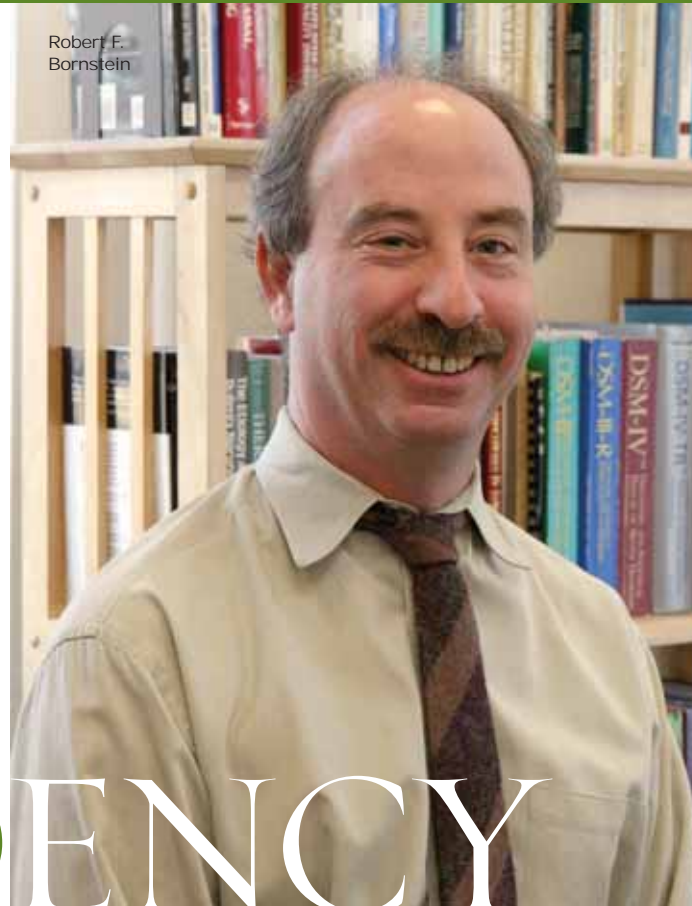




Faculty Focus

The advent of recent technology has made connecting with friends, family, and colleagues possible in new and profoundly innovative ways. Nowadays, it's not uncommon for a student to communicate with his or her grandparents via WebCam on another continent in real time. A businessman or woman in Asia can now join his or her American colleagues via satellite for a virtual meeting. And, it's increasingly commonplace to see everyone from young children to retirees sending text-messages and browsing the Internet via cell phone.



Robert F. Bornstein

DEPENDENCY

in the Digital Age

Devices such as cell phones, BlackBerries, and laptops allow us to be in constant contact, but how much communication is too much? We've all heard horror stories about the workaholic who travels to the tropics, only to return to his or her workplace more frazzled from constantly checking emails on the beach, or the couple whose relationship is strained because one partner is addicted to surfing the Web. We sat down with Professor Robert F. Bornstein, a noted expert in the field of personality dynamics, diagnosis, and treatment, to find out what causes dependent personality disorder and how this condition manifests itself in the digital age.



Robert F. Bornstein administers an ink blot test to Derner student Candice Sellitto '09.

About the Faculty

Robert F. Bornstein, a professor of psychology in the Gordon F. Derner Institute of Advanced Psychological Studies at Adelphi University, has published more than 150 articles and book chapters on personality dynamics, diagnosis, and treatment. An expert on dependent personality disorder, Dr. Bornstein wrote *The Dependent Personality* (Guilford Press, 1993) and *The Dependent Patient: A Practitioner's Guide* (American Psychological

Association, 2005), and has co-authored other works. Dr. Bornstein is a fellow of the American Psychological Association, American Psychological Society, and Society for Personality Assessment. His research has been funded by grants from the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Science Foundation. Dr. Bornstein's recent scholarship centers on the complex relationship between dependency and domestic violence.

What are the current trends in dependency theory?

