocacy staff, plus two external food assistance experts. (See Appendix A for a list of interviewees.) Semi-structured interviews started with basic, neutral questions, and then addressed organizational change and advocacy data. (See Appendix B for interview questions.) All but one of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, recorded via a mobile phone recording application, and transcribed using a third-party transcription service. Follow-up occurred via email, as necessary. Organizational documents and messaging via the food banks' websites and social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter) were reviewed before each interview to contextualize the conversations and provide supporting information.

The data was analyzed using a grounded theory approach, a method which allows the researcher to develop theory as data is collected and analyzed (Glaser & Strauss 3). My personal experience with local food assistance organizations, supplemented by a macro-level literature review, informed baseline questions. Interviews were then systemically conducted, reviewed and coded for themes. Analyzing the derived qualitative data allowed theory to emerge and shape the direction of future interviews (Glaser & Strauss 28-29). Question priorities were adjusted as new theories emerged to allow for more a targeted, strategic comparison between the cases (Glaser & Strauss 3, 27; Hammersley & Atkinson 24). Further, ethnographic description was used to tell the story of each organization and enrich the current body of research. The stylistic contrast these thick descriptions provide improves upon the spare (often flat) scientific style that typifies much organizational management research (Van Maanen 226; Watson 210, 216).

Observation

Observational data was drawn from my conference and meeting attendance. Participation at a two anti-hunger conferences in 2017 provided useful framing information to (1) identify issues, (2) establish interview questions, (3) discover additional resource documents, and (4) pursue networking opportunities with both scholars and practitioners, facilitating the initial interviews. The conferences highlighted the long-term relationships between the food banks and their staff. Their understanding of each other's programs filled gaps in this research, however their relationships and interdependence most likely tempered their candor with an outside researcher. Attendance at monthly San Francisco Food Security Task Force (SFFSTF) meetings since September 2016 helped me understand how the SFMFB fits into the larger San Francisco emergency food assistance network. Its membership includes leadership from public food assistance programs, larger meal providers/soup kitchens, housing and homelessness advocates, and public health scholars and practitioners. The committee staff person, also the Director of Food Systems for the San Francisco Department of Public Health, provided useful systems perspective and context.

Documents, Websites and Social Media

The San Francisco-Marin and Alameda County Community Food Banks have engaging, narrative-rich websites and sophisticated marketing materials (Impact Reports Annual Reports and direct mailings etc.) that appear to target volunteers and individual financial donors over policymakers or researchers. Yet the documents, websites and social media posts reveal much more about the organizations than content of the

messaging. They provide historical information, supporting details, change over time (Yin 49-51), and verification/corroboratorion of the interview data (Angrosino and Mays de Pérez 673). Pre-interview website analysis not only provided context, but nuanced details to help the research questions speak in the food banks' organizational language. As a past volunteer and donor, I received scheduled written communications, advocacy emails ("action updates"), and social media tweets (Twitter) and posts (Facebook) from both food banks. From these communications I extrapolated further program activities and inter-agency relationships. Finally, a detailed website review of the state and national organizations that support the food banks, and advocacy organizations that provide advocacy training and support, provided information on advocacy approaches, specific policy initiatives and suggested food bank impact. Despite the wealth of website information, I was mindful of social scientists Paul Atkinson and Amanda Coffey's warning not to place too heavy an emphasis on an organization's public documents, as "we cannot treat records—however 'official'—as firm evidence of what they report. We have to approach them for what they are and what they are used to accomplish." (Atkinson & Coffey 47).

Study Limitations

Because they are private organizations, the availability of published food bank data is limited. I developed reservations about the availability of historic food bank data beyond the last several years, as a website review of both case study organizations uncovered little material beyond current statistics and messaging. The ACCFB staff freely shared the most recent past annual reports plus the current strategic plan (expiring

2018) and a graphic outline of the next strategic plan (in progress). When asked, San Francisco staff stated that they did not have a current strategic plan in place that addressed advocacy, verbally referencing an older, perhaps outdated plan; they did not share internal documents. I did discover a limited number of older organizational reports in the public library's collections, in the food banks' sites, and through local newspaper archives. I also gathered a limited amount of quantitative data points on budget and program statistics from published annual "Donor Impact" reports and from the non-profit reporting service, GuideStar.¹² While I have been unable to discover documentation on the food banks' mission shift to include advocacy, (from either practitioners or scholars), the combination of interview transcripts, observations, food-bank specific academic literature and organizational documents provided sufficient data for my analysis. The lack of available written material on food bank advocacy, and the apparent gap between the scholarship and practice speaks to a void that this research can fill. Further, while scholarship can be found concerning food banks' role in the emergency food network, little historical information exists on the history of food banks in California and the case study food banks themselves. In the next section I will provide a brief summary of food bank history, and the origin stories of the case food banks as background for the advocacy analysis.

¹² GuideStar is an on-line source of information on non-profit organizations [501(c)(3)]. It provides IRS reporting data, plus a range of other data sources provided directly by the non-profits. Participation is voluntary, and the information provided is determined by each organization. For the SFMFB the information is not comprehensive: <http://www.guidestar.org/PartnerReport.aspx?ein=94-3041517&Partner=Demo>.

Chapter 4: Background & Case Descriptions

“The poor we shall always have with us but why the hungry?”

Epitaph, gravestone of John van Hengel,
founder of first US food bank, St. Mary’s, Phoenix, AZ

While many Americans are just one job or medical issue away from food insecurity, the federal safety net continues to unravel. The charitable sector attempts to fill the unmet need. It is from this vantage point that I considered the advocacy work of the San Francisco-Marín and Alameda County Community Food Banks. Their innovative food provisioning programs, while efficient at distributing large amounts of food, are Band-Aid® fixes—addressing symptoms of hunger, not root causes. On the other hand, their advocacy programs—directing clients to public resources and influencing public policy—are attempting to eliminate hunger. The following analysis describes their advocacy programs and methods, first providing historical context on their organizations and then outlining the evolution of their advocacy programs.

Food Banking in the US

Despite sizable expenditures, federal food assistance programs have not adequately met food security needs in the U.S. The USDA reports that only 53% of food insecure Americans participate in federal food assistance programs (USDA, FNS “Definitions”).¹³ Further, they readily acknowledge that food insecure individuals readily

¹³ This number may be low, as the USDA notes that food insecure survey respondents tend to underreport.

look to a combination of sources to meet their food needs, including non-governmental emergency food assistance providers in their local communities (Mosley and Tiehen 267; Ohls et al. 2). In response to governmental shortfalls charitable food banks have evolved into one of the largest U.S. emergency food delivery systems since their creation in the late 1960s (“Hunger in America 2014” 3).

Established in 1967, St. Mary’s Food Bank (Phoenix, AZ) describes itself as the first food bank in the world. Founder John van Hangel’s inspiration came from a woman in his food pantry line. He asked her where she got her food from to which she responded, “Well, from you and the dumpster behind the grocery store” (Morgan; “Our History”). This chance encounter moved van Hangle to act. He acquired an abandoned building and seed capital from the local Catholic diocese and created a system to allow local individuals and businesses, such as those grocery stores, to formally “deposit” excess food and dollars for the hungry into the food “banks” (“Our History”). Within its first year, St. Mary’s distributed 275,000 pound of food to those in need (“About Feeding America”). Its practical success prompted replication, and within ten years food banks had been created in eighteen cities across the U.S.

In 1979 a national food bank association, America’s Second Harvest (now named Feeding America) was formed to assist the growing food bank system (“About FA”). With a national network of 200-plus member food banks, Feeding America acts as the food bank system’s chief lobbyist and commodities middleman, coordinating the distribution of over three billion pounds of food annually. Additional food banks exist

outside the FA membership network, and function similarly as sources of food to social service providers in their communities.¹⁴

Food Banking in California

Over 4.6 million Californians report food insecurity, yet the state is third from the bottom in SNAP participation, suggesting a large gap for the food banks to address (US Census Bureau, “California”; USDA ERS “State Data”; USDA FNS “Reaching Those in Need” 2). While SNAP benefits should be the first recourse for food assistance, there are a variety of reasons why someone may not be eligible, or may not seek public assistance including income limits, conflicting entitlements, undocumented status, confusion, misinformation or fear, to name a few. Food banks and their network of food pantries and distribution centers meet much but not all of the need not met by federal food programs. The California Department of Social Services (DSS) provides contact information for all 59 California food banks. DSS defines food banks as “organizations that provide USDA commodity foods to residents of defined geographic area that meet established income guidelines” (CA DSS “Benefits”). The food banks, however, distribute more than government surplus (e.g., direct purchase food and corporate donations), and they do not require means-testing (minimum income thresholds) to provide their clients food.

The San Francisco Bay Area is defined by nine counties and six food banks. For over thirty years Bay Area residents have relied on food banks to close the hunger gap.

¹⁴ Food bank partner providers include: food pantries, youth programs, community kitchens, senior centers, day care centers, rehabilitation centers, homeless shelters, residential shelters and other charitable organizations.

Through food pantries, children's programs, shelters, soup kitchens, residential programs, and other emergency food providers, Bay Area food banks distribute over 193 million meals each year (“Food Insecurity in California”). With years of accumulated experience among clients, partner charities and government food assistance programs, the food banks know the resources in their communities. Contemporary food banks offer a variety of services beyond a pantry box of commodity surplus or donated grocery staples. They partner with a broad range of community agencies to provide food for direct distribution or for processing into meals (via soup kitchens or other community meal programs). California food banks have also expanded to create direct partnerships with growers and other non-governmental sources to increase the distribution of perishable foods, especially produce. As the food banks expanded their direct food service they also expanded their support services. Many food banks now provide outreach services to assist clients in accessing the federal food resources for which they are eligible (SNAP, WIC, school meals etc.). The food banks also created education programs to teach basic nutrition and cooking skills at their locations and at partner community agencies. Simultaneously, food bank executive directors and senior staff began devoting significant time and energy to building their communications and development efforts to fund their growth. A growing number of food banks have added begun adding advocacy to their programs to bring in new resources and take advantage of underutilized resources that can benefit their clients—all in service to their goal to end hunger. The most progressive food banks are attempting to use advocacy to address not just hunger but poverty.

Food Banking in the San Francisco Bay Area

This research is grounded in an exploration of the advocacy programs of the San Francisco-Marín and Alameda County Community Food Banks. As a starting point, their websites, social media platforms and public documents (annual reports, impact reports) were analyzed to describe current service areas, programs and advocacy efforts. The case statements below provide a foundation for the discussion of their advocacy philosophy, motivations and methods presented in Chapter Five.

San Francisco-Marín Food Bank. Founded in 1980, the San Francisco-Marín Food Bank (then the San Francisco Food Bank [SFFB]), was created to serve residents of San Francisco County. Its stated mission is “to end hunger in San Francisco and Marin” (“About SFMFB”). The San Francisco Food Bank was conceived of and initially administered by the San Francisco Council of Churches to address welfare assistance cuts by the Reagan Administration (“Canned Foods for SF Poor” 30). In the early years the food bank distributed a combination of industrial donations—dated canned goods, “expired” but still edible groceries, unsightly but nutritionally sound produce, and government surplus, including the infamous Reagan-era government cheese. The food bank distributed 38,000 pounds of it in 1981 alone (Mandel 2). Within two years of its founding the SFFB had increased its distribution ten-fold, from 20,000 to 200,000 pounds of food a month (Pereria 2). During its first few years of existence, the young SFFB responded as federal welfare cuts pushed more San Franciscans into poverty. As increasing numbers of hungry women and children swelled the poverty rolls, the food offerings shifted from cast-off surplus to essential goods such as baby food and formula

(Nakao 20). The SFFB staff of three spent the bulk of their time distributing food with their little remaining time spent sourcing more (Swan 25).

