

SOCIAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF THE DISABLED IN FORREST GUMP NOVEL

Oleh

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Abstract

The disabled often experience discrimination and are not considered as part of society. This causes the disabled to not have the same rights and positions as normal. This situation is reflected in the novel Forrest Gump which describes how society treats people with disabilities. This research aims to reveal how the disabled are treated in society, build identities for the disabled, and show the strategies used in the novel to build this identity. This research method is qualitative research. Data were analyzed using the Postmodernist theory by Jean F. Lyotard and Disability theory by Mellinda C. Hall. The data analysis method is based on the opposition between the disabled and the normal which focuses on the position of the disabled in normal society. The novel Forrest Gump shows that the disabled are positioned as "the other", "object", and "burden". The novel Forrest Gump also shows that people with disabilities can obtain the same position as normal as "part of society", "subject", and "main contributor" in society. As a result, the novel Forrest Gump uses several strategies to build an identity for people with disabilities, namely language strategies, social strategies, and cultural strategies.

Keywords: *the disabled, identity, society, strategy*

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Abstrak

Penyandang disabilitas seringkali mengalami diskriminasi dan tidak dianggap sebagai bagian dari masyarakat. Hal ini menyebabkan mereka tidak mempunyai hak dan kedudukan yang sama seperti masyarakat normal. Situasi ini tercermin dalam novel *Forrest Gump* yang menggambarkan bagaimana masyarakat memperlakukan penyandang disabilitas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap bagaimana penyandang disabilitas diperlakukan di masyarakat, bagaimana identitas penyandang disabilitas dibangun, dan menunjukkan strategi yang digunakan dalam novel untuk membangun identitas tersebut. Metode penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan teori Postmodernis oleh Jean F. Lyotard dan teori Disabilitas oleh Mellinda C. Hall. Metode analisis data didasarkan pada pertentangan antara penyandang disabilitas dan masyarakat normal yang menitikberatkan pada kedudukan penyandang disabilitas dalam masyarakat normal. Novel *Forrest Gump* menunjukkan bahwa penyandang disabilitas diposisikan sebagai “the other”, “objek”, dan “beban”. Novel *Forrest Gump* juga menunjukkan bahwa penyandang disabilitas dapat memperoleh kedudukan yang sama dengan masyarakat normal sebagai “bagian dari masyarakat”, “subjek”, dan “kontributor” dalam masyarakat. Hasilnya, novel *Forrest Gump* menggunakan beberapa strategi dalam membangun identitas penyandang disabilitas, yaitu strategi bahasa, strategi sosial, dan strategi budaya.

Kata kunci: kaum disabilitas, identitas, masyarakat, strategi

A. INTRODUCTION

In the United States of America, disability discrimination has become one of the main problems in humanity. People with disabilities experience discrimination in various fields such as social and public spaces, employment, and in community. The disability rights movement are actively improving, and supported by legislation for example in Americans with disabilities act (ADA) (Harris, Gould, and Mullin 2019). Therefore, the disabled must manage to cope with social identity and reconstruct their identity in society (Lejzerowicz 2017).

This new perspective in society was maintained in a system of postmodernism. It is depicted in literary work that there is never a center, or there are always many centers. In postmodernism, there is an underlying belief in difference (Mambrol 2016).

One study that utilizes a postmodernist approach is entitled “The Blind Can See: Revisiting Disability in Jane Eyre” (Schneck 2015, 80–87). It demonstrates that an able-bodied woman and a disabled man are equal. Their relationship is not defined by the presence of a disability but rather by how they acknowledge and respect both their own and each other's perceptions of disability.

Another literary works that represents disabilities is *Forrest Gump* by Winston Groom in 1986. This literary work has been analyzed using many approaches. One of them is a study by Ninu Nair (Nair 2020) entitled “Forrest Gump: comparing the book and its movie adaptation”. This study shows that the movie adaptation eliminates several characters in the novel such as Big Sam, Sue the orangutan, and Curtis. The writer also finds many related topics to the recent research such as disabilities, and social identity. However, this study focuses on analyzing the opposition between the main-theme regarding the successful life of the disabled and the sub-theme concerning the efforts of people with disabilities to be accepted by society using Jean F. Lyotard’s postmodernism theory and analyzing the social identity of the disabled using Mellinda C. Hall’s disability theory. Furthermore, the study exercised the strategy of the story used to disseminate the identity of disability in the United States as represented in Winston Groom’s Novel *Forrest Gump*.

