

*Sucker Punched: an evaluation
of Barbara Boxer's Rhetorical Strategies*

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English Period 5, AP Gov Period 3

California's 2010 election takes place in what seems like a boxing match of opposites. On one side of the ring, there are the career politicians with years of experience here to claim victory once more and, with the support of the Democratic party, promise a better future for Californians. On the other side, we see business executives whose only experiences in politics has been the hierarchy of the corporate world. And with the help of the Republican party, well they promise pretty much the same thing: a better future for Californians. They battle for the votes of the people, but how do we know which side to vote for? They each have to compete by not only convincing the citizens of California to support them, but also giving them enough motivation to actually go to the voting booth. Barbara Boxer and Carly Fiorina are a clear example of this fight. How will they do it? Boxer seems to have a set plan. Barbara Boxer has four clear strategies she trusts will knock her opponent out of the ring. First, Boxer lets the voters know who “has her back” in this fight by using an ethos appeal to show that people trust her to create jobs. Secondly, Boxer shows the audience that credible people oppose Fiorina and even lets the audience know of any unfavorable people who do. Third, Boxer continues on the offensive with a logos appeal by throwing in the numbers and facts that reveal Fiorina’s weak points. And lastly, Boxer makes a move on the audience’s emotions with a pathos appeal by using fear and connecting that fear to Fiorina, creating a negative emotional connection to Fiorina for the audience.

Boxer’s campaign constantly used an ethos appeal to emphasize that she is the right candidate and will have a positive effect on jobs and other policies. “Overboard”, Boxer’s most recent radio ad, was not only aired on radio stations state-wide, but was uploaded to her campaign’s Youtube page and posted on their official website. The narrator introduces himself as “Larry”, and claims that he was one of the 30,000 workers laid off from HP by Fiorina. Larry

finishes the radio ad by assuring the audience that even though “Fiorina never cared about [the people’s] jobs... Barbara Boxer does”(Overboard, 2010). Larry obviously has the credibility of a working-class citizen who has experienced, first-hand, being laid off by HP while Fiorina was in charge. Having Larry say that Boxer cares about people like himself is Boxer’s clear attempt at employing an ethos appeal targeting working-class citizens and anyone who cares about them. And if his credibility wasn’t convincing enough, the same ad assures that “the LA Times, California’s nurses, firefighters, and veterans groups have endorsed Barbara Boxer for senate [because she] has been fighting for California jobs and products made in America”(ibid). How much more credibility can you get? Well, In yet another ad, she claims the credible endorsement of the president himself. The TV ad, “Fighting for Jobs”, Obama tells the audience that they “have in Barbara Boxer a... senator passionate about fighting for jobs... and green jobs that can’t be outsourced, [and that he expects them] to make sure [they] return Barbara Boxer to the Senate”(Fighting for Jobs, 2010). Boxer evidently uses as much of it as she can to convince the voters that she is the right choice. She even employs the credibility of endorsers with negative intentions. Barbara Boxer uses the ethos appeal against her opponent, Carly Fiorina, to do the complete opposite of what Boxer’s positive ads did. “Workers”, a negative TV ad featuring many people who were laid off from HP, is a prime example. The ad had those people tell their stories about how Fiorina taking their jobs away to outsource them to China affected their lives, some having worked at HP for 19 years(Workers, 2010). All the stories are situations that no one would want to go through, and the credibility of the laid off workers is clearly an intentional attempt to damage Fiorina’s image. Moreover, Boxer even used the notoriety of Fiorina’s endorsers to sabotage Fiorina’s image in the negative online ad, “Carly Fiorina: Palin Qualified to be President”, the main topic is the similarities between previous Republican vice presidential

candidate, Sarah Palin, and Fiorina. Part of the ad is a clip from what looks like an interview on CNN, where the interviewer asks Fiorina whether she “thinks [Palin] is qualified to be president of the United States” since Palin has “endorsed [Fiorina] now.”(Carly Fiorina: Palin Qualified to be President, 2010). Boxer clearly uses Palin as a way to hurt Fiorina’s image because Boxer’s campaign team paid to make this video. They obviously wouldn’t do it if they thought it would make their opponent look good.

