

## Effect of Storyboard Visuals on Empathy and Value in Medical Malpractice Cases

Amanda J. Panagakis, MBA, MIS, PhD.  
Spartan Executives, LLC  
Amanda@spartanexecutives.com

### Abstract

In a rigid setting, such as a courtroom, the ability to create the emotional connection can be a challenge. To address the lack of research regarding visuals being used to create an emotional connection and used to increase monetary value, a quantitative experimental study was conducted. Three research questions guided this study:

1. Is there a significant effect between study groups (using storyboard visuals, not using storyboard visuals) in eliciting an emotional connection?
2. Is there a significant effect between study groups in determining the value in a client's case?
3. Is there a significant effect of correlation between the emotional response of a juror to an injured client's case and the monetary damages awarded by the juror?

The Appraisal theory was the theoretical foundation for this study. The study held 108 participants that resembled typical jurors. An Emotional Measure questionnaire and an 11-point dollar scale were used to collect data. The participants were randomly put into either a control or an experimental group. The groups were given a fictional narrative. The control group had no visuals and the experiment group had visuals. Various statistical procedures were utilized to analyze the data. The data showed that there was a statistical difference in eliciting an emotional connection and in the value of a client's case. A positive correlation was shown in the emotional response and the monetary damages awarded. Given the results of this study, storyboard visuals can create an emotional connection and increase monetary value in medical malpractice cases.

### Descriptive Statistics

		Experimental Group	Control Group
Empathy Measure	<i>M</i>	6.09	4.97
	<i>SD</i>	0.48	0.75
11-point Dollar Scale	<i>Median</i>	11.00	9.0
	<i>Mode</i>	11.0	9.0

*Note.* *N* = 54 in Experimental Group; *N* = 54 in Control Group

Table 1 presents the responses of the control and experimental groups to the 11-point Dollar Scale. The majority of the experimental group (33, 61.1%) endorsed the highest level of monetary damages, Point 11 (> \$4 million). In contrast, half of the control group (27, 50.0%) endorsed Point 9 (\$1 million to \$2 million) and about one quarter endorsed Point 10 (\$2 million to \$4 million).