Binary opposition can be used to interpret meaning in literary works (Putri and Sarwoto 2016, 18–20). According to Jean-François Lyotard, postmodernism challenges grand narratives, arguing that they obscure the truth and dismiss contradictions within social structures. Instead, postmodernists favor meta-narratives where a culture constructs and interprets its own stories and beliefs (Mambrol 2016). Therefore, it is related to disability studies that aim to reintegrate the disabled into society as citizens whose rights and privileges remain intact (Hall 2019).

Based on the theoretical framework above, this article examines how *Forrest Gump* depicts disability, the identity it constructs, and the strategies it uses to disseminate disability identity. This study aims to describe the position and identity of disability in society and explain the strategies used in the story to promote disability identity and advocate for their rights in society. The data are analyzed descriptively and qualitatively through Jean F. Lyotard's postmodernism and Melinda C. Hall's disability theory. The researcher focuses on several main aspects: identifying the binary opposition between grand narrative and meta-narrative, obtaining alternative meanings from the film through meta-narrative and mini-narrative, and summarizing the research findings.

This novel was selected because it portrays the construction of social identity for the disabled. Second, the researcher has not found any studies discussing about social identity construction of the disabled using the perspective of Jean F. Lyotard's Postmodernism theory and Melinda C. Hall's disability theory. Therefore, exploring this novel is crucial to gain a new perspective on the social identity of disabled.

B. THE POSITION OF THE DISABLED IN THE NOVEL FORREST GUMP

Forrest Gump centers on a man with a low IQ, highlighting how society perceives and responds to disability. Despite his intellectual challenges, Forrest leads an extraordinary life, becoming involved in major historical events and achieving success. His disability is often contrasted with his remarkable achievements, revealing the limitations imposed by societal expectations and the resilience he demonstrates in overcoming them. The novel explores how Forrest's disability shapes his identity and interactions, emphasizing the importance of acceptance and the potential to achieve greatness regardless of physical or mental limitations.

Disability refers to a condition that deviates from normal physical and/or mental functioning. These differences can disrupt or limit a person's ability to interact and engage in various activities. This is like what happened in *Forrest Gump* (Groom 1986). It describes the conditions of the disabled in society through characters that have intellectual and physical disabilities. It makes them face difficulties in

being accepted by society because of the dominance of society's perspective on the disabled. They are often considered as "the other", objects, and a burden.

1. The Disabled as "The Other"

"Othering" refers to the process of treating individuals or a specific group as fundamentally different from the dominant individual or group which leads to exclusion, marginalization, or stigmatization. In the novel *Forrest Gump*, there are elements of othering, as mentioned in the section below.

"Nex mornin when I wake up somebody hole up a newspaper in front of the camera down in Houston for us to see. The headline say, "Idiot Plays Space Music to Soothe ape" that is the sort of shit I has got to contend with" (Groom 1986, 115).

While on duty as a spaceman in outer space, Forrest Gump was accompanied by a colleague and a trained orangutan. However, the orangutan began to misbehave. In an attempt to calm him, Forrest took out his harmonica and started playing. As he played, the orangutan gradually settled down, appearing soothed by the music. The next day, a newspaper published a headline mocking Forrest Gump with the phrase "Idiot Plays Space Music to Soothe Ape".

The sentence "Idiot Plays Space Music to Soothe Ape" implies that people equate the status of someone considered an idiot with a wild ape based on the interaction that occurred. This indicates that people who are considered idiots are only able to interact with and provide benefits to animals. The symbolism of animals can be interpreted as thinking abilities far below normal humans.

On another occasion, Forrest Gump is marginalized when he meets a famous star named Raquel Welch. With just one glance, Raquel Welch immediately has a bad stigma against Forrest Gump and didn't even want to shake Forrest Gump's hand, as mentioned in the section below.

