

Introduction:

Empathy is necessary to understand the values, beliefs, and behavioral patterns of people's cultural background. Learning to be empathetic allows one to develop an ability to understand other's perspectives and feelings.

This resource provides several activities for facilitators to use for either an entire unit on understanding empathy through *JoJo Rabbit*, or for one activity after viewing the film. With these activities, participants will engage with a variety of topics surrounding the film, *JoJo Rabbit*. These activities will challenge participants to work outside of their comfort zone, understand new perspectives, and to support one another.

As a result of this activity, individuals will learn to work well with people from other parts of the world as well as to emotionally connect and engage with people from other cultures. Individuals will engage with Empathy frameworks from the [AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence VALUE rubric](#). A proficient level of knowledge in empathy involves interpreting intercultural experiences from one's own perspective in addition to other worldviews. Individuals also demonstrate an ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group.

Facilitator Notes:

This lesson plan presents several activities for facilitators to choose from: USC Shoah Foundation Curriculum, Jojo and the IDC, Dancing and Empathy, and Jojo and the Politician Climate.

Summary of Jojo Rabbit

Jojo, a young German boy with Adolf Hitler as an imaginary friend, finds out that his mother is hiding a Jewish girl in their attic as World War II rages around them. Throughout the movie, he is forced to confront his nationalism and challenge his current worldview.

Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Build skills in order to work well with people from other parts of the world as well as to emotionally connect and engage with people from other cultures.
2. Develop an ability to understand other perspectives and feelings.

Time:

2 hours.

Group Size:

Entire Group.

Materials:

JoJo Rabbit film; Copies of the Intercultural Development Continuum, The Atlantic article, Official 2018 National Dance Day Routine video (all in [Links](#)).

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Denial

- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Empathy

- To interpret intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview.
- To demonstrate ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group.

Other Skills:

Emotional Resilience.

Activity Instructions:

1. USC SHOAH FOUNDATION CURRICULUM

Website: <https://iwatch.usc.edu/sfi/Sites/JojoRabbit/>

The USC Shoah Foundation teamed up with Searchlight Pictures (formerly Fox Searchlight) to create a curriculum for *Jojo Rabbit*. Claudia Weideman, associate director of education technologies and training for the foundation, stated, “Everyone, I think, could see the enormous potential that the film could bring to promoting understanding around anti-Semitism, humanizing of ‘The Other,’ promoting empathy.”

The *Jojo Rabbit* Education Initiative pairs the foundation’s digital history archive with materials from Waititi’s film. The foundation has devoted a landing page to the film on their iWitness website, where educators and learners can access notes on the film, featurettes, and video testimony from eight survivors, recalling their memories of the Hitler Youth. Some of the survivors remember when their classmates, and even close friends, became involved in the Hitler Jugend, while others recall violence inflicted on Jews by members of the movement.

“We have about 1,000 testimonies in our digital history archive, where survivors and other witnesses talk about the Hitler Youth one way or another,” said Weidman. “They can speak to the time of this film and therefore, we can use it to engage students in really powerful ways that film alone may not be able to accomplish.”

2. JOJO AND THE IDC

The Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC™) describes a set of knowledge/attitude/skill sets or orientations toward cultural difference and commonality. These orientations are arrayed along a continuum from more monocultural mindsets (Denial and Polarization) through a transitional mindset (Minimization) to intercultural or global mindsets (Acceptance and Adaptation). Shifting cultural perspectives and bridging behavior across cultural differences is most fully achieved when one maintains an Adaptation perspective. This continuum is adapted from the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity originally proposed by Milton Bennett.

The Intercultural Development Inventory website gives a definition of each stage of the IDC: <https://idiinventory.com/generalinformation/the-intercultural-development-continuum-idc/>



- During a class viewing of *Jojo Rabbit*, facilitators should instruct participants to write down each stage of the IDC: Denial, polarization, minimization, acceptance, and adaptation. As they watch the film, participants should jot down an example of each stage that Jojo or other characters perform. Participants should be specific with their examples on how Jojo or others perform the actions of each stage.

Note: One could argue that all stages are depicted by the end of the film.

- After viewing the film, facilitators should debrief with the following questions:
 - What were the examples you came up with for each IDC stage?
 - Did any of your peers bring up examples that were surprising to you?
 - Which character changed the most in the film? How did this change happen? Which characters remained the same?
 - Which character did you identify with the most and why?
 - Did any of the characters perform an action you feel you would have performed yourself?
 - Which character did you empathize with the most? Least?

