

## Introduction and Aims

While a substantial number of studies have found that a relationship between negative imagery and psychopathologies exists, only recently have studies begun exploring imagery based interventions in treating certain affective disorders. Project Soothe is a current large scale project that has collected over 600 images from the general public and is now testing the 'universally soothing' validity of these images.

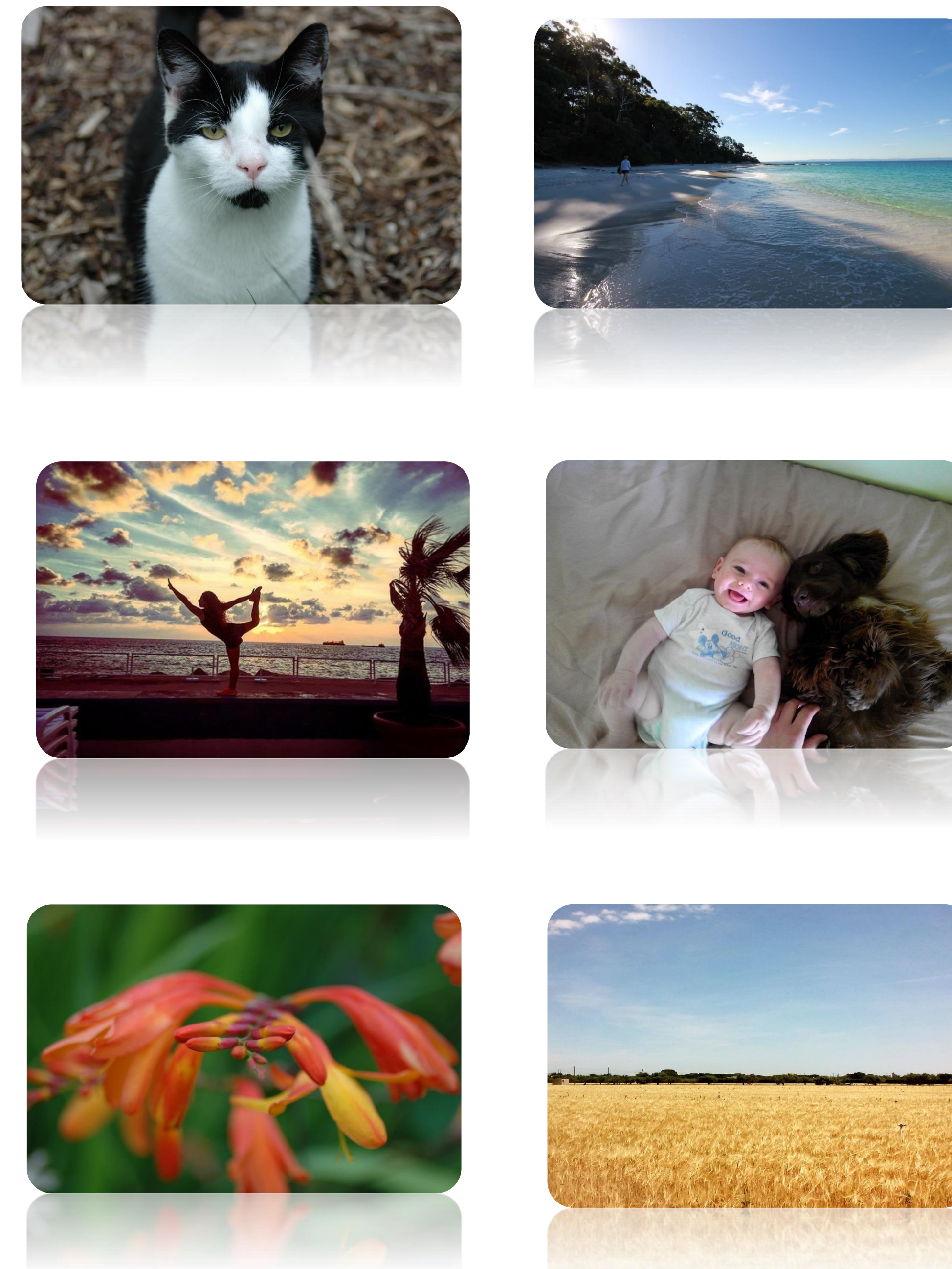
The current study was derived from Project Soothe and asked:

1. What is the effect of externally presented soothing images (EPSI) and mentally generated soothing images (MSGSI) on young people's mood?
2. Do depressive symptoms and emotion regulation scores influence young people's mood changes to EPSI and MSGSI?