"I stuck out my webbed han to shake hans with her, but she jump back about a foot an say, "uggh! Let's get this goddamn thing over with." (Groom 1986, 185).

Forrest tried to act friendly and professional as a colleague, but Raquel Welch considered Forrest Gump like a creature who only had a sexual interest in her and never once shook hands with Forrest.

It illustrates that society thinks that Forrest is different from them. This othering results in demeaning treatment, and marginalization. It reflects how the disabled are often "othered " by society, which considers the disabled to be separated or far from society. This happens in various ways, such as avoiding interactions, alienating them from mainstream activities, or treating them as objects of pity.

2. The Disabled as An Object

The disabled are seen as unable to contribute, leading to exclusion from decision-making and acceptance of societal labels and mistreatment. In the novel, disabilities are viewed as mere obstacles, ignoring the potential contributions of disabled individuals, as shown when Forrest's friends treated him inhumanely. They often avoid, mock, and even intentionally abuse Forrest physically, as described in the following section.

"at first, when I's growing up, she'd let me go out an play with everybody, but then she foun out they's teasing me an all, an one day a boy hit me in the back with a stick wile they was chasin me an it raised some fearsome welt. After that, she tole me not to play with them boys anymore. I started trying to play with the girls but that weren't much better, couse they all run away from me." (Groom 1986, 3)

As a child, Forrest's mother let him play with peers, but they often chased and beat him. Afterward, he avoided them and sought friendship with girls, who also rejected him, as mentioned in the following passage.

"... he takes a carton of milk an pours it in my lap an I jump up an run out cause it scares me. I tried to go the other way, but he come up to me an start pushing me on the shoulders. An he's saying all kinds of bad things, calling me a "stupo" an all, an the he hit me in the stomach..." (Groom 1986, 9).

Several times, people exploited Forrest for their own gain. For example, Miss French, a guest at his house, manipulated him with chocolates to satisfy her desires, as mentioned in the section below.

"..... she give me a piece of it, then she axe if I want another more, an she points for me to set down on the bed. I must of ten or fifteen of the divinity an lightning was flashing outside an thunder an the curtains was blowing an Miss French kinda pushes me an makes me lie back in the bed. She commences to start stroking me in a personal way. "jus keep your eyes closed" she says "an everything will be all right". Nex thing you know there is something happenin that had not happen before." (Groom 1986, 17)

The phrase 'She commences to start stroking me in a personal way' implies Miss French touched Forrest intimately, exploiting his innocence. This reflects how society often objectifies and mistreats disabled individuals, seeing them as symbols of suffering or weakness.

3. The Disabled as a Burden

A burden reflects the view that disability means dependence or exclusion from society. In *Forrest Gump*, this is shown through Lieutenant Dan, a former teacher-turned-soldier who lost both legs in the Vietnam War, preventing his full physical return. As mentioned in the following passage.

"I go to Dan an look down at him an he ain't got no legs no more." (Groom 1986, 76–77).

With a physical condition that is no longer "intact", it leads to the assumption that he is unable to carry out certain tasks or activities. He is considered unable to work, be independent, or fully participate in everyday life. Ironically, this assumption even comes from his wife, as mentioned in the section below.

"Also, his wife done run off with a tv producer that lived in New Yawk an she sued him for devorce on grounds of "incompatibility" (Groom 1986, 146).

This illustrates that society views disabilities as physical or mental limitations that prevent individuals from contributing normally or meeting societal standards. Due to these limitations, disabled individuals are often seen as dependent on others for daily activities, reinforcing the perception that they are worthless, incapable of contributing, and a burden on society.

All of the positions above emphasize the differences between the disabled and non-disabled. By distinguishing the disabled and the

normal, society reinforces a sense of "us versus them", reinforces stereotypes, and maintains power dynamics that the disabled are seen as "The Other," objects, and a burden. The disabled often lose their rights. As a result, people with disabilities do not have the same place or position in society and cannot participate fully in it.

