

Gender in the Media



“Over the past forty years the media, although somewhat reflective of society, increasingly have become powerful image and value shaping forces in our culture (Rak & MacMullen, 1985; Reeves & Miller, 1978; Signorielli, 1989). Among visual media, print advertisements may have a particularly powerful impact on reinforcing our gender-role attitudes, values, perceptions, beliefs and behaviors.”

~ From McKay, N. J., & Covell, K. 1997. “The impact of women in advertisements on attitudes toward women” *Sex Roles* 36: 573–583.

How does media portray gender? How might these images be used to reinforce gender stereotypes?

For this writing project, you will investigate the representation of gender in the media. First, you should find two print advertisements that depict gender. These can be found in magazines, newspapers, and/or online. Please record where you found each advertisement. Second, find one additional advertisement that depicts gender in your everyday surroundings. This can be at the store, at a bus stop, at a bar, etc. Take a picture and record the date and location that you discovered the advertisement. In total you should have three images. You are welcome to include a variety of images or to select along a theme (i.e. children’s advertisements; women and sexuality; women and violence; men and the home; hypermasculinity; etc.). For **each image**, please write one or two paragraphs that address the following:

- Brief description of the advertisement
- What gender stereotypes are being depicted?
- Are these gender stereotypes feminist? Why or why not?
- Do you think these depictions are problematic? Why or why not?
- How do the images in the advertisements relate to course material?

For **each image**, the format should look like this:



Figure (#) {insert where you found the advertisement}

{Insert paragraph that addresses the questions above here}

{Insert Next Image}

Weekly Writing Projects

Weight: 100 pts. [4]

Total Points Possible: 400pts

- Description: Each week, you will have a writing project to complete related to that week's material. These projects are designed to allow you to demonstrate that you have reviewed the material for the course and have critically considered the ideas presented. In these projects, you should explore the underlying value implications of the reading, lectures, and class discussion posts and relate it to your own observations and analysis.
- Purpose: to demonstrate learning and engagement with course material, deepen understanding of course material, improve critical thinking and written communication skills
- Due: each project is due by **5:00 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time) on the Monday** following the week that it was assigned **[except for the last week of class- responses will be due by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time) on Friday, June 7, 2013]**
- Grade: Your essay should be no longer than 1,000 words in length, Times New Roman 12 pt. font, single spaced. Shorter essays that answer all the questions above completely and demonstrate knowledge of the course material are acceptable.
- Example: I have included an example assignment to help guide you. The assignment was different, had a different format, and is longer/more extensive than I expect, but substantively it covers the same type of information. I hope you find it helpful.

Grading Rubric:

- ✓ **Use of class material**
____/45pts.
 - Response uses applicable information from class
 - Response demonstrates a depth of knowledge about class material
 - Response expresses that class material has been examined critically
- ✓ **Clarity of Response**
____/30pts.
 - Response answers all questions completely
 - Response is well organized and thoughtful
 - Response supports broad statements with facts and sources
- ✓ **Appropriate use of sources**
____/15pts.
 - Correct use of in-text APSA format for citations
 - Information from sources is appropriately cited
- ✓ **Grammar and Spelling**
____/10pts.
 - Grammatically correct
 - Spell checked

EXAMPLE

Women in the Media: The Ideas We Are Fed



Figure 1

You are what you eat, and you become what you are fed. According to the U.S. census (2004), the average American watches television for approximately four hours a day. Thirty percent of television programming is commercial advertisements and by the age of 65 the average American will have seen 2 million, thirty-second advertisements (U.S. Census Bureau 2004). By the age of 18, most will have seen approximately 200,000 different depictions of violence (ibid). Many people do not realize the effect that advertising has on their lives. In fact, to the contrary, some claim that ads have little effect on their everyday perceptions and choices. There is not a billion dollar advertising industry in the United States, however, because ads do not sway public opinion. The beer company, Bud-light, pays 1.5 million dollars for thirty seconds of television air time during the Super Bowl game because the company knows that its advertisements influence consumer decisions. The fact of the matter is that advertisements shape our society and culture. Advertisements and other media contain messages about societal norms and standards of gender roles and shape ideals about what it means to be male or female.

