



MAJOR LIFE EVENTS AND  
POSTPARTUM DEPRESSIVE  
SYMPTOMS AMONG BLACK  
AND LATINA MOTHERS:  
THE MODERATING ROLE  
OF PROTECTIVE FACTORS

*Ciara Venter, B.A.*

*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

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# POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION (PPD)

## Prevalence Rates of PPD

- **Global:** 27.6% (Al-abri et al., 2023)
- **US:** 12.5% (CDC, 2022)

## Linkage to poorer family outcomes

- **Children:** Negative psychological, behavioral, and physical health (Corrigan et al., 2015; Kingston & Tough, 2014)
- **Partner:** decreased relationship satisfaction and poorer coparenting quality (Trillingsgaard et al., 2014; Yu, 2021)



# PPD: BLACK AND LATINA WOMEN



Cultural influences

Greater stress exposures

Socioeconomic barriers

Underrepresented in research

## RISK FACTOR: MAJOR LIFE EVENTS

Substantial literature on negative/stressful life events predicting higher levels of depression

- Upwards of 70% of new mothers report experience at least one stressful life event within one year before the baby is born (Salm Ward et al., 2017)

Less literature on different perceptions of positive life events and how they predict depressive symptoms

- Riskind et al. (2013) found that positive events had a negative impact on depressive symptoms when negative events were not present

PROTECTIVE  
FACTORS:  
INTERPERSONAL  
RELATIONSHIPS  
(FAMILY)

Family Support

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graph TD; A[Family Support] --- B[Cultural importance of family within Latine communities (Sampson et al., 2018).]; A --- C[Importance of support from parents and child's father for African American mothers' mental health (Edwards et al., 2012; Hudson et al., 2016).]
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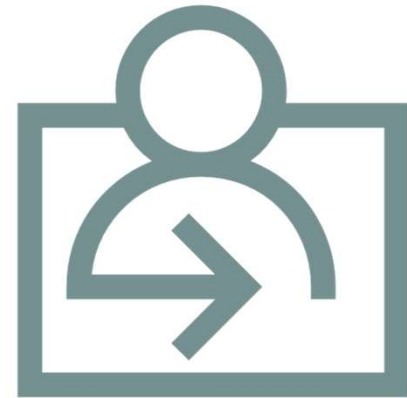
## PROTECTIVE FACTORS: INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS (DOCTORS)

There is literature on both the harm caused by a lack of care and support provided by maternal health care teams, as well as the protective benefits of having **effective support** (Souza et al., 2017; Sangsawang et al., 2021)

**Social support** provided by obstetricians and midwives can be a significant source of assistance and help to prevent PPD (Lee et al., 2020; Sangsawang et al., 2021)

## PROTECTIVE FACTORS: INTRAPERSONAL (INTERNAL)

- Sense of control
  - Degree to which an individual perceives their environment and life outcomes as under their own control (Mirowsky & Ross, 1990).
  - High sense of control is related to proactive behavior and positive psychological outcomes (Keeton et al., 2008; Lachman & Weaver, 1998).



# CURRENT STUDY GOALS

## Aim 1

Understand the relationship between major life events (positive and negative) and PPD symptoms among a sample of working-class Black and Latina mothers

## Hypothesis 1

Experiencing more major life events would be associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms at one-year postpartum

## Aim 2

Understand how interpersonal resources (family support and doctor support) and intrapersonal resources (sense of control) may serve as protective factors that buffer the effects of major life events on PPD symptoms

## Hypothesis 2

The association between major life events and PPD symptoms would be moderated by each of the protective factors (family support, doctor support, sense of control)