C. DISABILITY IDENTITY CONSTRUCTED IN THE NOVEL *FORREST GUMP*

As stated by Melinda C. Hall in the article entitled "Critical Disability Theory" in 2019 which aligns with Jean F. Lyotard's postmodernism theory that culture, history, and politics are grand narratives initiated by corrupt authorities. Therefore, postmodernists see a meta-narrative perspective that believes society or culture can explain itself without the universality and conclusiveness determined by authorities. By adopting the mini-narrative perspective, this novel presents a different viewpoint. Therefore, according to the construction of binary opposition, elements that oppose the societal views will emerge and propose new identities for the disabled as "part of the society," "subject," and "contributor".

1. As Part of Society

The disabled are part of society as they have the same potential. They often proved to be highly creative, resilient, and adaptable individuals as portrayed in the novel *Forrest Gump*. It is reflected in Forrest's involvement in a football team, as mentioned below.

"I gonna fake a pass to Gwinn, but I am gonna throw the ball to you, so I want you to run down there to the cornerback and then turn right and the ball be right there." I nod my head, and do as I am told." (Groom 1986, 37)

At that time, Forrest's team was behind by a score of 28-24. Forrest's teammate, Snake, devised a plan for Forrest to score a goal and turn the situation around. It shows that Forrest is a trusted valuable team member with a significant contribution. In army, although Forrest received insults from his fellow soldiers, he demonstrated his inclusion by showcasing his ability to collaborate effectively with the group, as mentioned below.

"Me an Bones, the machine gunner, an Doyle, an two other guys crawl out of our holes an start to moving down the little slope.....Doyle an me an the other two guys is throwin grenades," (Groom 1986, 54).

This demonstrates that, despite his disability, Forrest Gump is able to adapt, learn swiftly, and grasp his responsibilities. It highlights that individuals with disabilities are capable of fully engaging in society and making valuable contributions.

2. As Subjects in Society

Negative stereotypes about disabilities assume that the disabled have no contribution to society. However, Forrest Gump is also a significant subject who plays a significant role in his school's sports scene, as mentioned in the sections below.

"An I run over maybe four or five guys till I'm in the clear an they all start chasing me again. that year I made the All State Football team" (Groom 1986, 11).

"She say everything fine at home, but that the highschool ain't won no more championships since I done lef." (Groom 1986, 56).

It shows that Forrest Gump is a highly successful football athlete. Despite being considered to be disabled, Forrest Gump plays a crucial role in his team to achieve their victories and showcase his great athletic talent. This reflects the disabled can make significant contributions and be crucial subjects in society.

Forrest is not only smart but also confident in playing music without being asked by other people, as mentioned in the section below.

"Jenny was singin "Blowin in the Wind" an when I begun to play, she stopped for a secont, an the banjo player, he stopped too, an they get this very surprised looks on they faces, an they Jenny give a big grin an she commence to pick up the song again, an the banjo player, he stop an give me a chance to ride my harmonica for a wile, an everybody in the crowd begun to clap an cheer when I was done." (Groom 1986, 31)

It shows that the disabled were able to become a subject that is admired by many people for their talents. As a subject, Forrest can take over the show and create a situation that attracts many people.

In his business, Forrest works as a shrimp fisherman and runs his shrimp company independently. Despite the grand narrative, as portrayed in newspapers that label him a 'disabled idiot,' Forrest continues to grow his business and hires others to work with him, as mentioned below.

“That year we made 75 thousand dollars before expenses an the bidness is getting so big I got to hire more people to hep me run it. One person I get is ole Snake, an so I put him to work with Curtis in charge of dredgin an spillway duties. Then I find out that Coach Fellers an so I give him a job, along with his two goons who has also retired, workin on boats an docks.... Mama say to me that we need to get somebody help her with the bookkeepin part of the bidness... an then I decided to get in touch with Mister Tribble... he say, an will be on the next plane down.” (Groom 1986, 212–13)

Forrest can prove to the world that he is a subject or the main actor in running a business. He can recruit many people who were described as "normal" in the novel as his co-workers. He also shows that disability is not an obstacle for him to be able to contribute fully to society, especially being able to empower people around him.

It can be concluded that the disabled have an active and important role as subjects in society. They are not only objects to be observed or categorized but also have abilities, potential, and contributions that can shape dynamics within society. Their existence as subjects encourages equality of rights and opportunities in various aspects of social life.

