

# An Analysis of the Movie “Hachiko: A Dog’s Story” in Terms of Empathy and Solidarity with Animals

## “Hachiko: Bir Köpeğin Hikayesi” Filminin Hayvanlara Yönelik Empati ve Hayvanlarla Dayanışma Kavramları Açısından Değerlendirilmesi

 Nur Okutan<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, Van

### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to analyze the movie "Hachiko: A Dog's Story" in terms of empathy and solidarity with animals. For this purpose, the scenes in the movie were interpreted on the basis of empathic reactions towards animals (cognitive and affective; self/other-oriented) and solidarity with animals (emotions and behaviors such as attachment, belonging, intimacy, and cooperation). The movie is about the attachment between a dog and a human, and it encourages the viewers to understand this attachment. In order for this to happen, audiences should be able to empathize with the protagonist of the movie, Hachi. Through the analysis of the movie, it becomes clear that empathy with animals is depicted in scenes where efforts are made to understand the protagonist's fear, joy, or expectations (self/other-oriented cognitive empathic responses) as well as in scenes where the desire to do something for the protagonist is shown (other-oriented emotional empathic responses). Solidarity with animals is depicted in scenes that include emotions and behaviors such as sharing (time, happiness, sorrow, "bread"), support (helping, assuming care, etc.), and intimacy (desire to be together). Additionally, the movie directs viewers towards a dog's emotions such as joy, loyalty, sorrow, separation, and longing in many scenes.

**Keywords:** Empathy with animals, solidarity with animals, movie analysis

### ÖZ

Bu çalışmada, Hachiko: Bir Köpeğin Hikayesi filminin hayvanlara yönelik empati ve hayvanlarla dayanışma kavramları açısından çözümlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Bu amaçla, filmde yer alan sahneler, hayvanlara yönelik empatik tepkiler ve hayvanlarla dayanışma temelinde yorumlanmıştır. Film, bir köpek ve insan arasındaki bağlılığı konu edinir ve izleyenleri bu bağı anlamaya sevk eder. Bunun için izleyenlerin filmin kahramanı (Hachi) empati kurabilmeleri gerekir. Filmin çözümlenmesinde, hayvanlara yönelik empatiyi, kahramanın korkusu, sevinci ya da beklentilerinin anlaşılma gayreti (öz / diğeri yönelimli bilişsel empatik tepkiler) ve onun için bir şeyler yapma isteğinin (diğeri yönelimli duygusal empatik tepkiler) resmedildiği sahnelerde görebilmek mümkündür. Hayvanlarla dayanışma ise paylaşma (zamani, mutluluğu, kederi, "ekmeği"), destek (yardım etme, bakımını üstlenme gibi) ve yakınlık (bir arada olma isteği) gibi duygu ve davranışların yer aldığı sahnelerde izlenebilmektedir. Ayrıca, seyircilerin birçok sahnede bir köpeğin, neşe, bağlılık, hüznün, ayrılık ve özlem gibi duygularına yönlendirildiği görülmektedir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Hayvanlara yönelik empati, hayvanlarla dayanışma, film analizi

## Introduction

Human-animal interactions are an emerging area of research in psychology. Animals have been present in people's lives, sometimes as a companion, sometimes as a helper, and sometimes in therapeutic roles. Positive relationships with animals have many positive functions, such as "well-being," "physical health," and "reduction of prejudices" (Amiot and Bastian 2015). For example, companion animals (animals with which affectionate rather than utilitarian relationships are developed) are effective in reducing people's responses to stress by providing a form of social support (Allen et al. 2001). Attachment to companion animals increases the likelihood of pro-social behavior in children (Vidović et al. 1999). According to researchers, one of the ways to establish positive relationships with animals is to develop empathic bonds with them. Empathy involves valuing another person and has mutual positive effects (von Essen and Allen 2017, Bekoff 2020). In this interaction, empathized

**Address for Correspondence:** Nur Okutan, Van Yüzüncü Yıl University Faculty of Letters, Department of Psychology, Van, Türkiye **E-mail:** nurokutan@yyu.edu.tr

**Received:** 22.02.2022 | **Accepted:** 11.04.2023

people feel valued, while showing an empathic approach gives the happiness of being able to share someone else's feelings (Smith 2017). Caring about the feelings of animals and making them feel it strengthens the bonds between humans and animals by creating mutual empathic reactions (Bekoff 2020).

When such a bond can be established, the likelihood of attitudes and behaviors (solidarity) that look out for the well-being of animals increases (Amiot and Bastian 2017, Bekoff 2020), and people treat animals with more care and avoid harming them (Ascione 1993, Agnew 1998, Komorosky and O'Neal 2015). These positive effects are also reflected in relationships with people and the environment. For example, children who develop empathy with animals exhibit less violent tendencies (Lucia and Killias 2011). In adults, empathy and solidarity with animals are associated with egalitarian attitudes toward other human groups (Amiot and Bastian 2017, Amiot et al. 2020, Vonk and Weiper 2022) and environmental sensitivity (Berenguer 2007, 2010). However, despite these crucial associations, empathy and solidarity with animals have received less attention than human-oriented empathy or solidarity between groups of people (Eisenberg 1988, Amiot and Bastian 2017). For these reasons, negative attitudes and behaviors towards animals may still be widespread (Arluke 2006). Therefore, the present study aims to draw attention to this issue and to generate knowledge about the tools that can promote empathy and solidarity with animals and how these tools can be utilized.

One of the effective ways to promote empathy is through narratives (e.g., movies/novels) (Tan 1996, Hakemulder 2000, Keen 2007, Małecki et al. 2019). Narratives create an empathic bridge between the story's protagonist and the audience/readers. When this bridge is well established, the story creates an empathic effect, and people empathize with the protagonist. More importantly, a similar empathic experience can be exhibited in real life. According to this expectation, empathy for a fictional character can be transferred to non-fictional people who represent that character, thereby changing negative thoughts about them (Batson et al. 1997). In line with expectations, experimental studies show that narrative-based empathy is as effective in improving attitudes as in real life, and this effect is similar to animal narratives (Hakemulder 2000, Batson et al. 2002, Małecki et al. 2019).

As can be seen, film-based narratives are important in conveying values such as empathy and solidarity with animals (Brinckmann 2014, Lewis 2021). The present study aims to introduce the concepts of empathy and solidarity with animals and create a resource that can be utilized in different disciplines and levels of academia on the subject. For this purpose, the film *Hachiko: The Story of a Dog*, which portrays the special bond between a human and an animal impressively, was analyzed in terms of empathy and solidarity with animals.

Before introducing the basic concepts of the study, it may be helpful to note the terms "friend" and "pet" animals. Although the terms "friend" and "pet" animal can be used interchangeably, the meanings of these terms can change on the nature of the relationships established with animals (Serpell 2019). While "companion animals" refer to animals that are valued as individuals and where love and understanding are prioritized in the relationships established with animals (Linzey and Cohn 2011, Özkul 2018, Serpell 2019), "pet animals" refer to animals with which relationships are established based on the benefits they provide to humans (such as animals that are utilized in entertainment or working life) in addition to friendship. Therefore, in this review, considering the cases where the distinction between "companion" and "pet" animals may be ambiguous (Serpell 2019), these terms will be used interchangeably, but in order to emphasize the close bonds established with animals, the term "companion animals" will be preferred per the content of the cited studies.

## **Empathy for Animals**

---

Animal empathy refers to empathic responses to the emotional experiences of animals (Paul 2000) and has similar characteristics to human-oriented empathy (Eisenberg 1988, Young et al. 2018). Empathic responses can be observed in cognitive, emotional, or behavioral patterns. These responses are shaped by the interactions between the observer (empathizer) and the target (empathized), as well as the context in which empathy takes place (Davis 1994). The observer's physical competence or past experiences may be necessary for an empathic process. At the same time, factors such as whether the target is valuable for empathy or its perceived similarity may be decisive (Davis 1994, Cuff et al. 2016). In this process, the context creates a strong or weak situation for empathy. For example, directly witnessing someone experiencing pain and watching a news report on television are different contextual situations for empathy. If the context allows for a clear understanding of the target's emotional state, it creates a strong relationship and, vice versa, a weak one. Sometimes the strength of the context may be more relevant for empathic responses than the characteristics of the observer or the target (Davis 1994).

Although empathy with animals involves the same patterns, factors related to the circumstances of empathy,

such as target characteristics or observer-target similarity, make it different from human-oriented empathy (Westbury and Neumann 2008). In other words, when empathy is directed toward animals, the structure of empathy or the empathic process itself does not change. However, the interactions between its essential elements and, thus, empathic responses may differ.

Although approaches to empathy have addressed motivational and behavioral aspects (Davis 1994, Zaki 2014), empathy has often been discussed regarding its cognitive and affective features (Hall and Schwartz 2019). These two aspects have been less studied in terms of empathy towards animals (Young et al. 2018), but in the present study, cognitive and affective elements were examined as separate constructs.