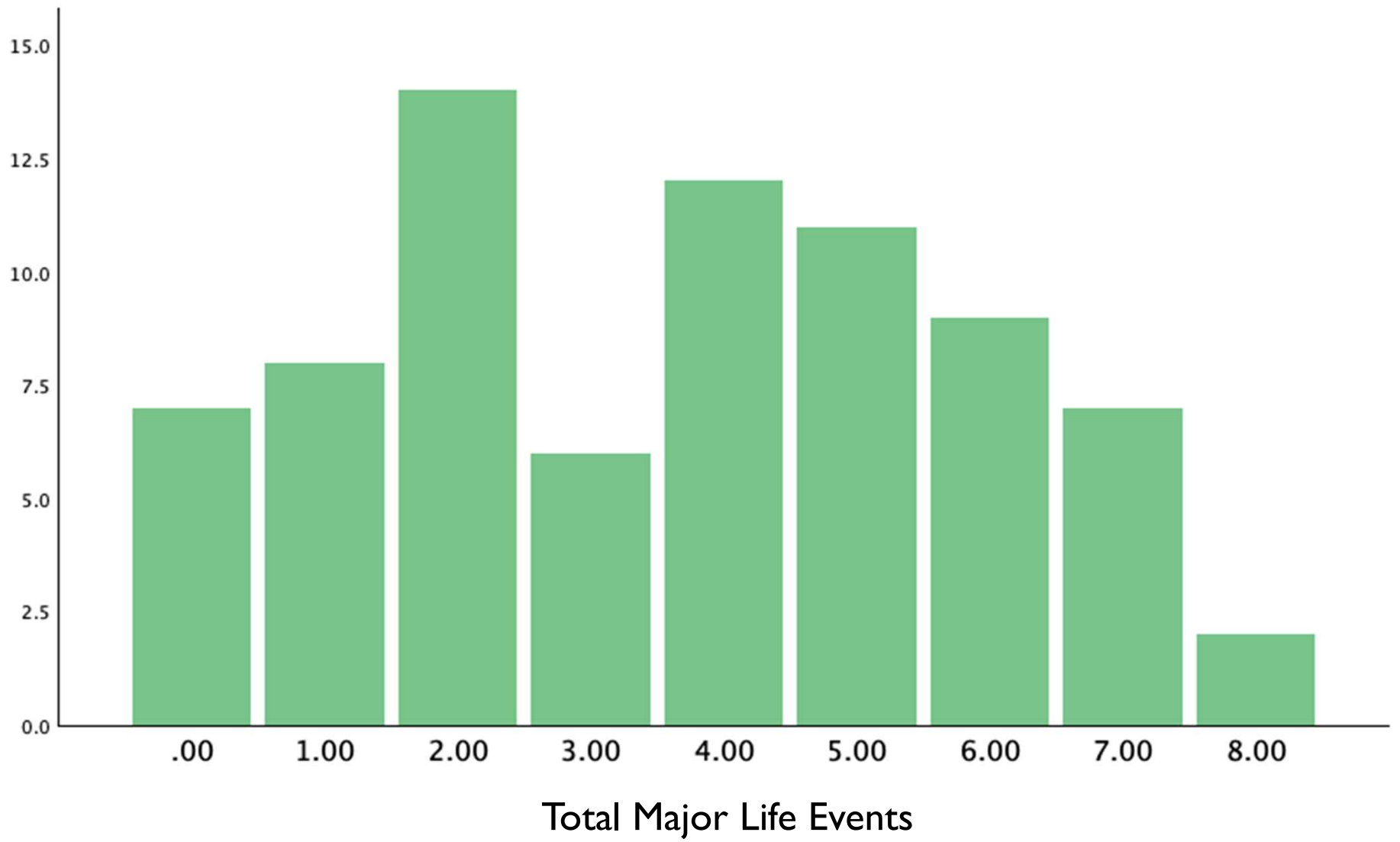


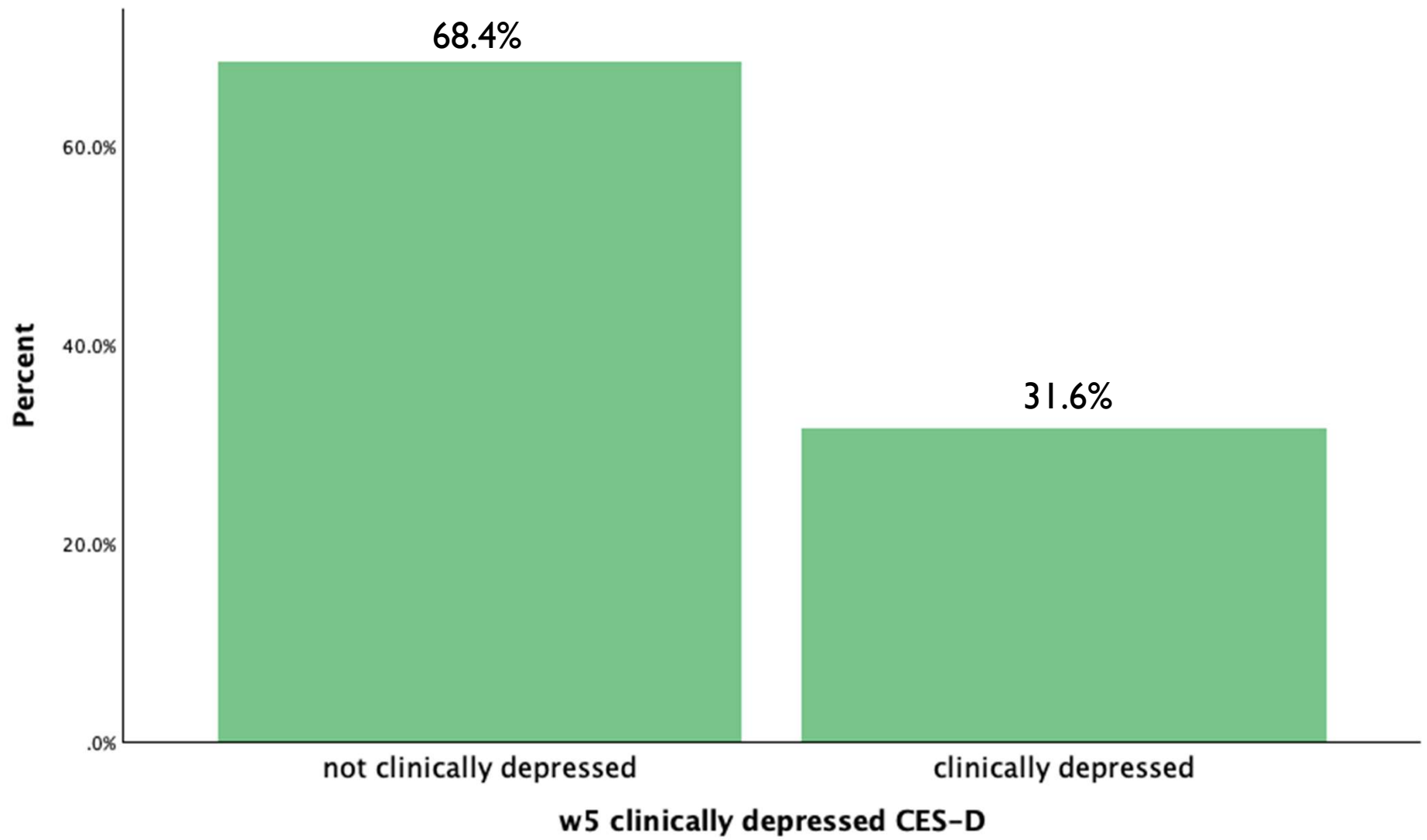


- Longitudinal study examining the experiences of 203 diverse and working-class families across the transition to parenthood.
- Current sample consisted of 122 Black and Latina mothers.