First, we're trying to understand the many different ways that dependency needs are expressed, both passive and active, direct and indirect. A direct expression of dependency often takes the form of a request for help or emotional support. Indirect requests for dependency often involve displays of helplessness that are designed to create a sense of responsibility or guilt in a friend or a romantic partner, without one asking directly. The second theme that's emerged is in distinguishing the maladaptive consequences of dependency from dependency's more adaptive features. For example, while dependency does place one at risk for depression, does tend to create problems in certain relationships, it also represents a strength in some contexts. For example, dependent people seek help more quickly than non-dependent people when a medical symptom appears.

What factors contribute to dependency?

We know that two parenting styles in particular lead to high levels of dependency later in life. Overprotective parenting leads to high levels of dependency in offspring. Because overprotective parents are, in effect, sending a message to the child that they are fragile and weak. Authoritarian parenting—rigid,

rule-oriented parenting—also leads to high levels of dependency later in life for much the same reason, though the message is different. The authoritarian parent is, in effect, telling the child that the way to get by in life is to do what others say. Both of these parenting styles lead to what I've come to call "a helpless self-concept," a perception of oneself as ineffectual and weak, and this is the linchpin of a dependent personality orientation.

What are the characteristics of this disorder?

Dependent personality disorder is characterized by a strong need for guidance, support, help, and reassurance that cuts across most, if not all, of the person's close relationships. And it typically has a negative impact on these relationships and on their functioning socially and at work.

Where do you see this disorder most often, in terms of age, gender, and socio-economic background?

Generally, dependent personalities are quite common in clinical settings in psychological treatment. It's not unusual at all. It does occur more frequently in women than in men. About two thirds of people diagnosed with dependent personality disorder are women. But dependent personalities cut across all age groups, all ethnic groups. From adolescence onward through late

adulthood, you'll find people with small and exaggerated dependency.

What cultural forces contribute to the manifestation of this disorder?

Gender role socialization plays a role in the expression of dependency. In general, men are socialized to not admit having any dependent thoughts, feelings, or motives in America. Women are less strongly socialized to try to cover up those feelings. More generally, America is what's called "an individualistic society," and tends not to tolerate strong expressions of dependency very well. More sociocentric cultures like India for example, and traditionally Japan, have been much more tolerant and accepting of dependency-related behavior.

How has people's pervasive reliance on technology exacerbated dependency?

Modern technology, like cell phones, for example, and instant messaging, has made it easier to express dependency by allowing people to remain almost continuously connected to those on whom they rely for reassurance or advice or support. Whereas in the past, one might have had to put some time between the impulse to call a spouse or call mom and the act of doing it, now one just opens up the cell phone, hits a button, and the person is right there before you.

How do you wean people from technological dependency?

No one has looked at that, and we haven't either. It hasn't been (addressed), but I can speculate. Much the same as the more common psychotherapy with dependent patients, that is first to help them understand the motives behind their excessive use of this technology, and second, to help them gain some control, so that asking for help is mindful, rather than mindless. It's a considered choice, rather than a reflex. ■

