

RESILIENCE AS THE GREATNESS OF GATSBY

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ABSTRACT

This paper, as its title – Resilience as the Greatness of Gatsby suggests, aims to read F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) against the backdrop of the newly developing field of resilience. More specifically, the paper addresses the question whether the greatness of Jay Gatsby lies in his degree of resilience – whether he is a resilient character at all.

The first two chapters provide a base for discussion, as they introduce the concept of resilience and dedicate some words to the novel and its main character. In the subsequent chapters the paper takes a close look at the conditions of resilience derived from its definition to determine whether it is relevant to seek any parallels between a resilient personality and Gatsby's character. In other words, the goal of these chapters is to primarily understand if Gatsby and his circumstances meet the conditions of a resilient setting. Finally, the research takes into consideration the strange anomaly of risk factors functioning as sources of motivation, i.e., how it is possible that poor circumstances better the chances of not only recovering but growing as well.

In regard to its methodology, the paper relies on comparing the qualities of resilience and the characteristics of Gatsby and focuses on two particular risk factors in the case of the character: growing up in poverty and getting rejected by Daisy.

In order to examine Jay Gatsby, this research studies *The Great Gatsby's* (1925) character in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel. Additionally, the research heavily draws on *Handbook of Adult Resilience* (2010), edited by John W. Reich, Alex J. Zautra, and John Stuart Hall, which is used for the examination of the model within the field of resilience.

INTRODUCTION

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) remains timeless and unique: the novel has grown into a fundamental masterpiece of the American psyche. Some look at the story as a cautionary tale, while others perceive Gatsby as the ultimate representation of the American Dream and the manifestation of the majestic ideal of the self-made man.

While it is subjective how one perceives the plot of the book and what they understand to be the moral of the story, it is certain that the perseverance of Gatsby throughout the novel is exceptional. Despite the luxury of the lavish parties, readers are made aware of Gatsby's burdening origins as well, and how James Gatz, a poor boy from North Dakota, reinvents himself in order to fit into his crystal-clear conception of becoming someone great in the future. Certainly, Gatsby has to face several hardships throughout his life – having a poverty-stricken childhood and an unsupportive family, getting rejected by his one and only love, living in a

tough and materialistic society which refuses to accept him, are all examples of what could easily make him turn away from his imagination of a better life. On the contrary, he remains faithful to his aspirations and starts making his dreams come true, regardless of the circumstances.

This paper aims to examine whether the driving force behind Gatsby is resilience, which is by definition an outcome of successful adaptation to adversity (Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010). The resilience model suggests that in the case of an individual facing difficulties, it is the norm to show healthy reactions, meaning a form of adaptation and even more so, advancement. In other words, in the case of resilience, recovery refers to not merely the absence of illness or difficulty, but a presence of a successful, adaptive transformation.

In order to research the relation between what seems like Gatsby's exceptional motivation and what the resilience model suggests, the paper examines the field of the formerly noted paradigm and aims to simultaneously explore the character of Gatsby from the point of the resilience model.

METHODOLOGY

This paper investigates the question whether the greatness of Gatsby lies in his degree of resilience – whether he is a resilient person at all. More specifically, the research examines the resilience paradigm and aims to apply it to Gatsby's character and behaviour. In order for the study to be relevant, it is necessary to primarily understand what researchers of the field have found so far about the newly developing concept of resilience.

Firstly, the paper takes a close look at the conditions of resilience derived from its definition to determine whether it is relevant to seek any parallels between a resilient personality and Gatsby's character. In other words, the goal of these chapters is to primarily understand if Gatsby and his circumstances meet the conditions of a resilient setting.

Secondly, the paper attempts to highlight fundamental aspects of resilience, then prove and illustrate how they are present in the life of Gatsby, making him an example of a resilient attitude.

In order to examine the character of Jay Gatsby, this research heavily draws on F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925). It is undoubtedly the most reliable source for analysing the character, since it had been once born in its creator's mind, and Fitzgerald expounds his imagery of Gatsby most profoundly in the novel itself. For the same reason the paper takes into consideration a biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald to understand his thoughts on writing the novel. *In Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (1981) Matthew J. Bruccoli

provides trustworthy information on the life of Fitzgerald, among which there is a collection of letters both written, as well as received by the novelist at the time of the birth of the novel.