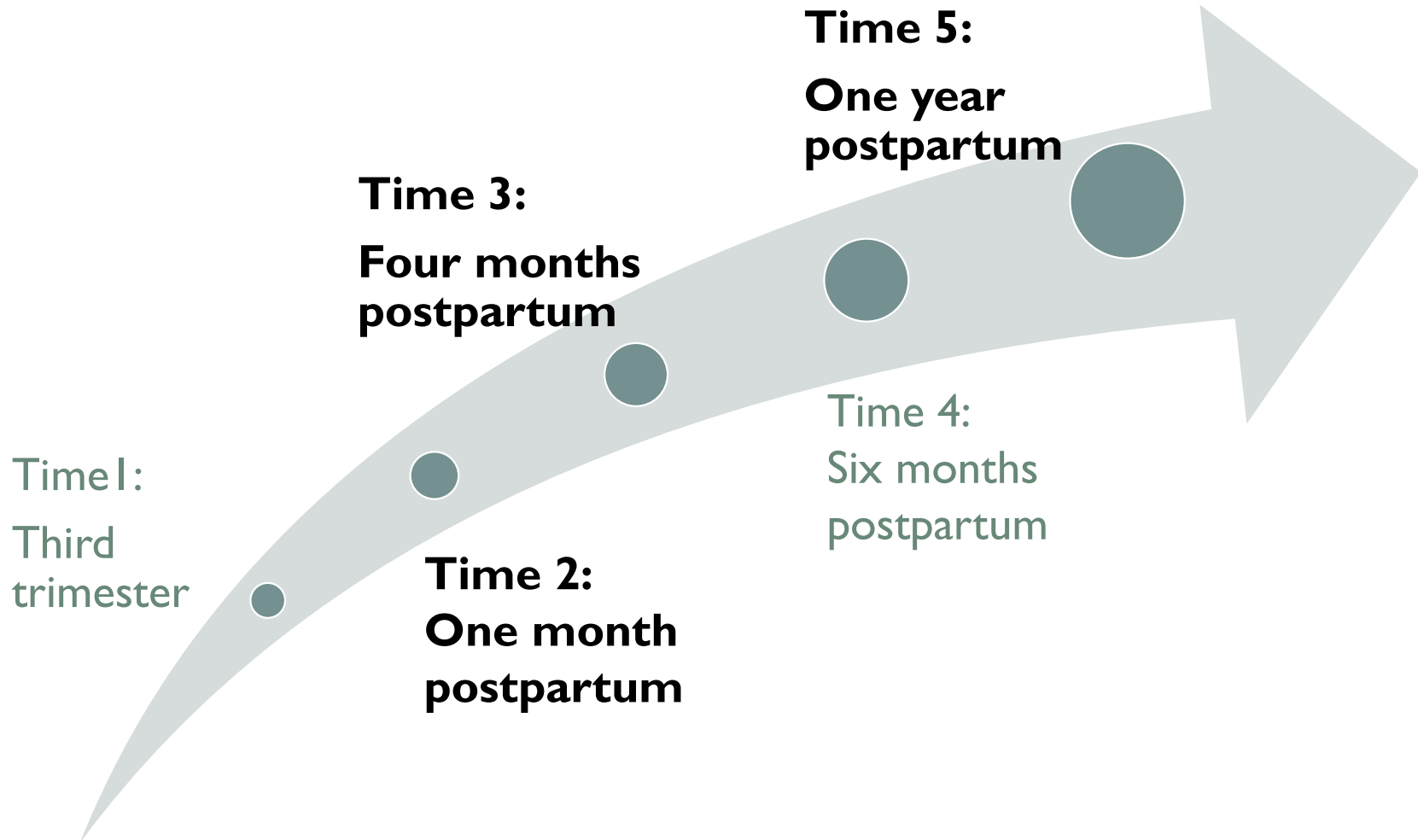
*Demographics at Time 1*

Demographics (n = 122)	Mothers		
	Frequency (%)	Mean	Range
Race/Ethnicity			
- African American	47 (38.5%)		
- Latina	75 (61.5%)		
Educational Level			
- Completed high school	83 (68.0%)		
- Attended college	62 (50.8%)		
Total number of kids in household			
- 0	43 (35.8%)		
- 1-3	73 (60.8%)		
Nature of Relationship with BF			
- Romantically involved on steady basis	76 (65.0%)		
Yearly Gross Income			
- Total family		\$45,635.12	\$125,120.00





# Timeline



# MEASURES

Major Life Events  
(Time 5)

- Major changes in financial situation, work situation, relationship etc.

Perceived Social Support Scale – Family (Time 3)

- “I rely on my family for emotional support”

Sense of Control (Time 3)

- “I am responsible for my own success”

Doctor Support – Single Question (Time 2)

- “How supportive was your obstetrician/midwife?”

CES-D (Time 5)

- “I was bothered by things that don’t usually bother me”



# “How was your obstetrician/midwife compared to how you thought they would be?”

## Examples from mothers reporting low support

“...it was different midwives, but some of them that I was trying to, talk to them like ‘What’s going on?’ like trying to make it easier for me, and they were saying, ‘Nah, nah we can’t do nothing, just wait”

- Latina mother

“She was too involved with the student and teaching him...I at least thought the doctor would be paying more attention”

- Black mother

“I thought she was gonna be one of the fastest people. I thought she was gonna check in all the time, but she only came in a couple times; the nurses came in more than she did”

- Black mother

“How was your obstetrician/midwife compared to how you thought they would be?”

Examples from mothers reporting high support

“His personality. Ya know, I just felt like I could trust him, and he looks really smart and I was like ‘oh I want him!’”