### **Cognitive Empathic Reactions**

Cognitive empathy toward animals is a cognitive response to understanding the internal states of animals (Young et al. 2018). Recognizing an animal's emotions, such as joy, sorrow, or anger, involves understanding them by putting oneself in the animal's shoes or looking at them from its point of view (Bekoff 2020). However, being able to recognize an animal's joy or grief is separate from the ability to understand a human's emotions (Phillips 2008). In the case of animals, cues such as verbal or non-verbal expressions that can trigger empathy are fewer or less noticeable (Bekoff 2020). This situation can also create uncertainty about empathy. As mentioned, when information about the target's inner life is limited, the strength of the situational context triggers empathy, and therefore, empathic responses are attenuated (Davis 1994).

However, sometimes the verbal or nonverbal expressions necessary for empathy are evident but go unnoticed because the situation is still ambiguous for some. For example, a dog's expressions of joy or sorrow or an elephant's displays of loyalty are unknown to many (Bekoff 2020). Sometimes, even when known, the information does not make a difference in empathic responses (Knight et al. 2010). For example, scientists can predict the stress that different types of research will induce in animals, but they continue to experiment on animals (Bekoff 2020). Thus, it can be argued that empathy matters more than the data about animals themselves, as the ideas adopted (Apostol et al. 2013). For example, many adults believe that animals have no emotions (Knight et al. 2010, Caviola et al. 2019) and have a less moral responsibility toward them (Bastian et al. 2012). Young children, on the other hand, can easily empathize with a fly by thinking that it might suffer (Hergovich et al. 2002). The perceived similarities and differences between humans and animals explain such changes in thoughts about animals. Accordingly, people show more empathy to animals they perceive as similar to themselves (such as monkeys) than to others (such as frogs) (Plous 1993).

In addition to perceived similarities and differences, how animals are framed is crucial in evoking empathic responses. For example, viewing a tree kangaroo as tasty food reduces thoughts about their ability to suffer and moral concerns about kangaroos (Bratanova et al. 2011). Similarly, when vegans or vegetarians are confronted with images of animals experiencing pain, regions of the brain associated with empathy are activated more than in omnivores (Filippi et al. 2010).

Cognitive empathy with animals is connected with thoughts about animals, and these thoughts can be positively developed through close/warm relationships with animals. Close relationships allow us to know animals more accurately and understand their needs (Bekoff 2020). High empathic responses of dog owners to their painful experiences (Ellingsen et al. 2010) or (high) empathy levels of horse caretakers can exemplify this (Luna et al. 2019).

### **Emotional Empathic Reactions**

Empathic feelings towards animals include rejoicing on behalf of animals, feeling compassion, being soft-hearted and sensitive, and feeling sad, grieving, distressed, and anxious (Batson 2011, Bekoff 2020). Empathic emotions can be demonstrated by experiencing similar emotions to the other, feeling personal distress, or demonstrating empathic concern/interest. These emotions are also correlated with the behavioral consequences of empathy and, as will be discussed later, indicate that empathic emotions can be self- or other-oriented. For example, the helplessness of living in a limited space in a zoo may evoke an equivalent emotion (helplessness) in observers (Young et al. 2018), or helplessness may lead them to focus on their concerns. However, when emotions are directed towards the animal's helplessness, it can result in motivations such as involvement in an initiative supporting animals' survival in natural areas.

As with cognitive empathy, emotional empathic responses to animals are primarily related to understanding the emotional states of animals (Bekoff 2020) and can vary according to the animals' characteristics or beliefs about animals (Young et al. 2018). This situation is apparent when considering different animal species. For example,

a dog's gaze or body language can reveal its emotions (Bekoff 2020), but trying to understand the inner life of an ant is more complex. However, this does not preclude empathizing with an ant because empathy essentially means caring for another person (Batson 2011). Therefore, it may not be necessary to understand an ant's gaze in order to protect or avoid harming an anthill.

Some studies also suggest that, compared to cognitive empathy, emotional empathy with animals is more likely. For example, one study found that seeing a photo of a dog in agony (such as starvation, physical and psychological suffering) activated neural networks in the brain more related to emotions. In contrast, a photo of a human in agony activated brain regions associated with cognitive empathy (Franklin et al. 2013). In another study, humans reported more emotional empathic responses (such as compassion and tenderness) to a puppy than to an adult human (Levin et al. 2017).

### **Self- and Other-Oriented Empathic Reactions**

Another critical point about empathic responses is that empathy can be directed toward oneself and others (Eisenberg 1988, Batson and Ahmad 2009). From the perspective of cognitive empathy, a self-directed empathic response involves imagining oneself in another person's situation and trying to understand them better. In this type of response, empathy focuses on the self. Self-oriented cognitive empathy can help to understand the other's situation, but imagining oneself in the position of the other can result in preoccupation with one's feelings and thoughts, thus distracting the empathic focus away from the other (Batson and Ahmad 2009, Batson 2011). When empathy is other-oriented, the empathic response involves visualizing the other's situation rather than putting oneself in their place. Therefore, empathy focuses on the feelings and thoughts of the other (Batson and Ahmad 2009).

In terms of emotional empathy, a self-directed empathic response refers to personal distress/discomfort in the face of another's experience (Eisenberg 1988). For example, another person's situation may cause feelings of fear, anxiety, or distress (Davis 1983). These feelings may also not coincide with the other's situation and, more importantly, may involve a rather selfish reaction (Eisenberg and Strayer 1987). When emotions are other-oriented, empathic responses are related to emotions such as compassion, sympathy, and sadness experienced on behalf of the other. In this empathic response, the focus of empathic concern is not on oneself but the other, and empathic concern is experienced for the other (Batson and Ahmad 2009). Unlike personal distress, empathic concern also generates a desire to do something for someone else (Batson 2011, Fultz and Bernieri 2022). This desire does not change even when the costs of helping the person in distress (such as feelings of disgust) are high. In such a situation, empathic concern motivates people to help by alleviating perceptions of the negative consequences of helping, while personal distress does not (Siem 2022).

Before concluding this section, let us make a brief note about another form of emotional empathy. According to the information above, empathy can also be experienced by feeling similar emotions. However, in this type of empathy, the empathic focus is not on the person or the other. What determines empathy is defined here as the level of similarity of feelings between the observer and the target (Lennon and Eisenberg 1987). Therefore, in the present study, other-oriented emotional empathic responses are considered in the context of personal distress and empathic concern.

### **Relationships between Empathic Responses**

Empathic responses, although diverse, are interrelated. For example, a self-oriented cognitive empathic response, primarily when little is known about the other, can facilitate the ability to imagine oneself in the other's shoes, to see things from the other's point of view (other-oriented cognitive empathy) and subsequently to have an empathic concern for the other. On the other hand, self-focus at the cognitive level can also result in self-directed emotional empathic responses, such as feeling personal distress. In this case, an empathic concern may occur to the extent that a self-oriented cognitive empathic response enables an explicit knowledge of another. Similarly, other-oriented cognitive empathic responses can generate empathic concern, but this is only sometimes the case (Batson and Ahmad 2009). For example, when the person in distress is unpopular, visualizing them in their situation may evoke joy rather than sadness or compassion (Staub 1978). These insights also imply that other-oriented cognitive and affective empathic responses differ in the fundamental matter of encouraging action for the welfare of another. In other words, while other-oriented cognitive empathic responses do not, in all cases, generate motivation for the well-being of the other, other-oriented emotional empathic responses are associated with emotions such as compassion and pity and a desire to meet the needs of a person in need (Batson et al. 1981).

## **Solidarity with Animals**

---

Solidarity refers to the psychological and behavioral commitment to a social group. Psychological commitment is associated with feelings such as belonging and closeness; behavioral commitment is associated with behaviors such as cooperation (Leach et al. 2008). Solidarity with animals includes intimacy, attachment and belonging to animals, and cooperation with them (Amiot and Bastian 2017). However, solidarity with animals is more complex than solidarity with human groups because the elements of solidarity operate differently here. More specifically, solidarity depends primarily on the existence of a social group that matters (Amiot et al. 2020). Through groups, people form meaningful and lasting social bonds. In order to establish these bonds, they seek social groups to which they can feel they belong. Belonging is often associated with feelings of perceived similarity/closeness (Tajfel 1974). People feel connected to groups and attribute importance to them to the extent that they perceive them as similar. Therefore, they are motivated to protect and maintain the social groups and identities they perceive as relevant (Ellemers and Haslam 2012). For this reason, they act with feelings of solidarity (Amiot et al. 2020).

As can be seen, humans may be less willing to form a psychological bond with animals as a social group (Amiot and Bastian 2017, Amiot et al. 2020). For example, the mere "importance of being human" can bring people together with a single social identity (McFarland et al. 2012), or shared ideals, beliefs, or past experiences can create strong bonds between people (Staub 1992). In contrast, people and animals are believed to have salient differences (physical or mental), and often these differences create profound divisions (Hodson et al. 2020). Accordingly, while shared pains or joys can bind humans together, animals are thought to experience different/primitive emotions than humans and not to suffer (Leyens et al. 2000, Knight et al. 2010, Morris et al. 2012, Haslam 2014). These assumptions, in turn, generate social distances between humans and animals, reducing the likelihood of solidarity with animals (Amiot and Bastian 2017).