Edited by John W. Reich, Alex J. Zautra and John Stuart Hall, *Handbook of Adult Resilience* (2010) is used for the examination of resilience. The book deals with one fundamental issue: what is it that enables an individual to bounce back from stressful experiences? The authors have produced a volume in which they examine the resilience paradigm and extend it to wide-ranging variables on both theoretical and practical levels. In this research, the book is used as an exclusive guide to dive into the field of resilience, that is, the paper considers *Handbook of Adult Resilience* (2010) as its primary source for exploring the resilience model.

After employing the previously described methodology for this research, the study expects to find that Jay Gatsby represents an excellent example of the resilience paradigm, as well as to successfully identify the resilient characteristics of his attitude.

Here, it is important to note that in the case of *Handbook of Adult Resilience* (2010) and other studies quoted throughout the paper, researchers rely on real-life studies, therefore their findings are to be understood on the level of non-fiction, while Gatsby is a fictional character, a creation of Fitzgerald's imagination.

DISCUSSION

An Introduction to F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

How does F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) remain so fascinating and timeless? Upon its release in April 1925, the novel faced tepid sales and received mixed reviews from authors who were looked upon by Fitzgerald himself. H. L. Mencken, contemporary American journalist acknowledged "the charm and beauty of the writing", despite claiming the novel to be only "a glorified anecdote" (Brucoli, 1981). In a letter to Fitzgerald, Edith Wharton, contemporary writer and designer, explained how much she liked the figure of Gatsby, but her only complaint was that Fitzgerald "ought to have given us his [Gatsby's] early career", which "would have situated him, & made his final tragedy a tragedy instead of a "fait divers" for the morning papers" (Lewis & Lewis, 1989, p. 482). Since then, the bitter reception of the piece has turned into an acceptance and even more so, adoration of the work. Despite its unpopularity at the time of its publication, the novel has grown into "more than an American classic; it's become a defining document of the national psyche, a creation myth, the Rosetta Stone of the American dream" (McInerney, 2018).

Certainly, there is something in the piece which engages each reader individually as the novel explores themes that are timeless, while creating and discovering characters that anyone can relate to in some way. Among other characters, Gatsby's development remains captivating because of the fascinating driving force behind it. By exploring the novel, it becomes unmistakable that Gatsby is keenly burdened by the circumstances: despite the glamour of his lavish parties, readers are also made aware of his modest origins, his struggles of finding his place in society and winning the heart of Daisy Buchanan. However, the enigmatic greatness of Gatsby becomes so powerful exactly because of his opposing fate; his poverty-stricken childhood, the disapproval by society and the rejection by his only love, Daisy, somehow eventuate a high-spirited, great Gatsby. "In the famous flashback scene of chapter VI, for example, Nick recalls Gatsby's past as "James Gatz of North Dakota" in order to explain Gatsby's present, portraying his youthful rejection of family and original name as a necessary precondition to his later "glory" as a wealthy, upwardly-mobile adult" (Bloom, 2010, p. 131). Despite his hindering background, he reinvents himself, exemplifying the ideal representation of the American Dream. "In an exaggerated pure form, he [Gatsby] struck what many regard as the unique chord in our national [American] experience: a whole-hearted allegiance to an imagined future", writes Wilson (1957), referring to Gatsby's strong commitment to his envisioned dreams. Though being rejected on several levels, not only does he dream the American Dream, but achieves immense wealth, continues to work towards his expectations, and becomes an outstanding representation of the magnificent self-made man.

To illustrate that it is possible to seek driving forces behind Gatsby other than living up to the majestic idea of the American Dream, it is worth mentioning Michelson's (1981) thoughts on the issue, who puts the whole narrative into an unusual point of view. According to the writer, Gatsby fits into the traditional myth-pattern, and he discusses his idea that the story of the novel is about how "a bold young man sacrifices everything for a few moments of impossible glory" (Michelson, 1981). Even though Michelson refers to Gatsby's aspirations as "moments of impossible glory", the former quotation also emphasises the hard work (in Michelson's own words, sacrifice) needed in order to achieve the glory.