- Latina mother

“...She rocked the *whole* thing...She made me feel very comfortable through the whole thing. Very calm. She made the whole experience that much easier for me”

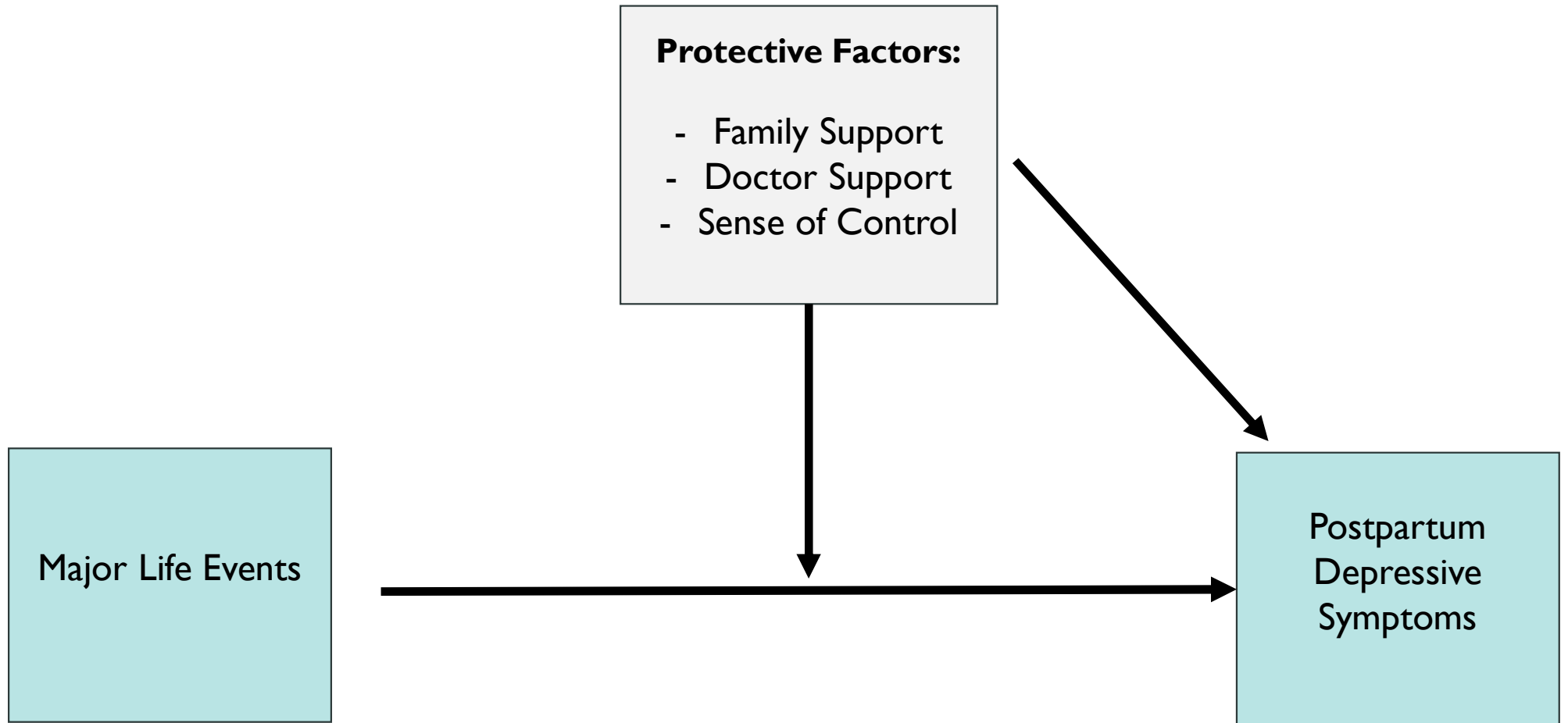
- Latina mother

“Cause he’s been my doctor for a couple of years now, so I knew he’d be good”