## Methods

The study included N=135 participants, females (n= 87 ) and males (n= 48), 12 to 18 years ( $M = 15.07$ ,  $SD = 1.55$  ) from Belize, Central America. Participants were randomized into: EPSI (n= 68) and MSGSI (n=67). EPSI group viewed 30 soothing images collected by Project Soothe. MSGSI group received instructions based on Compassion Focused Therapy to mentally create 6 soothing images. The following measures were used in both conditions: PANAS-SF, PHQ-9, ERQ-CA.

## Project Soothe Images



## Pictures of Belize



## Results

Participants in the EPSI group reported significantly higher positive affect than participants in the MSGSI group. There was no significant difference between the groups for negative affect. Depressive symptoms nor emotion regulation scores influenced mood changes.

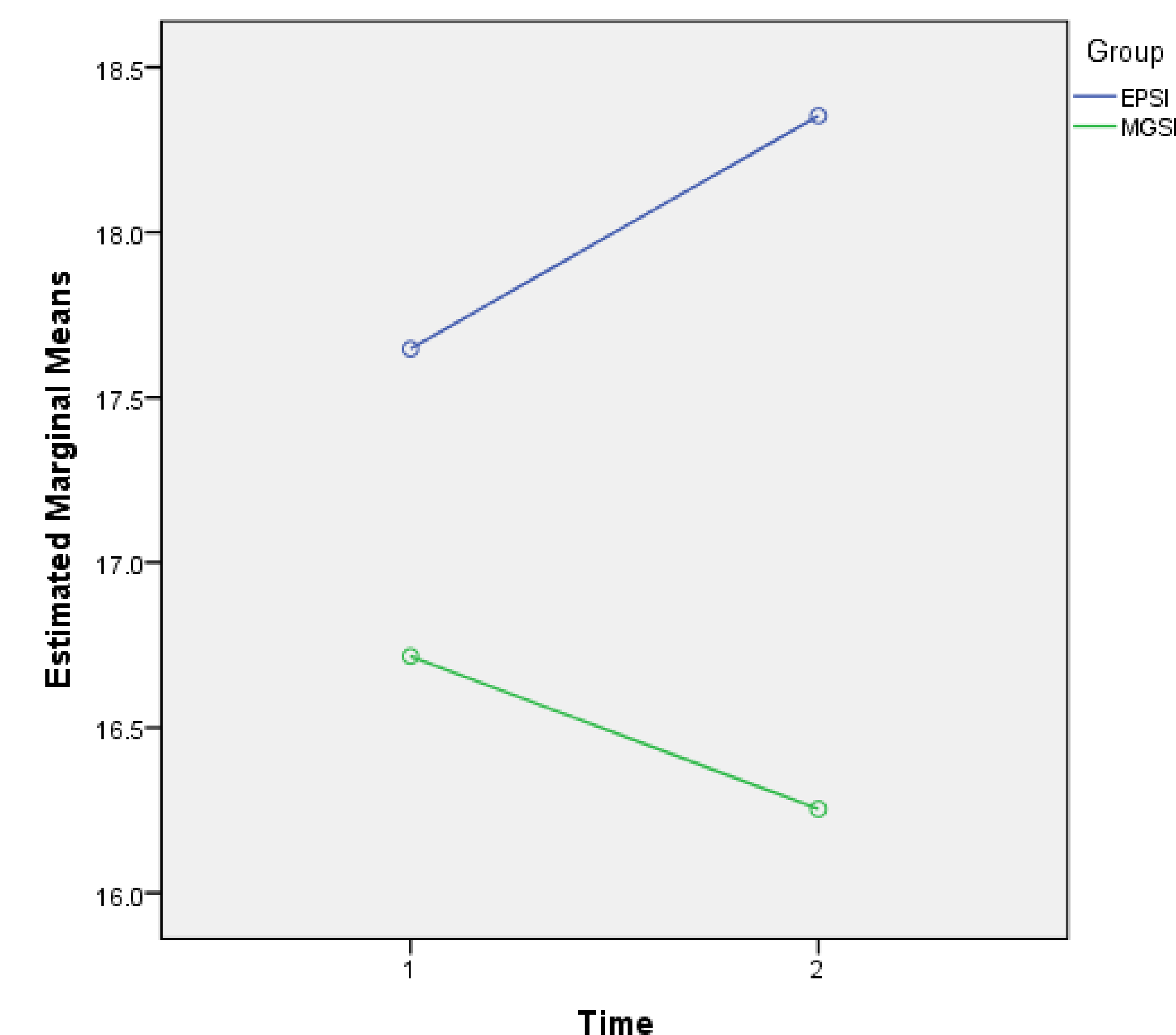


Figure 1. Group differences of positive affect at pre and post-test.