No matter what readers call it, it is obvious that Gatsby has something in him that keeps him going, regardless of the circumstances. One can associate his relentless fight with motivation, courage, diligence or perseverance, only to name a few possible reasons for the character's attitude. As noted above, Wilson traces back Gatsby's motivation to a strong confidence in the belief of the American Dream, while Michelson likens Gatsby to a typical mythical character due to his temperament. In addition to the former observations, one may acknowledge how

other characters of the novel perceive Gatsby's commitment to his ideas regardless of the constant obstacles he encounters. In Chapter I of *The Great Gatsby*, Nick Carraway specifically describes Gatsby having "some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life" and "an extraordinary gift for hope" (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 5), which is another affirmation of the presence of an enduring driving force behind Gatsby.

This paper examines the power which fuels the motivation of Gatsby from the point of resilience, which is by definition an outcome of successful adaptation to adversity (Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010). In order to apply the resilience paradigm to the case of Gatsby, it is necessary to research the nature of the character itself, while simultaneously diving into the field of resilience.

An introduction to resilience

Generally, resilience refers to a capacity to bounce back from difficult situations. As for an initial and more in-depth illustration of the concept, Sir Michael Rutter's research provides valuable insight as described by Reich, Zautra and Hall (2010). According to them, Rutter focused on risk and vulnerability to psychiatric illness, as well as stress and invulnerability in the case of young children.

Despite the extreme poverty endured by one in six British children (in 1979), Rutter found that nearly half were well adjusted, and that one in seven demonstrated outstanding ability. Amazed by the invulnerability he witnessed, Rutter hypothesized that the identification of competence factors and protective influences could help to determine why some children survive and even prosper despite extreme deprivation. (Reich, Zautra & Hall, p. 288)

Early researches, like the one conducted by Rutter in 1979, contributed to the later development of the concept of resilience.

To understand the idea of the resilience paradigm, a look at the origins of the model leads to a deeper understanding. In *Handbook of Adult Resilience* (2010), Reich, Zautra and Hall explain that "resilience research grew from studies of at-risk children: children who experienced risks, such as divorce and parental drug abuse, which were believed to predispose them to various forms of psychopathology", and that is how researchers' attention later shifted to studying resilience in addition to risk factors (Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010, p. 97).

In *Handbook of Adult Resilience* (2010), resilience is referred to as a "newly developing concept", as it has only been recently since the paradigm earned itself a distinctive field of

scholarship (p. vi). On the other hand, despite being “ripe for development”, resilience is one of the most integrative concepts of the 21st century thinking in social sciences, as a result of having “many variations in definitions and characterizations” (Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010, p. vi). Because of the wide range of varieties, it depends on the individual and their subject which approach they choose to focus on. Even though there are differences between the academic disciplines and their attitude towards the idea of resilience, there appears to be two dominant aspects that the concept revolves around: recovery and sustainability. The following table shows the focal points of the two approaches. Recovery refers to “patterns where the individual’s adaptive function declines as a result of adversity, then returns to a positive level. This pattern is normal and expected in situations of severe continuing adversity” (p. 221), while sustainability means “the capacity of a system to conserve resources [not waste] and to generate some resource reserves for future use” (p. 154) explain Reich, Zautra and Hall (2010).

<i>recovery</i>	the ability to rebound from stress
	a capacity to regain equilibrium quickly
	a capacity to return to an initial state of health
<i>sustainability</i>	the continuation of the recovery trajectory
	an enhancement of function

According to the resilience paradigm, healthy reactions as a response to risk factors are the norm (Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010, p. vii). It is important to note that in this context, healthy reaction as a response refers not only to an absence of illness and error, but it suggests a possible and likely process of adaptation as an attitude toward stress.

Conditions of the resilience paradigm

To begin with, it is essential to take a look at whether the narrative of Gatsby can be examined from the point of the resilient paradigm. To prove that the formerly noted model is applicable to the behaviour of the character, the conditions of resilience must be discussed primarily. Then, in order to create a parallel between Gatsby’s attitude and the resilience model, the key elements of the paradigm have to be identified in the plot of the novel, or more specifically, in the storyline of the character.