On the other hand, the nature of human-animal interactions is different. Human relationships with animals are full of contradictions. Humans love and protect some animals while using others for food or entertainment (Caviola et al. 2019). In this relationship, animals are often valued for their utility or competence. Companion animals are perceived as valuable because they fulfill the need for love and closeness; those categorized as "farm animals" are perceived as inadequate (e.g., mentally), albeit useful (Sevillano and Fiske 2020). Such moral distinctions about animals undermine the development and maintenance of respectful mutual relationships between humans and animals and, thus, feelings of solidarity (Bekoff 2020). For example, animals categorized as "farm animals" (such as cows, sheep, and chickens) arouse less moral concern in humans (Aytürk and Broad 2021), and therefore, people are less likely to want to show solidarity with an animal used for food (such as a pig) compared to animals that people prefer to care for in their homes, such as cats and dogs. Relationships with animals are often in the best interests of humans. For example, some of the research that emphasizes animal welfare may be conducted to increase product yields (e.g., milk) (Kielland et al. 2010), or the employment of animals in areas such as first aid and therapy may not inherently involve cooperation or solidarity with animals (Amiot and Bastian 2015).

In addition to human-animal interactions, solidarity with animals is also related to individual characteristics, orientations, beliefs and attitudes, or motives. Studies indicate that self-identification with nature, moral responsibility towards animals, human-oriented empathic concern, anthropomorphism, openness to experience, left-wing political views, and being female are positively associated with animal solidarity. In contrast, different forms of prejudice (speciesism, ageism, and modern prejudice) and beliefs supporting social hierarchy, such as social dominance orientation and authoritarianism, reduce the desire for animal solidarity (Amiot and Bastian 2017).

Empathy is also significant for solidarity with animals. Empathy involves being sensitive and attentive and adopting a fair and egalitarian attitude (von Essen and Allen 2017). An empathic approach is linked to close relationships with animals. Studies show that caring for a companion/pet and the intimacy and attachment felt enhances feelings of solidarity (Paul and Serpell 1993, Poresky 1996, Amiot and Bastian 2017). For example, the friendship between dogs and humans can indicate shared love, care, and helpfulness (Lewis 2021). Such friendships or solidarity-based relationships increase the likelihood of positive social behavior with animals (Amiot and Bastian 2017).

## **Role of Narratives in Developing Empathy and Solidarity toward Animals**

---

Empathic reactions are not limited to direct observation of emotions (Zillmann 2008). People can empathize with the protagonist of a novel or a movie or with people they see on a television screen (Keen 2007). The

narrative power of stories creates empathy with a fictional character (Brinckmann 2014). Stories arouse interest, trigger emotions, and draw readers or viewers in, establishing a connection between the narrative and the person. As the person connects to the story, they try to understand and engage with it. This connection also implies empathic participation (Lewis 2021).

Stories are less vivid and active than real-life experiences (Lewis 2021). However, the story itself or the context in which it takes place can have a similar effect on the listener/viewer (Davis 1994, Barraza and Zak 2009). Film-based narratives are notably important for empathy due to the success of films in directing attention directly to the scenes (characters). Therefore, they effectively involve the audience in the story and are more conducive to triggering empathy than other narratives (Brinckmann 2014).

The difference between empathy with the protagonist of a story and empathy with a real person is marginal (Cuff et al. 2016). When people are prompted to empathize with someone else, they may respond as empathically as they would to a real person, even if they know the person is fictional (Batson et al. 2002). The critical point is the empathizer's perceptions rather than the empathized person's reality (Cuff et al. 2016). The empathic processes between the narrative and the person work the same as in an actual situation. Viewers/readers exhibit empathic reactions by perceiving, imagining, understanding, experiencing similar emotions, and sharing the character's emotional state in the story (Zillmann 1991, Keen 2014). The physiological processes in these responses work in similar ways. Accordingly, as in genuine empathy, witnessing characters' emotional experiences in a movie increases empathy-related activation in the brain. For example, compared to scenes depicting an ordinary day, a father's emotional experience with his cancer-stricken son leads to more oxytocin release. Increased empathic responses result in positive social behaviors (Barraza and Zak 2009).

Empathic responses do not change when fictional characters are non-human (Keen 2007). People may well show similar empathic responses when the narrative's protagonist is an animal (Plous 1993, Berenguer 2007, 2010). For instance, watching an emotionally charged film about endangered whales increases viewers' empathy and inspires them to support whales more than watching a film with neutral images. (Shelton and Rogers 1981). Likewise, viewing visual narratives about animals injured by pollution raises participants' environmental awareness. (Schultz 2000).

This information also indicates the similarity of the relationship between fictional empathy and behavior to that real empathy. A well-fictionalized film or book can stimulate empathic responses, enabling the overcoming of prejudices against outgroups and developing positive behaviors, as in real empathy (Batson et al. 1997, Harrison 2011). In this sense, narratives serve the function of revisiting existing thoughts and approaching prejudiced people from an empathic perspective. If people experiencing this perspective show the same empathic reactions in real life, we can talk about the positive effects of narratives on social behavior (Hakemulder 2000, Koopman and Hakemulder 2015). For example, when people are asked to empathize with a (fictional) outgroup of drug addicts, they may experience more empathic reactions and transfer these experiences to a positive behavioral outcome, such as helping drug addicts, than when they are told to remain neutral (Batson et al. 2002). Likewise, when empathy focuses on animal outgroups, the power of narrative (a literary work) can generate empathic responses, leading to increased positive attitudes towards animals (Małeckı et al. 2019).

However, individual characteristics can moderate the relationship between narrative-based empathy and behavior. As mentioned earlier, engagement in empathic processes and personal experiences with these processes show individual differences. Some people tend to exhibit more empathy than others (Davis 1994). Therefore, empathic responses based on a movie or a story may be related to individual tendencies rather than the narrative (Keen 2007). For instance, one study revealed that participants with high levels of empathy reacted more empathically (personal distress) to an emotionally charged movie depicting a young mother with diabetes than other participants (De Wied et al. 1995).

Contrary to expectations, narrative-based empathic responses sometimes lead to a shift in empathic focus. Narratives can sometimes cause viewers/readers to feel intense personal distress, which may cause them to stop watching a movie or reading a novel halfway through. Thus, the expected behavioral effects based on the narrative fail to materialize (Keen 2007, 2014).

The impressions generated through movies can also help to promote human-animal interactions and solidarity, such as gaining new insights about animals and encouraging positive relationships with animals. Animals are framed through various metaphors (e.g., gullible, lacking moral qualities), often including negative images (Haslam et al. 2020). It is also possible to see such representations in linguistic expressions (e.g. proverbs) and common attitudes (e.g. the idea that animals are only created for use) of Turkish culture (Özkul et al. 2013, Okutan and Çenesiz 2021). Moreover, especially in studies with children, learning more about animals and

trying to understand their feelings and expectations have been shown to increase children's empathic responses (Ascione 1993, Ascione and Weber 1996, Ornaghi et al. 2014). Therefore, movies/narratives that depict animals as creatures that share life with humans from their perspective, with their emotions and needs, can strengthen people's bonds with animals. For example, when animals are framed as part of people's social identities with a "us' sense" (Amiot and Bastian 2017, von Essen and Allen 2017), viewers may feel a sense of solidarity with them.

## **Movie Information**

---

This 2009 film was directed by Lasse Hallström and starred Richard Gere, Joan Allen, Erick Avari, and Jason Alexander. The movie is based on the real-life story of a dog, and the story is based on the extraordinary friendship between an animal and a human being. The real Hachiko was born in Japan in 1923. His friendship with Professor Eisaburo Ueno started around this time, but the Professor died in May 1925. Hachi waited for his return in front of the train station for nine years and passed away in March 1934. Hachiko's statue at Shibuya station is still waiting for the Professor in its usual place as a symbol of his loyalty (Hallström 2009). The story of the movie also begins at a train station.

Hachiko, as a puppy, has to travel alone, and by a coincidence, he meets Parker, a music professor, on the train track. Parker does not want to leave the puppy Hachi and takes him home. His wife (Kate) initially refuses to accept him, but the Professor's love for Hachi changes Kate's mind. Over time, Hachi becomes a beloved member of the family. He and Parker become more and more attached. Every day, Hachi sees the Professor off on his way to work and goes to greet him on his return. Everyone around watches them with interest and curiosity. One day, Parker goes to work but never returns. One could say that Hachi's sad story begins with the Professor's death. Hachi does not want to leave Parker (his memories), and instead of living with Parker's family/daughter, he chooses to live near the train station. He faithfully waits for Parker at the same time and place every day. Hachi's loyalty arouses the interest of everyone in the neighborhood. The station attendant, the peddler and other people who work there, and the passengers want to show him they are there for him. When Hachi is featured in a newspaper, this interest and affection spread to other cities nationwide. Hachi bids farewell to this world precisely ten years after the Professor's death, in his usual place, at the station, waiting for him (Hallström 2009).

