

Self-efficacy in Changing Societies

Edited by

Albert Bandura
Stanford University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK [http: //www.cup.cam.ac.uk](http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk)
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA [http: //www.cup.org](http://www.cup.org)
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1995

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and
to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1995
First paperback edition 1997
Reprinted 1999

Typeset in Palatino

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data is available

ISBN 0-521-47467-1 hardback
ISBN 0-521-58696-8 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2002

Contents

Foreword	<i>page</i> vii
Preface	ix
List of contributors	xv
1 Exercise of personal and collective efficacy in changing societies	1
ALBERT BANDURA	
2 Life trajectories in changing societies	46
GLEN H. ELDER, JR.	
3 Developmental analysis of control beliefs	69
AUGUST FLAMMER	
4 Impact of family processes on control beliefs	114
KLAUS A. SCHNEEWIND	
5 Cross-cultural perspectives on self-efficacy	149
GABRIELE OETTINGEN	
6 Self-efficacy in stressful life transitions	177
MATTHIAS JERUSALEM AND WALDEMAR MITTAG	
7 Self-efficacy and educational development	202
BARRY J. ZIMMERMAN	
8 Self-efficacy in career choice and development	232
GAIL HACKETT	

vi Contents

9 Changing risk behaviors and adopting health behaviors: The role of self-efficacy beliefs	259
RALF SCHWARZER AND REINHARD FUCHS	
10 Self-efficacy and addictive behavior	289
G. ALAN MARLATT, JOHN S. BAER, AND LORI A. QUIGLEY	
Name Index	317
Subject Index	329

1. Exercise of personal and collective efficacy in changing societies

ALBERT BANDURA

People strive to exercise control over events that affect their lives. By exerting influence in spheres over which they can command some control, they are better able to realize desired futures and to forestall undesired ones. The striving for control over life circumstances permeates almost everything people do because it can secure them innumerable personal and social benefits. The ability to affect outcomes makes them predictable. Predictability fosters adoptive preparedness. Inability to exert influence over things that adversely affect one's life breeds apprehension, apathy, or despair. The capability to produce valued outcomes and to prevent undesired ones, therefore, provides powerful incentives for the development and exercise of personal control.

Although a strong sense of efficacy in socially valued pursuits is conducive to human attainment and well-being, it is not an unmixed blessing. The impact of personal efficacy on the nature and quality of life depends, of course, on the purposes to which it is put. For example, the lives of innovators and social reformers driven by unshakable efficacy are not easy ones. They are often the objects of derision, condemnation, and persecution, even though societies eventually benefit from their persevering efforts. Many people who gain recognition and fame shape their lives by overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles only to be catapulted to new social realities over which they have lesser control. Indeed, the annals of the famed and infamous are strewn with individuals who were both architects and victims of their destinies.

The vastly enhanced human power to transform the environment can have pervasive effects not only on current life, but on how future generations live out their lives. Our technical capability to render uninhabitable

much of the planet on which we reside attests to the growing magnitude of human power. There is much public concern over where some of the technologies we create are leading us. Voracious pursuit of self-interest not only produces effects that collectively may be detrimental in the long run, but creates special-interest gridlock that immobilizes efforts to solve socially the broader problems of society. Without commitment to shared purposes that transcend narrow self-interests, the exercise of control can degenerate into personal and factional conflicts of power. People have to be able to work together if they are to realize the shared destiny they desire and to preserve a habitable environment for generations to come.

Nature and function of efficacy beliefs

Because of the centrality of control in human lives, many theories about it have been proposed over the years (Adler, 1956; DeCharms, 1978; Rotter, 1966; White, 1959). People's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively the case. Hence, it is people's beliefs in their causative capabilities that is the major focus of inquiry. Much of the research generated by the various theories is tied to an omnibus measure of perceived control and devoted to the search for its psychosocial correlates. To fully understand personal causation requires a comprehensive theory that explains, within a unified conceptual framework, the origins of beliefs of personal efficacy, their structure and function, the processes through which they operate, and their diverse effects. Self-efficacy theory addresses all of these sub-processes both at the individual and collective level (Bandura, in press). By embedding the self-efficacy belief system in a broader sociocognitive theory, it can integrate diverse bodies of findings in varied spheres of functioning. The value of a theory is ultimately judged by the power of the methods it yields to produce desired changes. Self-efficacy theory provides explicit guidelines on how to develop and enhance human efficacy.