- Black mother



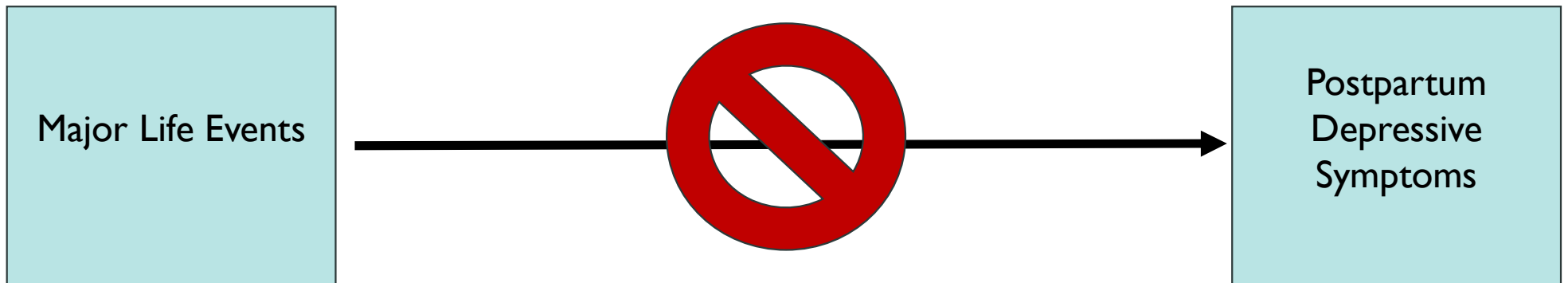
# Study Overview



## Results:

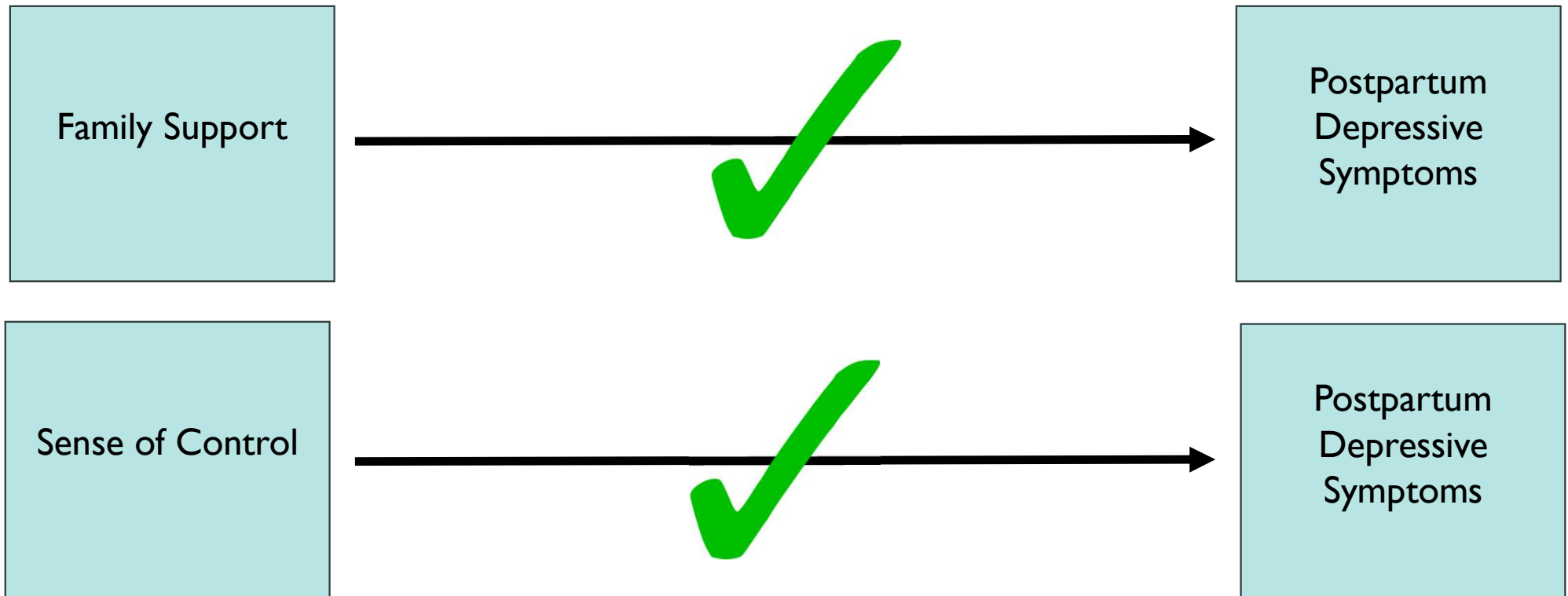
What is the relationship between major life events and PPD symptoms?

\*\*however, negative life events  
DID predict PPD symptoms



## Results:

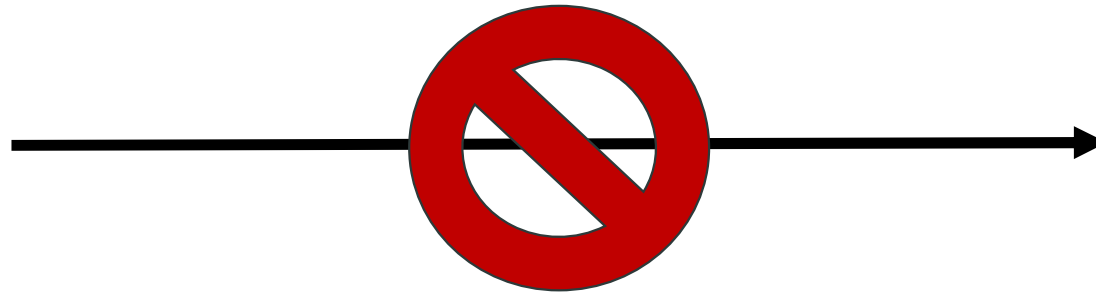
What is the relationship between each resource (family support, doctor support, sense of control) and PPD symptoms?