## **Interpretation of the Movie Scenes Concerning Empathy and Solidarity with Animals**

---

In this section, the scenes in the movie will be interpreted according to the concepts of empathy and solidarity with animals. The movie was watched three times, at different times, and the impressions of the movie and sample scenes were noted down by the researcher in order to determine the scenes that might be appropriate. After this step, the transcript of the movie was read twice, and the scenes and dialogues consistent with the notes were identified. The identified scenes and dialogues were categorized based on empathic reactions towards animals and solidarity with animals. Empathy towards animals was analyzed based on cognitive/emotional and self/other-oriented features of empathy; solidarity with animals was analyzed based on emotions and behaviors such as commitment, belonging, intimacy, and cooperation. The movie contains a story of physical separation (death). Therefore, empathic reactions before the separation were interpreted in terms of Parker's attitudes towards Hachi and the empathic reactions of the movie (sample scenes); after the separation, the reactions of other characters in the movie towards Hachi and the possible empathic attitudes of the audience were interpreted. Solidarity with animals was evaluated in both halves of the movie (before and after the breakup) with sample scenes of the people's solidarity in the movie with Hachiko. The relationships between empathy towards animals and solidarity with animals were also included in the evaluations. Interpretations are presented with the context of the movie summary and the time (minutes) of the movie for the relevant scenes and dialogues.

### **Empathy with Animals**

#### ***Elements Related to Empathy with Animals***

According to the overall analysis of the film, empathy with animals, like human-oriented empathy, involves a series of interrelated structures, and empathic responses emerge through interactions between these constructs (Davis 1994). In this construct, the characters in the movie and the audience can be considered as the observer, the movie's protagonist as the target of empathy, and the movie itself as the context of empathy for the audience.

### ***Empathic Reactions: Cognitive and Affective, Self- and Other-Oriented***

The film also exemplifies that empathy with animals involves cognitive and emotional elements and can be self- or other-oriented. When the movie is analyzed, these elements are interrelated, in line with the literature (Davis 1994, Batson and Ahmad 2009, Cuff et al. 2016). The first scenes that exemplify these situations occur at the beginning of the movie and the story. According to the story, ('Puppy') Hachi and the Professor meet for the first time at a train station. The Professor smiles at Hachi and says, "Hello, my friend. Are you lost?" (04'.10"). From his surprise and reaction, he thinks he might be lost. With this reaction, Parker shows a cognitive empathic reaction by trying to understand Hachi's situation (Eisenberg 1988). The empathic response is not only about recognizing the other's situation but also about comprehending the other's situation so that this empathic response can be interpreted as other-oriented (Batson 2011).

In the following scenes, cognitive empathic reactions are accompanied by emotional empathy. Parker first wants to leave the lost puppy, Hachi, with the station attendant (Carl), but the attendant says that he cannot take care of Hachi and that if he keeps him, he may have to send him to the shelter. Parker is disturbed by the idea of a puppy being given to a shelter and decides to take Hachi home. Parker's decision can be associated with emotional empathic responses such as compassion and sympathy. Similarly, on the way home, Parker says, "We will find your home. Until then you can stay with me in my nice warm house. How is that sound?" (05'.38"-05'.47") can be considered as an emotional empathic response. Both empathic responses are other-oriented because they are related to the desire and behavior of looking out for the needs of another and doing something for them (Batson 2011, Young et al. 2018).

In the presented examples, self- and other-oriented empathic responses can be distinguished as follows. Parker and Carl's empathic responses to Hachi are pretty different. Carl seems to empathize with the puppy Hachi, partly by saying that he understands him, but this response can be said not to involve looking from the other's point of view because merely understanding did not arouse an empathic interest in him, as can be inferred from his refusal to let Hachi stay at the station. On the contrary, Parker's cognitive empathic reactions, including the possibility of self-directedness, indicate an empathic concern when linked to the decision to take him home. These reactions can also be interpreted with the literature. Empathy researchers argue that self-directed cognitive empathic responses can activate other-directed emotional empathic responses, but this is less likely than other-directed cognitive empathy because the focus is on the self (Batson and Ahmad 2009). In the example scene, Parker's cognitive empathic response does not cause him to feel personal distress; instead, Parker decides to take Hachi home. Therefore, Parker's motivation to help can be attributed to an empathic interest.

Another way to distinguish between self-directed and other-directed cognitive empathic responses is through causal attributions toward the target of empathy. Causal attributions are explanations about the causes of behavior. Behaviors can be explained by characteristics of the person, such as character, ability, motives, or personality (internal attributions), or by situational factors that do not originate from the person, such as luck or the influence of others (external attributions) (Heider 1958). From this perspective, other-oriented cognitive empathic responses can be assumed to be more related to situational attributions rather than internal attributions (Regan and Totten 1975). As will be recalled, other-oriented cognitive empathy involves envisioning another person in their situation.

On the other hand, self-oriented cognitive empathy is associated with imagining oneself in the other's place (Batson and Ahmad 2009). Although there are no explicit statements in the film, it can be seen that in the encounter scene just exemplified, Parker, while trying to understand the puppy, does not attribute intrinsic qualities to the puppy (such as a puppy out for a walk), but instead refers to situational factors (such as being lost due to misfortune), such as looking at an empty carrying bag nearby or being alone at the station. Indeed, in the following scenes, Parker does not leave the puppy there but takes it to his house and tries to contact Hachi's relatives. This action makes us think that his cognitive empathic response may be other-oriented.

From an emotional empathy perspective, self- and other-oriented empathic responses can be distinguished based on the focus of empathy and the emotions felt accordingly (Eisenberg 1988, Batson and Ahmad 2009). Parker displays other-oriented emotions, such as compassion, both in the encounter scene and the conversation scene with Hachi. As highlighted in the previous sections, other-oriented empathic emotions differ from personal distress. These emotions also generate a strong desire to help the target of empathy. Self-directed emotional empathy, on the other hand, involves genuine concern for the person. Emotions such as increased self-anxiety or restlessness often motivate people to alleviate their distress (Eisenberg 1988). When interpreted on the basis of this information, Parker's reactions do not necessarily involve self-directed empathic emotions.

It is possible to increase the number of scenes that exemplify other-oriented cognitive and emotional empathy.

In the first of these scenes, Hachi is depicted alone in the hut because Kate (Parker's wife) does not want him. In this scene, Parker understands Hachi's loneliness and tries to act according to his needs by putting things like blankets, toys, and water near him. Such a reaction can be explained by looking from another's point of view and feeling emotions on their behalf. Therefore, the first empathic response can be associated with other-oriented cognitive empathy and the second with other-oriented emotional empathy.

A similar interpretation applies to the scenes in which the Professor attempts to find the relatives of the missing puppy, Hachi. Parker's thought that someone might be searching for Hachi in these scenes, coupled with the following, implies that his empathic focus is directed towards Hachi. Therefore, these empathic reactions can be evaluated as cognitive and other-oriented. In the rest of the scenes, Parker shows empathic concern with feelings of protection and compassion, which can be observed in Parker's behaviors, such as placing missing person notices for Hachi or going to the shelter to collect information. In another scene that points to other-oriented cognitive and emotional empathic responses, Parker massages Hachi. Parker's realization of Hachi's need demonstrates the ability to see from another's point of view. That such a perspective prompts him to learn how to massage a dog afterward indicates that he is other-oriented.

In contrast, applying the message to his needs indicates an empathic interest (Batson and Ahmad 2009). In another related scene, Parker tries to save Hachi from a skunk. In this scene, other-oriented cognitive empathy can be understood by an attempt to understand Hachi's fear, and empathic concern can be understood by reactions such as wanting to protect him, stroking his head with compassion, and pushing the skunk away. Empathic concern, as mentioned before, can motivate a person to behave even if the consequences of providing help are negative (Siem 2022). Parker's saving Hachi from the skunk at the risk of smelling bad can illustrate this.

In another scene that displays different empathic responses and the relationships between the two, it is possible to see one of the most important symbols of Hachi's story (commitment). In this story, Hachi sees the Professor off on his way to work and greets him back every day at the same time and place. In fact, at first, the Professor did not want Hachi to accompany him to work (out of concern for him). However, Hachi's gaze, desire, and persistence in his request make him think he wants to accompany him (other-oriented cognitive empathic response). He allows him to join not to upset him (other-oriented emotional empathic response). Parker's reactions, as in the other examples, are here also other-oriented. A closer look suggests that, in terms of cognitive empathy, understanding a dog's body language has more to do with trying to imagine the dog's situation than with imagining oneself in the dog's shoes.

