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The film *Erin Brockovich* is a cinematic masterpiece. The story of a paralegal turned ecological hero is one that is both enjoyable and inspiring. While watching this film is a fun way to spend an evening, it also highlights a variety of educational topics of interest. In particular, we as an audience can see the importance of perseverance, diligence, and passion in one's work. We can also observe how different groups value others. However, before we are able to analyze the film, it is important to understand the background on what a "learning society" is so it can be applied to Brockovich's journey. While seemingly simple, the goals of a learning society transcend a one line definition one would find in a dictionary; a learning society is a shared collection of ideals and views on education and how it applies to our world.

The goal of a learning society is multidimensional. At the individual level it becomes a societal norm for all individuals within the group to become better educated. This education can vary in structure and in content. Everyone begins with a similar highly structured experience through schooling. From here, as we grow, many continue towards higher forms of education, take on trades, and learn skills needed for each's individual life. These learning opportunities allow individuals to grow and become proficient in different areas, eventually (hopefully) becoming well rounded individuals. In a learning society it is not just the goal for each person to be well-rounded, but also to be a self-motivated, lifelong learner. When individuals take it upon themselves to improve their understanding of the world, and continue to do so for their whole lives, society can reap these benefits.

Each person in a learning society is important to the structure of the whole much like pieces of a puzzle or strands of yarn in a tapestry. While each part is crucial to the function of the entire work, in general, one looks at the entire thing from a few steps back when appreciating its success. On the larger scale, learning societies look to increase collective competence. It is also the job of those that are in charge of the society (whether it be government, educational officials, etc.) to provide a variety of educational opportunities for people of all ages to foster the ideals of a lifelong education. While there are a variety of different approaches to maintaining the society, the goal of being a strong and educationally diverse group remains the same.

Erin Brockovich is successful in her quest against PG&E for two reasons. The first is that she benefits from a variety of educational experiences. She is able to do this because she is intrinsically motivated and willing to learn. In the world of law, a structured education (law school) and job experience is paramount. Brockovich inserts herself into this world as an outsider and immediately sees that she is looked down upon for a lack of a more formal education. This even results in her getting fired because her boss (Ed Masry) assumes she has run off, when in reality she was doing research for their case. Through long hours and personal self-sacrifice Brockovich eventually becomes incredibly well versed in the case and earns respect. When her expertise is questioned, she is able to use what she has learned to defend herself and the work she has done for the residents of Hinkley.

Erin is also successful where others are not because she is able to bridge two vastly different cultures. In Hinkley, Brockovich worked extensively in order to make every resident feel like they were

being heard. She became a trusted ally when life became difficult, and she took huge personal responsibility for each individual's welfare. Her down to Earth personality allowed her to be successful in communicating with the town residents even when others from the case were not. Conversely, it was the success she had with the town of Hinkley which allowed her to earn respect in the world of law as well. Despite being looked down upon initially due to her language, attitude, and appearance, she was able to use her knowledge and wit to hold her own with Masry, his staff, and the lawyers from PG&E.

Erin Brockovich was able to help hundreds of residents of Hinkley California because of her dedication to learning. Her passion for the case, and a desire to find respect, pushed her to grow as an individual. Through self-directed, moderately structured learning she was able to overcome a lack of an advanced education and the stereotypes imposed upon her in order to change the world.