

# WOMEN'S COURAGE AS AN EFFECT OF A STRONG FRIENDSHIP BOND IN *THURSDAYS AT EIGHT*<sup>1</sup>

Margaretha Alexandra Pribadi<sup>2</sup> and Ekawati Marhaenny Dukut<sup>3</sup>

*Abstract: Having girlfriends may bring many advantages for women. They can relate and be comfortable with each other. This makes them talk about anything in a group. Thursdays at Eight talks about friendship bond and the power inside them through pain, rejection, ambition, and lost. This article, which uses Feminism approach, emphasizes in Third-wave Feminism and is intended to analyze the friendship bond and the courage of the women in the novel. For example is how the characters in the novel get up and fight to reach what they want through friendship bond.*

*Key words: friendship bond, courage, ,third-wave feminism.*

## INTRODUCTION

Having girlfriends are vital for all women. This is because female friendships are precious for women. Whether their girlfriends are married or single, mothers or childless, they are the

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<sup>2</sup> **Margaretha Alexander Pribadi** <shinbie89@hotmail.com> +62817297360 is a student of the Faculty of Letters, Soegijapranata Catholic University.

<sup>3</sup> **Dra. Ekawati Marhaenny Dukut, M.Hum** <ekamd@yahoo.com> +628122938202 is a full-time lecturer at the the Faculty of Letters, Soegijapranata Catholic University

people where we can find our precious moments. This can be read from the quotation of the novel, i.e. *Thursdays At Eight*, where in one of the pages there is a quotation that states;

We can let down our hair. We can let down our guard. We can be selfish. We can crack jokes. We can be ourselves and relax. We talk, we listen, we laugh, we cry, but mostly we support and encourage one another (Macomber 2001:1).

This assumes that having girlfriends may bring many advantages for women. It relates to how women share the issues to their girlfriends freely because female friends let married women take a break from being super mom and super wife. As it is said by UNIFEM in a human rights framework's principle (1994: ¶7), there is support for gender equity in decision-making from the household to the international level. It means that women have to be awake from their deep slumber and understand the true meaning of empowerment such as; women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

In their daily life, women always face trouble for having self-development in a family and society and often feel insecure in deciding choices of their future. It can be seen when these women with their own trouble come along together and fight a good fight toward their dream, their problem, and their own weary self.

## **FEMINISM**

Based on the issue of empowered women and the research questions, the writer prefers to use Feminism Theory. Nancy Cott

in the book *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* defines feminism as:

...the belief in the importance of gender equality, invalidating the idea of gender hierarchy as a socially constructed concept. Feminism refers to political, cultural, and economic movements aimed at establishing greater rights and legal protections for women (1987:4).

In addition, according to Adrienne Rich, a contemporary American poet, feminism is “the place where in the most natural, organic way – subjectivity and politics have come together” (Schneir 1994:196). So, based on the critics, the writer concludes that feminism is a belief in the principle that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men.

According to *Feminisms - a Reader* (Humm 1992:11), feminists and scholars have divided the movement's history into three "waves". The first-wave spans from the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. The main focus of this movement at this time was on *de jure* inequalities, or officially mandated inequalities. Most people consider the first-wave to have ended when the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed, granting women the right to vote. This major victory of the movement also included reforms in education, in the workplace and professions, and in healthcare.

The second-wave of feminism refers to the period of feminism beginning in the early 1960's and extending through the late 1980's. Unlike the first-wave, the second-wave's focus was on the *de facto* inequalities, or unofficial inequalities, and also felt that *de jure* and *de facto* inequalities were inextricably linked issues that needed to be addressed together if there was ever going to be any hope of change. This wave encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives and deeply politicized, and reflective

of a sexist structure of power. The key word of this wave was education, of women and of men.

### **THIRD-WAVE FEMINISM**

Since there was this feeling of failure left throughout in the second wave, the third-wave rose as a response to this feeling, and in full force. It is also believed that this wave was in response to the backlash against initiatives and movements that were unexpectedly created by the second-wave.

Beginning in the 1990s. This newer form of feminism focuses more on the individual empowerment of women and less on activism. It celebrates women's journeys to build meaningful identities in the complex contemporary world.