## Results:

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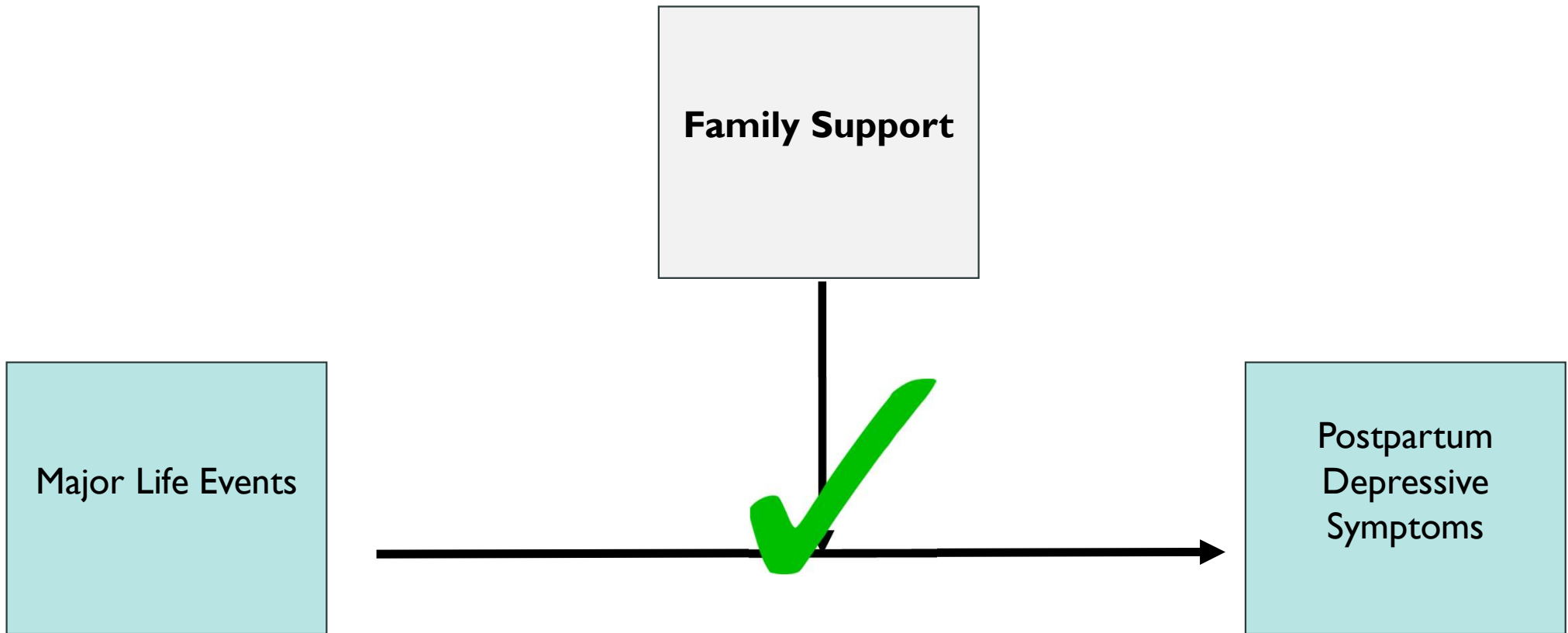
Doctor Support



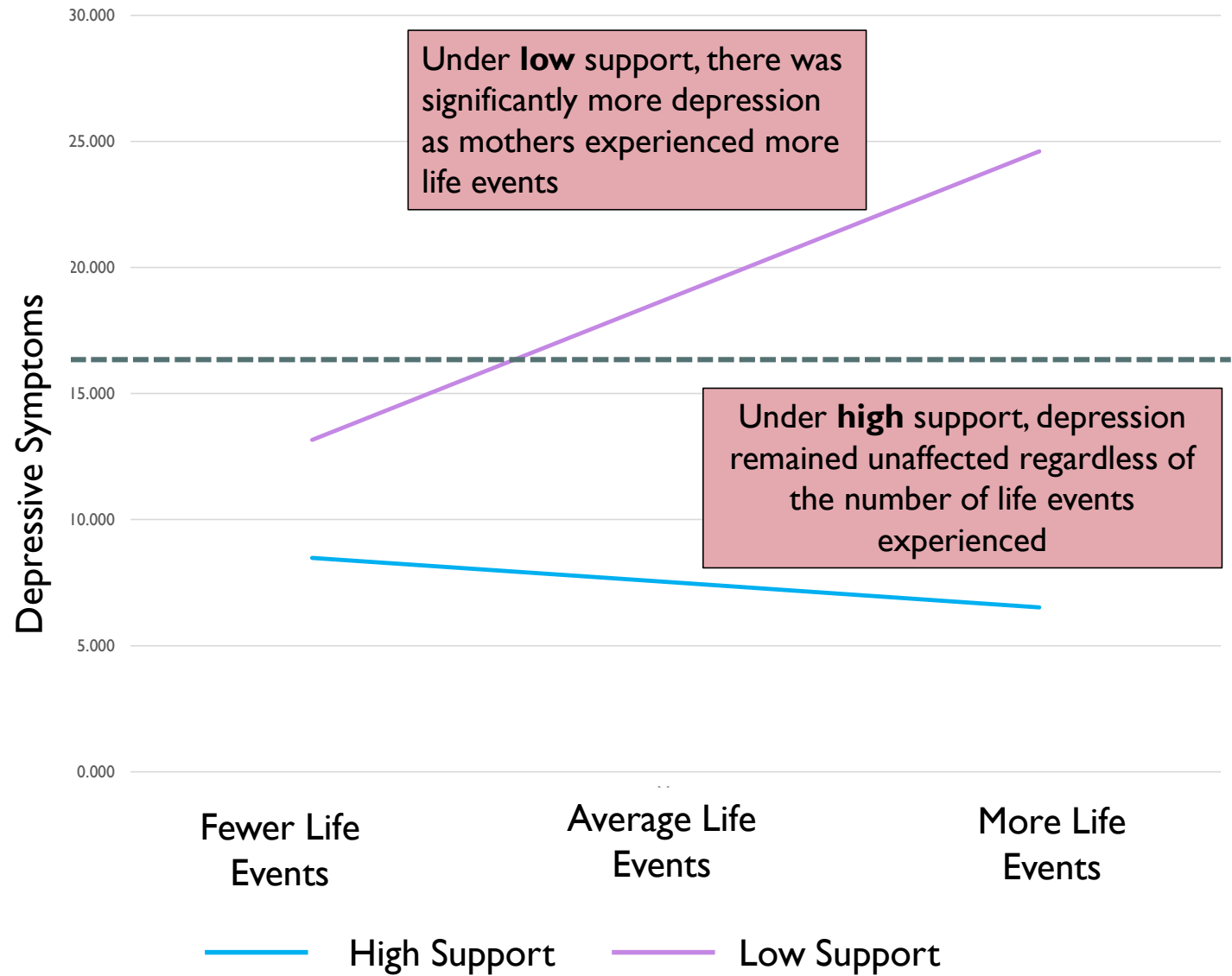
Postpartum  
Depressive  
Symptoms

## Results:

Do each of these resources buffer the effects of major life events on PPD symptoms?