By 1988 the SFFB distributed 1.8 million pounds of food a year and had recruited new leadership, Executive Director Paul Ash. The growing food bank remained challenged to address community need beyond food distribution. Cutbacks in food donations resulted in decreased quantity and quality of available food across the region, and the SFFB and its Bay Area peers began coordinating their efforts, to find new food sources (Swan 25). Together, they jointly hired a food industry insider to increase their private donations, and in the process their “food solicitor” changed the private sector dynamic, negotiating both state and federal tax credits for corporate food donations to the food banks (25). Donations increased, aided by federal tax deductions to corporations for food donations. Within several years, federal tax reforms would reduce corporate deductibility for donations, and the Bay Area, (like the nation), saw a tightening in corporate giving, while simultaneously struggling to offset the effects of federal welfare assistance cuts (Maita C1). Charities were hemorrhaging.

Ironically, a natural disaster lifted the SFFB out of crisis. The Loma Prieta earthquake had an unintended positive effect of increasing donations, although the 1990-91 recession cycled the SFFB back into crisis (Viviano A7; Minton A12). Despite economic stability in the early Clinton Administration, the Welfare Reform Act (PROWRA) reduced federal programs so severely that the SFFB’s role in the San Francisco emergency food safety net became permanent—far from the temporary fix originally intended. As it served an increasingly resource poor population, SFFB staff would grow to increase its own capacity to meet the need. The first test of the now

larger, established SFFB was a \$1.6M capital campaign to build a new facility, having outgrown its old warehouse. By 1997 the funds were raised, construction completed, and a new significantly larger space allowed the SFFB to expand their distribution program into perishable foods (Y. Wilson A13). At seventeen, the food bank was distributing over eleven million pounds of food a year and its mission was squarely focused on food distribution (Rojas A1).

As it approached the next decade, the SFFB expanded its work to include advocacy beyond its food provisioning programs. A 1999 *San Francisco Chronicle* editorial, co-written by SFFB Executive Director Paul Ash, the Alameda County Community Food Bank and the California Food Policy Advocates, encouraged broad use of the federal food stamp program, highlighting the persistence of hunger and poverty in the Bay Area, and the effectiveness of food stamps. This editorial marked an early public advocacy voice for the SFFB, urging San Francisco citizens to call for increases to federal assistance programs, by encouraging readers to contact elected officials and demand action (Manalo-Le Clair et al. A25). In the next decade the SFFB's public profile grew with more frequent news coverage as it actively advocated for increased support of public assistance, and lobbied for legislative reform, as the federal and state government again attempted to shift responsibility to the charitable sector (Ash et al.). The Great Recession marked the end of the next decade, with increasing need for food prodding the food bank to continue expanding its services, extending over the Golden Gate Bridge into Marin.

Marin County's wealthy reputation masks its many impoverished citizens. In an area known for well-resourced public schools, over 21% of public school children

currently qualify for free lunch (2016-17), an indicator of food insecurity and poverty (“Free and Reduced-Price Meals”). During the Great Recession, Marin’s food insecurity rose 18.5% to San Francisco’s 6% increase (“About SFMFB”; Wimer and Manfield 2-3). The Marin Food Bank served as an emergency food bank for its residents since its inception in 1981, offering short-term food assistance in times of need (i.e. temporary unemployment, natural disasters). Recessionary pressures stretched need beyond capacity and the Marin Food Bank solicited the SFFB’s help. In 2011 the two food banks merged; within the next five years, the rechristened SF-Marin Food Bank (SFMFB) increased food assistance in Marin by 50% in 2016 (Halstead; Fagan).

Food banks measure their productivity against two “Ps”: pounds and people. The merged SFMFB now served more people, distributed more pounds of food per year, and changed their food offerings. Surplus canned goods and donated processed foods now made up a smaller portion of the food mix with fresh produce offerings increasing (Said C1). During this time the SFMFB capitalized on its Northern California location (proximity to farms) to build relationships to the farmers and packers producing and processing the region’s produce. With a growing emphasis on healthier eating, the food bank expanded its fresh produce offerings to 65% of their total offerings, and food banks throughout the state replicated similar “Farm to Family” produce programs (C1). Today’s SFMFB is a far different organization than when it started in 1980 with donation cans at the back of local churches.

In 2016, the last year reported, the combined food insecurity in San Francisco and Marin counties was 14.9%, across a population of just over 926,000 people, the highest food security in the Bay Area; Marin County alone experiences 10.1% food insecurity

(“Map the Meal Gap”; US Census Bureau “Population Estimates”). In this same year the SFMFB served 225,000 people and distributed 49 million pounds of food (“By the Numbers”). San Francisco lists eight program areas: advocacy, Cal-Fresh outreach, community partners, fresh-produce initiative, home-delivered groceries (for seniors and residents with disabilities), morning snack for students, neighborhood pantries and nutrition education (“Programs”). Their three-person advocacy structure consists of a Director of Policy and Advocacy who supervises a Policy and Advocacy Coordinator and a part time Policy and Advocacy Analyst (researcher). The director resigned June 2017 and has not been replaced at the time of this analysis.

Alameda County Community Food Bank. Across the Bay from San Francisco, Alameda County experiences a food insecurity rate of 14.3%, well above the 12.5% state and 13.4% national averages (“Mapping the Meal Gap 2017”). The Alameda Community Food Bank (ACCFB) represents over 1.6 million residents in fifteen cities, from its county seat in Oakland (US Census Bureau “Population Data”). It was established in same period as SFMFB as a community-based response to need.

In the fall of 1984, the fledgling Food Bank Network¹⁵ was given a \$30,000 grant and a six-month renewable contract by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors to operate a warehouse where approved community organizations could receive food to donate to those in need (“County Oks Grant to Give Needy Food” B-1). Community members such as Ruth Clifford Beem, octogenarian, former social worker and Peace Corp volunteer, help organize the food bank’s early formation from her post as a First

¹⁵ Ken Schmidt, minister and director of Oakland’s Telegraph Community Center brought forward the food bank plan and served as the interim coordinator until a board of directors could be named.

Presbyterian Church of Oakland volunteer (“Working to Feed the Hungry Earns Food Bank Awards” B4). By September 1985 the food bank had incorporated as a non-profit public benefit corporation with a mission to “passionately pursue a hunger-free community.” (“Strategic Plan” 3). Early support from community leaders and high visibility patrons such as musician Bruce Springsteen earned visibility and encouraged private support in Oakland and beyond; within three years the food bank had distributed ten million pounds of surplus food (B4; D.Wilson 6,14, 23).¹⁶

The path to its current size and program offerings, however, was rocky and unstable. By 1988 the food bank was on the verge of collapse, due to sloppy bookkeeping, poor management, and personality conflicts within the organization (Newbergh, “Bailout Plan” B-3). The county intervened to save its food bank: “The Food Bank is central...to our ability to help people at a critical time in their lives,” explained then-Supervisor Don Perata. “It’s the difference between whether people eat or don’t eat...We have to save this thing. There would be no replacement if it went under” (Newbergh “Troubled County Food Bank to be Audited” C-3). The county again provided funds, this time for a thorough financial audit (to address reports of missing inventory, which had hindered the food bank’s ability to raise funds), county technical assistance (including a plan to strengthen warehouse operations, inventory controls and accounting and budgeting practices), and an agreement to become a full-fledged member of Second Harvest, increasing Alameda’s accountability standards and ability to attract larger food distributions (Newbergh, “Bailout Plan” B-3; Newbergh, “County

¹⁶ Springsteen’s concerts typically include a call-out to the local food bank in the area, asking for audience support. Early Springsteen support of the ACCFB resulted in annual “Springsteen Awards” recognizing the efforts of community food champions.

Supervisors” E-2). The county also recommended that the food bank work to raise private dollars, and to secure private business people to its board, to attract greater donations of food and money from Alameda’s “abundant food processing plants and warehouses” (B-3).

Alameda was successful in implementing the county’s bailout plan and within three years received community recognition for management excellence citing “managerial expertise, clarity of vision and ability to triumph over difficulties” (Chan D-3). Nine-year Executive Director John Momper acknowledged its turn-around in seemingly contradictory terms: “Our goal is to put ourselves out of business by ending hunger in Alameda County,” he stated, while in the same statement expressing his confidence in the organization’s ability to make positive change, illustrated by its move from a 19,000 square foot to a 31,000 square foot warehouse (D-3). Putting oneself out of business through sustained growth (more food = more people fed) suggests the food bank believed it could solve the hunger problem through its efforts alone.

Community needs and food bank programs grew in tandem for a decade; from 1992-95 alone, free food programs increased by 92% in Alameda County due to reductions in public assistance and social service program, chronic joblessness and increasing cost of living (Bailey A-9). In 1996, food bank director Momper observed that “The buying power of people on AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) has fallen by 24% since 1989 and federal government surplus contributions have declined from 1.2 million pounds a few years ago to only 92,000 pounds annually,” (A-10). Oakland’s director of Health and Human services acknowledged that many of the poor were single mothers on public assistance who could not make ends meet on federal food

stamps, a trend occurring across the country (A-10). “More working people are joining food lines because wages are not keeping pace with inflation and many are spending as much as sixty percent of their income on housing,” he stressed (A-10). The food bank responded again by growing, publicly declaring a need to double its food distribution capacity within five years. ACCFB closed the decade attempting to acquire [purchase] a larger, permanent warehouse space in the vacant Oakland Army Base (Horowitz Local-5; Kirkwood Local-2). “A facility would add stability,” said Momber, as the food bank anticipated the need for emergency food would increase under welfare reforms (PROWRA) begun in 1996 (Horowitz Local-5). They were right. Food need increased, yet simultaneously food stamp usage declined in Alameda, according to the USDA (LaPlante Local-1). Director Momber blamed the inconsistency on government red tape: “[the decrease] is more than what can be accounted for by the improving economy and employment declines” (Local 1-2). ACCFB would soon develop the first CalFresh (food stamp) outreach and advocacy program, a model replicated state-wide, reinforcing the food bank’s role as a permanent piece of Alameda’s emergency food safety net. They were working hard, but not working themselves out of a job.

By 2016 Alameda provided the equivalent of 30 million meals a year, distributing 36 million pounds of food, and serving 116,000 people per month. ACCFB touches one in five residents of Alameda, the majority of which are seniors and children (“Hunger: Alameda County Uncovered 2014” 1). Alameda has set itself an ambitious goal to serve 90 million meals annually by 2018—one meal for every resident of Alameda county experiencing food insecurity (“2014 Annual Report” 1; “2016 Annual Report”12).

Like San Francisco, Alameda offers services beyond food provision. ACCFB programs are categorized by function: food programs, CalFresh outreach, policy and advocacy, healthcare and nutrition initiatives, and child and student wellness programs. Alameda is unique in consistently stating it believes food is a basic human right, from its progressive equity and inclusion statement, to its annual performance report, to social media messaging (“Equity and Inclusion Statement”; “ACCFB 2017 Annual Report” 9). It currently has an advocacy staff of five: Chief of Partnerships and Strategy, Director of Policy and Partnerships, Senior Policy Advocate, Administrative Advocate and administrative support position. Further, ACCFB’s Community Development Manager’s work supports the advocacy department’s work. In the next chapter I will analyze staff interview and document data to describe both the SFMFB and ACCFB’s advocacy programs and goals and compare the differences between their advocacy approaches.

Chapter 5: Results

*Ending hunger is no small challenge. Food banks play a critical role, but we can't do it alone.
Fighting hunger is not only about providing emergency food to people in need—it also
means taking action to address the root causes of hunger and poverty.*

--California Association of Food Banks, 2018 State Policy Agenda Statement.

The San Francisco-Marin and Alameda County Food Banks were created in response to contracting government entitlement programs. They evolved to include advocacy alongside their direct service programs. The food banks share many features including supportive political and non-governmental partners, well-respected, long-term Executive Directors, and advocacy programs built around CalFresh. Most significantly, they both are motivated by the belief that they can eliminate hunger. The critical difference in their advocacy efforts lies in their approach. San Francisco's advocacy program is Cal-Fresh focused and quantitative. They use data-driven advocacy tools and attempt systems-level reform to maximize CalFresh participation. Alameda takes a more qualitative, whole-person approach. They believe addressing income inequality will most effectively address hunger, and enlist their clients as lobbying partners, relying heavily on community organizing strategies. Both organization's efforts, however, are constrained by the nature of advocacy itself and the government programs they support.