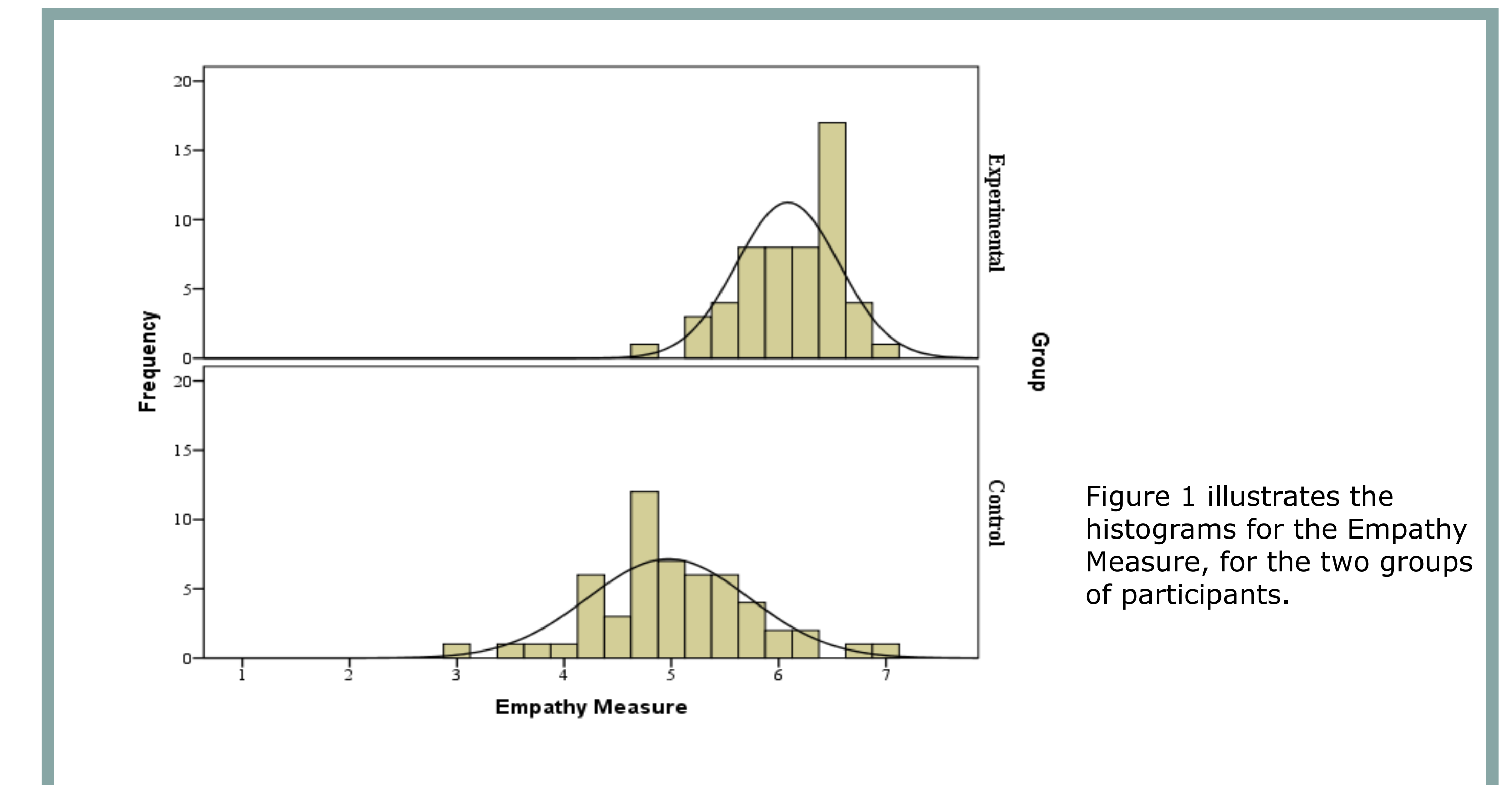


Figure 1 illustrates the histograms for the Empathy Measure, for the two groups of participants.

### Responses of the Control and Experimental Groups to the 11-Point Dollar Scale

Group	Point 7: \$0.25 Million to \$0.5 Million	Point 8: \$0.5 Million to \$1 Million	Point 9: \$1 Million to \$2 Million	Point 10: \$2 Million to \$4 Million	Point 11: > \$4 Million
Control	1 (1.9%)	11 (20.4%)	27 (50.0%)	13 (24.1%)	2 (3.7%)
Experimental		1 (1.9%)	7 (13.0%)	13 (24.1%)	33 (61.1%)

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics to summarize the data for the Empathy Measure and 11-point Dollar Scale collected from *n* = 54 participants in the experimental group and *n* = 54 participants in the control group.

