

How writers build ethos

In this excerpt from the article [Waste Couture: Environmental Impact of the Clothing Industry](#) by Luz Claudio, notice the places where the author establishes ethos for herself and for her other sources. **Bold** shows the parts to notice.

Reading from an academic journal article: *Everything Old Is New Again*

Here Claudio is telling us the credential for the author she is citing

In her book *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash*, Susan Strasser, a professor of history at the University of Delaware, traces the “progressive obsolescence” of clothing and other consumer goods to the 1920s. Before then, and especially during World War I, most clothing was repaired, mended, or tailored to fit other family members, or recycled within the home as rags or quilts. During the war, clothing manufacturers reduced the varieties, sizes, and colors of their productions and even urged designers to create styles that would use less fabric and avoid needless decoration. The government’s conservation campaign used slogans such as “Make economy fashionable lest it become obligatory” and resulted in an approximate 10% reduction in the production of trash.

However, the spirit of conservation did not last long; by the mid-1920s consumerism was back in style. Industrialization grew in the twentieth century, providing the means of increased production of all consumer goods. During World War II, consumption rose with increased employment as the United States mobilized for the war. The production and consumption of many household goods, including clothing, grew by 10–15% even in the middle of the war and continues to expand to this day.

Industrialization brought consumerism with it as an integral part of the economy. **Economic growth came to depend on continued marketing of new products and disposal of old ones that are thrown away simply because stylistic norms promote their obsolescence.** When it comes to clothing, the rate of purchase and disposal has dramatically increased, so the path that a T-shirt travels from the sales floor to the landfill has become shorter.

Here Claudio is zooming out to explain a larger cause behind what seem like foolish individual decisions by consumers. This builds ethos by showing the author’s reasonable acknowledgment of the bigger picture.

Claudio, Luz. “[Waste Couture: Environmental Impact of the Clothing Industry](#).” *Environmental Health Perspectives*, vol. 115, no. 9, Sept. 2007, pp. A448–A454. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1289/ehp.115-a449. Reproduced from *Environmental Health Perspectives* with permission from the author.

Annotation by Gabriel Winer, Berkeley City College



Yet even today, the journey of a piece of clothing does not always end at the landfill. A portion of clothing purchases are recycled mainly in three ways: clothing may be resold by the primary consumer to other consumers at a lower price, it may be exported in bulk for sale in developing countries, or it may be chemically or mechanically recycled into raw material for the manufacture of other apparel and non-apparel products.

Here Claudio is conceding that some progress is being made toward reducing negative environmental impacts.

Domestic resale has boomed in the era of the Internet. Many people sell directly to other individuals through auction websites such as eBay. Another increasingly popular outlet is consignment and thrift shops, where sales are growing at a pace of 5% per year, **according to the National Association of Resale and Thrift Shops.**

providing the source of the statistic

The U.S. government offers tax incentives for citizens who donate household goods to charities such as the Salvation Army and Goodwill Industries, which salvage a portion of clothing and textiles that would otherwise go to landfills or incinerators. The trend of

providing the source of the statistic

increased purchasing of clothing and other household goods has served the salvage charities well. For instance, since 2001 Goodwill Industries has seen a 67% increase in its sale of donated goods, most of it clothing. **Figures from the National Association of Resale and Thrift Shops** put Goodwill's sales of donated goods at thrift shops at more than \$1.8 billion in 2006.

providing the source of the statistic along with a credential to explain the expertise of the source

A 2006 survey **conducted by America's Research Group, a consumer trends research firm,** found that about 12–15% of Americans shop at consignment or resale stores. **The Council for Textile**

providing the source of the statistic

Recycling estimates that 2.5 billion pounds of post-consumer textile waste (which includes anything made of fabric) is thus collected and prevented from entering directly into the waste stream.

This represents 10 pounds for every person in the United States, **but it is still only about 15% of the clothing that is discarded.**

The author comes back to limit the concession: She started by saying we are discarding a huge and increasing amount of clothing since the 1920s; then concedes that some efforts are being made to reduce the waste and explains those different efforts; then reminds us that all of these efforts only save a little bit of the clothing from being discarded as quickly.