The advertisement on the previous page appeared in the April 2006 edition of the magazine, "PC Gamers." The advertisement was for a new game; "Hitman" in which players are given a series of "targets" to be assassinated. It is notable that the target audience is teenage boys. The scantily clad woman in the photo has been shot in the forehead and the caption reading "beautifully executed" (Fig. 1), seems to refer both to the attractive woman and the skill of the video game player. In the world of video games the perpetration of violence adds points to a player's score and garners the encouragement of fellow participants. This advertisement was intended to sell video

games, but it irresponsibly endorses violence against women and trivializes the consequences of that violence.

In 1998, approximately 1,500 women were killed by an intimate partner (Malley-Morrison 2004, 40) and according to the National Violence Against Women Survey, approximately 1 in 4 women are victims of physical assaults from a current or former intimate partner (Mally-Morrison 2004, 41). Furthermore, approximately 63,490 women reported having been raped or sexually assault by someone they knew. Despite these startling statistics, the media continues to depict women in demeaning ways to sell everything from computer software to alcohol. The practice of objectifying and sexualizing women leads to a culture of skewed gender roles, promotes the justification of gender-specific crimes, and trivializes violence.

Kilbourne (1990) found that subjects who were exposed to advertisements that depicted females in stereotypical, non-professional roles, showed significantly more negative attitudes toward women, especially concerning their managerial skills, than subjects exposed to advertisements that depict women positively in professional environments. These results suggest that there is indeed a relationship between the way women are portrayed in advertising and people's ideas about how women are supposed to behave, as well as, the roles they are supposed to occupy within society. Advertisements that depict women as subordinate to men, as sexual objects, as insignificant, or as needing to be controlled affect the way real women in society are viewed and treated.

In an ad for the car company BMW, a man and a woman are in bed and apparently engaging in sexual intercourse. The woman, however, has a magazine open on her face. The magazine shows a picture of a new car. The man is gazing down lovingly,

seemingly unconcerned with the reading material covering his lover's face. The ad copy reads, "the ultimate attraction." (Fig. 2) It appears that the man is more interested in the picture of the car than in his partner. This not only objectifies women it also demeans their position in society. The woman in this ad is not only underneath the man, she is underneath the car of his dreams. Her position in society is less than a motor vehicle. Furthermore, it perpetuates negative gender stereotypes. Women are less than objects and can be used for the sole purpose of feeding a man's pleasure. Sex is for men only, women are merely necessary participants.

Schwartz and DeKeseredy (1997) discuss the role of male peer support in relation to violence against women. Men rely on the support of other men for both resources and approval. According to their research, when men bond together strongly or identify closely with other men, there is a tendency to see women as a group of outsiders who are weak and therefore deserving of male dominance (Schwartz and DeKeseredy 1997, 107). These all-male alliances provide what has been termed a, "vocabulary of adjustment." Those men who might be feeling guilty, conflicted, or stressed learn to use a vocabulary that defines victims in a way as to identify them as legitimate objects of abuse (Schwartz and DeKeseredy 1997, 36). Men who successfully adopt and come to internalize these group-based justifications for the abuse of women often convince themselves that women deserve to be treated in an abusive manner. Although the book written by Schwartz and DeKeseredy was focused on college-based groups, men's magazines and male targeted advertisements are merely an extension of this same support group. These media sources teach men how to think about women and the vocabulary to use when referring to them.

This perpetuates a culture where it seems appropriate to view women one-dimensionally; women are merely a means to achieve male focused goals.

In an ad campaign for the Belgium men's magazine, CHE, a young woman in her underwear is lying on a bed. From her belly-button a cord trails out on the bed and connects to a generic video-game controller. The ad copy reads, "keep on dreaming of a better world." (Fig. 3). The advertisement seems to suggest that everyone would be a lot happier if women could be controlled through the flick of a switch. This is an advertisement for the type of perspective CHE men's magazine has to offer its patrons. Apparently, CHE wants to send the message that a women's own desires, thoughts, and goals are not important; instead the paramount focus is male dominance and control. Men who read the magazine can feel a sense of camaraderie in their plight to subjugate women. The ad is awful and clever; a dangerous combination. The first inclination is to chuckle, but the unfortunate truth is that every time someone laughs at an advertisement that demeans women, a culture of acceptance grows.

