

Abhishek Paul

Professor Noah Gentner

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### Movie/TV/Real Life Application Paper

#### **Summary:**

Southpaw is a boxing movie that revolves around a character named Billy “The Great” Hope, a world-champion boxer. Tragedy strikes as the death of Hope’s wife leads to a spiralling depression, as he loses custody of his daughter, becomes broke, and falls from the peak of his career with a loss of a championship. The movie illustrates his fall from the top and his journey to rebuild his life. With the help of a new trainer, he transitions from having an arrogant persona to being more grounded, adopting a genuine and confident one.

#### **Introduction:**

Confidence is an individual’s belief in their ability to be successful (Weinberg & Gould, 2023). An individual possessing low confidence can be detrimental to their performance. Arrogance, self-image, and self-efficacy are key components involved in this topic. Arrogance refers to an individual’s inflated sense of confidence. This results in the belief that success can be achieved without the added effort and preparation required. Self-image is an individual's view of themselves; a negative self-image reduces an individual's confidence and overall performance.

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in a task or goal. High self-efficacy plays a key role in boosting an individual's confidence in challenging situations.

The main theme in the movie *Southpaw* is confidence. This movie displays the contrast between arrogance, low self-belief and genuine confidence through Hope's journey. Early in this movie, Hope is defined by external factors such as his championship success, public image, and wealth, forming a fragile sense of confidence that relies on external factors rather than internal self-belief and confidence. He viewed himself as a dominant athlete, resulting in an inflated ego (Davis, 2019). This arrogance fueled his success, blinding him from secure confidence built from preparation and time. Hope's fighting style was also unstable; he often taunted his opponent and yelled in their face, which resulted in him taking unnecessary damage. Arrogance served as a tool to suppress his thoughts of self-doubt and overthinking, allowing him to succeed despite his persona (Moose, 2012). As a result, Hope had a false sense of confidence reliant on external factors, which caused his collapse when adversity struck, eventually leading to his performance struggles and downfall. Nonetheless, the display of this downfall emphasized Hope's transformation back to the top; it depicted his growth from arrogance to self-belief and confidence through rigorous training and technique.

## **Depiction of Confidence in “Southpaw”:**

### ***Confidence and Arrogance:***

#### *Opening fight scene:*

Hope takes excessive damage during this fight due to poor technique and reliance on aggression. He displays his arrogance during this fight as he taunts his opponent. During this scene, he screams in his opponent's face, trying to rile them up and get a reaction. Emphasizing his inflated confidence as he is exposed to many hits. Although he was able to knock out his opponent, it was from a false sense of confidence obtained from external validation (fame, championship, wealth) rather than genuine mental preparation and skill. He used arrogance as a subconscious barrier to eliminate thoughts of self-doubt. The win boosted his self-ego, strengthening his belief in success without the preparation, time and determination. Furthermore, it increased his self-efficacy; his win is a positive source of self-efficacy, strengthening Hope's belief in his capabilities and allowing him to feel more confident.

### ***Loss of Self-Efficacy and Poor Self-Image:***

#### *Losing Championship:*

After Hope's wife's tragic death, he goes into a spiralling depression. His previously inflated confidence, fueled by arrogance, was fragile because it was built on temporary external validation. This caused him to lose confidence as he cracked under this emotional distress. An individual with genuine self-belief and high internal validation would have effective coping strategies when experiencing failure or adversity, something Hope did not possess. Many scenes depict Hope experiencing suicidal emotions, where he is seen sitting on his bed with a gun in his hand. Emphasizing his depressive condition, a true contrast from his initial confident demeanour.

In this emotionally vulnerable state, he takes another championship fight, making decisions based on arrogance rather than confidence from preparation. During this fight scene, Hope is perceived to have given up, taking numerous hits and no longer displaying arrogance or confidence. For instance, he enters the ring with his head down, whereas his previous self would stare his opponent down. At the end of the fight, Hope lets his guard down, which results in many hits to his body and face, signalling that he has effectively given up. He was emotionally unstable entering the match, rendering low self-efficacy in his ability to succeed, and contributing to his poor performance. As a result, he had developed a poor self-image; now seeing himself as a defeated boxer, which reduced both his ability to handle failure and his resilience. In later scenes, he is seen abusing drugs and is involved in a car crash while under the influence. This demonstrated Hope's complete loss of confidence and inability to cope with this adversity. Additionally, his sources of self-efficacy are no longer valid. His recent loss outweighed his previous wins; he became isolated, which reduced his ability to have vicarious experiences, and his psychological state continued to worsen, further reducing the likelihood of a return to his confident, egotistical self.