Furthermore, Barbara Boxer relied heavily on pathos by consistently employing fear of unemployment, losing jobs to outsourcing, and connecting all that fear to her opponent, Carly Fiorina. After beginning the ad by introducing the fact that Fiorina laid off 30,000 jobs in her previous job as CEO of Hewlett-Packard and then sent jobs to China, the audience hears Fiorina saying she is “proud of what she did in HP” and then the voice-over ask, “proud? of outsourcing?” (Overboard, 2010) This is a clear example Boxer’s goal of getting the audience to associate Fiorina with the fear of losing jobs for many reasons. First, they cleverly quoted Fiorina verbatim right after suggesting that she is to blame for the 30,000 jobs lost at HP. Second, the quote is followed by a rhetorical question that is used solely to get an emotional connection to the audience because the audience would be able to relate when they would probably have a similar reaction;after hearing the earlier statement. Along with the radio ad, the appeal to fear continues in a campaign video titled “The Facts”. The video description itself says the video is “about Carly Fiorina’s Failure at Hewlett-Packard”. In the video, the slogan “Carly Fiorina, outsourcing jobs, out for herself”(The Facts, 2010) is said over anxious and fearful violins that played throughout the rest of the video. This is a strong example of Boxer using a pathos appeal to create fear in her campaign against Fiorina. Not only does the video feature violin music like music you would hear in a horror film, it also blatantly accuses Fiorina as someone who doesn’t

care about anyone else's needs. This directly connects and affects the emotions of those who fear losing their jobs, and anyone who feels sympathy for those who do, and connects it all it all to Fiorina.

Boxer's constant use of actual laid-off workers and honorable people to endorse her effectively reaches out to the audience. Most of the ads that Boxer made were negative and against Fiorina, and the main message that Boxer used to bring Fiorina down was that Fiorina was going to ruin jobs in California. So having someone as credible as someone who was laid off by Fiorina themselves shown and have them say that Boxer was better choice because of the job issue was almost perfect. Especially considering the large amount of the audience, California voters, who are working-class themselves or support the working class. And, of course, it always helps to have the president on your side. Especially Obama, who has his own reputation of being new, fresh, and ready to make change. This is actually very important for Boxer regarding what is said negatively about her; that she is old, played out, and has been in office too long.

And using ethos appeals against Fiorina also seems to be a smart move, for the most part.

Having the same workers that have endorsed Boxer for being there for them and the right choice for creating jobs, and then tell the audience how Fiorina is the complete opposite, couldn't get any more effective. Although using Palin's notoriety as an ethos appeal against Fiorina was probably effective in some aspects, it was also ineffective in others. Palin certainly isn't known by California Democrats, and some Republicans, as the smartest move for Senator McCain to make when choosing a running mate in the 2008 presidential election. People were scared of the possibility of her becoming president of this country if anything were to happen to McCain. So showing Californians that Palin endorses Fiorina, and that Fiorina is honored by Palin's support, probably would have motivated many a Democrat to get to the ballot on voting day any make

sure someone like Palin be placed in power by California. However, this ad would have been pointless, even at variance with Boxer's intent, when the audience is the Republicans in California. Given there are many who, regardless of party, don't approve of Sarah Palin, many Republicans do. So this ad would have reminded many of them that Palin wants them to get up and vote for Fiorina. Definitely not what Boxer wants.

Constantly employing the pathos appeal by creating fear of losing jobs and connecting it to Fiorina was a very effective rhetorical strategy by Boxer. Using scary music that you would hear in a horror film definitely sends the message out to the audience that the facts being presented are not positive. Using a logos appeal along with pathos galvanized the emotions. Being able to say such a huge number as 30,000 workers laid off gives the audience reason to connect with the scary feelings of the music being played in the ad. And then, always referring back to Fiorina and how she was the one in charge of the company at that time gives the audience someone to direct their fear toward, making them want to make sure she's not voted in.