Lanis and Covell (1995) conducted a study on images of women in advertising and their effects on beliefs about sexual aggression. Analysis of the data revealed that sexually explicit images of women, as opposed to "non-traditional role-reversed portrayals of women performing a variety of competent social functions" (643), resulted in increased gender role stereotyping and acceptance of interpersonal aggression and violence against women among the male participants. These results were replicated in a study by McKay and Covell (1997), which showed that after being exposed to sexually explicit advertisements, both men and women showed greater gender role stereotyping, rape myth acceptance, and acceptance of sexual aggression against women.

In an ad campaign for Linux, an internet computer server, a beautiful woman is shown, again in her underwear, on her hands and knees. She has on a black mask, which at first glance appears to be dominatrix style, but further attention reveals that it more closely resembles a Mardi-Gras mask. In bold capital letters next to her face, the ad copy reads, “bound to serve.” (Fig. 4). It appears that the best way to sell computer software is to sell men the illusion of controlling women. Again this ad is deceptive. At first it appears to be an ad for some type of questionable service that perhaps involves the use of bondage. After closer examination, descriptions of various computer components are noted on the periphery. The ad is attention grabbing, but again the danger lies in the likelihood that its real message will be lost in light of its “cleverness.” This ad encourages sexual aggression and creates a justification for physically restraining women. The woman is “bound to serve,” that is what she was created to do, just like the computer software. How convenient. In fact, at the bottom of the picture, the ad reads, “take control of your very own dedicated server.” This ad and others like it, trivialize the violence that occurs within society at large. An integral part of violent situations involving women is a quest for control on the part of the man. Often in domestic violence situations and rape, the issue is about the man’s ability to control the female. This ad not only justifies this perspective, i.e. women are made to be forcibly controlled, it also teaches men that they are supposed to be able to control women. To have a woman serve is what men should want and what they should aspire to obtain.

Women are victimized throughout the world in a variety of ways. They are not only the victims of those that abuse them physically, psychologically, sexually and emotionally, they are also the victims of the media. The media capitalizes on the

victimization of women to sell products. Advertisements use sex, subordination, control, and violence to grab attention. The ads that are produced perpetuate negative gender roles, encourage male peer support for abuse and trivialize violent experiences of women. Advertisers may believe they are selling cars, computer software, video games, and magazines, but what they are endorsing is abuse, sexual aggression, control and violence. It is time to wake up and take a look at what we are really being fed. When we buy products, we are also encouraging the method through which those products were marketed. It is time for men, and especially women, to decide that what they purchase is what they want to buy into. Advertisers only give us what we tell them we want.