3. DANCING AND EMPATHY

Article: [“Learning Empathy Through Dance” – The Atlantic](#)

The article “Learning Empathy Through Dance” discusses how schools can use dance (movement and expression) to teach children social and emotional skills. By learning how to dance, children can express their emotions and watch how their peers perform. Through such observation, children can identify emotions in others and become more empathetic. The New York nonprofit Dancing Classrooms brings ballroom dancing to schools in underprivileged areas to teach teamwork and respect. Studies have shown that, of the students who participated in the program, 66% reported an increase of acceptance, 81% said they treated others with more respect, and 95% of teachers reported their students’ cooperative skills improved.

Dancing allows individuals to read body language and communicate with their peers. One of the most iconic scenes of the film *Jojo Rabbit* is Jojo’s dance party with Elsa at the end of the war.

- Facilitators should break participants up into groups and have them watch and try to perform this dance together: [Official 2018 National Dance Day Routine](#).
- After performing the dance, facilitators should debrief with the following questions:
 - How did you feel during the exercise and why?
 - What did this exercise teach you concerning empathy?
 - Which emotions does Jojo and Elsa’s dance express? What emotions did you feel you expressed in your own dancing?
 - How did you cooperate with your peers during this activity? What would you have done differently?
 - What support did you give your peers and what support did you receive?

4. JOJO AND THE POLITICAL CLIMATE

Jojo Rabbit showcases the danger and power of propaganda, especially geared towards children, and how personal relationships can help alleviate hate and bigotry. The film has been both praised



and criticized (either as being too subtle in its allegory or too in your face) as an “anti-hate satire” that uses the past to criticize current-day politics.

Therefore, this activity has the opportunity to truly push individuals outside their comfort zone as the film considers empathy from both liberal and conservative political sides while still condoning the overall toxicity surrounding blind nationalism. A facilitator using this particular activity should feel confident in navigating the political conversation surrounding this film.

Note: For further background on *Jojo Rabbit* and its themes, a facilitator, after showing the film, might consider playing this video in class: [The Sociology of Jojo Rabbit | Video Essay](#).

- Assign participants to read the following articles:

Note: Facilitators can also encourage participants to bring in any articles/reviews of the film themselves to discuss in relation to the two assigned articles.

- [“Jojo Rabbit Makes a Mockery of MAGA Extremism” – Vanity Fair](#)
 - The article reviews the film *Jojo Rabbit* as not just portraying empathy during Nazi occupied Germany but as a film that questions if individuals can express empathy during the current political climate in America. Author Kimberley French speaks with Brian Levin, director of the nonpartisan Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, who states “Anyone who is concerned about extremist white nationalist culture around the world today will find resonance in the message of this film. The timing is unmistakable.” This article presents both positive and negative film reviews of *Jojo Rabbit*, discusses the current political climate, and discusses Waititi’s own political and cultural upbringing and his other satires.
- [“Movie Review: Jojo Rabbit” - Catholic Review](#)
 - The review written by Kurt Jensen focuses on how Waititi shows “...often in a deadpan way, the deadly consequences of blind loyalty to nationalism and political ideologies that marginalize entire categories of humanity as ‘the other’ — and the singular evil of inculcating children with hateful beliefs.” Jense argues that Waititi is not overtly paralleling World War II to today, nor is he trivializing the Holocaust, but rather focuses on the horrors of war and prejudice. Although a film review, Jensen’s writing focuses on many of the same themes discussed in *Vanity Fair*.
- After viewing the film and reading the articles, debrief participants using the following questions:
 - How did each article approach the topic of *Jojo Rabbit* and the politics of when it premiered?
 - What are the similarities you see between *Jojo Rabbit* and modern politics? Differences?
 - Can you discuss modern politics in relation to *Jojo Rabbit*?
 - Why is it that WWII films, especially featuring the Holocaust, continue to be created for modern audiences?
 - How does this film portray empathy and who is this empathy for?
 - Is *Jojo Rabbit* a film that can resonate with audiences 5 years from now? 10? 50?
 - Which character did you identify with the most and why?
 - How might you take what you learned today and apply it to other aspects of your life?