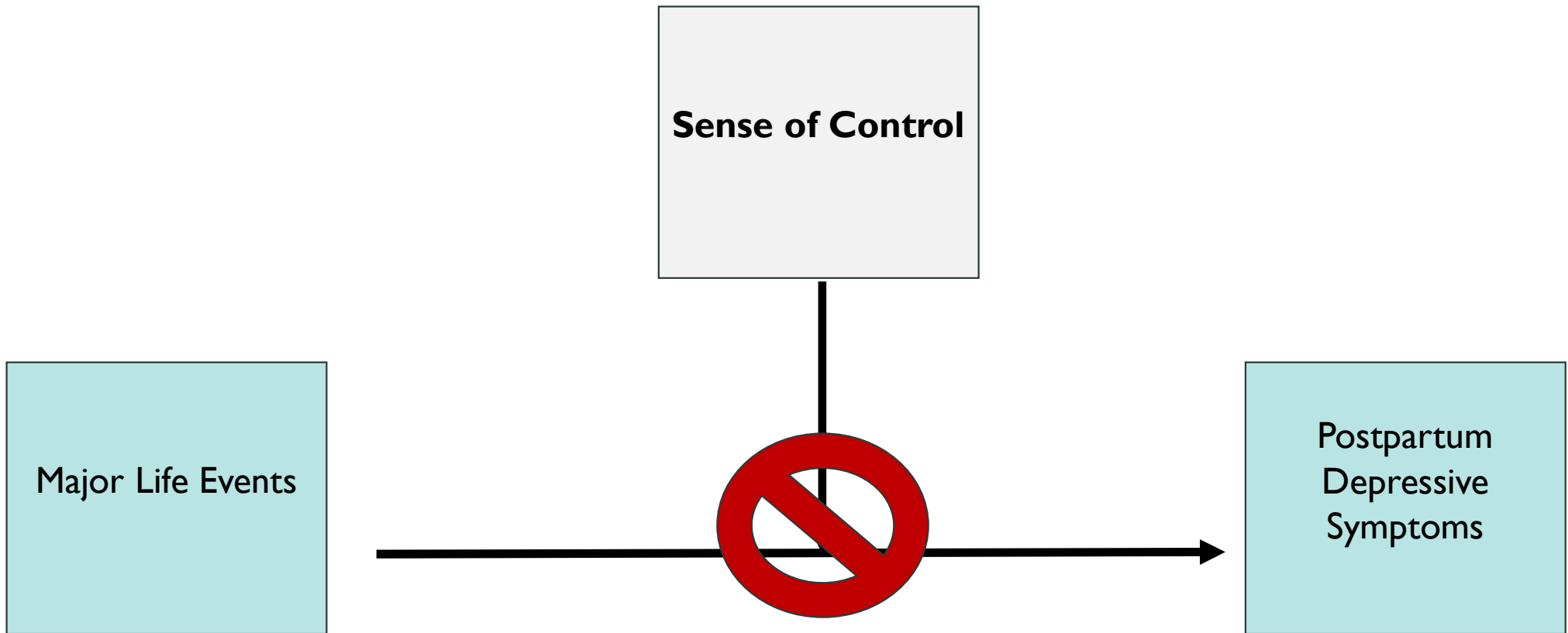


Family support moderates the relationship between major life events and PPD symptoms