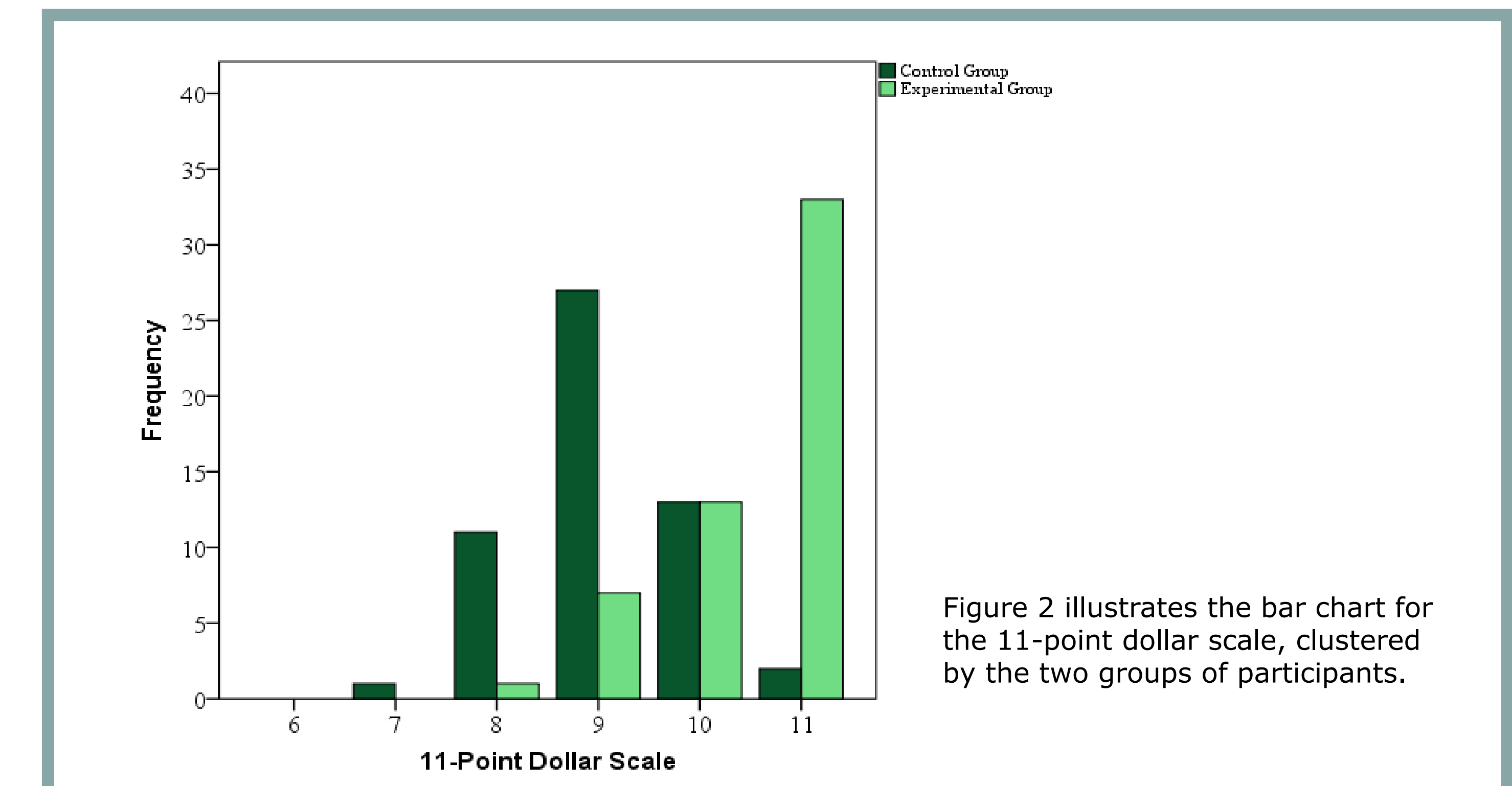


Figure 2 illustrates the bar chart for the 11-point dollar scale, clustered by the two groups of participants.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between storyboard visuals and the impact it had on emotional connections and monetary value in medical malpractice cases. The results of this study provided affirmative answers to the three research questions, and confirmed that storyboard visuals may impact jurors in medical malpractice cases by eliciting the emotion of empathy and increasing the monetary award to the injured party.

### Theoretical Implications

The implications of this study supported the appraisal theory, positing that a person's empathy is formed after interpreting another's situation as indicated through the Empathy Measure Questionnaire. Further, the results indicated that people who do not empathize with another person will not want to help that person however, visual stimuli may help people to empathize or create an emotional connection with another person.

### Practical Implications

The findings in this study support the notion that while the visuals may not create a way to calculate the damage amount, the visuals can create an emotional connection which leads to a motivation to want to help. The storyboard visuals showed that the emotional connection can be made without the use of additional testimony such as words spoken.

### Future Implications

Storyboard visuals create an emotional bond which leads a person to be motivated to want to help an injured party. For a practicing malpractice attorney, the future implications taken from this study is to include visual storyboards when discussing the injured party to create that emotional bond. The study also demonstrated the need to use visuals to evoke emotional connections between jurors and the injured party to create that necessary bond and to increase the amount of monetary damages.