Self-efficacy in the exercise of human agency

People make causal contributions to their own psychosocial functioning through mechanisms of personal agency. Among the mechanisms of agency, none is more central or pervasive than people's beliefs of personal efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations. Efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act. A central question in any theory of cognitive regula-

tion of motivation, affect, and action concerns the issues of causality. Do efficacy beliefs operate as causal factors in human functioning? The findings of diverse causal tests, in which efficacy beliefs are systematically varied, are consistent in showing that such beliefs contribute significantly to human motivation and attainments (Bandura, 1992a).

Sources of efficacy beliefs

People's beliefs concerning their efficacy can be developed by four main forms of influence. The most effective way of creating a strong sense of efficacy is through *mastery experiences*. They provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed (Bandura, 1982; Biran & Wilson, 1981; Feltz, Landers, & Raeder, 1979; Gist, 1989). Successes build a robust belief in one's personal efficacy. Failures undermine it, especially if failures occur before a sense of efficacy is firmly established. Developing a sense of efficacy through mastery experiences is not a matter of adopting ready-made habits. Rather, it involves acquiring the cognitive, behavioral, and self-regulatory tools for creating and executing appropriate courses of action to manage ever-changing life circumstances.

If people experience only easy successes they come to expect quick results and are easily discouraged by failure. A resilient sense of efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort. Some difficulties and setbacks in human pursuits serve a useful purpose in teaching that success usually requires sustained effort. After people become convinced they have what it takes to succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks. By sticking it out through tough times, they emerge stronger from adversity.

The second influential way of creating and strengthening efficacy beliefs is through the *vicarious experiences* provided by social models. Seeing people similar to themselves succeed by perseverant effort raises observers' beliefs that they, too, possess the capabilities to master comparable activities (Bandura, 1986; Schunk, 1987). By the same token, observing others fail despite high effort lowers observers' judgments of their own efficacy and undermines their level of motivation (Brown & Inouye, 1978). The impact of modeling on beliefs of personal efficacy is strongly influenced by perceived similarity to the models. The greater the assumed similarity the more persuasive are the models' successes and failures. If people see the models as very different from themselves their beliefs of

personal efficacy are not much influenced by the models' behavior and the results it produces.

Modeling influences do more than simply provide a social standard against which to judge one's own capabilities. People seek proficient models who possess the competencies to which they aspire. Through their behavior and expressed ways of thinking, competent models transmit knowledge and teach observers effective skills and strategies for managing environmental demands. Acquisition of better means raises perceived self-efficacy. Undaunted attitudes exhibited by perseverant models as they cope with obstacles repeatedly thrown in their path can be more enabling to others than the particular skills being modeled.

Social persuasion is a third way of strengthening people's beliefs that they have what it takes to succeed. People who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given activities are likely to mobilize greater effort and sustain it than if they harbor self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when problems arise (Litt, 1988; Schunk, 1989). To the extent that persuasive boosts in perceived self-efficacy lead people to try hard enough to succeed, self-affirming beliefs promote development of skills and a sense of personal efficacy.

It is more difficult to instill high beliefs of personal efficacy by social persuasion alone than to undermine them. Unrealistic boosts in efficacy are quickly disconfirmed by disappointing results of one's efforts. But people who have been persuaded that they lack capabilities tend to avoid challenging activities that can cultivate their potentialities, and they give up quickly in the face of difficulties. By constricting activities and undermining motivation, disbelief in one's capabilities creates its own behavioral validation.

Successful efficacy builders do more than convey positive appraisals. In addition to raising people's beliefs in their capabilities, they structure situations for them in ways that bring success and avoid placing people in situations prematurely where they are likely to fail often. They encourage individuals to measure their success in terms of self-improvement rather than by triumphs over others.

People also rely partly on their *physiological and emotional states* in judging their capabilities. They interpret their stress reactions and tension as signs of vulnerability to poor performance. In activities involving strength and stamina, people judge their fatigue, aches, and pains as signs of physical debility (Ewart, 1992). Mood also affects people's judgments of their personal efficacy. Positive mood enhances perceived self-efficacy; despondent mood diminishes it (Kavanagh & Bower, 1985). The fourth way of

altering efficacy beliefs is to enhance physical status, reduce stress and negative emotional proclivities, and correct misinterpretations of bodily states.