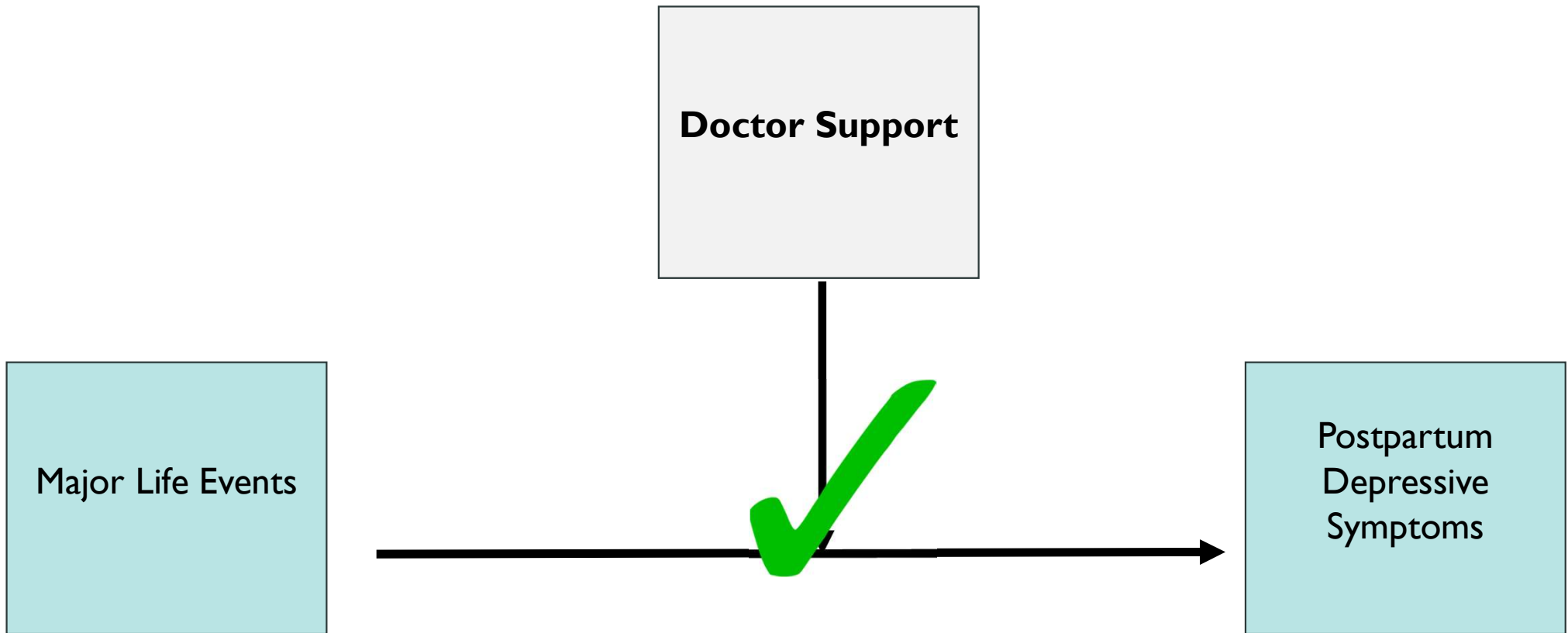
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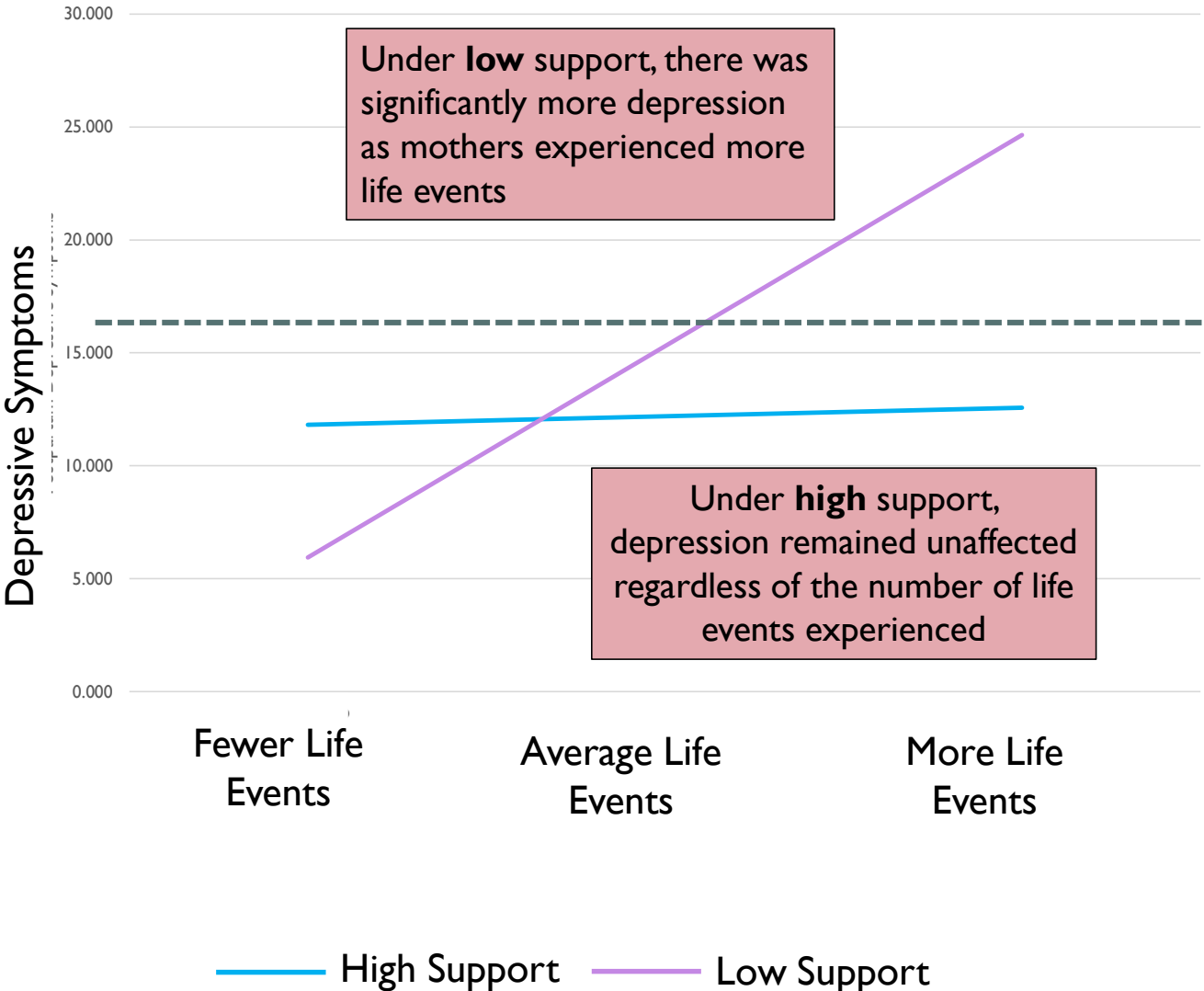
## Results:

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Doctor support moderates the relationship between major life events and PPD symptoms



## CONCLUSIONS

Amidst more significant life changes, Black and Latina women were more likely to experience PPD symptoms when they perceived little to no social support from their family and their doctors



Feeling in control over what happens in life can be protective against the development of PPD but may lose its protective benefits when facing significant life changes

## LIMITATIONS

Small sample size

General depression measure  
used to assess PPD symptoms

No clinical diagnosis

## STRENGTHS

Racially and ethnically diverse sample

Longitudinal design

Highlights important role that perceived doctor support can play in maintaining or worsening maternal mental health outcomes

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE



Taking a more holistic approach to maternal healthcare



Identifying sources of social support and prioritizing interventions aimed at strengthening support



Current strategies focusing on high-quality and respectful maternal healthcare should pay close attention to doctor-patient relationships

## REFERENCES