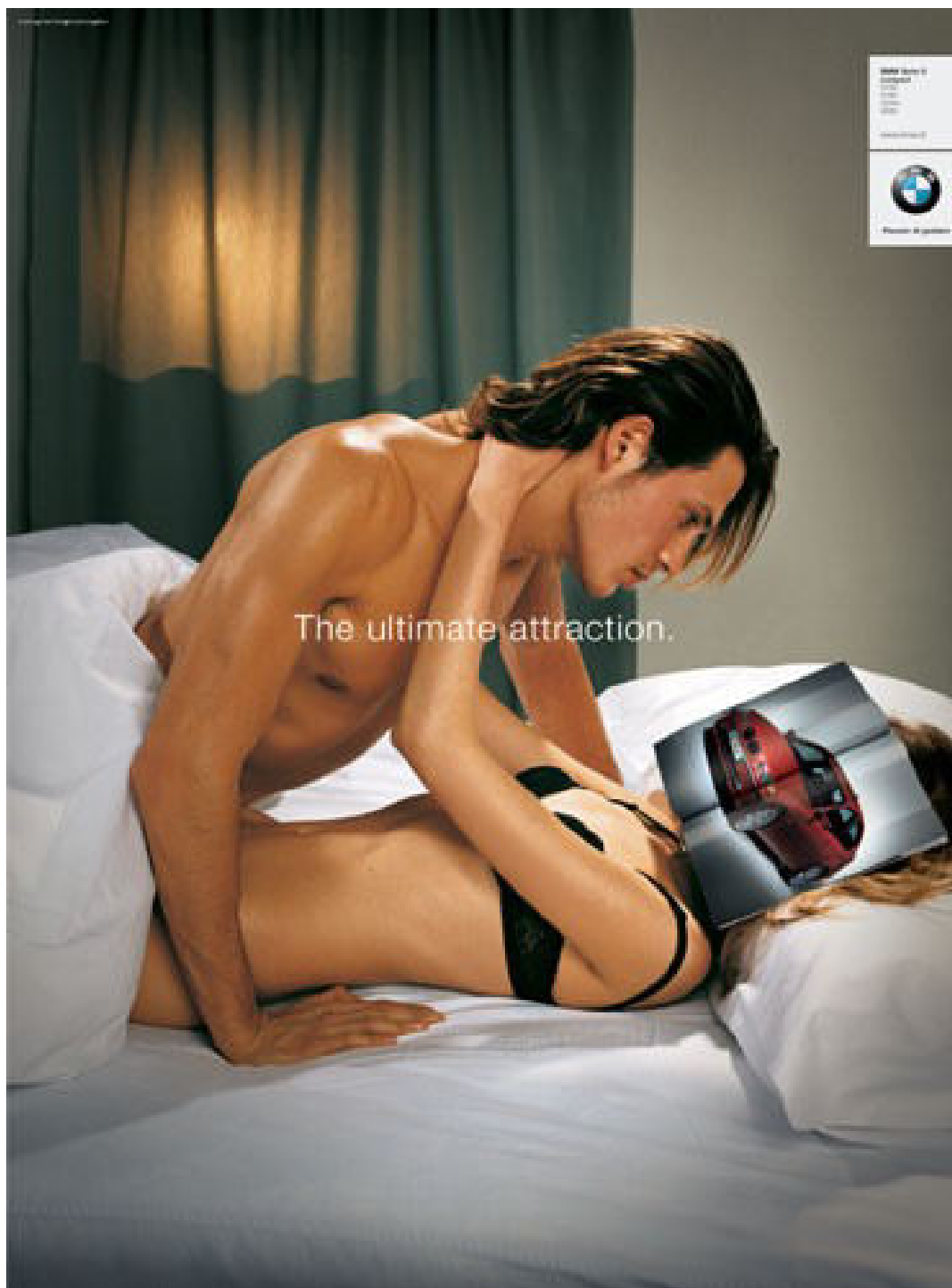


Figure 2



Figure 3

DOMAIN NAMES • PERSONALISED EMAILS • HOSTING • WEB SITE CREATION • E-COMMERCE • DEDICATED SERVERS

BOUND TO SERVE

Take control of your very own dedicated server
100% LINUX, 100% DEDICATED

- 1 GO TO www.amenworld.com
- 2 CHOOSE YOUR SERVER CONFIGURATION
- 3 SELECT THE DURATION OF YOUR PACK (1, 3 OR 12 MONTHS)
- 4 SELECT YOUR OPERATING SYSTEM
- 5 SELECT YOUR CONTROL PANEL
- 6 PAY ONLINE, BY CHEQUE OR MONEY TRANSFER

RECEIVE YOUR SERVER "ROOT" PASSWORD IN ONE HOUR

EXCLUSIVE ! MANAGE YOUR DEDICATED SERVER 100% ONLINE :
 INSTANT REBOOT, DATA BACK-UP & RESTORE, REINSTALLATION OF YOUR DEDICATED SERVER,
 NETWORK & TRAFFIC MONITORING, ADDITIONAL FIXED IP ADDRESSES

