CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The United States Involvement in Second World War

The Great Depression, the world biggest economic crisis, which occurred in 1929, had attacked almost every country in the world including the United States, which lasted more than ten years. During the economic collapse, a lot of Americans were unemployed and they were living in poverty (World Book Encyclopedia, 2006: 188). According to Evans (1997: 198), the impact of Great Depression led to a social change to women, who eventually, joined the labor force. This decision was made because men no longer could support their family income. However, in her essay, Milkman in Langley and Fox concluded that the type of jobs females mostly occupied were dominantly service oriented, such as running rooming houses or washing clothes. While men, according to her, were mainly involved in manufacturing area (1998: 251).

Since almost every country suffered from the Depression, it made dictatorship power appeared. Dictators promised to reconstruct the financial system, including Adolf Hitler, a Germany dictator, together with Japanese rulers began to conquering neighboring country. Their actions finally led to Second World War which started in 1939 (World Book Encyclopedia, 2006: 188).

4

Although Second World War began in 1939, the United States just entered the war in 1941 after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and bombed the U.S military base. The U.S declared war on Japan on December 8, and on Germany and Italy three days later. Facing the war, millions of the American people were get involved. About 15 million American men served the armed forces. For the sake of victory towards the war, not only men did the effort by joining the army but also women took part in war victory by replacing men's tasks in the factory due to male's labor shortages (The World Book Encyclopedia, 2006: 190).

2.2 Women at War (1941-1945)

Due to the war, number of male's labors had been decreasing as they were fighting in the war. To replace them, the government asked the women to replace men's job. Women were performing men's job from operating cranes, welding, and riveting (Lingeman, 1991: 254).

To create the image of strong women, Norman Rockwell, a well known America artist created a character called Rosie the Riveter. Lingeman (1991) pointed out that the image of 'Rosie the Riveter' had become a symbol of working women in an industrial field and symbol of patriotism. Yet, the experts believed "they could do just about anything that men could, if it did not require too much physical effort or too heavy or highly skilled operations. Women were riveters, spot and torch welders, hydraulic press operators,

crane operators, shell loaders, bus drivers, train conductors, bellhops, life-guards, lumberjacks, cowgirls, section hands, coal mine checkers, car washers, filling station operators, taxi drivers, barbers, policemen, ferry command pilots, and football coaches"(p. 257).

Lingeman (1991: 260) further proposed that the war industries also provide many jobs in which women could perform better than men. Women had always been found in the canning and food processing industries. In short, women, so in the consideration was, were better to do repetitious, minute and monotonous tasks which men avoided of and did not perform efficiently.

In the military field, the shortages of labor also occurred and required women to get involved. Hence, in 1942 and 1943 organizations like WAAC (Women's Auxiliary Army Corps)/WAC, and Women Appointed for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) were established (Evans, 1997: 222). Nevertheless, Evans further explained that women suffered from job segregation. Women, in this case, were avoided to be placed in the position where they might give orders to men. In fact, they worked in clerical and supply areas or as nurses (1997: 223).

2.3 Posters and Propaganda

In order to get more attention from women to join the war jobs, the U.S government used posters as one of the most powerful influence during the war, which is propaganda. According to Vasileva (2004), posters became the most effective way to

support the government strategy in recruiting more female workers, as posters could reach to almost anybody in the country, even to people who did not own radios or those who did not buy newspapers (The Persuasive power of posters during World War II: 1).

Furthermore, Mahaney in *Propaganda Poster* (2002) suggested four basic types of features which most American posters relied on during the wartime, with all are emphasizing on the emotions, both positive and negative. First, it carried a patriotic message, such as showing men and women who are proud and strong. Next, it carried a sentimental image where it might show a young woman reading the mail from her loved one overseas. The third type used humor aspect where the enemy might be depicted as silly. The last type of poster was more negative and dull like showing the image of soldiers fighting and dying (p. 41).

Lewis in Vasileva (2004) defined propaganda as "the systematic propagation of information or ideas by an interested party, esp. in a tendentious way to encourage or instill a particular attitude or response" (The Persuasive Power of Posters during World War II: 1). This is further strengthened by Mahaney (2002: 41), who defined the term Propaganda as "the tool used to shape opinion and influence behavior in pursuit of governmental goals".

Eventually, these posters had effectively influenced women at that time. Taylor in Vasileva (2004) said that the number of women got increased from 25% in 1940 to 36% in 1945 (The Persuasive power of posters during World War II: 6). While more than 15 million American men served the armed forces, about 338.000 women served in the U.S

armed forces. They occupied positions as mechanics, drivers, clerks, cooks and filled many other *noncombat* positions (The World Book Encyclopedia, 2006: 494).

According to Vasileva, during wartime propaganda, women responded when they were needed. After the war, the government left them in the place where they usually were, and ignored their rights (2004: 6). In line with this, Langley and Fox (1998: 227) also stated propaganda posters were portrayed only temporarily because once the war was over, men would take over their jobs. This clearly shows that women did not deserve in doing those men's tasks and that is why men had to take it over again.