Moreover, the fact that an empathic interest follows the cognitive empathic response increases the likelihood that this response is other-oriented (Batson and Ahmad 2009). However, there is still a possibility that Parker may have shown a self-directed cognitive empathic response by putting himself in Hachi's shoes since self-directed cognitive empathic responses can facilitate other-directed empathic responses (Batson and Ahmad 2009). However, even if the scene in this example indicated self-directed cognitive empathy, the presence of an empathic interest suggests that a self-directed cognitive empathic response may have triggered an other-directed cognitive empathic response (Batson and Ahmad 2009). When the emotional empathic responses in the same instances are analyzed, Parker's anxiety was not self-oriented because his anxiety was related to his thoughts that something negative might happen to Hachi. In other words, this kind of empathic response expresses a concern felt on behalf of the other.

Although the scenes in the film are primarily associated with other-oriented empathic responses, self-oriented empathy can explain some scenes. Kate's (Parker's wife) grief reactions are depicted in one of these examples. In that scene, Kate decides to move out of the city after the death of her husband but does not take Hachiko with her. At first glance, Kate's decision is about not caring for Hachi or being unable to understand her feelings, which is a possibility. However, this reaction seems more related to the fact that Hachi's existence focuses on the personal pain of the loss. In other words, Hachi's pain may remind her of her own pain. Therefore, her empathic response can be considered personal distress (Eisenberg 1988). It is also possible to see a similar self-directed emotional empathic response of Kate at the beginning of the movie. As will be recalled, Kate did not want Hachi at first. Although not elaborated on in the movie, her not wanting Hachi seems related to Hachi's leading her to the grief of another dog (Lucas) they had lost. Therefore, in this example, it can be inferred that the empathic focus is directed toward one's anxiety or sadness (Eisenberg 1988, Batson 2011).

### ***Can we not Empathize when we do not Understand Someone Correctly?***

All these narratives suggest that we can empathize with animals in cognitive and emotional ways. It is possible to understand animals' emotions accurately and respond appropriately and empathically. However, it may be

more challenging to predict animals' inner experiences than humans in some cases (Bekoff 2020). This idea also raises the question of whether genuine empathy with animals is possible. Therefore, it may be worthwhile for the present study to address this issue.

A relatable narrative can be exemplified by one of the most critical scenes in the movie, the separation of Hachiko and Parker. In this scene, Hachi is visibly restless, and unlike usual, he does not want to see Parker off to work that day. The narrative continues as follows: Parker cannot make sense of Hachi's reaction, but he tries to ease his discomfort with empathetic care. He turns to Hachi with compassion and says, "Tell me what is wrong, is something wrong?" (50'.12") and kisses him, then he says, "Well, are you all right now?" (50'.24") to demonstrate that he cares for him, that he wants to share his feelings and help him, even if the puppy cannot understand them. However, Hachi's restlessness still does not subside, and he refuses to go to the station with him. Parker goes to the station, trying to understand what is happening. Hachi cannot stand it, so he takes the game ball to make Parker happy and follows him to the station to say goodbye to him. Parker is pleased to see him with the ball. They play with the ball for a while. Before Parker gets on the train, Hachi gives him the ball. He does not want Parker to leave and is also very restless; Parker hugs and kisses Hachi with interest, even though he cannot understand him.

As for the interpretations, according to the narrative in the movie, Hachi's restlessness is related to the fact that he feels that Parker will never return. Therefore, Parker needs to understand Hachi's feelings entirely (correctly). Nevertheless, Parker compassionately tries to understand Hachi and relieve her uneasiness; he approaches her with empathic care. In other words, the inability to fully understand the other's situation did not prevent an empathic interest. At the same time, this situation does not create negativity from the perspective of the empathized. Hachiko's special bond with Parker continued with the same deep feelings until his death. Therefore, this example indicates that although the ability to predict the feelings and thoughts of others accurately is essential for empathy, empathy with animals can be evident within the framework of the significance attached to them (Staub 1987, Davis 1994, Batson 2011).

### ***The Empathizer, the Empathized, and the Interaction between Both***

The implications of the film also draw attention to the role of observer and target characteristics and the observer-target relationship in empathic responses. Empathic responses are linked to the empathizers' past experiences, individual predispositions, or personal attitudes and beliefs (Davis 1994). Although the movie does not include explicit statements, these characteristics of the observers may be relevant in the scenes depicting empathy with animals. Accordingly, characters who empathize with Hachi in the film are also portrayed with positive attitudes and behaviors towards Hachi. For example, Parker and his family, the officials at the station, the bookstore, the peddler, the passengers, the shopkeepers, and even the strangers (the newcomers) treat Hachi with respect and care. This respect and care can be noticed in how the passengers or the peddler greet Hachi every time they meet him or in Parker's egalitarian behavior, such as crawling while playing with Hachi. These representations are in line with the knowledge that empathy with animals is related to observers' positive attitudes and beliefs about animals (Apostol et al. 2013).

In another related scene, Parker's desire to familiarize himself with Hachi can be interpreted in terms of the value attributed to animals. In this scene, Parker goes to his close friend (Ken Fyutz Esi), a Japanese man, to learn about Hachi. He learns that the Japanese note on the box carrying Hachi indicates that he came from somewhere in Japan and that, according to his friend, Hachi is an "extraordinary dog" of the Akita breed. His collar reads Hachi, which means eight (lucky number) in Japanese. The Professor's effort can be considered a search for an empathic interaction with him because people may not be able to show an empathic approach to issues that they cannot define or do not have sufficient cognition (Stephan and Finlay 1999). In the following scenes, Parker, who learns that Hachi is a special dog, meets his choices (such as not playing with the ball) with a cognitive empathic understanding oriented towards the other.

These attitudes based on respect, care, and importance are also observed among the characters themselves. For instance, in one scene, the station attendant, thinking of Parker and Hachi, delays the departure of the train for a minute, which can be interpreted as an expression of his respect for both Hachi and Parker and their relationship. This act is consistent with the knowledge that people who do not discriminate between people or who adopt egalitarian attitudes can be more empathetic toward animals (Vonk and Weiper 2022).

The film also portrays some characters in close relationships with animals. As recalled, close relationships play an essential role in empathy with animals (Amiot and Bastian 2015). Thus, Parker's empathetic reactions to Hachi from the moment they first meet can be explained by his previous close bond with another dog, Lucas, with whom Parker seems to have kept some of his belongings. Similarly, the compassionate attitude of the

bookseller at the station, who has a sarman cat, when he sees the puppy Hachi can be interpreted in the context of shared experiences with animals (Bekoff 2007).

According to the narratives in the film, in addition to the characteristics of the observers, empathic responses are also related to the target of empathy. Hachi is an Akita dog, adorable, intelligent, and loyal. These characteristics can be considered factors that facilitate empathy because studies show that feelings and thoughts towards animals can change according to positive perceptions. For example, people evaluate animals they perceive attractive more positively than others (Serpell 2004), and a puppy evokes more empathy than an adult dog (Levin et al. 2017). However, the film has very few sample scenes for comparisons of empathic responses to animals or animal species with different characteristics. The scenes in question mostly exemplify solidarity with animals, so the relevant narratives will be included in the following section. In this section, however, the empathy with Hachi, as presented in the film, may have emerged through interactions between his positive traits and the traits of the empathizers themselves. This inference also emphasizes the role of observer-target interaction in empathy (Davis 1994).

### **Possible Empathic Reactions to Animals Evoked by the Movie in the Audience**

As might be expected, the empathic responses that the film evokes in the audience are the subject of a separate study in their own right and require closer examination (Tan 1996), but assessing the possible participation of the audience in the empathic process can provide important insights within the scope of this research. Therefore, in the following section, the possible empathic reactions that the movie elicits in the viewers will be discussed with the related characteristics.

Similar to the information provided in the previous section, the types and levels of empathic responses of the audience based on the movie may vary concerning observer-related characteristics. However, in general, the movie encourages the audience to engage empathically. In almost all scenes, the movie directs the audience to the feelings of sadness/grief, separation, sorrow, hope, devotion, joy, and longing experienced by a dog. The audience can empathize with the protagonist by trying to understand, imagine or share these emotions (Zillmann 1991, Keen 2014).

Hachi's emotions can be expressed in the relevant scenes as follows. On the night before Parker's death, Hachi's loneliness in his hut and the way he looks at the sounds coming from the house evoke sadness; the following day, as he watches the train leave the platform for the last time, he evokes the pain of separation. These feelings deepen on the day of Parker's death.

On that day, Hachi waits for Parker at the usual time and place, even though he will never return. Even though the hours have passed and everyone has left the station, Parker does not return, and Hachi's sadness gradually gives way to a feeling of deep sorrow. His grief can be seen in the following scenes as he looks from the hut to the house - there is mourning at home - trying to understand what is going on, his sad lying down and inactivity when the door of the hut opens in the morning, and his waiting as the family leaves for the funeral. A similar sadness/grief can be seen when Hachi leaves the house when he looks at his home and his memories from the back of the car.

Another possible emotion that emerges in the viewers is the feeling of alienation. It is possible to experience this feeling in the scene where Hachi (hopefully) goes to his old house, and there are new people in the house, and Hachi is now a stranger there.

