sion but also specifies a sequence of events in a causal chain hypothesized to culminate in this proximal sufficient cause. Each event in the chain leading to the proximal sufficient cause is a contributory cause because it increases the likelihood of, but is neither necessary nor sufficient for, the occurrence of the symptoms of hopelessness depression. In addition, these contributory causes vary in how proximal they are to the occurrence of the symptoms. Finally, with the exception of the relation between hopelessness and the symptoms of hopelessness depression, no link in the hypothesized causal chain is a sufficient condition for any other link. Instead, each link contributes to the occurrence or formation of the next link.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the hypothesized causal chain begins with the perceived occurrence of negative life events (or nonoccurrence of positive life events). In contrast to the 1978 reformulation (but consistent with later statements such as those of Peterson & Seligman, 1984), we begin the etiological chain with the perceived occurrence of a negative life event, rather than an uncontrollable event, because the logic of the hopelessness theory requires only the occurrence of the former, rather than the latter, to initiate the series of causes hypothesized to culminate in hopelessness and, in turn, the symptoms of hopelessness depression (see also Ritzel, 1978). Epidemiological research has shown that the occurrence of negative life events is involved in the development of depression (e.g., Brown & Harris, 1978; Lloyd, 1980a, 1980b). A fundamental question for the field of depression is why and how negative life events contribute to the onset of depression. In the hopelessness theory, negative events serve as "occasion setters" for people to become hopeless. However, people do not always become hopeless and depressed when confronted with negative life events. When do negative life events lead to depression and when do they not? According to the theory, there are at least three types of inferences people may make that modulate whether they become hopeless and, in turn, develop the symptoms of hopelessness depression in the face of negative life events: (a) inferences about why the event occurred (i.e., inferred cause or causal attribution), (b) inferences about consequences that will result from the occurrence of the event (i.e., inferred consequences), and

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3 For the sake of brevity, we will use the phrase negative life events to refer to both the occurrence of negative life events and the nonoccurrence of positive life events.