

Case Study: Forrest Gump

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Developmental Theories Applied to Forrest Gump

Risk and Resilience

Risk:

- Forrest Gump is physically and mentally handicapped. This could be considered a risk because of the teasing and bullying that he experienced as a result of his disabilities.
- He heard his mom having sex with the principal in order to allow him into the school. This is a risk because it affected him emotionally and made him feel bad about himself.
- Gump has no father figure in the beginning of his childhood which is a risk because he is unable to make an attachment with his father.
- When he was young, Gump's principal called him stupid. This is a risk because it affected how he viewed himself and his intelligence.

Protective:

- Forrest Gump has strong friendships with Jenny, Bubba and Lieutenant Dan. These friendships are considered protective factors because they helped him develop social competence and gave him a sense of peer acceptance.
- Gump has a strong relationship with his mother. A warm, nurturing mother and high quality parenting are considered strong protective factors.
- He is a part of a football team which is a protective factor because he is successful playing football and has a supportive team.
- The army is Gump's family. This is a protective factor because it helps build his self esteem and makes him feel accomplished and loved.
- Gump's protective factors are stronger than his risk factors because he has a positive outcome.

Cognitive development

- Forrest Gump has speech issues and is often called stupid.
- He also has scoliosis, which is a physical disability. By the time he was a teen, he had no problems with scoliosis and could run very fast.
- He is over protected by his mom and often says "mama always said....". This demonstrates the danger of the single story because he often relies on his mother for information on the world.

Nature vs. Nurture

- Phenotype: observable characteristics that shape Forrest Gump – He has a low IQ, he cannot walk/run properly as a child, he is smaller and he looks different from the other children.

- Cultural capital: knowledge and relationships that can be invested to gain benefits. For Forrest Gump this was Jenny and his mother. Jennie intervened and always helped Gump. His Mother always supported him as well.
- Cultural mismatch: incompatibilities between home and school. Forrest Gump has a low IQ and a frail figure. However, his mother and Jennie were supportive of him.
- Involuntary minority: he had low IQ (oppression and discrimination).

Behaviourism

- John Watson states that control of behaviour is located outside the child, in the environment. An example of this is seen when Forrest Gump is running at football practice. He learns that running with the football is something that the coach likes, so he keeps on running. He becomes a great football player.
- Forrest Gump has positive reinforcement from his mother and Jenny. They assure him that he is not stupid.
- He also has positive reinforcement in the army when the sergeants tell him that he is doing a good job. These positive reinforcements shaped him.

Vygotsky

- Forrest Gump learns from interactions between Jenny and his mother at a social and individual level.
- Scaffolding: Gump has the assistance of Jenny, Bubba, his mother and Lieutenant Dan outside of himself, the learner. They teach him and help him develop cognitively.

Piaget

- Accommodation: Forrest Gump has to accommodate for his physical and mental disability. When he is young he wears leg braces. As a result, he creates a new dance move, which Elvis uses after meeting him.
- Assimilation: Gump assimilates new knowledge into existing schemes. He uses what he knows about running in football in the army and runs to save the lives of others.

Intelligence

- According to Gardner, there are multiple intelligences. Forrest Gump is looked down upon because of his low IQ scores, however he is very successful in life. This means he has strengths in different intelligences, such as kinesthetic intelligence.

Talent and Expertise

- Forrest Gump is an exceptional runner and ping pong player. He is extremely successful as a result of these talents.

Attachment

- Forrest Gump has a strong attachment with his mother. Bowlby suggests that attachment is necessary for healthy development.

- According to chapter 6, Gump's attachment level with his mother allows him to explore with a secure base.
- He is able to be independent as a result of his attachment with his mother.
- Forrest Gump also has a strong bond with Lieutenant Dan and builds a strong relationship with him. This helps him achieve in the army, his business and social competence. Chapter 6 states that attachment can help with achievement and social competence.

Prosocial Behaviour

- Forrest Gump demonstrates prosocial behaviour when he saves the lives of the soldiers. He runs back and forth, carrying his friends to safety. In the process he is shot. This prosocial behaviour led to achievement when he receives the medal of honour and a high level of peer acceptance.

Peer Status

- When Forrest Gump was young, he does not have a high peer status. However, with his prosocial tendencies and his attachments with Jenny, his mother, Bubba and Lieutenant Dan, he is able to build popularity and success.

Friendships and Peer Networks

- Even though Forrest Gump is rejected at first, he has Jenny as a friend (clique). This begins his peer network and friendships.

Intervention

- make him an expert: we will work on Forrest's understanding of himself, what he thinks, how he feels and what he is good at. We will help him understand that he can be confident without his mother. He often says "momma says this..." We are going to ask Forrest how he feels and what he thinks to promote this as well as self worth.
- Forrest was able to get socialization through his football team and the army later in life, however, we would like to start socialization earlier to help build his skills and understanding.
- In order to accomplish this, we are going to implement Fin's Friends in grade 1 and grade 2. This will help promote his self worth and his understanding of his own emotions, feelings and thoughts. Fin's friends helps children examine themselves and have a greater understanding of themselves.
- we are going to implement BC friends for life to promote these goals from grades 3-7.
- BC friends for life (friends program BC): The FRIENDS program is a school-based anxiety prevention and resiliency skill-building program, sponsored by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). The goal for FRIENDS is to reach as many students as possible, providing them with life skills that will strengthen resiliency and reduce the risk of developing an anxiety disorder.

Summary of Forrest Gump's Story:

Young Forrest

- Born in Alabama
- Father was absent during the his life; mother claimed he was “on vacation”
- Born with a condition that forced him to wear leg braces making even walking difficult
- Had a low IQ and was not able to attend public schools until his mom slept with the principal
- Meets Elvis and teaches him some dance moves
- At a young age he meets Jenny and was instantly in love with her; they became great friends
 - Jenny was the only other person to accept Forrest besides his mother
 - She helped him read and stand up to bullies
- Forrest getting bullied, “run Forrest, run!” moment
 - Never wears leg braces again and ran everywhere

College

- Still bullied. Interrupted a football practice and got brought onto the football team
- Got a football scholarship at the University of Alabama
 - Named All-American team and meets JFK

Joining the Army

- Meets Bubba on the bus, who owns a shrimping business
- Jenny’s life in shambles and he gets deployed to Vietnam
- Bubba suggests they work together in the shrimping business after Vietnam
- Forrest saving Lt Dan and carried him to safety
 - Finds Bubba, but he’s badly wounded
 - Bubba dies in his arms
 - Forrest shot in the ass
- Gets the Medal of Honor