Limits to Food Bank Advocacy

Applying the basic definition of advocacy—to support a cause—all food bank employees advocate for the hungry, from the executive director to the truck driver. Yet food banks must be careful in how they advocate, so as not to threaten their nonprofit status. Before presenting the case study advocacy programs, it is useful to consider the framework within which 501(c)3 (tax exempt) food banks operate. 501(c)3 organizations have limitations placed on them by the Internal Revenue Service. The I.R.S. defines these parameters as follows:

In general, no organization may qualify for section 501(c)(3) status if a substantial part of its activities is attempting to influence legislation (commonly known as lobbying). A 501(c)(3) organization may engage in some lobbying, but too much lobbying activity risks loss of tax-exempt status.

Legislation includes action by Congress, any state legislature, any local council, or similar governing body, with respect to acts, bills, resolutions, or similar items (such as legislative confirmation of appointive office), or by the public in referendum, ballot initiative, constitutional amendment, or similar procedure. It does not include actions by executive, judicial, or administrative bodies.

An organization will be regarded as attempting to influence legislation if it contacts, or urges the public to contact, members or employees of a legislative body for the purpose of proposing, supporting, or opposing legislation, or if the organization advocates the adoption or rejection of legislation.

Organizations may, however, involve themselves in issues of public policy without the activity being considered as lobbying. For example, organizations may conduct educational meetings, prepare and distribute educational materials, or otherwise consider public policy issues in an educational manner without jeopardizing their tax-exempt status (US IRS “Lobbying”).

The I.R.S. definition of lobbying hinges on who the organization is trying to influence and the level and frequency of contact. Influencing lawmakers is limited by these guidelines, yet it appears to be just what food bank advocates are doing. The

ACCFB's bylaws start with a disclaimer that its described powers are exercised "except as limited by its Articles of Incorporation" ("Bylaws ACCFB"). It then goes on to describe advocacy behaviors. Alameda has a national reputation as progressive food bank with a highly-developed advocacy program; its advocacy appears to have been written directly into its bylaws.

Article 2.1 (Purpose) states:

The purpose of the corporation shall be to eliminate hunger in our community by:

- (a) Distributing nutritious food and providing nutrition education for people who live at or below the poverty level;
- (b) *Advocating* [emphasis mine] for and participating in programs that support the self-sufficiency of poor people;
- (c) forming alliances with public and private organizations to meet the needs of our constituents; and
- (d) educating the general public about hunger and other poverty-related issues ("Bylaws ACCFB").

I.R.S. compliance is a matter of interpretation, as advocacy takes a multiplicity of forms at the food banks. They circumvent lobbying limits that threaten their status through applying a narrower "non-lobbying" definition of administrative advocacy. The non-profit advocacy training organization, Bolder Advocacy, makes the following recommendation to charities interested in policy advocacy: Do not communicate with legislators, instead focus advocacy work on influencing administrative regulations and executive orders ("Administrative Advocacy"). This type of administrative advocacy is at the core of the food banks' advocacy efforts. The California Association of Food Banks stresses that food banks can lobby although it should encompass only a small portion of their advocacy activities as suggested by the IRS code ("Food Bank Guide" 5).

Why do food banks need to advocate? Simply put: combined client and self-interest. The food bank's clients are best served by the public food entitlements that

neoliberal U.S. policy trends have eroded. Food bank efforts have been critical to both maintaining and growing federal funding for emergency food sources such as The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program. More recently they've been instrumental in expanding state programs such as CalFood, a program that provides state grown produce to emergency food providers ("Food Bank Guide" 5-6). Increasingly food banks are a critical voice in preventing further SNAP cuts. The rationale for their advocacy for federal programs derives from their history. Food banks were created as a temporary, emergency source of food support to supplement (not replace) federal programs such as SNAP.

SNAP/CalFresh

SNAP is the nation's most important direct defense against hunger, doing the most to eliminate hunger, and doing so by helping families use mainstream systems of commercial food outlets.

--Food Research Action Center, *A Plan of Action to End Hunger in America* (2015)

Advocacy for increases in SNAP funding and enrollment is central to the food banks' advocacy goals. SNAP is large and complex, particularly in California. For this reason, it is useful to briefly describe how the program works and where it connects to the food banks. SNAP's current form was authorized out of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008. Current funding originates in the 2014 Farm Bill, a comprehensive piece of legislation that authorizes most federal policies governing food and agriculture programs, including SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, and TEFAP (commodity foods commonly distributed through the food banks) ("Farm Bill Primer"). The bill is reauthorized (approved in concept) and appropriated (federal budget dollars attached)

every five years. 2018 authorization is currently in progress. The federal government, through the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), determines how benefits change with household incomes and sets other key rules. The FNS operates seven regions throughout the country; the regional office for California (Western) does not set policy, providing only oversight ("CalFresh Guide"). SNAP funds are distributed directly to the states for determination of eligibility and administration of the program and the regional office determines program waivers.

In California the designated state agency for administering the SNAP (CalFresh) program is the California Department of Social Services (DSS) ("CalFresh Guide"). California DSS adopted a county-administered program, whereby local county welfare departments administer the program and determine local eligibility. California has 58 separate CalFresh Departments under this model, with no state coordination. San Francisco and Alameda counties have separate CalFresh programs that are overseen by two different local DSS directors, with a deputy director assigned to a department managing CalFresh and related programs (In SF, the Dept. of Economic Support and Self-Sufficiency, and in Alameda, the Workforce Benefits Administration).

The Food Banks interact with DSS's CalFresh representatives at multiple levels, as advocates, technical support advisors and outreach sub-contractors. From the clients' perspective, CalFresh enrollment can occur directly through the county agency office (or its website), or through their local food bank's outreach team or through other community-based organizations (termed "out-of-office" enrollment). The goal is to help the client determine if she is eligible and guide her in the application process. Both

SFMFB and ACCFB provide CalFresh eligibility and enrollment assistance by phone, on line and by mail, applying similar multi-step processes (Shadix 9-12, 39-42).

Challenges abound for CalFresh clients, even with food bank support. As a recipient moves within the Bay Area, any move out of one county to another requires a re-enrollment process. Additionally, Cal-Fresh recipients must be annually re-certified (verifying income) to remain in the program. The out-of-office enrollment systems were put in place to increase CalFresh access and enrollment numbers. Since 2008, these systems have increased enrollment in San Francisco by 22.7% and in Alameda by 17.4% (Shadix 9, 39). The outreach provides an income stream for the food banks, as sub-contractors,¹⁷ but more importantly, it is a means to redirect food insecure individuals to government sources by prioritizing and streamlining access to food entitlement programs. CalFresh outreach is a direct service provided by the food banks, not an advocacy activity. These efforts, however, appear to directly support the food banks' advocacy efforts, and merit consideration as tactic in their advocacy arsenal.

Food banks were never intended to be permanent sources of food support. Food bank advocacy to support SNAP/ CalFresh, encourages continued funding of these critical entitlement programs—constructing the state as the most appropriate source for food assistance. SNAP advocacy also provides implementation and other technical support at the local level to address barriers to SNAP participation and to maximize food resources to food banks' home counties. Individuals served by the emergency food safety

¹⁷ The California Association of Food Banks administers the federal government's SNAP (CalFresh) outreach in California. In 2016 CAFB distributed \$1.7million to 50 food banks (including CAFB members SFMFB and ACCFB) and other community partners in CA ("CalFresh Outreach").

net are less likely to have the ability to advocate for SNAP support (or reform) themselves, through lack of access or resource constraints. The food banks have the ability to advocate on their clients' behalf and create opportunities for education and self-advocacy. Both activities keep unresolved hunger issues in the public eye and on the legislative calendar. The next section will analyze San Francisco-Marín's reformist CalFresh-centered approach, and Alameda's bottom-up community-driven economic justice approach. In both programs support for SNAP is key, but Alameda differs in extending its advocacy efforts more broadly to non-food related sources of economic support.

San Francisco-Marín Food Bank's Advocacy Program

You can't food bank your way out of hunger.

--Paul Ash, Executive Director, SF-Marín Food Bank, Interview, Aug. 2017.

San Francisco concentrates its advocacy resources on its core expertise—CalFresh reform: improving the system and maximizing enrollment. Its stated mission to end hunger implies that San Francisco-Marín Food Bank's (SFMFB) efforts extend beyond food distribution to addressing hunger's root causes. SFMFB's advocacy statement articulates this philosophy:

Our mission is to end hunger in San Francisco and Marin, so our responsibility extends beyond food distribution—we also work to create systemic change. The Food Bank is a leading advocate for effective government programs that assist people at risk of hunger. We also conduct cutting-edge research to determine the food needs of low-income residents in San Francisco and Marin, part of a comprehensive effort to ensure that no one in our community goes hungry.

Our goal is to make it as easy as possible for people who are food insecure to participate in the food assistance programs for which they are eligible. Our approach is simple: we identify challenges and opportunities in public food assistance programs, analyze the issues using a data-driven approach, develop and advocate for effective solutions, and monitor progress. (“Advocacy,” SFMFB).

San Francisco’s self-described “data-driven approach” to advocacy evolved out of necessity—seeing a gap in the emergency food system and identifying a unique role to play. In practice, the SF-Marin Food Bank’s critical contribution to ending hunger is realized through improving SNAP functioning and increasing participation. This logic is supported by scholar Janet Poppendieck’s twenty-year-old argument that food charities must push the responsibility for food assistance back onto the public sector, acknowledging, for all the food bank’s good intentions, they are unable to fully meet the country’s food security needs (Poppendieck, “Sweet Charity” 5).

Evolution of the Program. Over the past thirty years, the SFMFB has evolved from an emergency food provider distributing frozen turkeys from the backs of trucks to a sophisticated social service agency looking beyond the next meal to systemic issues. According to Susannah Morgan, former SFMFB staff member (now Executive Director of the Oregon Food Bank), San Francisco’s advocacy program has changed significantly since the food bank’s incorporation, mirroring nation-wide food banking trends. Morgan

suggested food bank advocacy evolved to secure and stabilize levels of government commodities, to attract fluctuating manufacturing surplus and, ultimately, to advance their mission of reducing hunger, even as federal entitlement programs were cut.

Long-time Executive Director Paul Ash explained this evolution. For his first ten years at the helm, Ash was the only person doing advocacy work at his food bank. During that time, San Francisco relied on state and national advocacy organizations, primarily the California Food Policy Advocates (CPFA) and the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) to lobby on the food banks' behalf. It wasn't until 1999 that Ash created a position with part-time advocacy responsibilities (combined with communications). "We wanted to be able to take some action," said Ash, "to weigh in on issues, [and] be able to educate our donors about the importance of government programs and policies. That's when and why we decided to invest in advocacy" (Ash 2017).

In the 1980s and 90s, food banks were largely in the government commodity distribution business. Their dual goal was to acquire more commodities to distribute, and to improve the functioning of the commodity program policies that directly affected the food banks. As the organization matured, SFMFB's path to feeding more people centered on connecting clients back to government food assistance, namely CalFresh (SNAP, formerly food stamps).

CalFresh drives a significant portion of SFMFB's service and advocacy work. At the program level the SFMFB has literally become a state contractor (like many of its California food bank peers), providing CalFresh outreach services. Alongside their SFMFB direct food program peers, the CalFresh team provides application assistance to clients, training to other CBOs who provide application assistance, and facilitates same-

day service events to help San Francisco residents determine CalFresh eligibility and enrollment (Costa; “Our Programs: CalFresh Outreach”). As advocates, Ash and his team encouraged the formation of a statewide consortia—the Alliance to Transform CalFresh. This was necessary, because despite the demonstrated effectiveness of SNAP, (Gunderson et al.), California has one of the lowest SNAP participation rates in the country (“Alliance to Transform CalFresh”).¹⁸ SFMFB made meaningful improvement in San Francisco and Marin food insecurity through focusing the food bank’s limited advocacy and education efforts on improving CalFresh participation and functioning. “We focused really narrowly on improving Cal-Fresh state-wide,” explained Ash. “CalFresh is a five-billion-dollar program in California, so if you can move the needle a fraction of a percent, it’s a huge, huge win for low-income Californians” (Ash 2017). Advocacy-specific dollars are hard to raise, but SNAP outreach is plentiful through USDA contract dollars. It appears the food bank has found a way to advance its advocacy goals through strategic CalFresh outreach service provision. This work allows the food bank to redirect food security ownership to the government while expanding the number of people being served.

