James M. Cantor, PhD

- **Member since:** 2000
- **Hometown:** Toronto
- **Occupation:** University of Toronto assistant professor of psychiatry and clinical psychologist at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

**From computers to sex:** As an undergraduate at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Cantor majored in computer science and minored in math and physics. He also worked as a resident adviser in a dorm, where he helped counsel students with academic or personal issues.

“I discovered that those activities were the highlight of my day more than the technology-based parts of my day,” he says. So Cantor decided to pursue a doctorate in psychology at McGill University, which is where he found his research passion: the neurological underpinnings of sexual behavior. “I feel lucky to have found a way to stimulate my brain intellectually by indulging myself in thinking about sex all the time,” he jokes.

**Findings:** Cantor is currently interested in what causes pedophilia. Many people believe that life experiences, particularly sexual abuse, cause people to be sexually interested in children. Cantor’s research suggests otherwise. He’s found a number of physical abnormalities among people with pedophilia. For example, they tend to have less white matter in their brains, lower IQs and are shorter than average. “The logical explanation for this constellation of characteristics is that something went wrong during the early biological development of these people,” he says.

**Popular appeal:** Through such research, Cantor hopes to identify early causes of pedophilia and come up with ways to prevent its development. “I feel like one of the most rooted-for scientists in the world,” he says. “Everyone wants me to be successful in these projects.”

**Psychologists in love:** Cantor’s unusual and provocative research area makes him a sought-after speaker, and he frequently gives talks at conferences and seminars. Cantor’s love of public speaking was perhaps cemented when, in 1991, he gave a presentation at APA’s Annual Convention in San Francisco about the challenges of being a gay graduate student. He caught the eye of another graduate student — one who had circled Cantor’s talk in the conference book while en route to the convention. “It was as if we were drawn together even before we knew the other existed,” he says. The two will celebrate their 18th anniversary together at APA’s Annual Convention in August.

**All work, all play:** Cantor claims to have no interests outside of work.

“I’m a proud workaholic,” he says. He does, however, get away from his lab long enough to see an occasional play. “I will always love Broadway more than it could love me,” he says. “I am a huge fan, but I have no talent of my own.”
—S. DINGFELDER

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