It is not the sheer intensity of emotional and physical reactions that is important but rather how they are perceived and interpreted. For example, people who have a high sense of efficacy are likely to view their state of affective arousal as an energizing facilitator of performance, whereas those who are beset by self-doubts regard their arousal as a debilitator. Physiological indicators of efficacy play an especially influential role in health functioning and in activities requiring physical strength and stamina. Affective states can have widely generalized effects on beliefs of personal efficacy in diverse spheres of functioning.

Information that is relevant for judging personal efficacy, whether conveyed enactively, vicariously, persuasively, or affectively is not inherently instructive. Rather it gains its significance through cognitive processing. Therefore, the information conveyed by the different modes of influence should be distinguished from the cognitive processing by which that information is selected, weighted, and integrated into self-efficacy judgments. A host of factors, including personal, social, and situational ones, affect how efficacy-relevant experiences are interpreted (Bandura, in press). For example, the extent to which performance attainments alter perceived efficacy will depend on people's preconceptions of their capabilities, the perceived difficulty of the tasks, the amount of effort they expended, their physical and emotional state at the time, the amount of external aid they received, and the situational circumstances under which they performed. Each mode of influence is associated with a particular set of factors that have diagnostic significance in the self-appraisal of personal efficacy.

Efficacy-activated processes

Efficacy beliefs regulate human functioning through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes. These different processes usually operate in concert, rather than in isolation, in the ongoing regulation of human functioning.

Cognitive processes

The effects of efficacy beliefs on cognitive processes take a variety of forms. Much human behavior, being purposive, is regulated by fore-

thought embodying valued goals. Personal goal setting is influenced by self-appraisal of capabilities. The stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goal challenges people set for themselves and the firmer is their commitment to them (Locke & Latham, 1990).

Most courses of action are initially organized in thought. People's beliefs in their efficacy shape the types of anticipatory scenarios they construct and rehearse. Those who have a high sense of efficacy visualize success scenarios that provide positive guides and supports for performance. Those who doubt their efficacy visualize failure scenarios and dwell on the many things that can go wrong. It is difficult to achieve much while fighting self-doubt.

A major function of thought is to enable people to predict events and to develop ways to control those that affect their lives. Such problem-solving skills require effective cognitive processing of information that contains many complexities, ambiguities, and uncertainties. In learning predictive and regulative rules people must draw on their knowledge to construct options, to weight and integrate predictive factors, to test and revise their judgments against the immediate and distal results of their actions, and to remember which factors they have tested and how well they have worked.

It requires a strong sense of efficacy to remain task oriented in the face of pressing situational demands, failures, and setbacks that have significant personal and social repercussions. Indeed, when people are faced with the task of managing difficult environmental demands under taxing circumstances, those who harbor a low sense of efficacy become more and more erratic in their analytic thinking and lower their aspirations, and the quality of their performance deteriorates (Wood & Bandura, 1989). In contrast, those who maintain a resilient sense of efficacy set themselves challenging goals and use good analytic thinking, which pays off in performance accomplishments.

Motivational processes

Efficacy beliefs play a key role in the self-regulation of motivation. Most human motivation is cognitively generated. People motivate themselves and guide their actions anticipatorily by the exercise of forethought. They form beliefs about what they can do. They anticipate likely outcomes of prospective actions. They set goals for themselves and plan courses of action designed to realize valued futures. They mobilize the resources at their command and the level of effort needed to succeed.

There are three different forms of cognitive motivators around which different theories have been developed. They include *causal attributions*, *outcome expectancies*, and *cognized goals*. The corresponding theories are attribution theory, expectancy-value theory, and goal theory, respectively. Efficacy beliefs operate in each of these types of cognitive motivation. Efficacy beliefs influence causal attributions (Alden, 1986; Grove, 1993; McAuley, 1991). People who regard themselves as highly efficacious attribute their failures to insufficient effort or adverse situational conditions, whereas those who regard themselves as inefficacious tend to attribute their failures to low ability. Causal attributions affect motivation, performance, and affective reactions mainly through beliefs of personal efficacy (Chwalisz, Altmaier, & Russell, 1992; Relich, Debus, & Walker, 1986; Schunk & Gunn, 1986).

In expectancy-value theory, motivation is regulated by the expectation that a given course of behavior will produce certain outcomes and the value placed on those outcomes. But people act on their beliefs about what they can do as well as on their beliefs about the likely outcomes of performance. The motivating influence of outcome expectancies is thus partly governed by efficacy beliefs. There are countless attractive options people do not pursue because they judge they lack the capabilities for them. The predictiveness of expectancy-value theory is substantially enhanced by including the influence of perceived self-efficacy (Ajzen & Madden, 1986; deVries, Dijkstra, & Kuhlman, 1988; Dzewaltowski, Noble, & Shaw, 1990; Schwarzer, 1992).