The writers of the handbook firmly define resilience as “an outcome of successful adaptation to adversity” (Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010). The definition implies that when talking about resilience, it is necessary to consider stress as a determinant of a subsequent behaviour.

Consequently, the importance of a stressor must not be ignored because it helps identifying a resilient behaviour. Reich, Zautra & Hall (2010) describe why it is important to identify stressors in order to study a resilient setting:

If one observes a person or a community functioning well and even growing, this is not prima facie evidence that it is a resilient organism or entity. The person may well have high intelligence, good education, or finances, and the community may have a well-functioning system of municipal agencies and available resources, but in contemporary thinking about resilience, as demonstrated in our chapters, these variables are not evidence of resilience per se. The major assumption in these chapters is that resilience has to be studied in the light of either a sudden or an ongoing system stressor. Only when there is a system threat can we be assured that the person or community has exercised the requisite strengths, resources, and capacities that result in shorter- or longer-term resilient adaptation and growth. (p. 8)

To summarise the definition and the observation of the researchers together, the authors believe that in the case of resilient behaviour, there must be an adaptation which is primarily caused by adversity. In other words, the presence of prior adversity is necessary for a subsequent resilient attitude. When assessing resilience, it is important to consider that it is “relative and should be thought of as a function of risk exposure” (Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010, p. 241), which again highlights the importance of identifying the system stressor which precedes the adaptation process.

The following table is based on the findings of Reich, Zautra & Hall (2010); it contains examples of stressors, divided into areas that surround an individual’s personality. The table aims to give an illustration about how risk factors may occur in practice. The stressors represented here have been selected according to their relevance to the novel, or more specifically, to the case of Gatsby.

area:	Setting	Situational interactions	Group memberships
stressor example:	<i>financial setback, poverty</i>	<i>embarrassment, distress</i>	<i>group disapproval, loss of status</i>

Again, according to the definition of resilience, the precondition of a resilient setting is the presence of a system stressor, i.e., some type of adversity. Therefore, in order to prove that Gatsby is an example of a resilient individual, one must identify the character’s own, specific

stressor.

Before proceeding with the discussion, it is important to note that this research aims to highlight two main stressors in Gatsby's case: growing up in poverty and getting rejected by the love of his life, Daisy Fay. In this particular context, getting rejected by Daisy equals the marriage between her and Tom Buchanan. In this chapter, the research aims to prove that the two, formerly highlighted incidents are significant stress factors from the point of Gatsby, or in other words, that they equate heavy stressors in the experiences of the character.

Throughout the novel, as readers discover Gatsby's past and take a peek behind the curtains of the glamorous Jazz Age parties, it slowly becomes clear that Gatsby has been struck by various stress factors throughout his life. He is born into a discouraging family dealing with financial difficulties and spends his childhood in poverty in a household with no purpose in life. According to Nick Carraway, the narrator of the novel, "his [Gatsby's] parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people" (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 76) and "young Gatsby, for over a year, worked as "a clam-digger and a salmon-fisher or in any other capacity that brought him food and bed" (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 76), which is further proof of the family's financial difficulties and an inability to provide for young Gatsby. Later in the novel, Nick considers Gatsby's past and claims that "he had no comfortable family standing behind him [Gatsby]" (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 114).

Reich, Zautra & Hall (2010) consider a study previously conducted by Sir Michael Rutter in 1979, who identified a number of six family factors that were related to psychiatric disorders of young children, one of them being low social status (p. 288). Even though Rutter found that the presence of one of these factors does not necessarily lead to psychiatric disorders (Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010, p. 288), they are still to be considered risk factors in young children's life.

Poverty and its direct consequences – such as substandard housing or hunger, are not the only difficulties to face for the family and young Gatsby. Fitzgerald embedded the characters of the novel into the famous Jazz Age society, which is well-known for its materialism, hollowness and lack of noble values. To illustrate how important affluence is in Gatsby's contemporary society, the following quotation aims to help understand why Gatsby's dreams depend so much on acquiring wealth. In chapter 8 of the novel, Nick talks about the time when Daisy and Gatsby met for the first time, and the events of the short, one month period they spend together. From the narration it is evident that Nick puts emphasis on the struggle of the differences between social classes, which Gatsby too is unmistakably aware of.