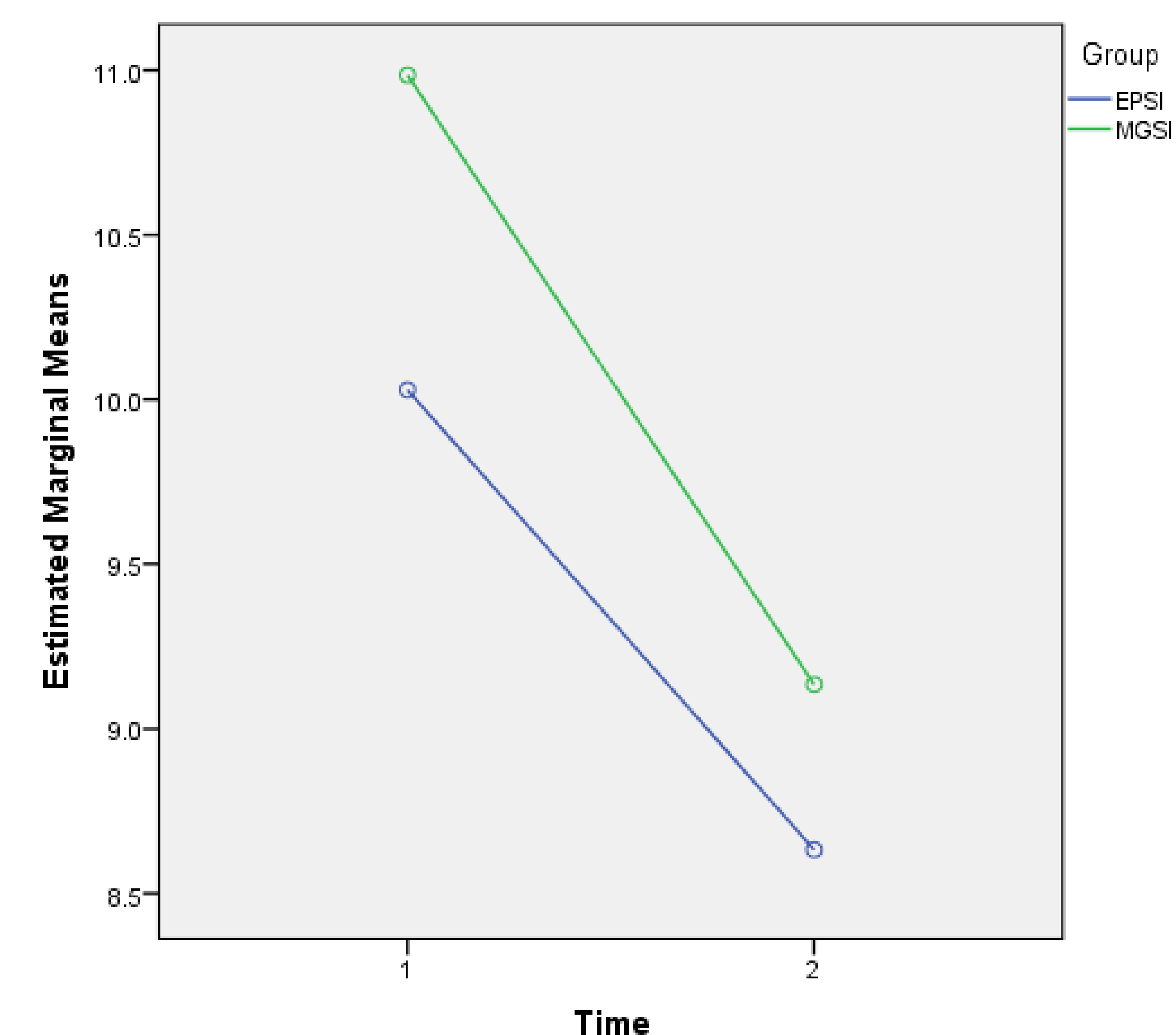


Figure 2. Group differences of negative affect at pre and post-test.

## Discussion

Our results show that young people can benefit from engaging with EPSI as it can help them improve their positive affect. Moreover, EPSI seems to maintain its effect on mood regardless of depressive symptoms and emotion dysregulation.

## Future Directions

Future studies can further test the effects of EPSI with young people who are representative of a clinical population.

Prevention and intervention strategies aimed at improving positive affect in young people should consider using EPSI.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the students and staff at San Pedro High School in Belize, whose involvement helped make this study possible.

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