The capacity to exercise self-influence by goal challenges and evaluative reaction to one's own performances provides a major cognitive mechanism of motivation. A large body of evidence shows that explicit, challenging goals enhance and sustain motivation (Locke & Latham, 1990). Goals operate largely through self-influence processes rather than regulate motivation and action directly. Motivation based on goal setting involves a process of cognitive comparison of perceived performance to an adopted personal standard. By making self-satisfaction conditional on matching the standard, people give direction to their behavior and create incentives to persist in their efforts until they fulfill their goals. They seek self-satisfaction from fulfilling valued goals and are prompted to intensify their efforts by discontent with substandard performances.

Motivation based on goals or personal standards is governed by three types of self-influences (Bandura, 1991a; Bandura & Cervone, 1986). They include self-satisfying and self-dissatisfying reactions to one's perfor-

mance, perceived self-efficacy for goal attainment, and readjustment of personal goals based on one's progress. Efficacy beliefs contribute to motivation in several ways: They determine the goals people set for themselves, how much effort they expend, how long they persevere in the face of difficulties, and their resilience to failures. When faced with obstacles and failures, people who distrust their capabilities slacken their efforts or give up quickly. Those who have a strong belief in their capabilities exert greater effort when they fail to master the challenge. Strong perseverance contributes to performance accomplishments.

Affective processes

People's beliefs in their coping capabilities affect how much stress and depression they experience in threatening or difficult situations, as well as their level of motivation. Perceived self-efficacy to exercise control over stressors plays a central role in anxiety arousal (Bandura, 1991b). It does so in several ways. Efficacy beliefs affect vigilance toward potential threats and how they are perceived and cognitively processed. People who believe that potential threats are unmanageable view many aspects of their environment as fraught with danger. They dwell on their coping deficiencies. They magnify the severity of possible threats and worry about things that rarely happen. Through such inefficacious thinking they distress themselves and impair their level of functioning (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Meichenbaum, 1977; Sarason, 1975). In contrast, people who believe they can exercise control over potential threats are neither ever watchful for threats nor conjure up disturbing thoughts about them. Sanderson, Rapee, and Barlow (1989) provide striking evidence for the power of efficacy belief to cognitively transform threatening situations into benign ones. Although subjected to the same environmental stressors, individuals who believe they can manage them remain unperturbed, whereas those who believe the stressors are personally uncontrollable view them in debilitating ways. The impact of efficacy beliefs on construal of uncertain life circumstances is also very much evident in wrenching transitions in life courses. In coping with adaptation to new societal demands, migrants with a high sense of efficacy treat it as a challenge, whereas those who distrust their coping capabilities view it as a threat (Jerusalem & Mittag, 1995).

People have to live continuously with a psychic environment that is largely of their own making. The exercise of control over ruminative, disturbing thoughts is a second way in which efficacy beliefs regulate anxiety

arousal and depression. The exercise of control over one's own consciousness is summed up well in the proverb: "You cannot prevent the birds of worry and care from flying over your head. But you can stop them from building a nest in your hair." It is not the sheer frequency of disturbing thoughts, but the perceived inability to turn them off that is the major source of distress (Kent & Gibbons, 1987; Salkovskis & Harrison, 1984). Hence, the frequency of aversive thoughts is unrelated to anxiety when the effects of perceived thought control efficacy are removed. But perceived thought control efficacy predicts anxiety when variations in frequency of aversive thoughts are removed. Both perceived coping self-efficacy and thought control efficacy operate jointly to reduce anxiety and avoidant behavior (Ozer & Bandura, 1990).

The causative role of coping efficacy beliefs in human stress and anxiety is best revealed in studies in which phobics' beliefs in their coping efficacy is raised to different levels through guided mastery treatment (Bandura, 1988). They display little anxiety and autonomic arousal to threats they believe they can control. But as they cope with threats for which they distrust their coping efficacy, their anxiety and autonomic arousal mount. After their perceived coping efficacy is raised to the maximal level by guided mastery experiences, they manage the same threats without experiencing any distress, autonomic arousal, or activation of stress-related hormones.

The third way in which efficacy beliefs reduce or eliminate anxiety is by supporting effective modes of behavior that change threatening environments into safe ones. Here, efficacy beliefs regulate stress and anxiety through their impact on coping behavior. The stronger the sense of efficacy the bolder people are in taking on problematic situations that generate stress and the greater their success in shaping them more to their liking. Major changes in aversive social conditions are usually achieved through the exercise of efficacy collectively rather than just individually.