However glorious might be his future as Jay Gatsby, he was at present a penniless young man without a past, and at any moment the invisible cloak of his uniform might slip from his shoulders. He took what he could get, ravenously and unscrupulously — eventually he took Daisy one still October night, took her because he had no real right to touch her hand. (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 114)

What is another considerable fact is that young Gatsby has a hatred of the thought of being poor, which perhaps is most evident from Nick's narration when he describes that even though "an instinct toward his [Gatsby's] future glory had led him [Gatsby], some months before, to the small Lutheran college of St. Olaf in southern Minnesota", Gatsby only "stayed there two weeks, dismayed at its ferocious indifference to the drums of his destiny, to destiny itself, and despising the janitor's work with which he was to pay his way through" (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 76). Another evidence that Gatsby resents even the thought of being poor is when Nick claims that Gatsby's parents did not fit his future conceptions of becoming Jay Gatsby – when James Gatz, a poor boy from North Dakota dreamt of a better life, "his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all" (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 76).

Poverty generally belongs to the category of what researchers call a community risk within the field of community resilience, which focuses on resilience in communities. Community risk factors, besides poverty, include factors such as crowded housing, high school dropout rates and income inequality (Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010, p. 12). Nonetheless, there exist studies that focus solely on poverty, on the level of the individual. Buckner and Waters (2011) conducted research to study resilience factors in the context of poverty:

Poverty, "the state or condition of having little or no money, goods, or means of support," has meaning in both relative and absolute terms. Those who are defined as poor in an affluent country like the USA may not seem impoverished, on a more absolute basis, compared with those living in extreme poverty in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa. Nonetheless, individuals who are poor in a more relative sense may still experience significant distress through the comparative wealth they see around them. (Buckner & Waters, 2011)

Therefore, according to former observations, it is not only an assumption to state that in the case of Gatsby, having to grow up in poverty and without any support from his family is a severe stress factor.

Apart from growing up in poverty, there is another stressor in Gatsby's life that the study aims to highlight. Another stressor to take into consideration is the marriage between Daisy and

Tom, equivalent to Daisy rejecting Gatsby. Since it is undeniable that the marriage indeed happened and Daisy “married Tom Buchanan of Chicago, with more pomp and circumstance than Louisville ever knew before” (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 59), it is not only a presumption to believe that Daisy rejected Gatsby, breaking her promise to wait for him. However, if the marriage is studied as a stressor, it must be proven that it has the effects of adversity in Gatsby’s life in order to fit into a resilient setting. Therefore, the paper aims to find evidence to prove that Gatsby is not under a delusion thinking that Daisy once had feelings for him, and that he is truly heartbroken over the woman.

The novel details the romance between the two from both Gatsby’s and Daisy’s point of view. Readers can explore the thoughts of Gatsby through one of his conversations with Nick, while the experiences of Daisy are described in a longer monologue of Jordan Baker, a close friend of Daisy, in which she tells about the time when Gatsby and Daisy met for the first time, and the events before Daisy’s bridal dinner.

The following quotation is part of a conversation between Gatsby and Nick, in which Gatsby admits his feelings toward Daisy:

“I can’t describe to you how surprised I was to find out I loved her, old sport. I even hoped for a while that she’d throw me over, but she didn’t, because she was in love with me too. She thought I knew a lot because I knew different things from her... . Well, there I was, ‘way off my ambitions, getting deeper in love every minute, and all of a sudden I didn’t care. What was the use of doing great things if I could have a better time telling her what I was going to do?” (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 115)

As noted above, Jordan’s monologue helps readers discover Daisy’s point of view. In chapter 4, Jordan talks about the time she had seen Daisy and Gatsby together, “so engrossed in each other that she didn’t see me [Jordan] until I was five feet away” (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 58). Additionally, Jordan noted that “the officer [Gatsby] looked at Daisy while she was speaking, in a way that every young girl wants to be looked at sometime, and because it seemed romantic to me [Jordan] I have remembered the incident ever since” (Fitzgerald, 1925, pp. 58-59).