Boxer used all her moves in this boxing match, including the ethos appeal to make her look good, the ethos appeals to bring her opponent down, the logos appeal to reveal those facts that give the audience a logical reason to believe Fiorina is bad, and the pathos appeal to direct negative feelings from the audience toward Fiorina. It was all seen in the campaign videos and the radio ads, and Boxer was surely unashamed of her technique. After all, the campaign was a success, it served to weaken Fiorina enough for Boxer to knock her out easily. But perhaps Boxer's strategy wasn't fair. Maybe its time referees need to look over what they allow in the battle, because it seems as if politicians can use rhetorical appeal to an excess in order to get the votes they fight for, but that leaves the voters in a position that is vulnerable to misleading appeals and confusing propaganda. After all, media can be constructed to send any message. And

if voters aren't informed with the truth, how much of the decision are they themselves and not leaving it for the politicians to fight over?

First Draft of Campaign Analysis GP Essay

Directions:

Write a well-developed body paragraph analyzing rhetorical trends found in your campaign. Your paragraph will be formatted exactly the same way that they would if you were writing a literary analysis essay, the only difference is that the evidence is media.

Not all pieces of evidence that you use will be quotable. Therefore some of the videos or images that you are describing may be paraphrased (though they must also be cited!)

Topic Sentence:

(This should identify ONE rhetorical trend that you've identified in multiple advertisements)

For example:

- *Frank Geary's reliance on attack ads is an attempt to jeopardize the credibility of his opponent and to call his years of experience as a legislator into question.*
- *Proposition 13 relies on pathos by consistently employing fear in their advertisements with their use of music, imagery and a frightening color scheme.*

Write yours:

Context and Evidence

(This should explain the background that is necessary to understand your piece of evidence)

For example:

- *Geary's most recent advertisement was released on October 26, 2010, just one week before the election. This advertisement ran on television, was emailed widely and could be found on his website. After showing a picture of his opponent, wild-eyed and yelling, a voice-over continues, "Insanity is doing the same thing. . ." (Geary for President, 2010).*

Analysis

(This should explain why this piece of evidence supports your general argument as well as this topic sentence specifically)

For example:

- *This is strong example of Geary’s attempt to smear his opponent for several reasons. First, the image that they’ve selected of Marie Von Trap makes her look old, out of control, and frightening. Although she is only 54, this ad easily adds ten years, an attempt to make her less appealing. Additionally, this ad highlights her years of experience as a law-maker for the state of California. This year specifically has drawn attention to the fact that many people distrust their public officials, and Geary has capitalized on that momentum in his attacks on his opponent. Rather than being an advantage, Geary’s campaign wants to change the conversation away from being experience and suggest that she is entrenched and ineffective at being a good leader and representative.*
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Transition

(This should build a seamless and natural link between first and second pieces of evidence)

For example:

- *In addition to Geary’s ad “Echo”, he also*
 - *Not only does Geary rely on scary images, he also*
 - *Furthermore, the music compounds his message*
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2nd Context and Evidence

For example:

- *In another ad, Geary melds together several clips of Von Trap. He shows her as a very young woman in the early 1980s. The ad highlights the difference in hair and clothing style, making it very obvious that it was a very long time ago. He shows her . . . (Geary for President, 2010).*
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2nd Analysis

Summary Statement

(This reminds the reader of the original claim of this paragraph and restates it in a different way.)

For example:

- *Geary's campaign has relentlessly hammered home the point that his opponent is not to be trusted. He attack's her character and credibility, hoping to make his own relative inexperience a strength rather than a weakness.*
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Suggestions:

- Don't forget to use transitions at the beginning of paragraphs and between pieces of evidence.
- You must use at least two pieces of evidence, but you're more than welcome to do more.
- All evidence must be cited, or else its plagiarism!