Hachi's grief, hope, and devotion are portrayed in another scene. In this scene, Hachi is seen waiting for Parker with hope, even though the station is closed. Carl (the station attendant), unable to bear her state, goes up to her, crouches down, and says, "You do not have to wait. He is not coming back" (01.01', 39"). Hachi's look says, "I know, but I want to hope, to show my commitment."

Possible empathic reactions in the audience are also related to Hachi's positive emotions. The pleasant times that Parker and Hachi spend together, the games they play, or the reunion scenes where Hachi meets Parker at the station exit can be said to arouse positive empathic emotions such as joy and satisfaction in the audience (Morelli et al. 2015). For example, Hachi's joy, longing, and love for Parker can be seen in his body language in all the scenes where he greets the Professor. In the movie's last scenes, his love and longing are again presented to the audience's attention. Hachi says goodbye to this world in the relevant scene by dreaming of the good memories with Parker.

When the exemplified scenes are taken together, the audience can have four possible empathic reactions: cognitive and emotional, self-oriented, and other-oriented. Accordingly, the audience may try to understand

Hachi's feelings through a self-oriented cognitive empathic response, imagining themselves in his position. It is reasonable to anticipate that those who know less about animals will be more prone to experience this kind of empathic reaction. People empathize by visualizing themselves in someone else's place when they do not know enough (Batson and Ahmad 2009). On the contrary, those who have knowledge and experience with the body language of animals (Bekoff 2007, 2020) are more likely to try to imagine Hachi's emotions in his situation (Batson and Ahmad 2009). In other words, other-oriented cognitive empathic responses are linked to having more animal knowledge. However, knowledge may not be associated with positive attitudes toward animals (Knight et al. 2010, Bekoff 2020). In this respect, although knowledge about animals increases the likelihood of a cognitive empathic response oriented towards the other, the presence of negative attitudes may prevent this response from arousing empathic interest.

Similarly, emotional empathic responses in the audience may also comprise two different orientations. Accordingly, Hachi's emotions may cause personal distress in some audience members. Such a reaction may be related to the audience's personal experiences, such as a painful event in the past (Batson and Ahmad 2009), or it may be explained by individual differences in empathic tendencies (Davis 1994). Alternatively, the audience may show other-oriented emotional empathic responses to Hachi's happiness or pain, feeling compassion and sympathy on his behalf. However, it should be remembered that these empathic responses are related to the observer- and target-related characteristics, such as bystanders' attitudes and beliefs, past experiences, or Hachi's cuteness (Serpell 2004, Bekoff 2007, Apostol et al. 2013).

### **Solidarity with Animals**

The analysis of the film points to several narratives that can exemplify solidarity with animals. These can be categorized as Parker and his family's solidarity with Hachi and Hachi's solidarity with the people in his immediate and distant environment after Parker's death. The solidarity between Parker and Hachi can be recognized through activities that the characters do together, such as watching a game, playing a game, taking a walk, or seeing each other off to work. Such activities indicate intimacy and commitment, which are psychological elements of solidarity (Leach et al. 2008, Amiot and Bastian 2017). For example, watching a soccer match or eating popcorn shows, they share time and joy. The fact that Hachi sees Parker off to work every day and meets him at the station exit expresses the continuity of their sharing and the value they give to each other. Again, in the play scene, Parker's acting with the principle of fairness and honesty can be interpreted as a demonstration of the loyalty he forms with Hachi. In these narratives, Parker wants to play a ball game with Hachi, but Hachi does not want to participate. Parker tries to include Hachi in the game relatively in the narrative and understands his reluctance. The fact that he does not try to deceive Hachi in any way during the game can be considered an example of Parker's honesty. Parker's solidarity relates to his experience of close relationships with animals and his positive thoughts about animals. Indeed, studies suggest that being less prejudiced against animals or concerned about their well-being is linked to increased solidarity (Amiot and Bastian 2017).

In scenes related to solidarity, Hachi is also depicted as a valuable family member. In these scenes, Hachi is included in all family activities and is given the same attention and value as other family members. For example, in Andy's (Parker's daughter) wedding scene, Hachi is photographed with the family. These scenes point to the intimacy and attachment established with Hachi and the value and emotional meaning attached to Hachi. In other words, Parker and his family see him as a part of their social identity (Tajfel 1981); therefore, these scenes exemplify a factor related to solidarity with animals ("building a common identity") (Amiot et al. 2020).

Other exemplary scenes relate to narratives after Parker's death. The stories begin with the loneliness of losing someone Hachi was deeply connected to. In these scenes, Hachi is portrayed in great grief and pain. His pain is felt by everyone who loves and knows Hachi, and everyone who knows him wants to share his pain. For example, Parker's daughter Andy takes Hachi to their home and tries to make up for his absence by offering him a new family. However, Hachi wants to stay at the station, where he feels he belongs, and runs away from home. Those who see him watch in amazement. After a while, when Andy comes to the station to pick him up, Jess (the peddler) protests against taking Hachi away, saying, "Hey, hey, leave him alone!" (01.09',03"), showing that he shares Hachi's pain and at the same time, by trying to protect Hachi, he shows the psychological bond he has established with the dog. A similar attachment and solidarity are seen in the scene where Andy later allows Hachi to live in the station. In this scene, when Andy hears the sound of the train, he sees Hachi's excitement and says to him, "We want you to stay with us, but if you want to go, be good" (01.10',15"-01.10',26"), expressing that he shares Hachi's pain and lets him go for his good, in other words, that he acts out of solidarity. Others also support Hachi at the station (such as Carl, Mary, the bookseller), passengers, shopkeepers on the way to their old home, and many people from other cities. In the relevant scenes, these people are shown trying to support Hachi by

caring for him. These scenes also draw attention to the relationship between solidarity with animals and intentions and actions for their well-being (Amiot and Bastian 2017).

In these examples, it is possible to see aspects of solidarity with animals. These can be expressed as shared emotions, common identity/sense of we, attributed value, and solidarity. For example, the fact that Parker is happy when Hachi is happy or that the people at the station experience the same sadness as Hachi shows that their joys and pains are common. Shared emotions, meanwhile, can bind them to each other because people can develop close bonds with groups they share the same emotions with or perceive as similar to themselves and feel that they belong to these groups (Staub 1992). When groups are framed with a sense of us, the importance ascribed to the group and the desire to maintain the group's existence also increase (Ellemers and Haslam 2012).

In the movie, the common identity established with Hachi, besides being a valued family member or station member, can be extended to people from different cities. This extension can be evidenced by the fact that when Hachi's loyalty (reported in a newspaper) spreads across the country, many people want to take care of him. A similar interpretation can be made for the reactions of Parker's close friends Ken and Jess (the peddler) in other related scenes. The scene features Ken's visit to Hachi. Jess, who watches this visit from a distance, tells Parker's friend, "This is his [Hachi's] home now" (01.16',22"), expressing their acceptance of Hachi as part of the people of the station. The dialog between Ken and Hachi in the following scene points to a similar sense of identity. In this dialog, Ken's addressing Hachiko as "my friend" can be interpreted as a sign that he sees him as a part of his self ("I understand how you feel. Hachi is my friend, Parker will never come back, but if Hachiko wants to wait, then Hachiko must wait." [01.16',57"-01.17',11"]).

The solidarity between Hachi and the others may have been established through the intimacy between Hachi and Parker. Their love for each other, Hachi's seeing Parker off and greeting him every day, and their happiness at the moments of reunion were met with surprise and interest by those around them (e.g., station attendant, peddler, passengers). This interest motivated an empathic approach over time because such an extraordinary relationship can only be perceived through an empathic understanding. Therefore, as highlighted by related research, empathy for Hachi may have evoked feelings of intimacy and solidarity (Amiot and Bastian 2017).

A final example of animal solidarity is the scene in which Kate (Parker's wife) meets Hachiko after many years (ten years). In this scene, Hachi has aged considerably and is strolling towards the station to wait for Parker at his usual time and place. The scene continues as follows: Kate sees Hachi, runs to him, and sits down next to him, saying, "My old friend, are you still waiting?" (01.22',09"), and everyone around looks at them (Jess, Carl, Ken). Kate hugs Hachi, crying, "Do you mind if I wait for the next train with you? Is that okay?" (01.22',46"-01.22',52"). Jess, who is watching them, is moved, and her eyes fill with tears. This scene can also be said to be one of the most dramatic scenes of the film because this time, instead of showing a personal concern, Kate is portrayed as empathetically caring for Hachi, wanting to share his attachment and longing, and waiting for the train (Parker's) return with Hachi.

Unlike these narratives, some scenes in the movie shed light on the contradictory nature of human-animal relationships. For example, in a scene depicting a family event where Hachi is present, the family eats "fried meat"; in another scene depicting the interest in Hachi, the shop owner (butcher) gives him a piece of meat. In another narrative, Jess (a peddler) shares his food, sausage, with Hachi. While these scenes contain examples of empathy and solidarity with animals, the film also portrays a pervasive contrast between "loved" animals and "eaten." In this paradox, people perceive some animals (such as chickens and turkeys) as a source of food (Holden and Herzog 2020) while at the same time defending animal rights (Herzog and Golden 2009). Therefore, some of the narratives in the film contain distinctions between "animals used for food" and "companion animals". The film is also considered an excellent example to underline these divisions. As mentioned at the beginning, almost all the scenes in the film encourage the audience to feel empathy and solidarity with animals. However, some scenes encouraging these feelings also relate to moral distinctions between animals (such as beloved/eaten animals) (Herzog 2011). Exemplifying these scenes can help to review the conflicting attitudes towards different animal species and help viewers to realize that in some scenes where they feel empathy and solidarity with animals, some animal distinctions are also legitimized (Camilleri et al. 2020). Such awareness may offer a deeper understanding of empathy and solidarity with animals.

