

In the movie *Erin Brockovich* Erin reveals concepts of the learning society in multiple aspects, excluding the traditional formal education context. Within the first scene, we see that Erin has no medical training or experience, yet fights to support her family. Her ultimate goal at the beginning is to keep her family afloat. The viewer sees while this plays a major role throughout the movie, her motivation begins to shift as her learning progresses. The viewer sees in her personal and professional environments how her learning evolves as the movie develops.

In Erin's personal environment, we see her struggles as she yearns to provide for her children and build her self-esteem through employment. The viewer sees even as she begins work at the office, the other employees do not have lunch with her. This changes as she begins to work heavily through the case. Erin even mentions towards the end of the movie that people stop talking when she walks into a room and wait to hear what she has to say, something she has never had before in her life. The personal growth she has through her self-taught learning experience is another added benefit in her experience.

In Erin's professional environment, we see her learning through different avenues. She is highly motivated once she learns of the case. At first she seems intrigued, but then truly cares for the affected families. To learn about the case, Erin seeks both tangible and intangible resources. She seeks people to interview, digs through reports, and tirelessly reviews documents. Ironically, she does step foot on a college campus to ask a faculty member about toxicology and the chromium side effects, but this is the only formal education setting we see. One thing that never changes within her professional setting is her blunt demeanor. Erin does not have much of a filter and tends to spew what she is feeling without thinking about it first. While she does hear from Ed about her behavior in the workplace, the viewer does not see this as a learned behavior.

The historical aspect, in addressing technology, proved to make things a slower process for Erin. As she spends so much time at the regional water board center, those documents may be online now where she could search and browse much quicker. Also, while her physical presence was an important aspect of the case, using a reliable cell phone to contact the 600+ people would have been helpful. Further, a lot of the research she did could have come from the internet. As discussed by Nicholas Carr, had Erin had the internet, she may have missed vital information in her search when relying on the internet too much. She would have missed some critical thinking opportunities.

Another avenue that was great to see was how what Erin learned was passed on to other people. One example shows how Donna's neighbors approach Erin at her home because of what they had learned through Donna about the chromium side effects. Another specific example is how Erin draws out the plant and verbally tells Ed how the system worked. It proves that her learning has made a significant impact not just for herself, but for other people.

The greatest take away from this movie in the context of the learning society is the purpose behind Erin's learning. She was not learning to add credentials behind her name, as Friedman discusses, or learning for the sole purpose of advancing within her company. Her motivation to help the people of Hinkley, CA drove her to spend countless hours in the regional water board center, in the office, and away from her family. Regardless of the specifics, it is clear that Erin had the "right stuff," as discussed by Friedman. Even had she been taught her paralegal skills, or attended conferences to stay up to date on the most current issues, the dynamic she brought to the discussions with other lawyers is relentless. Her passion and direct

statements left others speechless and made them recognize the truth in her statements. This defiance and difference in a “typical” work environment proves to be successful for Erin and her case. It was clear that Ed made attempts to calm and restrain Erin, but she did not falter on what she believed was the truth. Erin’s belief in the case and the people of Hinkley drove her to be successful for them and ultimately learn about PG&E.