A low sense of efficacy to exercise control breeds depression as well as anxiety. One route to depression is through unfulfilled aspiration. People who impose on themselves standards of self-worth they judge they cannot attain drive themselves to bouts of depression (Bandura, 1991a; Kanfer & Zeiss, 1983). A second route to depression is through a low sense of social efficacy to develop social relationships that bring satisfaction to one's life and cushion the adverse effects of chronic stressors. Social support reduces vulnerability to stress, depression, and physical illness. Social support is not a self-forming entity waiting around to buffer harried people against stressors. Rather, people have to go out and find or create support-

ive relationships for themselves. This requires a strong sense of social efficacy. Thus, a low sense of efficacy to develop satisfying and supportive relationships contributes to depression both directly and by curtailing development of social supports (Holahan & Holahan, 1987a, b). Supportive relationships, in turn, can enhance personal efficacy to reduce vulnerability to depression (Cutrona & Troutman, 1986; Major, Mueller, & Hildebrandt, 1985; Major et al., 1990). Supporters do so by modeling for others how to manage difficult situations, by demonstrating the value of perseverance, and by providing positive incentives and resources for efficacious coping.

The third route to depression is via thought control efficacy. Much human depression is cognitively generated by dejecting ruminative thought. A low sense of efficacy to control ruminative thought contributes to the occurrence, duration, and recurrence of depressive episodes (Kavanagh & Wilson, 1989). The weaker the perceived efficacy to turn off ruminative thoughts the higher the depression. Mood and perceived efficacy influence each other bidirectionally. A low sense of efficacy to gain the things in life that bring self-satisfaction and self-worth gives rise to depression, and depressive mood, in turn, diminishes belief in one's personal efficacy in a deepening self-demoralizing cycle. People then act in accordance with their mood-altered efficacy beliefs.

Selection processes

The discussion so far has centered on efficacy-activated processes that enable people to create beneficial environments and to exercise some control over those they encounter day in and day out. People are partly the product of their environment. Therefore, beliefs of personal efficacy can shape the courses people's lives take by influencing the types of activities and environments they choose to get into. In this process, destinies are shaped by selection of environments known to cultivate certain potentialities and life-styles. People avoid activities and environments they believe exceed their coping capabilities. But they readily undertake challenging activities and select environments they judge themselves capable of managing. By the choices they make, people cultivate different competencies, interests, and social networks that determine their life courses. Any factor that influences choice behavior can profoundly affect the direction of personal development. This is because the social influences operating in selected environments continue to promote certain competencies, values, and interests long after the efficacy decisional determinant has rendered its inaugurating effect.

The substantial body of research on the diverse effects of perceived personal efficacy can be summarized as follows: People who have a low sense of efficacy in given domains shy away from difficult tasks, which they view as personal threats. They have low aspirations and weak commitment to the goals they choose to pursue. When faced with difficult tasks, they dwell on their personal deficiencies, the obstacles they will encounter, and all kinds of adverse outcomes rather than concentrate on how to perform successfully. They slacken their efforts and give up quickly in the face of difficulties. They are slow to recover their sense of efficacy following failure or setbacks. Because they view insufficient performance as deficient aptitude, it does not require much failure for them to lose faith in their capabilities. They fall easy victim to stress and depression.

In contrast, a strong sense of efficacy enhances human accomplishment and personal well-being in many ways. People with high assurance in their capabilities in given domains approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. Such an efficacious outlook fosters intrinsic interest and deep engrossment in activities. These people set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them. They heighten and sustain their efforts in the face of difficulties. They quickly recover their sense of efficacy after failures or setbacks. They attribute failure to insufficient effort or to deficient knowledge and skills that are acquirable. They approach threatening situations with assurance that they can exercise control over them. Such an efficacious outlook produces personal accomplishments, reduces stress, and lowers vulnerability to depression.

The multiple benefits of a resilient sense of personal efficacy do not arise simply from the incantation of capability. Saying something should not be confused with believing it to be so. Simply saying that one is capable is not necessarily self-convincing. Self-efficacy beliefs are the product of a complex process of self-persuasion that relies on cognitive processing of diverse sources of efficacy information conveyed enactively, vicariously, socially, and physiologically (Bandura, 1986, in press). Once formed, efficacy beliefs contribute importantly to the level and quality of human functioning.