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
			October 28 th -Vocabulary quiz -grammar -write two body paragraphs HW: -12 pieces of evidence by Monday - 2 more body paragraphs	WLE
11/1 ENG and AP GOV: 2 BP due at the end of the day -grammar -write two eval paragraphs HW: Continue writing PHONE CALLS!	11/2 ENG and AP GOV: 2 more BP due at the end of the day HW: work on bibliography; 2 more BP due at the end when you come into class (whichever you have first) on Thursday.	11/3	11/4 Bibliography due at the beginning of class ENG and AP GOV: 2 more BP due at the end of the whichever class they have first Work on thesis, introduction, conclusion HW: finish thesis, introduction, and conclusion; draft due Friday	11/5 time to put it all together -draft one is due by 3pm (computers will be available from 1pm-3pm) PHONE CALLS!
11/8 peer edit in their first class; revise in their second class HW: revised drafts due at the end of the day	11/9 catch up time for kids who are behind; extension activity for kids who are on track HW: Final Draft Due next week	11/10 catch up time for kids who are behind; extension activity for kids who are on track PHONE CALLS!	No school for Veterans Dayj	WLE
11/15 Quick Unit Two Assessment on Vocabulary and grammar	11/16 Final Draft of Essay Due	Prep for Exhibition	CHILL DAY!	No school!
11/22	11/23	Thanksgiving Break	Ms. Lantos is in	Chicago with her family!!

11/29 Start Unit Three: Literary Theory and Postcolonial Lit				
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Graduation Portfolio Essay
Lantos

Name:
Assignment #:

- ❖ For your first Graduation Portfolio assignment in English, you will be writing a media analysis essay in which you evaluate a 2010 political campaign. You will pick one campaign to follow closely, gather evidence, and then evaluate the way your chosen campaign uses rhetoric to persuade voters.
- ❖ You will also be considering the rhetorical and thematic trends of the campaign, the message that they have crafted and the way this message affects their intended audience(s).
- ❖ Although you will be considering how effective their campaign was run, you are not predicting whether or not they will win, or if you agree/disagree with them—you are limiting your analysis and evaluation to how they conduct their campaign.
- ❖ This essay will be similar to literary analysis, except instead of using novels, you will be using advertisements, editorials, news clips etc to construct an argument about the effectiveness of the rhetorical strategies.
- ❖ For the next three weeks you should be gathering evidence. Cutting out ads from magazines, watching tv and recording information about political campaigns, watching the debates, looking at the websites of your candidate or proposition. The more evidence you have, the better your analysis will be.
- ❖ All essays will use APA in-text citations as well as a complete works cited list at the end.

The format of this essay should look roughly like this, though variation may be acceptable:

- Introduction with context and thesis
- 4 body paragraphs in which you analyze the trends or themes identified in the advertising campaign.
- 3-4 body paragraphs in which you evaluate the rhetorical strategies used.
- Conclusion (evaluation of overall campaign- answers the question “was the campaign successful in your opinion?”)

Possible Races

Jerry Brown (D)

Meg Whitman (R)

Barbara Boxer (D)

Carly Fiorina (R)

