



Intellectual Disability: I Am Sam; The Other Sister (Movies)

Est. Time: 4 Hours Viewing/45 Minutes Class

Synopsis

The Other Sister

An overprotective mother shelters Carla, a young woman with an intellectual disability (ID). Carla wants to become more independent, so she moves into her own apartment and enrolls in a local vocational college. At school she meets Danny, who also has ID. As they fall in love, Carla's mother becomes nervous. She objects to the relationship, but Carla proves that she and Danny can handle life on their own.

I Am Sam

Sam, a man with ID, has a daughter named Lucy. The girl's mother, a homeless woman, deserted both Sam and Lucy soon after the child's birth. With help from a neighbor and friends, Sam is able to care for his daughter. However, as Lucy becomes older, Sam's limitations become apparent to her. Once the staff of Child Services becomes alerted to the situation, they want to place Lucy in foster care. Sam is forced to hire a lawyer in an attempt to retain custody of his child.

Activity

View the following movies and be prepared to discuss the questions below in class:

Title: The Other Sister (1999)

Studio: Touchstone

Title: I Am Sam (2002)

Studio: New Line

Questions/Discussion Topics

1. Both films depict relationships of individuals with ID. Are these portrayals accurate? Justify your answer.
2. People with ID often exhibit the following characteristics: impaired cognitive functioning and difficulties with memory, decision-making, adaptive behavior, independent living skills, interpersonal skills, and communication. Critique both films based on the accuracy of those portrayals; discuss the similarities and differences among the characters with ID in both movies. Are these portrayals accurate?
3. Discuss what is correct and/or incorrect regarding the treatment of ID in each film.
4. Both films allude to institutional settings where the main characters spend time. What are the general attitudes expressed about such facilities?



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