3. As the Contributor in Society

This position can be seen in the story of Lieutenant Dan after his both legs were amputated. After being abandoned by his wife, he was robbed and lived as a legless homeless person. Instead of living as a burden on society, he donates most of his retirement salary every month to fellow homeless people, as in the following section.

“there’s a little money ever month from his disability pension, but most of the time he just give it away to the other bums” (Groom 1986, 146).

A similar event also happened to Forrest when the newspapers called him an idiot and forgot the fact that he was one of the smartest people who could go into space. Forrest Gump's intelligence can be seen in the following citation.

“we want to use you on a flight to outer space. As Doctor Duke has pointed out, your mind is jus like a computer”—They say I is to be the “backup” for the backup computer.” (Groom 1986, 108–10).

Forrest's intellectual capabilities are immensely valuable. In this situation, NASA depends on him to manage scenarios involving computer malfunctions. Utilizing his exceptional intelligence, Forrest can manually record, process, and operate data, including executing emergency landing procedures. It shows that his intelligence provides benefits in jobs that require special abilities which not everyone has.

Within the military, Forrest serves as a key element in the team by supplying what is required by other team members, as mentioned in the section below.

“I am the machine gun ammo bearer, cause they figger I can carry a lot of shit on account of my size. Before we lef, a couple of other fellers axed if I could mind carryin some of their han grenades so 's they could carry more c-rations, an I agreed.” (Groom 1986, 50).

Society should cease viewing disabilities as something negative. They should provide equal opportunities for the disabled to develop their potential. It emphasizes that despite being marginalized, the disabled are highly contributors to society. It can be concluded that disability is not a deficiency or a burden on society. On the contrary, disabilities provide new values in a society where the society can learn to be more conservative in certain matters.

D. STRATEGIES USED TO DISSEMINATE A NEW IDENTITY FOR THE DISABLED

Through the application of the Disability Theory by Melinda C. Hall (2019), this study aims to reintegrate individuals with disabilities into society, preserving their rights and privileges. This involves acknowledging their inclusion and contributions, all with the ultimate goal of achieving freedom and social justice. In the novel *Forrest Gump*,

there is not only an attempt to change traditional views or stereotypes that separate the disabled from the able-bodied, this novel also introduces new strategies that involve society and the readers in shaping new identities for the disabled. These strategies are intended to alter the position of the binary opposition and encourage readers and society to rethink the concept of disability. The strategies in question include language strategies, social strategies, and cultural strategies.

1. Language Strategy

The initial action that emerges in the novel *Forrest Gump* in the effort to promote a new identity for individuals with disabilities is through the language choices in its writing. The use of dialect is generally used by writers to communicate a certain atmosphere or purpose in a literary work. In the case of *Forrest Gump*, the language choices aim to establish a new identity by encouraging readers to enhance their understanding of disability and provide a more authentic cultural picture of the disabled.

By using a first-person perspective in writing this novel, the language used really emphasizes the character of Forrest Gump. In this case, the language used reflects the communication skills of people with special needs as mentioned below.

"I be crouchin down real low an tryin to get all that ammo an the water can an the tri-pod plus all my own shit up to where Charlie Company is, an I'm strungglin past a slit trench when this guy down in it pipe up an say to the other" (Groom 1986, 50).

In the quotation above, Forrest Gump says "crouching" becomes "crouchin", "trying" becomes "tryin", "struggling" becomes "strungglin". He also changed the pronunciation of several words, as in the following section.

"When I was maybe twelve year ole." (Groom 1986, 2).
"When I begun to play, she stopped for a secont." (Groom 1986, 31).

Forrest also does not pronounce the letter "t" in words ending with that letter and also the first letters of a word, as in the following citation.

"Nex morning when I wake up somebody hole up a newspaper in front of the camera down in Houston for us to see." (Groom 1986, 115)

"I dont care for bananas much, cept for banana puddin. I like that all right." (Groom 1986, 3)

In some words, Forrest also removes middle letters that were difficult for him to pronounce. He also produces the sound of some words differently from the way normal people pronounce them, as mentioned below.