The fact that women could accomplish the jobs during the wartime finally may prove that they were able to accomplish such mannish tasks. Unfortunately, they were paid less than men (A history of the United States, 1998:490). Lingemen (1991: 260) also proposed the same statement. He said that although women did the same tasks as men had done previously, the difference in this wage system was due to a variety of reasons. Women, he said, were less of seniority, and thus, they were working in lower pay grades. Their lack of seniority also made them difficult to be upgraded and meant that they were in the last-hired, first-fired category.

2.4 Patriarchy

In the *Dictionary* of *Sociology*, Abercrombie, Hill and Turner defined the concept of patriarchy as 'the dominance of men over women' (1994: 308). Although the traditional role of males as breadwinners and females as 'housewives' still existed before the Depression emerged, this role had changed soon after men no longer could support their family income. Women, actively, joined the labor force (Evans,1997: 198).

Yet, Langley and Fox argued that what it says to be the women's job was in fact had some similarity, to some extent, to their family role. Women worked in industries in which the productions were formerly manufactured by women in the home like clothing and processing food (1998: 254). Thus, one striking aspect that exists in the patriarchal ideas support the paradigm that males are more dominant and superior than females.

Walby in Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon (2002:73-74) classified six key structures in determining patriarchal relations, which are paid work, housework, sexuality, culture, violence and the state. In term of employment, the concept 'patriarchy' is frequently seen through the consideration that women become subordinate to men. Representation of women in media, according to Fenton in Gamble (2001), showed some degree of patriarchal relations. Males, she said, had been shown to be more dominant, active and authoritative figures, while females had been shown to be submissive, passive but eager to the wills of the media males (p.106-107). Thwaites, Davis and Mules (1994: 156) further strengthened this patriarchal ideology in media where the legitimizing values and means of text production were strongly based on male control and preference.

During the wartime, posters have become an effective media to influence women getting into war jobs. Posters were created in such a way to convince women viewers that they were capable of doing physical tasks. In spite of having intention for women to work independently, the concept of patriarchy still revealed in the posters.

2.5 Semiotics

Semiotics is the study of signs, how meanings are made and how reality is presented (Chandler 2002: 2). According to Chandler, the form of "signs" not only referred to "signs" in everyday speech but anything that "stands for" something else. These signs could be in the form of words, images, sounds, gestures, acts or objects, odours, flavours. However, something becomes signs if it is put into meaning and anything can be a sign as long as someone interprets it as 'signifying' something (2002: 17).

A sign consists of a signifier and a signified. In the semiotics world, "the *signifier* is now commonly interpreted as the *material (physical) form* of the sign – it is something that can be seen, heard, touch, smelled or tasted." (Chandler 2002: 19). As for the signified, it refers to *the conceptions, not the things, that symbols directly mean* (Langer in Chandler 2002: 20).

Chandler further stated that "Semiotics is concerned with meaning-making and representation in many forms, perhaps most obviously in the form of 'texts' and 'media'." He then explained that the term 'text' was a collection of signs (such as words, images, sounds and/or gestures). A text can exist in any medium from speech to printed media (2002: 2).

Pierce used three modes of relationship between signifiers and the signified which is further simplified by Chandler (2002: 36) :

1. Symbol/symbolic, where the signifier is regarded as arbitrary and as referring only to other signs. The examples of symbols are language in general (plus specific languages, alphabetical letters, punctuation marks, words, phrases, and sentences), numbers, Morse code, traffic lights, national flags.

2. Icon/iconic, where the signifier is not regarded as part of the signified but as depicting it transparently. The examples of Icon are a portrait, a cartoon, a scale-model, onomatopoeia, metaphors, 'realistic' sounds in 'programme music', sound effects in radio drama, a dubbed film soundtrack, and imitative gestures.

3. Index/indexical, where the signifier and the signified are regarded as directly connected. The examples of index are 'natural signs', medical symptoms, measuring instruments, signals, pointers (a pointing 'index finger', a directional signpost), recordings (a photograph, a film, video, or television shot, an audio-recorded voice), personal 'trademarks' (handwriting, catchphrase) and indexical words ('that', 'this', 'here', 'there')

The structural relationships in the signifying system at a particular moment in history can be divided into two kinds of relationships: (Saussure in Chandler : 2002) syntagmatic (concerning positioning) and paradigmatic (concerning substitution) relations. The plane of the syntagm is the *combination* of 'this-*and*-this-*and*-this' while

the plane of the paradigm is that of the selection of 'this-*or*-this-*or*-this'. While syntagmatic relations are possibilities of combination, paradigmatic relations are functional contrasts. Syntagmatic relations refer intratextually to other signifiers *co-present* within the text, while paradigmatic relations refer intertextually to signifiers which are *absent* from the text (p 79-80).