- By Erin Walsh



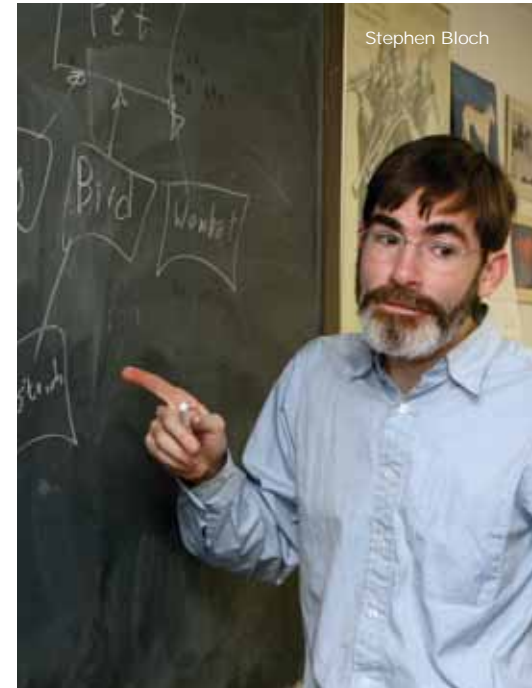
SCHOLARLY pursuits

A Recipe for Programming

To Associate Professor Stephen Bloch From The National Science Foundation For Hosting week-long summer workshops for college faculty on an innovative approach to teaching computer programming The National Science Foundation (NSF) awarded nearly \$500,000 in grant funding over the next four years to Associate Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science Stephen Bloch. Dr. Bloch is the principal investigator for "Redesigning Introductory Computing: The Design Discipline," a grant which will enable him and his colleagues at four other universities to host week-long summer workshops for college faculty on

"TeachScheme, ReachJava!" a breakthrough approach to teaching introductory computer programming. The investigators will also measure what effects the technique, which emphasizes broad problem-solving skills, has on student learning in participants' classrooms.

"Our curriculum starts students with a consistent and simple language," says Dr. Bloch. "Students develop good programming habits and a solid understanding of concepts like 'variable,' 'data type,' and 'function,' and then learn to apply the same skills and concepts in other, more complex languages."



Stephen Bloch



Joan Stein Schimke (second from right) with cast members of *Law & Order*




Davy (Travis Walters) is caught by Stu (Nicholas Cutro) casting spells in the film version of *Davy & Stu*.

can hope to do is communicate your unique vision to as many people as possible."

Academy Award-nominated director Joan Stein Schimke didn't hesitate when Matthew Penn, executive director of the television series *Law & Order*, asked her if she was interested in directing an episode of the popular crime drama after viewing her work.

"Of course I said yes!" says Ms. Schimke. "*Law & Order* is one of my favorite shows. I find the issues that they write about to be compelling and thought provoking."

The episode, "Corner Office," aired December 8, 2006. Directing for television was a departure from Ms. Schimke's prior film directorial work.

"In television, everything happens so quickly," she says. "I had one day to read the script, and then the next day I had to meet with the writers and producers to start talking about the episode and the story.... In film, you can be with a project for months, sometimes even years, before the shooting begins. It's all so condensed in television. You are also working with actors and crew who have done this many times before, so you have to work at their level. It was very exciting." 

- By Erin Walsh

Short Takes

Two Adelphi faculty members, Assistant Professor of English Anton Dudley and Assistant Professor of Communications Joan Stein Schimke, are leaving their inimitable imprints on the small and silver screens.

The screen adaptation of Mr. Dudley's play, *Davy & Stu*, which chronicles the first love between two Scottish teens, has been accepted by 42 international film festivals on five continents. The film has garnered industry awards and honors, such as the Grand Prize in the Alternative Spirit category at the Rhode Island International Film Festival, the Student Award at the 2006 Hamptons International Film Festival, and the CINE Golden Eagle Prize for Excellence in Filmmaking. Mr. Dudley, who traveled to several of the film festivals where *Davy & Stu* was shown, called the experience "phenomenal."

"I had the opportunity to see independent films from all over the world, people telling human stories to which I could relate, in languages and through visions of which I had never dreamed," he says. "As an artist, all you

Cross-Cultural Social Work in Hong Kong

To Professor Roni Berger From Fulbright Senior Specialists Program For Cross-cultural social work research in Southeast Asia

School of Social Work Professor Roni Berger spent the month of March at the City University of Hong Kong researching the cross-cultural aspects of social work with families, and studying the process and understanding the effects of migration. During her stay in Hong Kong, Dr. Berger's intent was to develop scholarly and professional relationships with schools and human services agencies to create venues for international collaboration.

She sought to gain insight into East Asian cultures' attitudes towards psychosocial issues, a subject about which very little has been chronicled.

"Most international knowledge in social work is currently based on European and other industrial societies while...knowledge from the cultures of origin of most migrants, i.e. Latin America, and Southeast Asia, is limited," says Dr. Berger. "In recent years, we have learned quite a lot about the former, but are still missing understanding of the latter."



Roni Berger