Adaptive benefits of optimistic efficacy beliefs

Human accomplishments and positive well-being require an optimistic sense of personal efficacy. This is because ordinary social realities are strewn with difficulties. They are full of impediments, adversities, setbacks, frustrations, and inequities. People must have a robust sense of per-

sonal efficacy to sustain the perseverant effort needed to succeed. In pursuits strewn with obstacles, realists either forsake the venture, abort their efforts prematurely when difficulties arise, or become cynical about the prospects of effecting significant changes.

It is widely believed that misjudgment breeds personal problems. Certainly, gross miscalculation can get one into trouble. However, the functional value of accuracy of self-appraisal depends on the nature of the venture. Activities in which mistakes can produce costly or injurious consequences call for accurate self-appraisal of capabilities. It is a different matter where difficult accomplishments can produce substantial personal and social benefits and the costs involve one's time, effort, and expendable resources. Individuals have to decide for themselves which creative abilities to cultivate, whether to invest their efforts and resources in ventures that are difficult to fulfill, and how much hardship they are willing to endure in pursuits strewn with obstacles and uncertainties. It takes a resilient sense of efficacy to surmount the impediments and setbacks that characterize difficult undertakings.

When people err in their self-appraisal they tend to overestimate their capabilities (Taylor, 1989). This is a benefit rather than a cognitive failing or character flaw to be eradicated. If efficacy beliefs always reflected only what people could do, routinely they would remain steadfastly wedded to an overly conservative judgment of their capabilities that begets habitual performances. Under cautious self-appraisal, people rarely set aspirations beyond their immediate reach nor mount the extra effort needed to surpass their ordinary performances. Indeed, in social systems where children are punished for optimistic beliefs in their capabilities their attainments closely match their conservative view of what they come to expect of themselves (Oettingen, 1995).

An affirmative sense of efficacy contributes to psychological well-being as well as to performance accomplishments. People who experience much distress have been compared in their skills and beliefs in their capabilities with those who do not suffer from such problems. The findings show that it is often the normal people who are distorters of reality. But they display self-enhancing biases and distort in the positive direction. Thus, those who are socially anxious or prone to depression are often just as socially skilled as those who do not suffer from such problems (Glasgow & Arkowitz, 1975; Lewinsohn, Mischel, Chaplin, & Barton, 1980). But the normal ones believe they are much more adept than they really are. The nondepressed people also have a stronger belief that they exercise some control over situations that are unmanageable (Alloy & Abramson, 1988).

Social reformers strongly believe that they can mobilize the collective effort needed to bring social change. Although their beliefs are rarely fully realized they sustain reform efforts that achieve important gains. Were social reformers to be entirely realistic about the prospects of transforming social systems they would either forego the endeavor or fall easy victim to discouragement. Realists may adapt well to existing realities. But those with a tenacious self-efficacy are likely to change those realities.

Innovative achievements also require a resilient sense of efficacy. Innovations demand heavy investment of effort over a long period with uncertain results. Moreover, innovations that clash with existing preferences and practices meet with negative social reactions. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that one rarely finds realists in the ranks of innovators and great achievers. In his review of social reactions to human ingenuity, titled *Rejection*, John White (1982) provides vivid testimony that the striking characteristic of people who have achieved eminence in their fields is an inextinguishable sense of personal efficacy and a firm belief in the worth of what they are doing. This resilient self-belief system enabled them to override repeated early rejections of their work. Societies enjoy the considerable benefits of these persisters' accomplishments in the arts, sciences, and technologies.

In sum, the successful, the venturesome, the sociable, the nonanxious, the nondepressed, the social reformers, and the innovators take an optimistic view of their personal capabilities to exercise influence over events that affect their lives. If not unrealistically exaggerated, such personal beliefs foster positive well-being and human accomplishments. The influential role played by efficacy beliefs in different spheres of human functioning is reviewed in greater detail in the sections that follow.

Self-efficacy in the changing structure of family systems

The parenting role places continual heavy demands on coping efficacy. Parents not only have to deal with ever-changing challenges as their children grow older. They also have to manage interdependent relationships within the family system and social links to a host of extrafamilial social systems including educational, recreational, medical, and caregiving facilities. Parents who have a firm belief in their parenting efficacy are quite resourceful in promoting their children's competencies (Teti & Gelfand, 1991). Moreover, a strong sense of parenting efficacy serves as a protective factor against emotional strain and despondency (Cutrona & Troutman, 1986; Oliofoff & Aboud, 1991).