WEB SERVER PACK

- AMD Duron 1600 MHz
- 256 MB RAM (up to 512 MB)
- 80 GB Hard Disk (up to 120 GB)
- 700 GB Traffic
- Fixed IP addresses (1 to 4)
- PLESK Control Panel
- No hidden fees
- No set-up fees

£29 excl. VAT P/Month
 FOR A 12 MONTH CONTRACT

£39 excl. VAT P/Month
 ON A MONTH TO MONTH BASIS

OUR COMMITMENTS ** :

- SATISFIED OR YOUR MONEY BACK • SERVER HARDWARE REPLACEMENT GUARANTEED IN UNDER 4 HRS • NO SET-UP FEES
- NO HIDDEN FEES • TECHNICAL SUPPORT 24 X 7 • NO UPGRADE FEES • 100% ONLINE ADMINISTRATION
- PROACTIVE MONITORING 24 X 7 • 99.9% AVAILABILITY • REDUNDANT NETWORK • GUARANTEED BANDWIDTH

0870 444 6778 **www.amenworld.com**

PAYMENT    

amen
 IN WEB WE TRUST

Figure 4

References

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- Lanis, K., & Covell, K. 1995. "Images of women in advertisements: Effects on attitudes related to sexual aggression" *Sex Roles* 32:639–649.
- Malley-Morrison, K., & Hines, D.A. 2004. *Family Violence in a Cultural Perspective: Defining, understanding and combating abuse*. London: Sage Publications
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- Schwartz, M.D., & DeKeseredy, W.S. 1997. *Sexual Assault on the College Campus: The role of male peer support*. London: Sage Publications.
- U.S. Census Bureau. 2004, March 11. Facts for features: Television viewing statistics. *Office of Public Information*. Retrieved May 2, 2007, from http://www.census.gov/PressRelease/www/releases/archives/facts_for_features/001702.html
- Figure 1: <http://www.joystiq.com/2006/04/07/ad-critic-hitman-advertisement/>
- Figure 2: <http://www.reclaimyourculture.com/Activism/top%20offensive%20ads.htm>
- Figure 3: http://www.aeropause.com/archives/2006/05/game_ads_losing.php
- Figure 4: http://www.asa.org.uk/asa/focus/background_briefings/Taste+and+Decency+-+the+depiction+of+women.htm

Wonder Women! The Untold Story of American Superheroines



Video Description

Wonder Women! The Untold Story of American Superheroines traces the fascinating evolution and legacy of Wonder Woman. From the birth of the comic book superheroine in the 1940s to the blockbusters of today, *Wonder Women!* looks at how popular representations of powerful women often reflect society's anxieties about women's liberation.

Duration: 56min 46sec

Date/Time: Thursday, May 16, 2013 at 10:00 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time)

Join: <https://ovee.itvs.org/screenings/4gz8a>

Documentary Film Screening and Response

Weight: 100 pts. [4]

Total Points Possible: 400 pts.

Description: Each week, you may watch one documentary film on the OVEE website at a scheduled time. OVEE offers an interactive platform that allows for sidebar chatting while the film is playing. During the film, I will act as moderator of our real-time discussion. After watching the film, you will write a short essay on your response. Submission of this assignment will be via Blackboard. For your essay, please answer the following questions:

- What do you think is the perspective of the filmmaker? Why?
- What did you find interesting about the film? Why?
- What did you agree or disagree with? Why?
- How did the film relate to course material?

Purpose: to practice writing succinctly, to demonstrate the ability to "listen" and to integrate ideas and information presented in different formats

Due: each film response is due by **5:00 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time) on the Monday** following the week that it was assigned **[except for the last week of class- responses will be due by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time) on Friday, June 7, 2013]**

Grade: Your essay should be no longer than 1,000 words in length, Times New Roman 12 pt. font, single spaced. Shorter essays that answer all the questions above completely and demonstrate knowledge of the film and course material are acceptable.

