
McEntee, Jesse


McEntee’s (2010) purpose in writing this article was to contrast two different forms of food localism, which he labeled contemporary and traditional. McEntee hypothesized that "localized food movements were taking place in America and that some of these activities had ideological sp labels attached to them (contemporary), while others did not (traditional)” (McEntee 2010: 796). In order to test this hypothesis, McEntee spent seven months in Grafton County, New Hampshire interviewing people on their own experiences with growing food and on their preferences for selecting food.

After interviewing 29 key stakeholders and 40 community respondents, McEntee (2010) found that motivation was the key factor in determining whether a local food activity was either contemporary or traditional. Contemporary local activities were characterized by the desire “to support local farmers and to promote sustainability,” and food purchasing criteria were based on freshness, health, and locality (McEntee 2010: 785). The people who participated in contemporary local food activities were likely to have a small garden to obtain fresh food, shop at farmers’ markets, and be keen on helping the local economy and leaving a smaller carbon footprint. On the other hand, traditional local food activities were characterized by the motivation to buy inexpensive and fresh products. The people who took part in traditional local food activities tended to not have a preference for where food was grown but focused on price when determining what products to buy. They also were characterized by maintaining gardens and livestock to help reduce the amount of money spent on food.

In reading the article, it was evident that the different motivations that were key to McEntee’s idea that there were two categories of local food activities, contemporary and traditional, were largely influenced by socioeconomic status. It was clear that people who went to the farmers’ market and bought fresh and local food were influenced to do so because they had the money to do it. However, the people who were categorized as traditional based all their food decisions on money. For example, the article discussed how people in the contemporary category rarely reduced their food budget when the economic downturn occurred, but people who fell in the traditional group limited their budget (McEntee 2010). One person in the traditional local group said that he could “suck it up and eat ramen noodles” (McEntee 2010: 795). Therefore, I feel it may be more useful to categorize food purchasing activities on socioeconomic status and find practical solutions to food problems, such as quality of food, based on those categories. For example, people who are food insecure, or cannot afford regular meals, are more likely to be obese and consume high caloric, non-nutritious food, such as McDonalds (McEntee 2010: 788). Therefore, based on categories of wealth, individuals with lower income could receive coupons to be used for local healthy food, reducing the likelihood of obesity.

Another point that McEntee (2010) brought up in the article was that people of lower socioeconomic status strayed away from farmers’ markets, even though they would like to purchase goods there, because the market had a sense of being for the wealthy and they did not want to be looked down upon in that environment. For example, McEntee describes how one market began to play classical music and how that turned many customers of lower economic status away from that market (McEntee 2010: 796). Therefore, it may be practical to design markets that would not offend any person and welcome people of all socioeconomic statuses.

Very good choice of article and some good commentary. You write well.