“You can’t food bank your way out of hunger” acknowledged both Director Ash and Former SFMFB Director of Policy & Advocacy Terri Olle. (Olle; Ash, 2017). The decision to expand into advocacy has been gradual and cautious—gradual due to the shortage of public and private funds available, and cautious in light of the food bank’s dual role as both government contractor and critic of the program (Ash 2017). Former

¹⁸ CalFresh participation falls significantly below eligibility in the state, with 66% participation statewide compared to 83% at the national level, ranking 47 out of 50 states (“About - Alliance to Transform CalFresh”; USDA “Reaching Those in Need”).

Advocacy Director Olle arrived in 2010, replacing the sole advocacy/communications staff member. During her tenure, the advocacy staff increased from one to three (2.5 FTE). While a seemingly small increase, many food banks have no dedicated advocacy staff, instead spreading advocacy responsibilities across the organization, if advocating at all. Both Olle and Becky Gershon, SFMFB Advocacy and Policy Coordinator, suggested that Ash's longevity with the organization, and his relatively liberal board's accumulated trust and specific expertise has helped grow SFMFBs' advocacy efforts to a three-person advocacy program that provides CalFresh reform leadership statewide through their work on the Alliance to Transform CalFresh. Gershon illustrated this point, recalling Ash's encouragement of a donor to fund Gershon's position, a decision strengthening SFMFB's advocacy resources. SFMFB's third advocacy staff member, Diana Jensen, returned to the food bank after graduate work and public service experience in a related agency. Her analytical skills and knowledge of the county system has allowed San Francisco to position its advocacy work in the data-driven, Cal-Fresh-centered direction Ash described. To understand what their efforts looks like on a practical level, SFMFB's advocacy activity will next be analyzed by resource targets: federal, state and local.

SFMFB: Federal Advocacy. SFMFB's Congressional representatives believe in the importance of food entitlements and support the food banks legislatively (Senators Feinstein and Harris, Congresswoman Pelosi, 12th). "We have deep relationships, food bank access and influence with our federal representatives," share Olle. On a practical level, the Food Bank can count on all three of its federal representatives to support food bank priorities, including the Farm Bill Reauthorization and public food assistance

measures as they come up for a federal vote (Olle). Olle explained that unlike some of her inland and southern California peer food banks, she devotes fewer resources to federal level advocacy. In return, federal policy staff can rely on the food banks for district-wide data and anecdotal information on the client impact of specific legislation. In 2017, for example, SFMFB advocated for bills to increase minimum SNAP benefits under a new food plan formula (H.R. 1276, Adams, NC), to exclude housing allowances in SNAP eligibility calculations for uniformed service members (H.R. 6305, Davis, CA), and to clarify and enhance coverage of food donations under the Emerson Act (H.R. 952, Fudge, OH) (“2017 Legislative Agenda”). Their advocacy activities have many forms. SFMFB adds its name to joint letters of support organized by their federal-level lobbying partners, such as FRAC, or the California Association of Food Banks. They visit their representatives in Washington, D.C. annually (in advance of key relevant legislation) to voice support of relevant legislation. They also provide standardized support letters to on their website to allow clients, donors and friends to amplify SFMFB’s support of federal issues. Finally, the food bank shares personal stories with legislators of constituent impact, such as personal anecdotes relating to SNAP useage, or access to federally funded produce programs.

SFMFB partners with the California Association of Food Banks to maximize their federal-level influence. In January 2017 the CAFB added a full time staff member devoted exclusively to federal advocacy, allowing the food bank to spend more of its advocacy resources at the state and local level (Gershon). SFMB and CAFB’s coordinated efforts include annual Washington D.C. lobby days, an effort facilitated by Feeding America and FRAC, allowing SFMFB to update legislators and their staff on

food bank programs and the potential impact of pending food assistance legislation.¹⁹ SFMFB's 2017 and 2018 D.C. visits appeared focused on the importance of protecting SNAP funding in the 2018 Farm Bill Reauthorization.

When the SFMFB advocacy team travels to Washington D.C. they invariably represent interests beyond their own organization. During their 2017 visit they reached out to Central Valley legislators (10th District, Denham) on behalf of their peer food bank, as the latter's leaner advocacy budget prohibited a visit. SFMFB also coordinated their efforts with regional and state peers at the April 2017 Anti-Hunger Policy Conference, before making legislative visits to assure they were sending consistent messages (Ash 2017, Olle). SFMFB established a national level advocacy presence (at the encouragement of the Alameda County Community Food Bank) securing membership on Feeding America's twenty-member national Policy Engagement and Advocacy Committee (Olle). There they share best practices, keep abreast of potential issues and threats, and coordinate strategies with peers from across the nation.

Andrew Fisher's *Big Hunger* flags Feeding America's role as top-down convener of food bank advocacy efforts, presuming neoliberal corporate priorities (e.g., donations, tax deductions, greenwashing, etc.) might trump client needs. Yet, it is precisely this collaboration and coordination across CBOs that elevate their voices (and their clients') beyond their small, localized advocacy teams. Further, this national perch allows for a larger systems-approach for SFMFB when developing its reformist advocacy targets, in keeping with food systems expert Mark Winne's food movement recommendation to

¹⁹ Lobby days are organized as part of Feeding America and FRAC's annual Washington D.C.-based Anti-Hunger Policy Conference. Food bank and other anti-hunger advocates use the three-day event to update their advocacy information and strategies, network across regions and organizations, and visit their legislators.

“stand together or starve alone” (Winne 2018). Ironically, Fisher is concerned that the “big tent” approach may just be too big to hold all interests, but SFMFB sees value in partnering. (Winne et al. “Webinar”; Olle). It is at the state-level, however, where SFMFB’s advocacy program appears to have the greatest impact. Through its CalFresh reform efforts, SFMFB is most concretely attempting to follow Poppendieck and Riches’ recommendations to push accountability for addressing hunger back on government.

SFMFB: State Advocacy. SFMFB takes a two-pronged approach to state level advocacy: legislative activity and CalFresh technical assistance. The legislative advocacy is straightforward. SFMFB develops an annual legislative agenda based on bills that are currently in the state-level pipeline, deciding whether to track, support or oppose based on the legislation’s alignment with SFMFB goals (Gershon email). SFMFB selects advocacy targets that support and expand existing federal food assistance programs (CalFresh, WIC, school meals), in line with their stated advocacy goal “to make it as easy as possible for people who are food insecure to participate in food assistance programs for which they are eligible” (“Advocacy–SFMFB”).

SFMFB’s 2017 state legislative agenda targeted twelve state-level bills for support, including issues ranging from expanded college student CalFresh eligibility, MediCal direct certification (allowing K-12 students eligible for state-sponsored healthcare [MediCal] to be automatically enrolled in school meal programs), to increased cost of living adjustments (COLA) for SSI (supplemental security income–state welfare entitlement) payments (“2017 Legislative Agenda”). SFMFB also works directly with the Governor’s office budget staff, advocating for increases to state budget items such as

CalFood and SSI (raising SSI levels above the federal poverty level and permanently restoring state COLA) (“2017 Legislative Agenda”).

Beyond relationship-building visits to state legislators and their policy staffs (the individuals who draft the legislation language and budget documents), SFMFB uses its website and social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter) to encourage direct advocacy from their followers and donors. Online support letters and sample email templates allow the public to “sign on” in support of food bank positions and attach personal messages to both the governor and legislators. Print postcards are also made available to Food Bank volunteers and supporters. In 2017 hundreds of signed postcards and emails to Governor Brown and Assemblyman Ting were critical to the food bank securing \$8 million in CalFoods funding (allowing for the purchase of California-grown products such as eggs, dairy and produce at reduced cost). In the current legislative cycle, SFMFB encouraged its supporters to sign on to a petition letter advocating for Farm Bill/SNAP support in the face of recommended cuts. As of March 2018, the House Agriculture Committee delayed mark up on its version of the Farm Bill largely due to voiced opposition to the harmful cuts and recommended changes to SNAP (@CFPAFoodPolicy). Though their Cal-Fresh Story Project, SFMFB encourages clients to share their CalFresh story (written and uploaded via website portal, or through a phone interview). These stories are carried by SFMFB to state representatives in support of CalFresh both in their written materials to be left behind, and in their verbal conversations with state legislative staff (“Share Your CalFresh Story”). Finally, San Francisco reaches individuals directly through an email “Advocacy and Policy Newsletter” (“Advocate with Us—Advocacy News”).

Gershon pointed to Director Ash’s first advocacy-only email appeal with no

corresponding fundraising ask as evidence that the Food Bank was increasingly emphasizing advocacy (Fall 2017). She stated she looks forward to continued advocacy-only messaging.

CalFresh reform advocacy is more complicated than state legislative advocacy. Ash expressed frustration with California's decentralized system, candidly observing "they don't know how to improve their programs and don't talk to each other to figure it out." (Ash 2017). Even at the state level, he observed, "there's not a lot of cross-pollination, or sharing of best practices, or even [asking] how states stack up against other states or counties against counties. It's very silo-ed." Data from the counties does not bubble up directly to the state-level. Instead it goes into three separate, uncoordinated, privately-owned databases, managed by three disconnected consortia of county-level welfare directors. The redundancies and inconsistencies across counties create both program inefficiencies and barriers to participation that San Francisco, through its founding membership on the state-wide Alliance to Transform CalFresh, is working hard to change. A recent USDA mandate to merge the three databases into one by 2022 has given the Alliance and SFMFB hope for real improvement (Ash 2018; Olle; Gershon 2017). Ash hopes to eventually see information roll up directly from the counties to the state—reducing data inconsistency, increasing comparability, and enabling the state to use the data to create accountability—to better understand who it serves and to modify its program to reach those it doesn't. (Ash 2018, Olle).

The Alliance to Transform CalFresh has a short-term goal to increase CalFresh participation from 66% to 80%, with no county below 70% by 2019 ("About—Alliance to Transform CalFresh"). On behalf of the Alliance, SFMFB advocacy staff devotes

research resources to interpreting and sharing current CalFresh data at the county and state level. In addition, through their advocacy team (and additional external research funding) SFMFB has created analytical tools and reports and made them available to food bank peers. Their “Mapping the Meal Gap” report, for example, aggregates public and private food resources to identify levels of unmet need by county. These efforts have enabled the SFMFB to identify CalFresh program shortfalls such as “churn” and make concrete, data-supported recommendations for improvement such as text reminders, simplified forms and e-signatures for recertification.²⁰ Their Alliance recommendations can be verified in practice through SFMFB’s local CalFresh outreach activities.

SFMFB: Local Advocacy. In San Francisco and Marin local government is working to address income inequality. SFMFB signed on in support of local minimum wage increases in 2014, but largely focuses on food-related initiatives at the local level (Ash 2017). Higher minimum wage and workplace health insurance requirements exist locally, yet housing costs continue to rise faster than income. Record-high cost of living translates to residents at two and three hundred percent of the federal poverty level still needing food assistance (Ash 2017). Because of this resource gap and the underutilization of county-level CalFresh, SFMFB devotes most of its local efforts to food provision, and its local advocacy efforts to CalFresh outreach, a direct service program that supports its advocacy goals. The food bank estimates more than 56,000 individuals in San Francisco and Marin counties are currently eligible but not enrolled in

²⁰ Churn occurs when CalFresh clients unexpectedly lose benefits, usually due to an administrative issue such as a missed reporting requirement, only to re-enroll one to three months later.

CalFresh (“CalFresh Outreach – SFMFB”). Ash explained that unclaimed CalFresh benefits are “money left on the table” (Ash 2017).

CalFresh outreach (eligibility and enrollment assistance) has made demonstrated participation improvements, but advocacy for local CalFresh program/procedural changes isn’t the best approach according to Ash (Ash 2018). With limited advocacy resources, “it just doesn’t make sense to try to make changes at the granular level, county by county. It really needs to happen at the state level” (Ash 2018). Locally, SFMFB’s advocacy team works, instead, to cultivate partnerships across the city (and in Marin) with other members of the emergency food safety net.

