

# Food and social justice argumentative essay example

[Environment](#), [Ecology](#)



A number of people are usually oblivious of what it took to produce the products or even services they consume. An even greater number are unaware of the potential effects of these costs, as well as the origin of these items that they consume. The ecological footprint concept therefore attempts to address this lack of concern that stems mainly from ignorance. It is based on this concept of ecological footprint that the concept of calculating the social footprint concept arises. However, unlike the ecological footprint, the social footprint concept is a bit more philosophical, as it holds that all human actions normally leave traces, and lead to negative consequences the individual may be unaware of. As such, it is quite important to be aware of the potential consequences and traces that actions we may engage in innocently may lead to. Knowledge of, and an ability to calculate one's social footprint may therefore go as long way towards reducing the chances of people engaging in clumsy and narcissistic actions. As such, the social footprint is an even wider concept that in a way even encompasses the concept of the ecological footprint. It goes further than simply analyzing the effects of people's behavior on the environment, covering even aspects of how the environmental changes that result from individual actions may potentially affect the individual in question, as well as those around him or her.

A number of people usually engage in careless or delinquent behavior without giving due considerations to the social repercussions of their actions. For instances, a stripper may choose to bear her body believing that it is a mark of her femininity, without appreciating the other aspect of such exercises. For instance, due to ignorance of the social footprint concept, the

stripper may not know that her actions contribute negatively towards the gender construct of femininity, as it promotes the view of women as simply sex objects, meant to be toyed with. On the other hand, a thief may not know the full extent of their actions, even though at times their actions may even result in negative consequences that also affect them. For instance, a thief may opt to steal guard rails along a road for the metal, forgetting that these rails are meant to ensure the safety of all road users including themselves. Pearce (5) aptly captures the selfish and ignorant nature of the human race when he says “ our strange species Homo Sapiens, which has so peremptorily taken over this planet.” This highlights the ruthless and uncaring attitude that most people have for any occurrences that do not affect them directly. In fact, according to Pearce, all individuals seem to exhibit this uncaring and selfish nature, in the sense that due to their ignorance when it comes to their social footprint, to the extent that they are able to engage in certain actions unconsciously as routines, without being mindful of the fact that these routines they engage in have serious repercussions for others miles away. The book by Pearce essentially has the effect of highlighting certain actions people take for granted. For example, a simple action such as eating may potentially have numerous repercussions, more so the choices of foods people choose to eat. Pearce’s journey retracing the paths followed by various foods prior to reaching their target market, not only makes for interesting reading, but also highlights certain serious social repercussions of the simple act of choosing to take coffee instead of tea. These recollections by Pearce also serve to highlight the importance of being able to trace one’s social footprint, as not only does it

lead to greater awareness of the potential ills of choosing a particular course of action, but it also helps one realize ways in which they can positively contribute to the society through social action.

In order to be able to determine one's social footprint, an individual would need to separate their actions and belongings into similar categories, these may include categories such as food, clothing, and waste as well as other items they interact with or utilize during their typical day or typical week. They would then need to break down these finished products into their constituents and try to retrace where these constituents come from, as well as what it takes to produce these constituent items. A critical analysis of what these costs demand from those involved in their production holistically; economically, politically, psychologically as well as socially.

These costs are then analyzed using the concept of social justice, to determine whether the costs are worth it. A good example would be to analyze the manner with which farmers from third world countries are forced to sell their unrefined coffee to unscrupulous middle men who in turn sell to the final manufacturers for a smart profit, at the expense of farmers.

Retracing the steps involved in the production of products we consume, right from the raw material phase may therefore result in the discovery of exploitative measures certain organizations employ in order to gain competitive advantage over others. Another good example is that of Wal-Mart, which is able to offer consumers lower prices than its competitors through denying employee benefits to most of its employees. The act of shopping at Wal-Mart due to the obvious price advantage even if innocent, would not only amount to an endorsement of their unethical practices, but

would also serve to further perpetuate the suffering of their employees. This cycle will as a result be repetitive in nature, as price sensitive customers will opt to shop at Wal-Mart, while Wal-Mart, in an attempt to maintain the constant flow of customers, will opt to continue denying its employees their rights to finance its cheaper pricing strategy. Knowingly or not, these shoppers have through their social action of shopping left a negative social footprint. As such, a critical examination of the sources of products or services we indulge in, is usually key to determining one's social footprint. Courses such as philosophy, critical thinking, sociology and psychology, are central to gaining an understanding of the concept of one's social footprint. Philosophy is key to gaining an important understanding of what constitutes moral action, as well as justice, while critical thinking, sociology, and psychology, are important when it comes to gaining an understanding of exactly how our social actions affect others.

Overall, this discussion is important when it comes to providing perspective and clarity on issues of social responsibility and social justice, in the sense that it serves as an eye opener on the lengths one must go to in order to fulfill their social obligations and responsibilities to others, as well as to ensure social justice is observed. The assertions by Kidder on issues of access to clean water and other basic amenities (91) further serve to highlight the need to observe and respect our responsibilities, not just as individuals but also as a society, and a global community; responsibilities that start with keenly controlling our social footprints.

## **Works Cited**

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Pearce, Fred. Confessions of an Eco-Sinner: Tracking Down the Sources of My Stuff. BeaconPress, 2009.