Rebecca Walker, a writer, speaker, activist, who engages in topics including feminism, gender, (mixed) race, and more. She also happens to be the daughter of Alice Walker, a notable black feminist, poet, and Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Color Purple*. She states the following opinions about feminism:

My mother's feminist principles coloured every aspect of my life. As a little girl, I wasn't even allowed to play with dolls or stuffed toys in case they brought out a maternal instinct. It was drummed into me that being a mother, raising children and running a home were a form of slavery. Having a career, travelling the world and being independent were what really mattered according to her (Walker 2010: ¶ 5).

...I believe feminism is an experiment, and all experiments need to be assessed on their results. Then, when you see huge mistakes have been paid, you need to make alterations... (Walker, 2010, ¶ 6).

It became very apparent that she had these Third Wave feminist views, which were a contrast and rebuttal to the second wave feminists (including her mother). Instead of generalizing the feminine experience and identity, she called for acceptance of differences and understanding. Instead of rejecting or antagonizing men, she encouraged cooperation and mutual support. Third Wave Feminism encourages personal empowerment and action. Third Wave feminists like to think of themselves as survivors, not victims. Therefore, women need to grasp themselves by knowing, 'who I am today, woman I am becoming, and woman I want to be'.

### **FRIENDSHIP BOND**

In the book of *Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus*, John Gray states "men hide in the cave when they are under pressure, but women come out looking for the attention from someone to their problems" (1992:35). Knowing that women need to share their minds when they got depressed, women need to go out with other girls, without any direction in conversation and without any special purpose of their meeting. At the end of the day, when it seems they do not get their problems fixed, they still can feel the happiness and satisfaction of enjoying their day because they feel concerned and cared about their problem's sharing.

According to Heather Long (2009:¶ 4), women experience a unique emotional connection with their female companions that is very different from the intimacy and emotional connection they feel with spouses and or family. They tend to have better physical health because friends provide support in three main ways: emotional, cognitive guidance, tangible help. Friends give each other emotional support by demonstrating care and

affection. They also provide guidance during times of decision-making.

Whereas, according to Jennie Kakkad, a freelance writer. "Friendship is also about trust" (ezinearticles n.d.:¶ 2). One is able to open up freely to the person who is a friend because she knows she will not be judged. It is fine to express inhibitions and also seek the advice of a friend but at the same time friendship is also respecting the other person's predicament. Kakkad added about the test of friendship is during critical circumstances, as she states;

When you are down and out the best friend is still next to you. He or she gives you the biggest support with kind words and assures you that life is truly a great gift (ezinearticles n.d.:¶ 4).

A good friend is a rare gem and so, there is a need to polish this bond with the goodness of friendship. Friendship is all about how much you care and understand each other. It is all about talking, listening and building up a strong relationship loyalty among each other.

## **FRIENDSHIP BOND IN WOMEN**

The friendship bond in the novel reflects that through listening, talking, and supporting each other, women can find support and have an appropriate decision. Being in a supportive team helps them to find courage because through supports from friends, they can collect confidence and comfort to find the best decision.

*Thursdays At Eight* is about four different women, named Clare, Liz, Karen, and Julia, who are at four different points in their lives and ages. They meet each other through a journal writing class. While the class proves to be less than worthwhile,

these four women bond together and decide to meet weekly. Thus, begins the weekly meetings every Thursday mornings at 8 am at Mocha Moment, a popular coffee shop to talk about their life experiences

According to Liz, one of the novel's characters, the friendship bond encourages women to find confidence in their choices. Every Thursday at eight is the allocated time for them to listen, to talk, and to encourage each other. In the novel this encouragement is found when Liz clarified that someone to listen is what they need. In the novel, Liz says, "In fact I didn't want anyone to say anything, what I needed was someone to listen" (Macomber 2001:32). From her statement it is shown that listening is very important in the meeting because women might already been tired of their problem and they do not need any judgment from what they have done the whole day. Women need something to relieve their stress along the week. This is why the women in the novel would get together every Thursday at eight to listen and talk to each other. They come not to get their problems fixed but through conversation, they can find other individuals who are concerned about their feelings. When one of the women could not show up, Liz exclaims how important it is to be available and discuss each other's feelings,

We'll talk about her feeling, whatever she wants.  
Without her contributing, the group simply  
doesn't work (Macomber 2001:130).