### ***Building Confidence:***

#### *Training in the gym with Tick Willis:*

After hitting rock bottom, Hope decided to join a gym to regain the confidence to fight again. His new coach, Tick Willis, is a disciplined trainer who plays a critical role in getting Hope back to his original form, but with the added genuine self-confidence built on patience, preparation, and control rather than arrogance, wealth and fame. Tick Willis enforced strict routines focused on footwork, defence, and mental drills. Forcing Hope's old, chaotic, and

unstructured fighting style out of him, Willis ingrained discipline in Hope, something he did not possess previously. Several training sessions depicted Willis telling Hope, “You’re not gonna win slugging anymore” or “Stopping punches with your face is not defence....” (IMDB, 2015). This showed Willis's attempts to change Hope's fighting style and incorporate a structure into his game. Coach Willis aligned with the following idea: “As a personal trainer or coach, it is critical to put your clients or athletes in a position to have success early. This can include ensuring proper preparation for competitions and setting realistic goals.” (Gentner, 2025). Two methods are also being used to build Hope's efficacy.

***Verbal Persuasion:*** Willis provided constant feedback, reinforcing the progress Hope is making. The quote from Willis: “Don’t let him take this from you. Don’t let him get into your head. You got one shot. Go southpaw on his ass. You... beat his ass!” (IMBD, 2015) displays his belief in Hope and ingrains confidence and self-belief into him.

***Physiological states:*** Hope sees improvements in his methods, allowing him to gain self-efficacy in boxing professionally again. He goes from struggling with drills to becoming faster with better movement and accuracy.

Additionally, Willis’s belief in Hope has resulted in Hope to also believe in himself; this is an example of the self-fulfilling prophecy, where a positive view of potential from a coach increases an athlete's confidence in their ability to succeed. Overall, this helps Hope replace the fragile ego and arrogant style with an authentic style based on genuine confidence and skill.

### *The Final Fight:*

Hope returned to the fighting scene as he was unexpectedly offered a championship fight by his former manager. This is what Hope has been training for the past couple of months. Unlike his previous self, he now possesses a confident demeanour rooted in discipline and preparation, separate from his older, arrogant self. His character seems more grounded and open to new ideas and techniques. An example of this is that he learns a new style of fighting called *southpaw*. Having the ability to be open to new ideas and criticism is a key trait many genuinely confident people possess (Gentner, 2025). Before the fight, he had gone through a 6-week training camp in preparation. A collection of clips is shown as Hope is executing drills with speed and precision. A particular *southpaw* drill, which he previously struggled with, was demonstrated, but now with accuracy and speed, showing his improvement for the fight. This improvement increased Hope's physiological state, boosting his self-efficacy in the ability to win. The previous loss is now overshadowed by the months of visible growth. As Hope enters the ring, he looks completely different from his previous fight. Showing an authentic level of confidence, for instance, he is now seen fighting with more defence, poise and patience, unlike his previous boastful and reckless self. This is shown when he calmly blocks and steps back from numerous punches and counters calmly with a well-timed shot, demonstrating his improved grounded confidence and developed strategy with hard work and patience. Overall, he was able to knock his opponent out and reclaim his title, but this time with humility and established self-respect.

**Ineffective Psychological Strategies:**

Early in the movie, Hope possesses a dependency on anger and ego to fuel his championship performances. This resulted in an arrogant persona and inflated confidence, built on various external factors such as wealth, championships and public image. His sense of self-worth and identity entirely belonged to this external validation. As a result, when he experienced adversity, his world came crashing down. His downfall was devastating as he did not possess healthy coping mechanisms, traits which people with a positive self-image and genuine high confidence possess.

**Effective Psychological Strategies:**

Later in the movie, Hope adopts a new mindset revolving around discipline and patience. Hope committed to a structured training routine that focused on defence, mental strength and hard work. Hope's coach, Tick Willis, assisted Hope through his difficult time, as Hope's self-belief was increased using the self-fulfilling prophecy. His coach's belief in his potential made Hope also believe in himself. Over time, this increased his emotional regulation and self-efficacy that he carried, which gave him a more authentic and sustainable sense of confidence.

**What I Would Do Differently:**

I would incorporate internal self-confidence with structured training and disciplined mental drills earlier in Hope's career. This would help him build a stable self-confidence, separate from the confidence built on external factors such as public image, championships, and wealth. This would allow him to gain the crucial benefits of this new sense of self, such as

stronger coping mechanisms, increased resilience, and, even better, calculated performances. Overall, this would assist Hope when tragedy strikes, permitting him to be better equipped to cope mentally and bounce back faster.

### **Implications for Computer Science:**

In computer science, mastering technical interviews can be similar to stepping into a boxing ring. Just as Hope restructured his boxing mindset with structured training and disciplined drills, CS students can boost their confidence by practicing coding problems and following a consistent study regimen and routine. Additionally, a strong support system, like Willis to Hope, can build a self-fulfilling prophecy, which can help students like me believe they will conquer the interview. Overall, these disciplined routines and strong support systems can build confidence in CS students, greatly assisting their performance in interviews, much like Hope's performance at the end of this movie.



## References

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