SFMFB’s conducts local-level advocacy through its participation on the San Francisco Food Security Task Force (Olle, past-chair), and the Marin Food Policy Council (Gershon, co-chair). There they join efforts to promote greater food access, and network with other safety net food providers to route local resources to food programs, largely public.²¹ The Task Force, established in 2005 by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, advises the city on how to achieve the City’s goal of being hunger-free by 2020, an aspirational goal to drive food security visibility and efforts. The food bank provided direct research and advocacy to help pass the hunger-free resolution in 2013 (“Act Local: SFFSTF”). During Olle’s tenure on the Task Force, their advocacy efforts resulted in tangible public food security improvements. Olle’s work with the city budget office staff resulted in \$2.3 million in new San Francisco budget dollars largely for public

²¹ Olle resigned in June 2017. Gershon was nominated for membership March 7, 2018. A public planner by training, she described her advocacy position at the food bank as follows: “My role is focused on strengthening the safety net programs that are the collective responsibility of a compassionate society, namely effective, efficient and well-funded public assistance programs” (Gershon 2018). Of note, food bank staff members have served on the task force since its early days. The current chair, Anna Quaintance (Meals on Wheels), was a program director at SFMFB when chairing the task force in 2007.

food programs, funding expansion of congregate meals (home delivered groceries and meal service for seniors), and increased summer meals for children when schools are closed. While not direct food entitlement dollars (e.g., food stamps), these examples mirror SFMFB's efforts at the state level to increase government food programs. The task force is a "dialog-producer," according to Ash, giving the food bank a platform to partner with other groups to leverage public resources, and to build relationships that extend beyond direct food assistance to the larger issues it connects to, such as education, housing and health care. Its direct advocacy efforts secured millions of dollars in new funding for expanding programs to end hunger ("Act Local: SFFSTF").

Health outcomes, in particular, are a frame that San Francisco food advocates are increasingly using to make the case for more food resources. The most recent SFMFB newsletter "Food Matters" (Spring 2018) featured the "food as medicine" concept, highlighting food pharmacies—a partnership between the food bank and the San Francisco Health network to improve patient health through nutrition, where produce prescriptions ("Veggie Rx") are written and filled on-site to address community members who cannot afford or access fresh produce ("Food is Medicine" 1).

As with its CalFresh work, the food bank's other local advocacy efforts focus first on increasing resources to the public food assistance programs. Its primary work product as part of the Task Force—the 2014 (and soon to be published 2018) food security assessment—illustrates food insecurity and resources by supervisor district, allowing city planners and program managers to identify program gaps and opportunities for improvement (and funding). In Marin, SFMFB and its food policy council peers created a similar county-wide food system assessment to raise awareness of hunger and promote

equitable food access. Marin's 2017 CalFresh improvement goal was to increase enrollment by 30% over the next year. Data-driven reports such as Marin's county-wide "Healthy Eating Active Living Strategic Framework", connects food security resources (public and private) to health outcomes for local food systems, planning, and policy formation ("Marin County Healthy Eating Active Living Strategic Framework"), once again leveraging food bank resources to justify increasing public programs and budget dollars. ("Together We Can End Hunger" 9).

Internally, SFMFB advocacy staff coordinate the generation of hunger research primary data. Its "Missing Meals" report is an annual analysis of the food resources available for low-income residents (under 200% of the federal poverty level), covering personal resources, public program and non-profit assistance. The gap between an individual's needed meals and her resources pinpoints unmet need. Missing Meals is a powerful and concrete tool to educate donors, legislators and the public about local hunger, and the difficult tradeoffs individuals make between food, rent, medicine etc. This basic drive for fairness drove Olle and SFMFB's advocacy team to share the Missing Meals data broadly, as the data clearly reveals that children, seniors, unemployed and low-wage workers make up the majority of those struggling with hunger today.²² The Reagan-era 'welfare queen' stereotype of women on public assistance living lavish lives is not born out by the data, nor is the assumption that most people needing food supports are the chronically homeless (Ash 2018). Yet there is still a significant gap between demonstrated need and available resources, public and private.

²² In 1987 when the food bank was first incorporated, homelessness was emerging as the crisis issue. The food bank devoted most of its food distribution to programs serving this population (Duggan L9).

For now, CalFresh is SFMFB's lodestar. At the federal level, advocacy in support of the Farm Bill (SNAP funding) is its primary focus. The rest of SFMFB's federal level advocacy supports food program expansions to buttress CalFresh access and fill the gap where it is lacking. State partnerships with the California Association of Food Banks and Alliance to Transform CalFresh, in particular, allow SFMFB to focus on data-driven improvements to systemic CalFresh issues—changing the system from within. Alliances with regional peer food banks and non-food advocates provide SFMFB efficient ways to lend its name in support of state-level food and income initiatives. At the local level its direct service work on Cal-Fresh outreach creates opportunities to advocate directly with food insecure populations. Its leadership on the San Francisco Food Security Task Force, both generating original research and lobbying for city budget dollars has identified gaps in local food assistance and redirected resources to public and private food programs. “We can do better,” said former Policy Director Olle, and CalFresh is their primary tool for improvement (“SFMFB Works Toward Systemic Change”; Olle).

A similar drive to do more motivates the Alameda County Community Food Bank's team. The next section will describe its programs, weaving an organizational comparison through the analysis.

Alameda County Community Food Bank's Advocacy Program

There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not lead single-issue lives.

--Audre Lorde, writer/activist, “Learning from the 60's” Address, Harvard University, Feb.1982, referenced at the 2018 CalFresh Forum by the California Association of Food Banks.

Lorde's sentiment artfully illustrates the difference between the San Francisco and Alameda food banks' approach to advocacy. While San Francisco concentrates its

resources on its core expertise—CalFresh advocacy—Alameda County Community Food Bank (ACCFB) casts its advocacy net broadly—prioritizing anti-poverty initiatives. The first time I met ACCFB Executive Director Suzan Bateson, she was speaking of the common challenge for her clients to decide whether to put gas in the car, go to the grocery or fill a prescription. Accessing food, she explained, is just one issue among many. In its 2014 strategic plan, ACCFB articulated that policy advocacy work is the most important driver in ending hunger. The plan articulated the need to “shift [its] community’s action,” acknowledging that “ending hunger cannot be solely met through food distribution; it will require us to expand our horizons” (“ACCFB Strategic Plan” 9). While SFMFB’s approach focuses mainly on maximizing safety net resources, Alameda adds four additional goals: lobbying, movement building, leading strategic partnerships and conducting and applying original research. Macro-advocacy goals include ensuring all Alameda residents are enrolled in all federal nutrition program for which they are eligible, reducing the number of people who lack resources for food, and maximizing public and private resources (including their own). Alameda frames its work in civil rights language—they intend to “lead a movement,” which requires coalition building across private and public partners, from the “grassroots” (the public) to the “grass-tops” (leader/influencers). Their plan to conduct original research stems from a desire to tell the story of the challenges low-income adults and children face, and to use their data to promote positive health and life outcomes. Their aggressive plan defines the work the community must do to end hunger, ensuring programs and planning are aligned with both needs and solutions (“ACCFB Strategic Plan” 11).

ACCFB's ambitious plans are the latest chapter of an advocacy history "hard wired" into the organization, explains Executive Director, Suzan Bateson. Bateson arrived at the ACCFB in 2001 after a career of food bank and non-profit human service experience in neighboring Contra Costa county. The early days of the Alameda's advocacy program mirrored San Francisco's and the larger food bank sector advocacy evolution (Morgan). Bateson describes the expansion of the ACCFB's advocacy program over her sixteen-year tenure, from 2001 to today.

Evolution of the Program. Alameda developed its advocacy program proactively when its program and local resources were stable. In early 2001 Oakland was booming, and community needs were stable, and, according to Bateson, "not that deep." Her predecessor took the unprecedented step of moving an existing employee out of programs and into advocacy, as prior to this time, the executive director carried all advocacy responsibilities. The director chose an individual uniquely qualified to advocate on behalf of ACCFB's clients, someone skilled at drawing connections between active legislation and the effects it would have on individuals and the community. Of critical importance, this new advocate—Jessica Bartholow—had lived in poverty as a child, which had left an indelible mark. Bateson remarked on her luck: "I was fortunate to come to the food bank and have that kind of partner to teach me about this world and how to act and react in it."²³ Bateson was an early champion of ACCFB's advocacy work; it was the reason she took the job. "I imagined doing something more for people,

²³ That advocate, Jessica Bartholow, has spent two decades in anti-poverty organizing, advocacy and program development at the local, state and national level, and continues to work with the ACCFB in her role as Policy Advocate for the Western Center on Law and Poverty in Sacramento.

providing more help for their families; with its DNA wired for advocacy...[ACCFB] was the only food bank of its ilk at that time in California” (Bateson).

Despite the economic prosperity in the county, those in need who had experienced public resources shrinking after the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, faced onerous barriers to accessing the largest remaining public support—food stamps (SNAP/CalFresh). The programs required onerous monthly check-ins (akin to probation) and finger-printing. Bateson and Bartholow set to work reversing what they perceived as a “criminalization” of public entitlements, while simultaneously developing an advocacy master plan to benefit from federal funding double-matched by county funds and private donors (Bateson). This advocacy formed the core of the first CalFresh (food stamp) outreach program, which Bateson described as a model for the state.

Bateson’s team found ways to synergistically use existing ACCFB resources to buttress their advocacy efforts. ACCFB’s food help-line (providing callers food information referrals) was the logical extension. As individuals called in to ask about food resources, ACCSD staff could quickly and easily ask a few questions to determine whether the caller met the thresholds for food stamp eligibility. Bateson convinced her board to devote fifty-percent of the help-line employee’s time to CalFresh advocacy/outreach. “This was a huge leap of faith for our board, when you think of food in/food out as the gold standard for food banks,” said Bateson. It took several attempts to convince the board that the investment made sense. The CalFresh benefit would help families provide two weeks’ worth of food. When combined with the two-week food distribution the ACCFB provided, they could make families whole. “It was pretty esoteric [at the time], but we were the pioneers, and we’ve proven ourselves right.

(Bateson). A 2010 USDA-funded study co-sponsored by the Congressional Hunger Office and the California Association of Food Banks affirms ACCFB's innovative efforts to strengthen public entitlements. (Shadix 5-7). ACCFB was out front of the trend. Feeding America reports that by 2014 60% of their participating food banks were engaging in SNAP outreach nationwide (Alford et al. 1). ACCFB's advocacy and outreach efforts work to remove obstacles to CalFresh participation; its eligibility and enrollment assistance programs and policies are critical strategies to reduce hunger.

ACCFB has a five-person advocacy team with professional experience reflecting the type of change they intend to make in Alameda County. Allison Pratt (Chief of Partnerships and Strategy) is a former state lobbyist with tax reform experience who arrived at ACCFB in 2004 to replace the departing advocate. Pratt worked with Bateson to grow ACCFB's advocacy program. In her current leadership role, she oversees the advocacy department implementing the food bank's public policy agenda. She works closely with elected officials and their policy staffs to "improve programs that address the root causes of hunger and poverty" ("Our Team"). Pratt describes her advocacy department as strong, having "the trifecta (federal-state-local) well covered" (Pratt). Her new Policy and Partnerships Director, Steve Knight is a social and economic justice-oriented lawyer with housing, environment, and immigration experience. Knight spent his first year at ACCFB refining the vision and the strategy for advocacy for the 2018 strategic plan. He's also the primary state and federal lobbyist for the food bank (Pratt). Knight's senior policy advocate, Shanti Prasad, is also engaged in creating the state legislative agenda and in lobbying. She uses her food systems background and coalition-building experience to develop ACCFB's community organizing efforts.