"Probly, tho I'm closer to bein a imbecile or, but personally, I'd rather think of mysef as like a halfwit," (Groom 1986, 41)

"I axed coach Fellers to let me run the ball straight and he say okay" (Groom 1986, 11)

In his use of language, Forrest Gump employs the indefinite article differently than most people. While the indefinite article 'a/an' is typically used based on the sound of the following word, Forrest does not always follow this convention, as stated below.

"Probly, tho I'm closer to bein a imbecile or maybe even a moron, but personally, I'd rather think of mysef as like a halfwit, or something—an not no idiot—cause when people think of a idiot" (Groom 1986, 1)

It shows that the novel uses a unique dialect because it reflects the disabled way of speaking. This novel uses a distinctive narrative style to depict Forrest's voice and perspective. This can foster empathy and understanding among readers that the disabled have a self that is worthy of being presented as a subject.

This writing style reflects the idiolect of Forrest Gump, requiring readers to understand the context from his perspective. The goal is for society to recognize disabilities as part of cultural and ethnic diversity, rather than viewing disabled individuals as a group with shortcomings. Like an ethnic community, disabled people have their own unique language, communication methods, and expressions. By adopting this paradigm, 'normal' people can appreciate and understand this diversity by learning their languages, such as sign language or braille, as a sign

of respect for their uniqueness. This approach is what is meant by language strategy.

2. Social Strategy

In this novel, there are indications of a social approach to achieving better inclusion of the disabled. Concrete action at the social level is an important element in bringing positive changes to the perception and inclusion of individuals with disabilities so that they are no longer "the other" in society but part of it. This approach covers the areas of employment, public access, equal rights, and so on. This is illustrated through the character of Lieutenant Dan as in the following section.

"Also, his wife done run off with a TV producer that lived in New Yawk an she sued him for devorce on grounds of "incompatibility." (Groom 1986, 146)

With his physical limitations, his wife, as the closest person, did not trust that Lieutenant Dan would be able to support his family because of his physical limitations. Moreover, he lost his job as a mathematics teacher because the mathematics class was on the second floor, as mentioned in the section below.

"after he had got out of the army hospital, Dan went back to Connecticut to try to get back his ole job teachin history. But they wadn't no history job available, so they made him teach math.. the math class was on the secont floor of the school an he had a hell of a time makin it upstairs with no legs an all" (Groom 1986, 146)

It was like despair for him that gives a huge impact of the challenges and losses he faced, especially because he did not have a place in society. This novel tries to embrace people like Lieutenant Dan, one of which is by providing empathy as does Forrest in the following citation,

"I look over Dan an his eyes is gleamin from behind his beard. Something tellin me he is the one needs some hep" (Groom 1986, 148)

This incident can be seen as an effort to build social inclusion for people with disabilities. The easiest thing for society to do is to provide moral support for people with disabilities, like what Forrest did. With

care like the above, society can build inclusion for people with disabilities.

Another character named Jenny also shows inclusiveness towards disabilities. In the story, Lieutenant Dan struggles in basic task, such as using toilet. Jenny shows her concern for him by offering help when he wants to go to the toilet, as mentioned below.

“Dan rolled hisself into the bathroom, say he’s got to take a pee. When he’s in there, Jenny axe how he gonna do that, an don’t he need hep? It is a sad an sorry spectacle when no-legged man have got to pee in his shoe an then dump it over into the toilet.” (Groom 1986, 154–55)

Knowing it, Jenny finally provided a container which she placed on the bathroom floor. She did this as a form of effort to provide more humane facilities for Lieutenant Dan when he wanted to urinate in the toilet, as mentioned in the following citation.

“Jenny fixed up Dan a place in a corner of the livin room with a little mattress an she kep a jar on the bathroom floor so he wouldn’t have to use his shoe.” (Groom 1986, 154)

This demonstrates that social inclusion can be achieved by providing accessible infrastructure and public services, such as accessible toilets and wheelchairs. An inclusive society must create spaces that accommodate the needs of the disabled. For example, wheelchairs facilitate mobility, and public spaces, buildings, and transportation should be designed to meet the needs of disabled individuals. Lieutenant Dan, who requires lifts and escalators, illustrates how such accommodations help disabled people navigate multi-storey buildings more easily and safely.