---

## Conclusion

Empathy and solidarity with animals are associated with many positive outcomes, such as pro-social behavior, psychological and physical health, and reduced violence or aggression. However, in different fields of science (e.g., academia), these issues have yet to receive the attention they deserve. Studies conducted in Türkiye are

considerably more recent. It seems essential to enrich the content of existing studies with different tools (such as films and books) and to conduct scientific analysis. The movie provides a wealth of information for the applicants. In many scenes of the movie, it is possible to see examples of empathy towards animals and solidarity with animals. In these examples, empathy can be distinguished as emotional, cognitive, self-oriented, and other-oriented. The narratives are also associated with scenes where viewers can closely experience empathy and solidarity with animals. Some of these scenes suggest the contradictory nature of human-animal relations and exemplify how empathy and solidarity with animals may vary for different animal species. These analyses indicate that the film is an appropriate resource that can be utilized in different fields of academia, especially in psychology education, when explaining the concepts of empathy and solidarity with animals.

## References

- Agnew R (1998) The causes of animal abuse: A social-psychological analysis. *Theor Criminol*, 2:177-209.
- Allen K, Shykoff BE, Izzo Jr JL (2001) Pet ownership, but not ACE inhibitor therapy, blunts home blood pressure responses to mental stress. *Hypertension*, 38:815-820.
- Amiot CE, Bastian B (2015) Toward a psychology of human-animal relations. *Psychol Bull*, 141:6-47.
- Amiot CE, Bastian B (2017) Solidarity with animals: Assessing a relevant dimension of social identification with animals. *PloS One*, 12:e0168184.
- Amiot CE, Sukhanova K, Bastian B (2020) Social identification with animals: Unpacking our psychological connection with other animals. *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 118:991-1017.
- Apostol L, Rebegea OL, Miclea M (2013) Psychological and socio-demographic predictors of attitudes toward animals. *Procedia Soc Behav Sci*, 78:521-525.
- Arluke A (2006) *Just a Dog: Understanding Animal Cruelty and Ourselves*. Philadelphia, Temple University Press.
- Ascione FR (1993) Children who are cruel to animals: A review of research and implications for developmental psychopathology. *Anthrozoös*, 6:226-247.
- Ascione FR, Weber CV (1996) Children's attitudes about the humane treatment of animals and empathy: One-year follow-up of a school-based intervention. *Anthrozoös*, 9:188-195.
- Aytürk E, Broad G (2021) Moral concern toward different categories of animal species: using the animal moral concern scale to examine animal-related self-perceptions and behaviors. *Psyarxiv*, doi:10.31234/osf.io/5pywj.
- Barraza JA, Zak PJ (2009) Empathy toward strangers triggers oxytocin release and subsequent generosity. *Ann N Y Acad Sci*, 1167:182-189.
- Bastian B, Costello K, Loughnan S, Hodson G (2012) When closing the human-animal divide expands moral concern: The importance of framing. *Soc Psychol Personal Sci*, 3:421-429.
- Batson CD (2011) *Altruism in Humans*. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Batson CD, Ahmad NY (2009) Using empathy to improve intergroup attitudes and relations. *Soc Issues Policy Rev*, 3:141-177.
- Batson CD, Chang J, Orr R, Rowland J (2002) Empathy, attitudes and action: Can feeling for a member of a stigmatized group motivate one to help the group? *Pers Soc Psychol Bull*, 28:1656-1666.
- Batson CD, Duncan BD, Ackerman P, Buckley T, Birch K (1981) Is empathic emotion a source of altruistic motivation? *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 40:290-302.
- Batson CD, Polycarpou MP, Harmon-Jones E, Imhoff HJ, Mitchener EC, Bednar LL et al. (1997) Empathy and attitudes: Can feeling for a member of a stigmatized group improve feelings toward the group? *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 72:105-118.
- Bekoff M (2020) *Hayvanların Duygusal Dünyası: Hayvanlar Nasıl Empati Kurar, Neden Dedikodu Yapar ve Şakalaşırlar?* (Çeviri A Taçyıldız İpekçioglu). İstanbul, Beyaz Baykuş.
- Bekoff M (2007) *Encyclopedia of Human-Animal Relationships: A Global Exploration of Our Connections with Animals*. London, Greenwood Press.
- Berenguer J (2007) The effect of empathy in pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors. *Environ Behav*, 39:269-283.
- Berenguer J (2010) The effect of empathy in environmental moral reasoning. *Environ Behav*, 42:110-134.
- Bratanova B, Loughnan S, Bastian B (2011) The effect of categorization as food on the perceived moral standing of animals. *Appetite*, 57:193-196.
- Brinckmann CN (2014) *Color and Empathy Essays on Two Aspects of Film*. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press.
- Camilleri L, Gill PR, Jago A (2020) The role of moral disengagement and animal empathy in the meat paradox. *Pers Individ Dif*, 164:110103.
- Caviola L, Everett JAC, Faber NS (2019) The moral standing of animals: Towards a psychology of speciesism. *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 116:1011-1029.
- Cuff BMP, Brown SJ, Taylor L, Howat DJ (2016) Empathy: A review of the concept. *Emot Rev*, 8:144-153.
- Davis MH (1983) Measuring individual differences in empathy: Evidence for a multidimensional approach. *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 44:113-126.

- Davis MH (1994) *Empathy: A Social Psychological Approach*. New York, Westview Press.
- De Wied M, Zillmann D, Ordman V (1995) The role of empathic distress in the enjoyment of cinematic tragedy. *Poetics*, 23:91-106.
- Eisenberg N (1988) Empathy and sympathy: A brief review of the concepts and empirical literature. *Anthrozoös*, 2:15-17.
- Eisenberg N, Strayer J (1987) Critical issues in the study of empathy. In *Empathy and its Development*, (Eds N Eisenberg, J Strayer):3-13. New York, Cambridge University Press.
- Ellemers N, Haslam SA (2012) Social identity theory. In *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*, (Eds PAM Van Lange, AW Kruglanski, ET Higgins):379-398. Los Angeles, Sage Publications.
- Ellingsen K, Zanella AJ, Bjerkås E, Indrebø A (2010) The relationship between empathy, perception of pain and attitudes toward pets among Norwegian dog owners. *Anthrozoös*, 23:231-243.
- Filippi M, Riccitelli G, Falini A, Di Salle F, Vuilleumier P, Comi G, Rocca MA (2010) The brain functional networks associated to human and animal suffering differ among omnivores, vegetarians and vegans. *PloS One*, 5:e10847.
- Franklin Jr RG, Nelson AJ, Baker M, Beeney JE, Vescio TK, Lenz-Watson A, Adams Jr RB (2013) Neural responses to perceiving suffering in humans and animals. *Soc Neurosci*, 8:217-227.
- Fultz AA, Bernieri FJ (2022) Observer descriptions of the empathic person: A look at the Davis IRI and Hogan empathy scales. *J Soc Psychol*, 162:26-40.
- Hakemulder J (2000) *The moral Laboratory: Experiments Examining The Effects of Reading Literature on Social Perception and Moral Self-Concept*. Amsterdam, John Benjamins.
- Hall JA, Schwartz R (2019) Empathy present and future. *J Soc Psychol*, 159:225-243.
- Hallström L (2009) *Hachiko: A Dog's Story* (Movie). Culver City, CA, Stage 6 Films.
- Harrison MC (2011) How narrative relationships overcome empathic bias: Elizabeth Gaskell's empathy across social difference. *Poet Today*, 32:255-288.
- Haslam N (2014) What is dehumanization? In *Humanness and Dehumanization*, (Eds PG Bain, J Vaes, JP Leyens):34-48. London, UK, Psychology Press.
- Haslam N, Holland E, Stratemeyer M (2020) Kittens, pigs, rats, and apes: The psychology of animal metaphors. In *Why We Love and Exploit Animals: Bridging Insights from Academia and Advocacy* (Eds K Dhont, G Hodson):90-103. New York, Routledge.
- Heider F (1958) *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*. New York, Wiley.
- Hergovich A, Monshi B, Semmler G, Zieglmayer V (2002) The effects of the presence of a dog in the classroom. *Anthrozoös*, 15:37-50.
- Herzog HA, Golden LL (2009) Moral emotions and social activism: The case of animal rights. *J Soc Issues*, 65:485-498.
- Herzog H (2011) *Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat: Why It's So Hard to Think Straight about Animals*. New York, Harper.
- Hodson G, Dhont K, Earle M (2020) Devaluing animals, "animalistic" humans, and people who protect animals. In *Why We Love and Exploit Animals: Bridging Insights from Academia and Advocacy* (Eds K Dhont, G Hodson):67-89. New York, Routledge.
- Holden CJ, Herzog H (2020) Featherless chickens and puppies that glow in the dark: Moral heuristics and the concept of animal "naturalness". In *Why We Love and Exploit Animals: Bridging Insights from Academia and Advocacy* (Eds K Dhont, G Hodson):137-153. New York, Routledge.
- Keen S (2007) *Empathy and the novel*. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Keen, S. (2014). Narrative empathy. In *Handbook of Narratology*, (Eds P Hühn, J Meister, J Pier, W Schmid):521-530. Berlin, De Gruyter.
- Kielland C, Skjerve E, Osterås O, Zanella AJ (2010) Dairy farmer attitudes and empathy toward animals are associated with animal welfare indicators. *J Dairy Sci*, 93:2998-3006.
- Knight S, Bard K, Vrij A, Brandon D (2010) Human rights, animal wrongs? Exploring attitudes toward animal use and possibilities for change. *Soc Anim*, 18:251-272.
- Komorosky D, O'Neal KK (2015) The development of empathy and prosocial behavior through humane education, restorative justice, and animal-assisted programs. *Contemp Justice Rev*, 18:395-406.
- Koopman EME, Hakemulder F (2015) Effects of literature on empathy and self-reflection: A theoretical-empirical framework. *J Lit Theory*, 9:79-111.
- Leach CW, van Zomeren M, Zebel S, Vliek MLW, Pennekamp SF, Doosje B et al. (2008) Group-level self-definition and self-investment: A hierarchical (multicomponent) model of in-group identification. *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 95:144-165.
- Lennon R, Eisenberg N (1987) Gender and age differences in empathy and sympathy. In *Empathy and its Development*, (Eds N Eisenberg, J Strayer): 195-217. New York, Cambridge University Press.
- Levin J, Arluke A, Irvine L (2017) Are people more disturbed by dog or human suffering? Influence of victim's species and age. *Soc Anim*, 25:1-16.
- Lewis BA (2021) *Social Emotional Stories: Lessons and Learning from Plants and Animals*. London, Free Spirit Publishing.
- Leyens JP, Paladino PM, Rodriguez-Torres R, Vaes J, Demoulin S, Rodriguez-Perez A, Gaunt R (2000) The emotional side of prejudice: The attribution of secondary emotions to ingroups and outgroups. *Pers Soc Psychol Rev*, 4:186-197.