ACCFB: Federal Advocacy. ACCFB's federal-level advocacy is very similar in substance and approach to San Francisco's. Like SFMFB, they have supportive Senators (Feinstein and Harris) and Congress people (Barbara Lee, 13th and Eric Swalwell, 15th). Lee, in particular, is an anti-poverty champion; her goals align with ACCFB's vision for the future. As chair of the Democratic Whip Task Force on Poverty, Income Inequality and Opportunity and as a member of the powerful House Appropriations (Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Service and Education) and Budget Committees, she is well positioned to preserve and expand critical safety net programs like unemployment insurance, housing assistance, child care, and two issues important to the ACCFB, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and SNAP ("Issues: Poverty").

ACCFB's work centers around maximizing entitlements for its clients. Its 2017 federal policy agenda contains two items: The Farm Bill Reauthorization Act (SNAP funding reauthorization) and H.R. 1276 (Adams NC) Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2017, which raises minimum SNAP benefits, permanently authorizes standard medical deductions for seniors and individuals with disabilities and incorporates a new meal plan funding formula. While San Francisco also signed on to these two bills, ACCFB's focus on these two issues, exclusively, addresses the federal level of ACCFB's strategic advocacy plan to "maximize" safety-net resources. "At the heart of food bank advocacy is defending the safety net, primarily SNAP," explained Policy Director Knight. "Two years ago, we would have said 'support' it, but now we are 'defending it' from being broken. They want to do what they did with AFDC (welfare) twenty years ago [reduce it]" (Knight). Defending involves sharing the stories of their clients who rely on CalFresh, through advocacy staff visits (lobby days) to Washington D.C., (like their peer

SFMFB) and client advocate visits to local Congressional offices. These visits provide their legislators with supporting data and constituent impact stories.

Knight stressed the need for food banks to go beyond baseline hunger work, a point frequently discussed internally, here described after a staff discussion of Andrew Fisher's food bank critique *Big Hunger* (2017). Knight continued:

“There are a bunch of concentric circles of the other elements to the safety net, and [we need] direct advocacy in support of people who are poor, and supportive programs [that can] proactively [help] rather than just imperfectly catch them as they fall—programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit and minimum wage. There are macro issues [to consider] like race and capitalism: how come someone is in our line, why are they there, what's the racial makeup of the food bank lines across the county, and why is it that way? These are...some of the bigger issues swirling around us” (Knight).

The ACCFB has endeavored to expand their advocacy into these areas, particularly in their state and local work.

ACCFB: State Advocacy. Like San Francisco, Alameda advocates in support of CalFresh from the federal to the local level. Increased SNAP enrollment benefits both the client and the local economy, providing a multiplier effect (freeing up food dollars for non-food expenditures). Every dollar spent on SNAP results in \$1.84 in economic activity—a fact not lost on ACCFB, whose approach aims to reduce as many barriers as possible to economic stability (6). At the state level the two food banks diverge: SFMFB focuses on CalFresh and ACCFB employs a more diversified advocacy approach. Alameda educates and advocates around the basic premise that their clients pay for food and other life expenses out of one family budget, so any program that puts more money

in their wallet can and does increase food security (Bateson). Using this frame, they advocate for non-food income equality initiatives such as SSI and EITC supports.

ACCFB strongly supports increasing the Supplemental Security Income/State Supplemental Payment (SSI/SSP), the state’s cash-based welfare program for seniors and the disabled as it was cut dramatically during the Great Recession. Individuals qualifying for SSI benefits are disqualified for SNAP, which makes them frequent users of food bank services. “When I started here (2014) we took up SSI as one of our top priorities,” explained Senior Advocate Shanti Prasad. To assist her advocacy efforts, she established a community advisory group, “Community Advocates Against Hunger” that meets monthly to share experiences and concerns. Meeting content and conversations in-between inform the food bank’s advocacy agenda. These individuals—clients and allies—provide more than token feedback, they participate in planning and execution. “We were hearing from seniors in our advocacy group, and our research [bore it out]” (Prasad). In 2017 ACCFB lobbied the state directly to lift recipient income above the poverty level and help restore the permanent costs of living adjustment (“2017 Policy Agenda”). San Francisco signed on to this initiative (listed as a supporter) but Alameda’s advocacy went further, leading collaborations, making regular state capitol visits, and training, supporting and coordinating the direct advocacy of their clients. Both food banks are also members of Californians for SSI (CA4SSI) a coalition of two hundred plus service providers across the state working to reverse cuts to this important entitlement program. Again, ACCFB appears to more aggressively advocate on these issues, holding community “teach-ins” to educate their clients on SSI, and develop their voices.²⁴

²⁴ CA4SSI is the only coalition of its kind in the nation (Knight).²⁵ I was invited to attend a workshop and was forwarded the *Scarcity* summary article to review before our session. The three main points were

ACCFB's policy agenda-making process is tied to their community organizing work:

We believe that we are most effective when we are engaging the community in the work, and actually including people who are impacted by hunger and the policies we're working on in strategic conversation. These are the people we take with us to Sacramento...where the food bank has an opportunity to speak out (Pratt).

On their website ACCFB shares video vignettes about clients—their struggles and successes. These stories are a powerful way to connect the client to the influencer or policy maker. One segment tells the story of a volunteer named Steve who lost his job and apartment in the Great Recession. After years of sorting vegetables on the warehouse floor, he heard about the advocacy program and thought “I could have a voice here,” and has since travelled regularly to Sacramento to speak out against hunger and poverty (“Our Stories”). Pratt stresses the critical value of client advocates. “If I go to Sacramento and speak about CalFresh, it's okay. I'm closer to it than the legislator. But if someone who's actually filled out the SNAP application delivers that message it's much more effective. (Pratt).

ACCFB's community-based approach is a powerful combination of community-building and effective advocacy—a model that cultivates leadership and facilitates opportunity for all parties. Through their active leadership in California Hunger Action Coalition (CHAC), a twenty-six-year old group they co-founded, ACCFB advocates together for state-level hunger, poverty and food system reforms. ACCFB currently holds a leadership position on the steering committee; Prasad serves as Legislative Committee Co-chair. (SFMFB is a non-leadership member.) The coalition provides a

discussed in the session with the community human service providers.

forum for the non-profit anti-hunger direct service providers to partner with advocacy organizations to amplify their voices before the state legislature on issues such as SSI reform and other poverty issues. Annual participation in the Coalition's Hunger Action Day provides advocates from across the state an opportunity to meet in the capitol and visit legislators, network, and rally alongside their coalition advocate partners ("Advocacy Effort CHAC").

Our elected officials say they need to hear from [our clients] to do their jobs better. The client advocates feel empowered. They realize, 'oh my God', I am part of this system. I think part of the advocacy is, of course, protecting the programs, but including all of these people who feel disenfranchised by the system, oppressed [by it] are [given a chance] to use their voice. Many ...don't vote, they feel like they are not part of [the solution]. They have no power. (Prasad).

Community engagement is a triple win—for legislators, the food banks and their clients. ACCFB is mindful of the power of this work and uses every opportunity to educate its clients so they can advocate for themselves, including voter registration/get-out-to-vote (GOTV) efforts before elections. To that end, Prasad and former advocacy director, Keisha Nzewi, developed a GOTV presentation in 2016, "Harnessing the Power of Your Food Bank to Get Out the Vote", for the California Association of Food Banks to educate member food banks about voter registration (Prasad and Nzewi 2016). ACCFB lists registering to vote prominently on the Advocacy page of its website, linking users to the California Secretary of State's multilingual on-line voter registration system.

Despite concerted effort around SSI reform, the food banks and their partners have not yet succeeded in restoring SSI to pre-recession levels. Seeing an impasse under Governor Brown they looked for alternatives to address income inequalities. ACCFB and its coalition found an opportunity around expanding a new California add-on to the

federal Earned Income Tax Credit, an effort that would add back income to working Californians through their state tax returns. ACCFB has advocated through the governor's budget process and through the assembly (AB 1010, Ting). "It's a pretty stark choice," explained Knight, "given the difference between the SSI [seniors, disabled] and the EITC [employed] populations, but there was a large amount of money available...to put in the pockets of low-income families (Knight). This level of state advocacy is not new to the food bank. They've spent twenty years fighting with partners such as the Western Center on Law and Poverty, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children and state legislators to get the maximum family CalWorks (state welfare) grant revoked, and for repeal of the lifetime CalFresh/CalWorks ban on convicted drug felons—both policies that the food bank felt were racist and unfair (Knight). These efforts relied on ACCFB's skill at coalition work, both inside and outside the food space, and their visioning for the long-term. At the local level, they rely on these same skills directed at different audiences, through person-to-person interactions and virtual interactions using their website and social media platforms.

ACCFB: Local Advocacy. At the local level Alameda advocates with the public sector, other CBOs and food bank clients to maximize access to economic resources and to build community. Alameda's strong relationship with the Oakland Unified School District provides an opportunity to advocate for greater food access (and participation) in the beleaguered school system. Oakland schools are diverse, including a high number (30%) of English language learners, newcomers, and outsized need—73% of its students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches—which opens the door to innovative

programming addressing whole schools (Real and Kingsley-Ma; Tsai). ACCFB supported increased enrollment in school meal programs by advocating for the implementation of MediCal Direct Certification statewide (S.B. 138, McGuire), which, in turn, maximized federal universal meal provisions to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students in high poverty schools (“2017 Policy Agenda”). They’re also currently advocating to close a loophole (AB 1871, Dickinson) preventing Alameda County’s low-income charter school students from receiving free meals for which they are eligible (Prasad “Action Alert: Closing the School Meal Gap”). ACCFB’s administrative advocate works with the school district’s nutrition services staff to ensure that eligible students are participating in all available food programs. In some cases, the food bank advocates have suggested (and enabled) tactical changes within the schools, such as alternative delivery models for school breakfast programs to improve participation (breakfast before the bell versus breakfast after the bell). In other cases, the food bank serves as an indirect supporter. Chief of Partnerships Pratt acknowledged the challenge of developing relationships and exerting influence without direct authority. ACCFB’s partnership with the school district is so successful that ACCFB was asked to present their methods to the state’s County Welfare Directors (the CalFresh administrators) at their annual conference (Pratt).

Alameda’s community organizing skills are highly developed and varied. They employ a range of activities to build and mobilize their community via their website, media platforms and personal interactions. Their website reflects an organizational value of transparency. The advocacy tab (“Get Involved: As an Advocate”) is rich with information highlighting the broad range of advocacy tactics they employ to influence

policymakers and the public. It provides contextual data, shares client stories on hunger and food insecurity, presents their policy agenda and articulates specific actions community members can take (e.g., register to vote, find your representative, send a letter on an issue, attend Hunger Action Day in Sacramento, or a program at the food bank). ACCFB's blog (and newsletter) spells out specific, actionable, advocacy tasks combined with first-person client narratives. Its community advocacy institute—the Speak Up Project (SUP!), is a free, six-week workshop series, teaching food bank clients, CalFresh recipients, and other community members about the legislative process to groom grassroots level anti-hunger advocates (“‘SUP’–The Speak Up Project”). According to Community Development Manager Sheila Burks, efforts like SUP are emblematic of Alameda's desire to elevate the voices of the hungry and allow them to “speak truth to power.”

Burks strengthens ACCFB's advocacy efforts by developing an informed and engaged community. Her experience in community lending and homeownership supports, and her familiarity with ACCFB programs (seven years of warehouse volunteering) add value to the advocacy program. As women of color, Prasad and Burks bring important perspectives. Burks acknowledged that the leadership of ACCFB is dominated by white women. She stressed that it was these same women who saw the need for equity and inclusion programming to achieve ACCFB advocacy goals. “They recognized the blessing of already living in a majority minority state,” explained Burks, and had “an awareness of where we live and where we are, and that they are not as gifted as they want to be” (Burks).

Seventy-five percent of Burks' time is spent building partnerships in the community because "quiet as it's kept, a bag of groceries is not going to end poverty or cure hunger" (Burks). Burks focuses on the strategies and collaboration needed to assist and support ACCFB's clients as they make the transition out of the food bank into thriving economic outcomes. Her work on college campuses, for example, helps first-generation students navigate these institutions; she also assists the schools' administrations in removing barriers to success. Burks' work on behalf of the ACCFB helps people stabilize their lives.