It is therefore certain that the romance between the two had been once true, which leads readers to the assumption that Gatsby’s feelings were indeed deeply hurt. Even though the example of Gatsby and Daisy is a very specific one, researchers of the field explain that romantic breakups are possible to be studied from the point of resilience, as they can be interpreted as stress factors on the level of the individual. “Breakups are common but often one of the most distressing experiences that young people can have”, write O’Sullivan, Hughes,

Talbot, and Fuller (2019), whose goal in their study is to assess traits that reflect resiliency after a romantic breakup.

A resilient personality

According to researchers, “positive emotions constitute a “basic building block” of resilience”, since “positive emotions may function in the service of well-being by (...) interrupting the ongoing example of daily stress” (Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010, p. 88). That is to say that showing positive attitude regardless of an ongoing stress factor heightens the chances of a resilient recovery, as positive emotions are components of coping.

The evident fact that during the years he spent in poverty Gatsby never accepted his circumstances, unquestionably improved his chance of a resilient outcome, and not only recovering but obtaining sustainability as well. Reich, Zautra and Hall (2010) examine a study previously conducted by Werner and Smith:

Through data collection and analysis spanning 40 years, this research has been able to identify key risk and protective factors that influence outcomes across child development and into adulthood. Findings have emphasized several key factors influencing resilient outcomes, including (1) individual characteristics, such as self-esteem and purpose in life (...) (p. 15).

This observation suggests that there are certain key factors that better the chances of a resilient outcome, i.e., a form of recovery and advancement. One such factor is possessing a self-esteem and purpose in life on the level of individual characteristics.

In the case of Gatsby, it is evident that he undoubtedly sustains a sense of purpose in his life; in fact, he fuels a disapproval of his hindering background and his own, impoverished self, and a reinvention of himself with the help of what Wilson (1957) calls “a whole-hearted allegiance to an imagined future”. Nick Carraway gives ample description about the faith of Gatsby, which discovers his own point of view of the conviction that one day, he would become someone great.

The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God — a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that — and he must be about His Father’s business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end. (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 76)

Common belief suggests that an individual with strong coping abilities is more likely to easily deal with difficulties than someone who has not developed any coping mechanisms. In connection with this issue, Reich, Zautra and Hall (2010) explain that resilient personalities are indeed characterized by traits that reflect a firm, “well-differentiated” sense of self (p. 113). This trait helps achieving “high levels of adaptive functioning” (Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010, p. 114). A strong sense of self is a highly important element of demonstrating resilient behaviour. Sense of self – or in other words, “self-structure” - is embodied by qualities of self-esteem, self-confidence or self-efficacy, self-understanding, a positive future orientation, and an ability to succeed in dealing with negative behaviours and emotions. “Some of these traits have been subsumed under the concepts of “hardiness” and “ego-resilience” (Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010, pp. 113-114).

According to the authors of the handbook, self-esteem can be defined as “a sense of self-worth, self-respect, and self-acceptance that is usually linked to an expectation of success in life” (Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010, p. 114). From the narration of Nick Carraway, it is clear that Gatsby honestly believes, with what might seem to be a childish naivety, that he can achieve his imagined aspirations.

We see how James Gatz of North Dakota invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year old boy would be likely to invent, set him in a dream universe of ineffable gaudiness, such as one could concoct by skimming through a dozen magazines, and remained faithful to that conception to the end. (MacKendrick, 1950, p. 310).

His faith in achieving his goals, from acquiring material wealth to winning Daisy, is a great example of the previously described strong expectation of success in life. Nick calls this expectation “an instinct toward his [Gatsby’s] future glory” and describes Gatsby’s heart being in “a constant, turbulent riot” as “the most grotesque and fantastic conceits haunted him in his bed at night” (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 76).