Prop 19- marijuana

Prop 20 – redistricting

Prop 23 environmental

Prop 25 – balancing the budget with a simple majority

Prop 26 – tax reform

Sample Intro

2010 represents a challenging year to be a politician in America. The traditional alliances have been turned upside down, being experienced or well connected may hurt more than help, and the country is facing the after effects of one of the deepest recessions in American history. The Tea Party movement has demonstrated how much Americans distrust the overall political system and called into question all the “rules of the game.” California, in particular, faces massive unemployment, high levels of home foreclosures and the perpetual challenge of balancing its budget. Maria Mills is a classic political insider, having served as governor thirty years ago, and then both mayor of Fresno and state attorney general. She is a moderate democrat, running against republican Frank Salazar, the former CEO of I-more, for governor of California. Mills’ campaign has actively used television, the radio, the internet and scheduled debates with her opponent. After gleaning through two months worth of campaign material, it is clear that Maria Mills’ advertising campaign has four discernable trends. First, Mills relies heavily on pathos, both in creating hope and optimism about her campaign promises as well as by painting Salazar as villainous, greedy and inexperienced. Second, the Mills campaign lays out clear and logical details about her plans for increasing tax revenue, without raising taxes on the middle class or small business. Third, Mills uses her reputation as an experienced and committed social servant to provide credibility to her run for governor, and finally because Salazar lacks a political record, Mills hardly attacks her opponent at all, relying more on her reputation and record and less on his. Ultimately, these four trends create a moderately successful campaign, but her failure to call Salazar’s reputation into question, specifically given his business strengths, weakens her efforts. Additionally, her decades of experience actually weakens her overall campaign.

Sample Trend Analysis

Mills consistently uses her reputation and experience to attract voters and give her campaign credibility. In her first televised debate with Salazar on September 30th, Mills stated, "Public service to me has meant a great deal from my earliest years. My

father, when I was only 5 years old, was elected district attorney of San Francisco, and I watched him become attorney general and then governor. I care a great deal about public service” (Mills, 2010). Mills does not shy away from her record as a life long public servant; in fact, she uses her commitment and that of her family to add to her credibility. Life-long public servants are far and few between, and this is a deliberate selling point of the campaign. Although the prevailing opinion is that outsiders have a better chance of winning election this year, Mills is targeting an older audience who are not willing to trust a newcomer to the job. Her message relies on ethos, and therefore her target audience is those people who remember her from years of working for the state of California. In addition to the debate, Mills sent out a state-wide mailing that included a picture of her younger self as governor, and several pages later a picture of herself during her tenure as Fresno mayor. Underneath the picture, in a friendly cursive script, it says, “Older, wiser, more experienced” (Mills, 2010). This is only one of many similar ads, with similar tag lines. (citation, citation) The target audience for this is clearly an older generation. Younger voters do not remember her as governor, nor are they as likely to want someone who has been in government for over forty years. Mills again is juxtaposing Salazar’s lack of experience and political record with her own years doing public service. This is an ethos appeal, because she is using her own record and reputation to attract and hold on to votes.

Sample Evaluation

Mills’ use of ethos does not serve her well. Granted, it is impossible for Mills to avoid the fact that she has been a political insider for forty years, nonetheless, in this election cycle, reminding voters that she has been in office many times does not serve her well. The message that she is experienced, wise and tough makes sense, but ultimately does not sit well with voters this year. Salazar continues to drag out her record as governor and as mayor, and has a great deal of evidence that her record was murky at best. During the debate, Salazar recited statistics about Fresno’s schools during Mills’ tenure. And although Mills ran as the education major, she did not successfully turn around schools, and in fact may have actually overseen a decrease in

overall performance (www.greatschools.org, 2010). This is not a good selling point, and yet it is hammered home relentlessly by the Mills campaign. Furthermore, targeting an audience of older voters is not a successful strategy. Democrats need the youth vote to be successful. The Republican party on average is much older than the Democratic party. Mills' failure to capitalize on who typically would support her campaign is a misstep and decreases the success of her campaign.

Questions

1. Underline the thesis of this essay. Make note of the part of thesis that analyzes the trends and the part that evaluates the campaign.

2. Put a star next to the context. Does it go before or after the thesis?

3. What are the four main trends identified by this writer?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.

4. Does this writer think the campaign was successful?

5. Underline the topic sentence in the first body paragraph. What is this paragraph going to prove, in your own words?

6. Put an asterisk next to the context for the quote. Put a cross next to the evidence.

7. How many sentences of analysis are there after the first piece of evidence?
8. How does the analysis link back to the topic sentence (and therefore thesis)?

9. Underline the topic sentence of the evaluation paragraph. What is this paragraph going to prove in your own words?

10. Does the analysis link back to the topic sentence?