How do we ... help tell that story and help supplement the resources that these folks are already bringing... actually building some agency too, so people understand the resources they do have and the things they can leverage. It's about navigating barriers (Burks).

ACCFB's equity-inclusion programming develops new advocates using anti-poverty curriculum. The program is framed through a racial and economic justice lens as Burks finds the term social justice "a bit too benign" (Burks). 'Train the trainer' sessions for county social services professionals adopt a methodology that defines poverty as an absence of (economic) resources, assuming "the middle-class understandings of those who work with children and adults in poverty are often ill-suited for connecting with and helping people build up resources and rise out of poverty" (Payne "Framework"). The training provides set of tactical tools that allow service providers (including ACCCFB staff) to be more effective and respectful advocates for clients' needs.

To further illustrate this shift in ACCFB's thinking, Burks shared the work of behavioral economist Sendhil Mullainathan and psychologist Eldar Shafir. Their work *Scarcity: The New Science of Having Less and How It Defines Our Lives*, informs ACCFB's equity and inclusion curriculum and suggests a better approach to working

with clients across the resource strapped anti-poverty space. Mullainathan and Shafir put forward three strategies to address poverty: cut the cost of being poor (things costs more when you are poor), create bandwidth—or slack (time and money)—in the system, and reframe those messages that we share (Mullainathan and Shafir 2017). Burks uses this framing in her economic justice workshops and keeps both the book and a summary article at hand for food bank clients and partners to borrow from her desktop lending library.²⁵ When the food bank frames its work as advocacy for the client, rather than “cases to be managed,” Burks explains, it changes how the provider and the client see each other and builds a new set of expectations (Burks). ACCFB’s advocacy team members expressed enthusiasm around these progressive approaches, stressing that its work ahead is changing.

ACCFB’s equity and inclusion approach to advocacy reflects its evolution as an organization. The centerpiece of its 2018 strategic planning involves rethinking how its advocacy team does its work, moving away from “pounds in, pounds out” or numbers of partners or contacts—all outputs. Instead, ACCFB is focusing on outcomes. While measuring effectiveness is beyond the scope of this research, Alameda is experimenting with an unusual approach to quantify its advocacy, translating its policy efforts into a new unit of measurement—meals—a frame comfortable to the food bank. It is fairly easy to convert the CalFresh outreach into meals, but ACCCFB pushed further to develop a methodology to articulate the impact of all its policy work in this manner. While this number of meals appears more output than outcome, Chief of Partnerships Pratt was undaunted by this observation. “Once we did that [changed the metric],” she said, “you

²⁵ I was invited to attend a workshop and was forwarded the *Scarcity* summary article to review before our session. The three main points were discussed in the session with the community human service providers.

can see what really drives change [and] this allows us to determine which policies to work on” (Pratt). Despite Pratt’s confidence, it is still not clear how the number of meals approach is truly different from the prior “pounds and people” metric, despite its apparent significance to ACCFB’s advocacy goals. Perhaps the finalized 2018 strategic plan will provide a clearer rationale. In contrast, I found the most pressing example offered the connection of hunger (and poverty) to negative health outcomes, showing the power of nutrition education and food access investments to health improvements (and reduced medical expenses). Building on its history as the first food bank to ban soda donations, ACCSF is currently part of a three-city national diabetes study, sponsored by University of California, San Francisco, connecting dietary choices to health outcomes. The advocacy team sees this type of original research as a new way to shift the discussion from food access to whole person advocacy.

Analysis Summary: Key Findings

The San Francisco-Marin and Alameda County Community Food Banks have much in common, in history, programs and practice. The above analysis teases out the differences between their advocacy approaches. While both food banks strive to end hunger, SFMFB directs the bulk of its advocacy resources toward CalFresh reform. It pursues system level reform through its Alliance to Transform CalFresh initiatives and policy recommendations. Locally, SFMFB works to increase client participation through CalFresh outreach services. The food bank joins issue-based coalitions lending its name and a supportive voice to state and federal legislation aimed at increasing public food programs. It advocates locally for increased public support of public food programs

through membership on the San Francisco Food Security Task Force and Marin Food Policy Council. Meanwhile, its direct service programs and facilities continue to grow to address unmet need.²⁶

In contrast, Alameda takes a more holistic approach to serving its clients, adopting an economic and racial justice lens. Its advocacy efforts work to maximize all public sources of economic support, from CalFresh to school meals, earned income tax credits and supplemental security income advocacy. Its larger advocacy staff lobbies for state legislation and uses administrative advocacy at the local level to increase access to resources, such as school meals. Its demonstrated advocacy leadership is reflected in its community organizing—grass-roots coalition building, training and problem solving with its allies and clients to improve the food banks’ service and to bring its stories directly to state and local policy makers. Like SFMFB, Alameda is a critical member of the emergency safety net, but its expanded advocacy efforts are shaping a new role for the food bank, marking it as a leader among its peers.

²⁶ In April 2018 SFMFB’s communications highlighted a newly purchases Marin warehouse, four times the size of the prior leased space, allowing for an expansion of Marin County direct service programs.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Advocacy is the most essential component of the complex of factors that protect and promote a strong food assistance safety net.

--Janet Poppendieck, *Breadlines: Knee-Deep in Wheat* (2014 Epilogue)

San Francisco-Marín and Alameda County food banks share both a history and mission that define their program evolution, yet they diverge on their approach to advocacy. They developed along a similar trajectory, responding to government retrenchment by developing food programs, adding advocacy programs as both government and corporate donations cycled unevenly and shrunk. They operate in contiguous geographic areas sharing parallel federal and state food assistance constraints, and increasing local need, despite stabilizing economies. They both can count on liberal local political environments for funding and volunteer support. Food program-friendly state legislators leverage food bank advocacy information to break down legislative barriers to increased food and non-food income supports for food bank clients. And federal representatives are readying their votes for the 2018 Farm Bill reauthorization to protect SNAP funding. The food banks' current advocacy programs both have CalFresh advocacy and outreach and at their centers, and they advocate for most of the same federal and state food-specific legislative and budget issues. The list of federal and state partners they share is far longer than those they don't. Lastly, they both have long-serving, experienced Executive Directors who share the confidence of their boards, staff and stakeholders.

Both food banks want to end hunger and use their advocacy programs to push for policy change. SFMFB's reformist approach has centered its efforts on improving public programs through the Alliance to Improve CalFresh and guiding its clients to accessing these programs through outreach, education and advocacy. Progressive ACCFB works to put more money in its clients' wallets through CalFresh outreach and advocacy to remove barriers to CalFresh enrollment, increase SSI payments and maximize Earned Income Tax Credit supports. Its advocacy strategies leverage existing program resources, such as their helpline to bolster CalFresh eligibility, and its pairing of MediCal forms with reduced-price school lunch programs further expands access to food.

Yet in countless ways, both food banks still resemble the food bank model Fisher critiques. They prioritize growth and corporate partnering while measuring success largely through outputs. Embodying Arundhati Roy's warnings, the growth of these food banks remains the proverbial canary in the coal mine, signaling government's abdication and the effect of generations of neoliberal public policy. They have boards filled with large corporate donors. They accept donations where they can find them. They still distribute the government cheese, corporate flops and waste (surplus) that reinforces stereotypes of poverty. Their charitable fixes do as much to provide a balm to our collective consciousness as fill a client's dinner plate. They accept donations of time, money and highly visible resources from the same institutions (Wal-Mart etc.) who've wreaked havoc on the food system, and whose employment and compensation policies created circumstances that pushed their employees into food assistance programs. And as the food banks work tirelessly to maximize their clients' resources, income inequality

continues to grow, often lengthening their pantry lines as participation in public food assistance programs drops (USDA “Food Assistance Landscape 2017” 1-2).

I approached this research expecting the cases to reinforce Poppendieck’s, Riches’ and later Fisher’s critiques about the role of the charitable food assistance providers in perpetuating the issues they are attempting to solve. Instead I discovered two organizations that are looking beyond food distribution to how they can impact the system that inadequately serves those experiencing food insecurity. The constant stream of pounds in-pounds out requires an Olympic level of effort, from coordinating the legions of volunteers to managing the sophisticated push distribution system of food to a complex web of pantries, soup kitchens and mobile delivery sites in dense urban areas. Ever expanding warehouses, capital campaigns and smartly crafted marketing campaigns reinforce a public narrative that the food banks have the problem covered. Simultaneously, the federal government is threatening, yet again, to shrink SNAP, the food entitlement that most effectively addresses food insecurity when well-functioning and fully subscribed. While the food banks embody many of the scholars’ and activists’ fears, they also suggest hopeful progress. My data reveals that as these two food banks developed and matured, they attempted to address the scholar’s gravest concerns, and have prioritized pushing accountability for food assistance back on the public sector through efforts to increase enrollment in entitlement programs and lobbying to expand local, state and federal food assistance.

My analysis of San Francisco and Alameda County food banks revealed differing value systems, approaches and unique contributions. I learned the most when listening carefully without the scholarly filters—letting food bank staff tell me, in their own words,

why they advocate and how they can address both hunger and poverty for—and with—their clients. Adding the scholarly literature and practical critiques back in afterward provides the rationale for the food banks' evolution from Band-Aid® fix to public entitlement reformer and champion, leveraging even the unholy alliances Fisher preaches against.

San Francisco's method is the simpler of the two. Its systems approach could be characterized as top-down, focusing on maximizing California's piece of the SNAP pie. SFMFB Executive Director Ash and his advocacy team are committed to reforming SNAP/CalFresh, knowing its power (by sheer dint of its size) to address hunger. Through relatively unrestricted limits, SNAP allows participants to choose food from a growing array of outlets that clients value as culturally appropriate and appealing. Its credit card-like EBT payment card reduces shaming differences. The challenge is improving the effort-to-benefit ratio for clients. San Francisco is committed to buttressing CalFresh from every angle, working through the Alliance to Transform CalFresh to rebuild the program from the inside out, from data collection and management to enrollment and benefit levels. SFMFB has leveraged its CalFresh understanding and expertise to create analytical planning tools for its California peers, to educate its state partners, and to advocate for more resources to address the federal mandate for a merged system by 2022—all means to make the system simpler for its clients. Acknowledging the food bank's inability to end hunger alone, Director Ash adamantly defends this goal. He sees charitable assistance as critical until the federal programs, especially CalFresh, are optimized. While SFMFB may not be able to end the line alone, their CalFresh advocacy could shorten the line by improving the

government's ability to implement its chief anti-hunger tool—CalFresh (SNAP). In doing so, the SF-Marin Food Bank functions as a quasi-official CalFresh department, supplementing the work of the declining state as Peck and Tickell described, in the absence of government leadership on CalFresh reform.

The Alameda County Community Food Bank takes a different tack, pursuing a bottom-up justice approach, working directly with its clients to understand resource obstacles and identify local, state and federal resources to break down barriers. SNAP/Cal-Fresh is a foundational advocacy target, but CalFresh work alone is not sufficient for the ACCFB. Alameda appears less concerned than San Francisco about stepping outside its comfort zone, instead, in Community Development Manager Sheila Burks' words, "acknowledging their lack of expertise, and stepping into it" to harness the power of its clients' lived expertise to raise all bottom lines. It is not linear. The wins are sometimes decades in the making. Alameda knows its "resistance must remain politicized," to borrow Arundhati Roy's phrase. They will know they have failed, to Roy's critique, if the community believes they have filled the vacuum left by the "retreating state" (Roy). ACCFB's people-centered equity approach has garnered attention and results, even in the eyes of the food bank's most vociferous critic, Andrew Fisher. "Who's at the table shapes the agenda," writes Fisher, and Alameda is one of the food banks setting the example for others to follow (Fisher 185). Perhaps Fisher's acknowledgement speaks to ACCFB's fashioning of a new agenda, not anti-hunger, but anti-poverty. And while its attempts to measure its advocacy effectiveness still appear more output than outcome, it recognizes the need for a whole person-centered approach. ACCFB sees the local food bank as a place for more than a gift of groceries—it is a place

to engage in community-building with partners who believe in both the right to food and the right to a seat at the table.