Even after Daisy rejects him by marrying Tom, Gatsby maintains his resilient attitude towards his aspirations. The next quotations are taken from the novel, more specifically the scene which takes place in Plaza Hotel, where Gatsby confidently opens up to Tom Buchanan, the husband of Daisy – he talks about his relationship with the young woman and how she loves him too.

“I [Tom] want to know what Mr. Gatsby has to tell me.”

“Your wife doesn’t love you,” said Gatsby. “She’s never loved you. She loves me.”

“You must be crazy!” exclaimed Tom automatically.

Gatsby sprang to his feet, vivid with excitement.

“She never loved you, do you hear?” he cried. “She only married you because I was poor and she was tired of waiting for me. It was a terrible mistake, but in her heart she never loved any one except me!” (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 100)

Gatsby claiming that Daisy never loved Tom is evidence that even after Daisy had rejected him by marrying Tom, he never stopped believing that he would once win back her heart. In fact, he never believed he had lost it; he talks in a way to make sure that it is obvious that Daisy had always loved him, and never really abandoned the idea of being with Gatsby again. The next quotation is further evidence of the former observation:

“I told you [Tom] what’s been going on,” said Gatsby. “Going on for five years — and you didn’t know.” Tom turned to Daisy sharply.

“You’ve been seeing this fellow [Gatsby] for five years?”

“Not seeing,” said Gatsby. “No, we couldn’t meet. But both of us loved each other all that time, old sport, and you didn’t know. I used to laugh sometimes.”— but there was no laughter in his eyes ——” to think that you didn’t know.” (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 101)

It must be noted that even though the former quotations are excellent examples of Gatsby’s never-ending yearning towards his future dream, therefore showing an attitude of what the resilience paradigm calls a positive future orientation, self-confidence is not at all equal to a sense of delusion. Because of the limitations of the research, it does not answer whether Gatsby - in the formerly quoted scene of the Plaza Hotel – is in a state of delusion, or a strong confidence with a firm purpose in life, therefore this issue is to be studied further. However, it is worthy to note that one must not underrate the importance of positive attitude, especially from the point of resilience. “Resilient actions often start just with a smile or a moment for reflection that welcomes a broader perspective and encourages a thoughtful optimism about events”, write Reich, Zautra & Hall (2010, p. 11).

On the other hand, Jordan Baker briefly mentions that Gatsby, after the marriage of Daisy and Tom, bought a house to live just across the couple.

“It was a strange coincidence,” I [Nick] said.

“But it wasn’t a coincidence at all.”

“Why not?”

“Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay.” Then it had not been merely the stars to which he had aspired on that June night. He came alive to me,

delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor. (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 61)

Contrary to a sense of delusion, Gatsby buying a house across the property of the Buchanans [Daisy and Tom] is more likely to be a form of purposefulness. Again, the difference between the two is that buying a house to be closer to Daisy appears to be more practical from the point of not giving up, rather than ‘chanting’ a thought over and over again. What is certain, is that Gatsby never turns his back on Daisy.

In 2019, O’Sullivan, Hughes, Talbot, and Fuller conducted research with the help of an online survey to study the relationship between romantic breakups and resilience. The focus of the study was to examine the influence of positive traits that reflect resilience and explain emerging adults’ adjustment to a recent relationship breakup.

Breakups are common but often one of the most distressing experiences that young people can have. Poor adjustment to relationship loss is linked to depressive symptoms and rumination. This study assessed traits that reflect resiliency and that might comprise protective factors that ameliorate depressive symptoms and rumination. (...) After controlling for gender and current relationship status, higher optimism, self-esteem, and grit were expected to be associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms and rumination for those who had experienced a breakup in the three months prior to the study, and for the most part, these predictions were confirmed. (O’Sullivan, Hughes, Talbot & Fuller, 2019)

According to results of the study, individuals who focused on traits that reflect resilience - such as optimism, grit and opportunism, were more likely to show fewer and less-depressive symptoms, and among those with lower levels of optimism, breakup was associated with elevated levels of depressive symptoms. “Taken together, the results indicate that having high levels of resiliency appears to be counter some of the distress associated with breakups, and this may be especially true for young women” (O’Sullivan, Hughes, Talbot & Fuller, 2019).