It is also important to pay attention to the facilities needed in schools for students with special needs. Students with special needs who study in regular schools certainly need several special things, both from teaching staff and from learning media. This is reflected in Forrest Gump who studied at a regular school, as mentioned below.

“Mama thought it would be good for me to go to the public school., Sometimes I’d set there wile teacher was talkin an I don’t know what was going on in my mind, but I’d start lookin out the winder at the birds an squirrels..., an then the

teacher'd come over an fuss at me... an then she'd make me go out an set on a bench in the hall." (Groom 1986, 4)

This should be a concern for teachers to understand that disabled students need special methods so that they can still receive lessons at school. One effort that can be made is to provide seats closer to the teacher and also be more interactive with students with disabilities so that they can remain focused and interested in learning in class. It is also necessary to provide training programs and seminars for teachers to understand the needs of disabled students.

It shows that the implementation of inclusion can be seen through in-depth efforts to integrate students with special needs in regular schools, provide disability-friendly facilities, and hold training programs for employees and community members to increase their understanding of diversity. In an inclusive society, awareness campaigns are regularly held to reduce stereotypes and prejudice, and participation of disabled people is encouraged through their active involvement in decision-making. In this way, disability is no longer a disease or burden but is part of the diversity in society. This is what is meant by social strategy.

3. Cultural Strategy

The variety of ethnic groups that exist means that people are born with the need for recognition as part of that group. This recognition then becomes an identity for the community. Likewise, for people with disabilities, their existence needs to be recognized, not as a deficiency but as a new culture and ethnicity that is accepted in society.

According to Hopson (Hopson 2019, 22–24), cultural views on disability often present it as an identity separate from that of 'normal' people. To foster a new identity for disabled individuals, society must learn about their culture and experiences. This is in line with Joseph's (2012) opinion that culture cannot be separated from identity. The concept of a culture is closely related to beliefs, values, and practices which must have an identity function for the individuals or groups who participate in it.

The novel *Forrest Gump* illustrates that the elements of cultural formation are also shared by people with disabilities. This can include

the way they view the world, the values they hold, and the practices that shape their daily lives.

The beliefs and values held by people with disabilities are represented through the character Forrest Gump as a person with intellectual disabilities. One of these beliefs and values is about humanity, as in the following citation.

"So all thru that summer an fall an the next spring we be workin hard, me an Sue an Mama an Curtis—an I even had a job for Bubba's daddy." (Groom 1986, 210)

In the story, Forrest Gump fulfills his promise to start a shrimp business in honor of his friend Bubba's dream. After Bubba's death in the Vietnam War, Forrest is determined to bring their plan to life and reaches out to Bubba's father to share the story. He not only starts the business but also helps Bubba's family by offering Bubba's father a job. This shows that, as a disabled man, Forrest possesses human values, demonstrated through his concern for others. It also reflects his loyalty, sense of responsibility toward his promise, and willingness to help those around him.

Forrest Gump's concern for other humans is also shown through his conversation with his father Bubba regarding the American-Viet Nam war, as in the following citation,

"Well, we was tryin to do the right thing, I guess. We was jus doin what we was tole." An he say, "Well, do you think it was worth it? What we did? All them boys getting kilt that way?" An I says, "Look, I am jus a idiot, see. But if you want my real opinion, I think it was a bunch of shit." (Groom 1986, 204)

In the conversation above, Bubba's father asks Forrest why Bubba died during the war. Initially, Forrest said that Bubba died because he was shot. But Bubba's father asks a deeper question, namely why we go to war and whether the sacrifices and losses are worth it. Forrest then contemplates and states that they were only carrying out orders from authorities. However, when he was asked if it was worth it, he answered honestly that it was "a bunch of shit".

These conversations highlight human values. Bubba's father questioning the reasons behind his son's death and whether the sacrifice

was worth it invites reflection on morality and the impact of war. Forrest, despite calling himself an 'idiot,' recognizes that war causes significant loss, expressing his emotional and rational disapproval by stating it's 'a bunch of shit.' This reveals his deep concern for the suffering caused by war.