Syntagms can represent spatial relationship. Spatial syntagmatic relations are found in drawing, painting and photography. Paradigmatic dimension focuses on content and the choice of subject-matter. One of the syntagmatic relations are spatial relations. Spatial syntagmatic relations include: above/below, in front/behind, close/distance, left/right, north/south, inside/outside, center/periphery (Chandler, 2002:87).

The horizontal axis, for example from left to right, and the vertical axis, for example from up to down, carry connotations. Many observations of this spatial relationship have shown that one signifier to be located 'higher' than another. For example, 'men tend to be located higher than women in these ads, symbolically reflecting the routine subordination of women to men in society' (Goffman : 1979:43 in Chandler : 2002 : 88).

The paradigmatic dimension analyses the text by comparing and contrasting each of the signifiers present in the text with absent signifiers which in similar circumstances might have been chosen, and considering the significance of the choices made (Chandler 2002: 99). Sometimes, a change on the level of the signifier leads to a change on the level of the signified. For example, this might involve the use of a close-up rather than a

mid-shot, a substitution in age, sex, class or ethnicity, substituting objects, a different caption of a photograph, etc.

One of the examples of paradigmatic relation is the binary or polar semantic oppositions (e.g *us-them, public-private*). Such oppositions are essential to the generation of meaning. Distinctions can be made between various types of 'oppositions'(Chandler 2002: 104) :

- Oppositions (logical 'contradictories'): mutually exclusive terms (e.g. alive-dead, where 'not alive' can only be 'dead')
- Antonyms (logical 'contraries'): terms which are comparatively graded on the same implicit dimension (e.g. *good-bad*, where 'not good' is not necessarily 'bad')

Another example of paradigmatic analysis is the linkages which become aligned in some texts and codes so that additional 'vertical' relationships (such as male-mind, female-body) acquire apparent links of their own. Silverman (1983 : 36 in Chandler 2002 : 106) observed, ' a cultural code is a conceptual system which is organized around key oppositions and equations, in which a term like 'woman' is defined in opposition to a term like 'man', and in which each term is aligned with a cluster of symbolic attributes'. Binary oppositions form the basis of underlying 'classificatory systems'. Leach (1970: 44 in Chandler 2002: 106) argued that "apparently fundamental oppositions such as male-female and left-right become transformed into the prototype symbols of the good and the bad, the permitted and the forbidden". Paradigmatic analysis has also been applied to opposition in relation to mass media texts. The tonal

relationship between the letters and the background may be light on dark or the reverse. The contrast could establish distinct identity (Chandler, 2002: 109).

The concept of markedness (*sic*) according to Chandler (2002: 110) can be applied to the poles of a paradigmatic opposition: paired signs consist of an 'unmarked' and a 'marked' form. This applies both at the level of the signifier and at the level of the signified. The 'marked' signifier is distinguished by some special semiotic feature. Normally, the use of *active voice* refers to unmarked and the use of *passive voice* conveys the marked term. Clark and Clark (1977: 524 in Chandler 2002: 111) further noted that " in English, the female category is generally marked in relation to the male." Chandler (2002: 111) says that " the unmarked term is primary, being given precedence and priority, while the marked term is treated as secondary or even suppressed as an 'absent signifier'." Culler (1985: 112 in Chandler 2002:111) writes that "the unmarked term is presented as fundamental and originative while the marked term is conceived in relation to it as derivative, dependent, subordinate, supplemental or ancillary."

The unmarked term is not merely neutral but implicitly positive in contrast to the negative connotations of the marked term. The unmarked form is typically dominant. It is thus transparent. The marked form is presented as different, out of the ordinary, or default form of the unmarked term. Unmarked-marked may be thus read as norm-deviation. (Chandler 2002: 112).

Semiotics can also use two ways of textual analysis. The first one is at the signifier level between the literal and the figurative. The second one is at the signified level between denotation and connotation. Chandler (2002: 140) also proposed that

denotation and connotation can be used to show the relationship between the signifier and its signified. Denotation is often described as the 'literal', 'obvious', or 'commonsense', meaning opposite. Connotation often represents the socio-cultural and 'personal' associations (ideological, emotional, etc) of the sign. Chandler (2002: 140) said that "the denotational meaning of a sign would be broadly agreed upon by members of the same culture". Chandler also said that connotations are not purely 'personal' meanings, thus, they are determined by the codes to which the interpreter has access.

2.6 Color reference in Western Media

According to Hirsch (2005: 237), photography is a sign language and therefore it has a symbol and represents an idea. Yet, symbols cannot be put into absolute terms because of factors such as cultural background, economic status, gender, psychological state, political, religious and sexual preferences (Hirsch, 2005: 238). Hirsch also gave symbolic association of colors in Western cultures:

- Red reflects blood, fire, emotion, wounds, death, anger, excitement, physical stimulation.
- Yellow indicates intellect
- Blue signifies psychic ability and spirituality
- Black illustrates the time before existence, chaos (2005: 239).

The symbolic associations of colors illustrated above are only some of what Hirsch has mentioned. Those colors are picked only restricted to the colors which will be used in this analysis.