Both the SFMFB and the ACCFB recognize their efforts alone cannot end the line. Hunger is a symptom of structural poverty; without sufficient money to buy food, individuals will seek other forms of assistance. Scholars remind us that neither building more food banks nor expanding existing ones will decrease hunger in a climate of contracting public social services. But food banks can move from perpetuating the problem to addressing its causes. They can push back against the neoliberal tendency to solve social problems with market solutions by returning the ownership and management of hunger to the government—and holding them accountable—as recommended by Janet Poppendieck over twenty years ago. SF-Marín and Alameda County Community Food Banks' advocacy efforts to support and strengthen food entitlement programs through CalFresh reform and enrollment outreach—a direct service program in support of their advocacy goals—are concrete steps in that direction. Advocacy efforts in coalition with other food policy and social service advocates, from the Alliance to Transform CalFresh to Californians for Supplemental Security Income, push more citizens towards the government programs that provide economic support. Community organizing, particularly the equity and inclusion work at ACCFB, elevates the voices of those experiencing the sharpest effects of income inequality and provides them a vehicle to share their stories with policy makers.

The food banks' attempts to shorten the line are challenged by the growing wealth gap. Both food banks' CalFresh outreach has increased participation, putting food money in their clients' wallets, but their efforts have been offset by market pressures and

increasing income inequality even as the overall economic picture stabilizes and grows. In the short-term food banks are still feeding the line, albeit with offerings that decreasingly are corporate marketplace failures, replaced by healthier, whole, and locally-grown foods. Membership on their local food policy councils (SF Food Security Task Force and Oakland Food Policy Councils, respectively) assure the food banks are at the table as food system change and health outcomes-based innovations are developed.

Can the food banks really end the line? It seems unlikely. Their impact is limited by the widening wealth gap and the stigmatizing of food supports such as CalFresh benefits in a political lead-up to what could be a third wave of social welfare cuts during the Trump Administration. But this aspirational goal sets the food banks on an appropriate path, one that is consistent with their shared belief that you cannot food bank your way out of hunger, and a mutual commitment to the power of elevating the stories of those affected.

Future research remains necessary to re-check fundamental assumptions and to push the advocacy argument further. This research, and the scholarship it is based on, recommends pushing food assistance accountability back on the government, but little has been written about the effects of full SNAP participation, for example. Is it sustainable? What new challenges would it raise? On the charitable side, research aimed at developing meaningful advocacy metrics—ones that focus on outcomes, not outputs—is needed to justify the efforts and to measure impact.

While supporting the role of food bank advocacy, this research does not suggest the San Francisco-Marin or Alameda County Community Food Banks will be able to work themselves out of a job, as their mission statements imply. I argue, instead, that

through their advocacy, they've worked themselves into a new and necessary job: pushing food accountability back on the government, and in the most progressive cases, using advocacy to enrich their communities by ensuring those affected have a voice in creating solutions.

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APPENDIX A: Most Common Forms of Lobbying and Advocacy

Response	% of organizations			
	Orgs that Lobby or Advocate (n=182/191)		All Respondents (n=311)	
	Any Time	3+ Times	Any Time	3+ Times
Forms of Lobbying				
Signed a correspondence to a government official	97%	65%	57%	38%
Visited a government official	85%	52%	50%	31%
Called a government official	86%	51%	50%	30%
Stimulated public to communicate to officials	60%	36%	35%	21%
Forms of Advocacy				
Responded to requests for info from official	90%	50%	55%	31%
Distributed information materials	82%	49%	51%	30%
Testified at hearings	57%	22%	35%	13%
Wrote an Op-Ed piece or letter to the editor	53%	17%	33%	10%
Organized public event	46%	9%	29%	6%
Released research report	38%	15%	24%	9%
Filed or joined a lawsuit	4%	0%	3%	0%

Source: The Johns Hopkins University Listening Post Project.

The Listening Post Project is located within the Center for Civil Society Studies at the Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies. The 2007 survey reached 872 nonprofit organizations across four sectors: children and family services, elderly housing services, community and economic development and the arts.

APPENDIX B: Advocacy Tactics and Their Targets

Advocacy Activity	Definition & Scope	Target
<i>Mobilizing citizens and organizing advocacy allies</i>		
Civic engagement	Increasing individual involvement and motivating them to improve the quality of civic life.	Individuals, public
Coalition building	Unifying advocacy voices by bringing together individuals, groups or organizations that agree on a particular issue or goal, such as field operations	Individuals, public, Interest Groups, Nonprofits
Community organizing/mobilization	Creating or building a community-based groundswell of support for an issue or position, often by helping people affected by policies to advocate on their own behalf	Individuals, public
Canvassing	Conducting phone polls, focus groups and public opinion polls to assess public views/attitudes on problems and policy issues	Public
Protest/Demonstration	Mobilizing rallies, marches and civil disobedience.	Individuals, public
Building social movements	Creating or expanding a loose collection of groups and individuals that seek to change an understanding of an issue.	Public interest groups, nonprofits
<i>Expanding public and policymaker awareness</i>		
Public awareness campaigns	Raise recognition among a general public about a policy issue or position, such as a messaging campaign	Public
Public will campaign	Influencing the willingness of a non-policymaker target audience to act in support of an issue or policy proposal	Public
Media Advocacy	Influencing coverage in the media which may contain but is not limited to television, radio, print and online newspapers and magazines, blogs and social media; may be paid or earned	Media, policymakers
Voter outreach	Conveying an issue or position to specific groups of voters in advance of an election (voter outreach, candidate debate, educating	Public, policymakers

	candidates); voter registration, get-out-to-vote and encouraging citizens to vote	
<i>Influencing policymaker support</i>		
Lobbying	Efforts to influence specific legislation, support/oppose a ballot initiative	Policymakers
Influencer education	Informing key influencers about an issue or policy position	Policymakers, influencers
Policymaker education	Informing, advising or educating decision-makers about technical aspects of an issue/position, and about its support	Policymakers
Champion development	Cultivating high-profile individuals, including policymakers, to adopt an issue and publicly advocate for it	Policymakers, influencers
Political will campaign	Influencing willingness of policymakers to act in support of an issue or policy proposal	
Request for advice	Providing written technical support or testimony at hearings	Policymakers
<i>Researching and monitoring policy</i>		
Policy analysis and research	Systematically investigating an issue/problem to better define it or identify possible solutions	Policymakers
Model legislation	Drafting legislation consistent with an advocacy position (for dissemination to policymakers)	Policymakers
Regulatory feedback	Providing comments on, and suggested improvements to specific regulations/policies	Policymakers
Budget Monitoring	Tracking govt. budget allocation or spending on a particular policy	Policymakers
Litigation	Using the judicial system to move policy by filing lawsuits or civil actions	Courts

Source: *Advocacy and Policy Change Evaluation* (Gardner and Brindis, 2017)

APPENDIX C: Interview Questions

Note: As all interviews were open-ended, this list was prepared as a guide to prompt discussion. Not all questions were asked of all interviewees.

Introduction script/context: (5 minutes)

- Thank interviewee for agreeing to be interviewed. Sign consent form.
- Re-commit to one hour of time (or more, as agreed upon in advance email exchange)
- Ask permission for audio-taping for personal research use only (transcript)
- Briefly summarize research objective (as previously summarize in set-up communications) and use of material (unpublished thesis document)
- What clarifying questions I can answer?

Personal Background

- What is your position and work with the organization?
- How long have you worked with your organization?
- How many staff members report to you/ describe structure of your division?

Organizational Background

- Briefly summarize the history of *your* food bank.
 - What does it do?
 - Who does it serve?
 - How has it changed over time? (Growth/shift in mission or emphasis?)
 - How does your food bank fit in to the Bay Area & California food bank efforts?
 - Please describe any work are you currently doing at the national level with Feeding America.

Advocacy Efforts - Advocacy staff

Note: Advocacy and anti-hunger/poverty issues could come up together depending on the mission and structure of each organization. If not, move quickly through advocacy questions, not getting bogged down in technical details.

- How do you define advocacy?
- Explain the advocacy functions within your food bank?
 - What is the structure of this department/divisions?
 - How did it come about (origin story)? Why?

- How long has this function existed?
- How receptive was your leadership to adding advocacy your mix of services?
 - What kind of education was involved in getting the board “on board”?
- How does it fit within the whole?
 - What legal restrictions limitation exist to your advocacy work? How do you talk about it to your constituents and partners?
- What are the specific advocacy vision and guiding principles?
- How is success measured?
- What is your vision for this area?
 - Short, mid and long-term goals?
- What are the biggest challenges/obstacles you face?

Structural Change - Anti-Hunger/Poverty Work

- Are your advocacy efforts aimed at “structural change” – changing the larger system to address poverty? Yes/No?
 - Why or why not?
 - If yes, what are your priority areas for food bank work?
 - Programs?
 - Who are your partners?
 - What will it take to succeed?
 - If goal is to end hunger, how do you explain the increasing demonstrated need from the FB?

Closing Questions

- Who do look to as models of “best practice” in advocacy?
 - Other food banks? Other organizations? (Specific organizations)
- What would you like to tell me regarding your work, your food bank or other issues that we haven’t explicitly talked about?

Additional questions for Executive Directors

- What are the biggest changes you’ve experienced at the food bank over your long tenure?
- As Executive Director, I assume fundraising is a large part of your job.
 - Could you describe your fundraising goals? Not just dollars to raise, but distribution of those dollars (to what kind of efforts?)
- At the national level, and at Feeding America conferences there is lot of talk about ‘feeding the line versus shortening the line versus ending the line’.

- How much is aspirational versus realistic? Do you see SFMFB/ACCFB working itself out of a job? Can we talk more about that?
 - If no, why not?

Separate questions for ancillary interviews (non-food bank individuals)

- Briefly summarize my research question/get permissions/consent.
- At the national level, and at Feeding America conferences (specifically Anti-Hunger Policy Conference Jan. 2016 – cosponsored by Feeding America and Food Research & Action Center [FRAC]) there is lot of talk about ‘feeding the line versus shortening the line versus ending the line’.
 - How much is aspirational versus realistic? Do you see the food banks working themselves out of a job? Can we talk more about that?
 - If no, why not?
- What role do you see the individual foodbanks and groups such as yourselves in effecting structural change around hunger/poverty?
 - If yes, what are the priority areas and why?
 - If no, why not.
- What does advocacy mean to you - for you, in your organization, and for the individual food banks as you interact with them? Who can you point to as leaders or “best-practice” examples of advocacy and change efforts?
- Have you done research in your work related to the advocacy efforts of the food banks?
 - If so, could they be made available to me?
 - If not, could you tell me a bit about how you measure advocacy efforts?

APPENDIX D: Formal Interviews and Informal Conversations

Face to Face Interviews (except where noted)

- Paul Ash, Executive Director, SF-Marin Food Bank (SFMFB) 2 interviews *via telephone*.
- Suzan Bateson, Executive Director, Alameda County Community Food Bank (ACCFB).
- Sheila Burks, Community Development Manager, ACCFB.
- Becky Gershon, Senior Policy & Advocacy Coordinator, SFMFB.
- Paula Jones (SF Dept. of Public Health) & SF Food Security Task Force.
- Steven Knight, Director of Policy and Partnerships, ACCFB.
- Susannah Morgan, Chief Executive Officer, Oregon Food Bank & former SFMFB staff member).
- Teri Olle, Former Director of Policy & Advocacy, SFMFB & Former Chair, San Francisco Food Security Task Force.
- Shanti Prasad, Senior Policy Advocate, ACCFB.
- Allison Pratt, Chief of Partnerships and Strategy, ACCFB.

Informal Conversations

The following conversations were shorter and less formal than the interviews, but they contributed important insights to this research.

- Francesca Costa, Program Manager, CalFresh Outreach, SFMFB.
- Andrew Fisher, Community Food Security Expert, Author: *Big Hunger*.
- Nancy Hahn, Operations Manager, Food Runners.
- Leo O'Farrell, Former Cal-Fresh Program Director, City and County of San Francisco.
- Janet Poppendieck, Hunger and Food Assistance Scholar, Professor Emeritus, Hunter College, NY, NY.