This shows that disabled people also have beliefs and values about humanity. According to Joseph (2012, 2), work, dress, and use language. Language is a practice can be seen in how people practice those functions as a tool to spread one's culture to other people and to express the things one does.

This is in line with Alsahmmari (2018, 98), that language is used as a tool to represent a culture so that people can share their ideas, feelings, and thoughts within a culture. How the disabled use language is different from the normal in language, like Forrest's idiolect, as in the following quote.

"I been a idiot since I was born. My IQ is near 70, which qualifies me, so they say. Probly, tho I'm closer to bein a imbecile or maybe even a moron, but personally, I'd rather think of mysef as like a halfwit, or something—an not no idiot—cause when people think of a idiot" (Groom 1986, 1)

Through this first point of view, normal people as readers are forced to understand what Forrest Gump is saying. This is of course a characteristic of people with disabilities in communicating with other people. Society must be willing to learn how the disabled communicate so that society also understands what the disabled think and feel.

Practices are also reflected in how individuals or groups carry out their daily activities such as dressing, working, or even affection. Disabled people also understand that the activities they do every day also reflect how they represent themselves, as in the following citations.

"I don't care what the rest of them do," Jenny says, "I don't like this one bit. Forrest, you go an get out of that outfit." I gone on back to bathroom an took off the costume. Maybe Jenny is right, I'm thinkin." (Groom 1986, 158)

Forrest Gump realized that he was not supposed to wear this costume that makes him look idiot. It shows that the disabled also know and understand what they wear and how they should dress because it reflects the identity they want to show to society.

Even though the novel *Forrest Gump* does not tell about marriage, this novel shows that the disabled also have the same feelings as normal people, as in the following citations.

“Naturally, things are a bit different between Jenny and me after that. We commenced to sleep in the same bed together, which was also kind of strange for me at first, but I sure got used to it. All of a sudden things start to change for me—like my whole life just begun, and I am the happiest feller in the world.” (Groom 1986, 95)

Forrest Gump as a disabled falls in love with Jenny Curan. This shows that people with disabilities can also feel love even for normal people. They can also share their feelings and thoughts with other people, although not necessarily verbally, but through the actions they do. Apart from that, they also have the same opportunity to live with their loved ones and they even deserve to live side by side.

Disabled individuals have often been seen as incapable of working or being employed. (Naberushkina, Raidugin, Voevodina, & Ikhneva, 2021, p. 1). However, *Forrest Gump* disproves this notion by succeeding in business and offering opportunities to others by hiring many people to work with him, as mentioned below.

“That year we made 75 thousand dollars before expenses and the business is getting so big I got to hire more people to help me run it.” (Groom 1986, 212–13)

This shows that disabled people can work together with people. Through the cultural-forming elements described above, society should see disabilities as part of cultural phenomenon and ethnic diversity which have their own beliefs, values, customs, and language. It shows that the disabled also have the same opportunities and abilities as normal people to achieve this identity. By depicting everyday habits in dressing, working, and socializing with society, *Forrest Gump* becomes a bridge for the disabled and the normal to live side by side. In this way, the disabled strengthen their identity as a cultural community which gives them a special meaning as a new ethnicity or group in society. This is what is meant by cultural strategy.

E. CONCLUSION

The disabled should not be considered according to the perception that has existed in society so far. They should be seen as active members of a normal community. This novel challenges the concept of the "normal" and "abnormal". Facts show that people with disabilities are also able to do things that society in general does, although with different methods. Therefore, this novel presents various ways and strategies to reintegrate the disabled into society. In this case, it is hoped that society can better understand disabilities as part of cultural and ethnic diversity, rather than considering them as a group that has disadvantages. As an ethnically similar community, they bring their unique language, ways of communicating, and expression. By depicting this new entity culture, *Forrest Gump* becomes a bridge for people with disabilities and normal people to live side by side. In this way, the disabled strengthen their identity as a cultural community which gives them their own meaning as a new ethnicity or group in society. In this way, it is hoped that society can support the rights of individuals with disabilities, as well as accept and respect diversity at all levels of society.

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