Additionally, researchers aimed for discovering the reason for the results of the survey. Even though it is yet unclear what causes the pattern behind the results, researchers hypothesize that in the case of individuals with high optimism, recent breakup is interpreted as “a positive and opportunistic event, possibly a catalyst for a positive change”, and seen as “an opportunity for self-improvement and growth” (O’Sullivan, Hughes, Talbot & Fuller, 2019).

Even though the formerly discussed study clearly indicates that in the case of a romantic breakup, optimism and grit – traits that Gatsby unmistakably possesses - are factors that

improve the chances of recovering, the connection between these observations and the relationship between Gatsby and Daisy is to be further studied. The reason for that is because Daisy marrying Tom Buchanan while Gatsby is away and not present (physically) in her life is not exactly the same as a breakup – at least breakup is not commonly referred to as marrying someone else without telling the other - but the formerly quoted study is a good starting point for investigating the issue, as this particular case supposedly carries the value of a breakup.

Risk factors and motivation

Apparently, Gatsby's poverty-stricken childhood and the fact that Daisy chooses Tom over him, are motivation for Gatsby to put faith into his imagination of becoming someone great. In other words, the events which are interpreted as stressors in Gatsby's life, become the factors which motivate him to get better and show resilience. This anomaly can be explained by the following observation of Reich, Zautra and Hall (2010): "behind every stressor we experience lurks unseen, myriad opportunities for transformative growth" (p. 89), meaning that adversity contains an opportunity for recovery and advancement, in this case, in the form of obtaining motivation.

According to *Handbook of Adult Resilience* (2010), some researchers had established studies concerning at-risk children, involving some who experienced poverty and community disruptions. "In the course of such studies, however, researchers' attention was turned to the substantial number of children with severe risk factors, (...) who nonetheless turned out to be healthy, functioning, happy adults" (Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010, p. 97). Studies like these shifted the focus of the researchers to another issue: they started wondering whether there existed resilience factors that counteracted the risk factors to promote resilient outcomes. Current findings prove that resilience is revealed when an individual is stressed by having their unique personal connections severed or placed at risk (i.e., facing adversity), after which resilience is called for in order for the individual not only to recover, but especially to grow (Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010, p. 97).

The information found in the following table are based on the findings of Reich, Zautra and Hall (2010, p. 10). The table helps to characterize the nature of risk and resilience, which is highly important to consider in order to understand that resilience resources are separable factors of well-being, not qualities found at the positive end of a single continuum of risk. In other words, in the case of an individual facing a certain risk factor (for example, poverty) has the opportunity to show a type of resilience resource (for example, optimism) at the same time.

In order to identify the nature of risk and resilience, there is a necessity for models that contain

at least two separate factors: one which focuses on vulnerabilities and another which focuses on strengths. The middle column of the table showcases risk factors, while the right column contains resilience resources, both originating from – and connected by – the type of each factor, represented in the first column. The factors can be of individual or interpersonal aspects. The table aims to illustrate risk factors contrasted by resilience resources as their counterparts.

<i>Type of factor and resource</i>	<i>Risk factor</i>	<i>Resilience resource</i>
individual	helplessness	hope, optimism
interpersonal	childhood trauma	close social ties

Overall, this chapter aims to prove that a positive attitude – especially in the case of facing adversity – is vital in order to show resilience, i.e., recover and improve. According to the formerly noted studies, showing a strong sense of purpose and self-confidence leads to a higher chance of coping with difficult situations.

CONCLUSION

From examining the resilience paradigm, it is now clear that Gatsby meets the conditions of a resilient individual. He is struck by several stressors throughout his life; during his childhood, not only does he grow up in poverty, but does not have a supportive family standing behind him either. Additionally, he is rejected by the love of his life, Daisy, leaving him with nothing but a reminiscence of a bittersweet memory and a longing for a distant daydream.

On the other hand, these risk factors also allow and encourage him to show adaptation and eventually grow, in the form of a strong sense of purpose and an outstanding faith. He maintains a positive attitude towards his future aspirations and remains loyal to his dreams, thus becoming a high-spirited, great Gatsby.

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