Grading Rubric:

- ✓ **Use of class material** _____/45pts.
 - Response uses applicable information from class
 - Response demonstrates a depth of knowledge about class material
 - Response expresses that class material has been examined critically
- ✓ **Clarity of Response** _____/30pts.
 - Response answers all questions completely
 - Response is well organized and thoughtful
 - Response supports broad statements with facts and sources
- ✓ **Appropriate use of sources** _____/15pts.
 - Correct use of in-text APSA format for citations
 - Information from sources is appropriately cited
- ✓ **Grammar and Spelling** _____/10pts.
 - Grammatically correct
 - Spell checked

Prompted Discussion Posts

Weight: 40 pts. [3]

Total Points Possible: 120 pts.

Description: For the first three weeks of class, you will be responsible for responding to a given question or prompt in a discussion post on Blackboard. Use what you have learned from lectures, readings, podcasts, films and/or previous class discussion to write your post. The information included should be substantive in nature and needs to answer/address all parts of the question/prompt completely. Submission of this assignment will be via Blackboard. Please remember to cite sources.

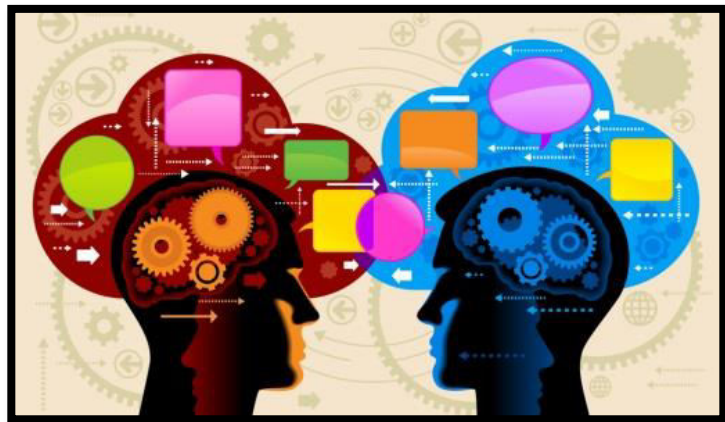
Purpose: to practice writing succinctly and persuasively, to demonstrate the ability to “listen” and respond to the ideas of others

Due: original discussion post is due by **5:00 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time) Friday of each week**, responses are due by **5:00 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time) on the Monday of each week**

Grade: Your response to the question/prompt should be at least 200 to 250 words in length. You are also responsible to commenting on the post of at least two other classmates. These response posts should be at least 100 words in length.

Grading Rubric:

- ✓ **Use of class material** _____/15pts.
 - Response uses applicable information from class
 - Response demonstrates a depth of knowledge about class material
 - Response expresses that class material has been examined critically
- ✓ **Clarity of Response** _____/10pts.
 - Response answers all questions completely
 - Response is well organized and thoughtful
 - Response supports broad statements with facts and sources
- ✓ **Appropriate use of sources** _____/10pts.
 - Correct use of in-text APSA format for citations
 - Information from sources is appropriately cited
- ✓ **Grammar and Spelling** _____/5pts.
 - Grammatically correct
 - Spell checked



Are you thinking what I am thinking?

Week 1 Discussion Post Assignment

Please ask two individuals the following questions.

- What does feminism mean to you?
- Are you a feminist, why or why not?

Record their responses. Also record their:

Approximate age

- less than 18
- 18-25
- 25-35
- 35-45
- 45-55
- 55-65
- 65+

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Unknown

National Origin (if known) i.e. Japan, United States, Russia, India, Ireland, Canada, etc.

- Do you agree or disagree with your respondents? Why, or why not?
- How does what they say match/conflict with the course material?

Post on Blackboard. Record the number of words. Don't make it up! It will be more interesting (and easier) to just ask two people.

Week 1 Discussion Post Responses Assignment

Select two posts completed by classmates. In response to each of those posts, address the following questions:

- How are the responses recorded by your classmates similar to those you recorded?
- How are the responses recorded by your classmates different to those you recorded?
- Are there any patterns? If so, what are those patterns?
- Any surprises?

Post on Blackboard. Record the number of words.