- Linzey A, Cohn PN (Ed.) (2011) Terms of discourse. *J Anim Ethics*, 1:vii-ix.
- Lucia S, Killias M (2011) Is animal cruelty a marker of interpersonal violence and delinquency? Results of a Swiss National Self-Report study. *Psychol Violence*, 1:93-105.
- Luna D, Vásquez RA, Tadich T (2019) Exploring the relationship between socio-demographic background and empathy toward nonhuman animals in working horse caretakers. *Soc Anim*, 29:539-558.
- Małecki W, Pawłowski B, Sorokowski P, Oleszkiewicz A (2019) Feeling for textual animals: Narrative empathy across species lines. *Poetics*, 74:101334.
- McFarland S, Webb M, Brown D (2012) All humanity is my ingroup: a measure and studies of identification with all humanity. *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 103: 830-853.
- Morelli SA, Lieberman MD, Zaki J (2015) The emerging study of positive empathy. *Soc Personal Psychol Compass*, 9:57-68.
- Morris P, Knight S, Lesley S (2012) Belief in animal mind: Does familiarity with animals influence beliefs about animal emotions? *Soc Anim*, 20:211-224.
- Okutan N, Çenesiz G (2021) İnsanlar hayvanlardan farklı ve üstün müdür? Türkçe atasözlerinde Türler Arası Önyargı Modelinin tematik analizi. *Sosyal Psikolojide Ahlak Çalışmaları Ulusal Sempozyumu*, 26-27 Kasım 2021 Van, Türkiye (Çevrim içi). Kongre Özet Kitabı sayfa:16-22.
- Ornaghi V, Brockmeier J, Grazzani I (2014) Enhancing social cognition by training children in emotion understanding: A primary school study. *J Exp Child Psychol*, 119:26-39.
- Özkul T (2018) Empati: Soru ve Cevaplarla İnsan-Hayvan Etkileşimi. Bursa, Ezgi Kitabevi.
- Özkul T, Sarıbaş T, Uzabacı E, Yüksel E (2013) Türk toplumunun hayvan hakları kavramına yaklaşımının belirlenmesine yönelik bir araştırma: II. Hayvan sevgisi, hayvanları tanımlama, hayvan sahipliği ve beslenme alışkanlıklarına yönelik tutum analizi. *Kafkas Univ Vet Fak Derg*, 19:199-202.
- Paul ES (2000) Empathy with animals and with humans: Are they linked? *Anthrozoös*, 13:194-202.
- Paul ES, Serpell JA (1993) Childhood pet keeping and humane attitudes in young adulthood. *Anim Welf*, 2:321-337.
- Phillips C (2008) *The Welfare of Animals: The Silent Majority* (Vol. 8). New York, Springer.
- Plous S (1993) Psychological mechanisms in the human use of animals. *J Soc Issues*, 49:11-52.
- Poresky RH (1996) Companion animals and other factors affecting young children's development. *Anthrozoös*, 9:159-168.
- Regan DT, Totten J (1975) Empathy and attribution: Turning observers into actors. *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 32:850-856.
- Schultz PW (2000) Empathizing with nature: The effects of perspective taking on concern for environmental issues. *J Soc Issues*, 56:391-406.
- Serpell JA (2004) Factors influencing human attitudes to animals and their welfare. *Anim Welf*, 13:145-151.
- Serpell JA (2019) Companion animals. In *Anthrozoology Human-Animal Interactions in Domesticated and Wild Animals* (Eds G Hosey, V Melfi):17-31. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Sevillano V, Fiske ST (2020) Animals as social groups: An intergroup relations analysis of human-animal conflicts. In *Why We Love and Exploit Animals* (Eds K Dhont, G Hodson):260-283. New York, Routledge.
- Shelton ML, Rogers RW (1981) Fear-arousing and empathy-arousing appeals to help: The pathos of persuasion. *J Appl Soc Psychol*, 11:366-378.
- Siem B (2022) The relationship between empathic concern and perceived personal costs for helping and how it is affected by similarity perceptions. *J Soc Psychol*, 162:178-197.
- Smith A (2017) *Ahlaki Duygular Kuramı (Çeviri B Tartıcı)*. İstanbul, Liber Plus Yayınları.
- Staub E (1978) *Positive Social Behavior and Morality: Social and Personal Influences* (Vol. 1). New York, Academic Press.
- Staub E (1987) Commentary on part I. In *Empathy and its Development* (Eds N Eisenberg, J Strayer): 103-115. New York, Cambridge University Press.
- Staub E (1992) *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*. New York, Cambridge University Press.
- Stephan WG, Finlay K (1999) The role of empathy in improving intergroup relations. *J Soc Issues*, 55:729-743.
- Tajfel H (1974) Social identity and intergroup behaviour. *Soc Sci Inf (Paris)*, 13:65-93.
- Tajfel H (1981) *Human Groups and Social Categories*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Tan ES (1996) *Emotion and the Structure of Narrative Film: Film as an Emotion Machine*. New York, Routledge.
- Vidović VV, Štetić VV, Bratko D (1999) Pet ownership, type of pet and socio-emotional development of school children. *Anthrozoös*, 12:211-217.
- von Essen E, Allen MP (2017) Solidarity between human and non-human animals: Representing animal voices in policy deliberations. *Environ Commun*, 11:641-653.
- Vonk R, Weiper MLV (2022) Meat and interpersonal motives: The case of self-enhancement. *J Soc Psychol*, 12:1-13.
- Westbury HR, Neumann DL (2008) Empathy-related responses to moving film stimuli depicting human and non-human animal targets in negative circumstances. *Biol Psychol*, 78:66-74.
- Young A, Khalil KA, Wharton J (2018) Empathy for animals: A review of the existing literature. *Curator (N Y)*, 61:327-343.
- Zaki J (2014) Empathy: A motivated account. *Psychol Bull*, 140:1608-1647.
- Zillmann D (1991) Empathy: Affect from bearing witness to the emotions of others. In *Responding To The Screen: Reception And Reaction Processes* (Eds J Bryant, D Zillmann):135-167. New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum.

Zillmann D (2008) Empathy theory. In The International Encyclopedia of Communication (Ed W Donsbach):1530-1534. Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishing.

**Authors Contributions:** The author(s) have declared that she has made a significant scientific contribution to the study and has assisted in the preparation or revision of the manuscript

**Peer-review:** Externally peer-reviewed.

**Conflict of Interest:** No conflict of interest was declared.

**Financial Disclosure:** No financial support was declared for this study.