From the quotation above, it is clear that the women are really close to each other. They have a friendship bond that could unify them to be one soul. They feel they can only find completeness by talking and listening to each other. Having whatever they did as something accepted by the group is a form of support that they dream of having. It can be seen in the novel when Liz states, "In fact I didn't want anyone to say anything. What I needed was

someone to listen” (Macomber 2001:32). Karen also states a similar opinion when asked what makes her to always come to a meeting point every Thursday’s at eight, “What I love about them is that they are so accepting of me”(Macomber 2001:43).

## **STRENGTH FOUND FROM SELF-UNDERSTANDING**

Women can be stronger when they have the opportunity to express themselves because self-understanding is a step for women to gain the power using their own experiences and dreams. And through expressing themselves, they can choose what they want to be and what they want to do. This is because they can be a survivor or victim, a loser or winner. Having a decision can make them have a stronger personality to face new changes in their life.

Clare who has just been through a devastating divorce is driven by anger and revenge. She was a good wife, a good mother. She says;

From the moment I spoke my vows I was faithful to my husband, my marriage, my family. All these years I’ve been faithful to myself; I’ve never acted dishonesty and I’ve always put my family responsibilities above my own desires (Macomber 2000:16).

The quotation above shows how Clare realizes that she does not need to find herself. With her condition, she chooses to remain faithful to herself. Clare and Liz have somewhat similar situations because they are not only losing their husband but also the framework of their social life. They show their ability to swift from one representation to the other. It is supported by both Clare and Liz’s statements below;



*Clare:* For twenty-three years my identity was linked to Michael (Macomber 2001:15).

*Liz :*It all seems to be done in pairs (Macomber 2001:32).

Loneliness brings the four women to the point that makes them realize how dependant they have been. It makes them want to recover or re-manage their life to shape a new status in the social life. It shows how they struggle to re-form their life better and get out from a depending life.

In the Third Wave feminism, women are also invited to discover their individual empowerment. One of the actions to deal with is by testing their dream. In the novel, the writers find that Karen's character is depicting this kind of empowerment through her dream. Karen's dream to be an actress makes her so ambitious, that it has become uncontrollable since her mother is always trying to run Karen's life;

Since the day I was born, my domineering mother has attempted to run my life (Macomber 2001:39).

Her mom is so aware of what people think or say and so want Karen to have a respectable career and social life. Fortunately, Karen would not give up her dream. That is why she keeps on trying to get a role in some TV commercial because she realizes that acting is her only delight. She states;

This (acting) is my dream. My life's ambition. If I don't go after it now, I never will. No one else is going to do this for me (Macomber 2001:43).

The quotation shows that through the rejection of a dream, there come a stronger personality to keep moving forward with the thoughts of getting the acceptance and proving one's ability in reaching the dream.

## **CONCLUSION**

*Thursdays at Eight* consists of chapters that tell about a friendship, engaged by four women that meet every Thursday to talk about their problems and to voice their feeling to each other. These four women become such powerful persons when they come together and talk about their problem with friends. Women do things that make them comfortable to voice their feelings and it can be found in a friendship where the conversation is taking a role. Through supporting each other, they become powerful persons because support from friends is like a boost for their confidence. So, a friendship bond in the novel makes encouragement to each woman to decide an appropriate choice in life.

The process of women being a stronger individual can be achieved in everyday live. The women's step to be a stronger personality in the novel is seen through a Third Wave Feminism's sense of gaining women's power through meaningful identities in their own way. The approach of third wave feminism shows how woman can celebrate multiple and contradictory identities in today's world, discover their individual empowerment, and think of themselves as survivors, not victims.

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The word "Celt" is written in a large, stylized, blue font with a white outline and a slight drop shadow. The letters are bold and rounded, with the 'C' being particularly large and prominent. The 'e' is lowercase and smaller than the other letters. The 'l' and 't' are also lowercase and have a similar rounded, blocky appearance. The overall style is modern and graphic.