

# Robert Contofalsky

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## EDUCATION

### Rutgers University

*Ph.D., Cognitive Psychology*

- Advisor: Jacob Feldman

### Concordia University

*Graduate Diploma, Computer Science*

### McGill University

*Bachelor of Arts, Psychology Major; History minor*

- CGPA: 3.63/4.00; CGPA of most recent 60 credits: 3.83/4.00
- Thesis: [Supervised Learning of Auditory Categories: A Pilot Study](#)

New Brunswick, United States

September 2024 - Present

Montreal, Canada

September 2023 - April 2024

Montreal, Canada

January 2019 - September 2022

## FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

- **Socially Cognizant Robotics for a Technology Enhanced Society - SOCRATES**, Rutgers University, Fall 2024-2025 \$36, 295/year
- **Tomlinson Engagement Award for Mentoring**, McGill University, Fall 2021, \$300

## PUBLICATIONS

- Poulson, S., Skvortsova, A., Paz, L., Cui, W., Mandatori, A., Burek, J., Zahra, F., Dinh, A., Boorman, D., Liang, L., **Contofalsky, R.**, & Mogil, J. (2025). Cholecystokinin input from the anterior cingulate cortex to the lateral periaqueductal gray mediates nocebo pain behavior in mice. *Manuscript under review; Nature Communications*.
- Koestner, R., & **Contofalsky, R.** (2021). The Psychological Effects of The COVID-19 Pandemic on Young Adults: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective. *McGill Journal of Human Behaviour*, 1(1), 89-103

## PRESENTATIONS

### Conference Presentations

- **Contofalsky, R.** (2025). Uniting Physics and Perception: How Constructal Law Governs Human Categorization. 15th Constructal Law Conference (CLC2025). Miami, FL, United States. [[video](#)] [[certificate](#)]

### Invited Talks

- **Contofalsky, R.** (2024). Estimating The Reproducibility Of Psychological Science. Invited Speaker for the Tanenbaum Open Science Institute (TOSI) ReproducibiliTea Journal Club. Montreal, Canada.

### Poster Presentations

- **Contofalsky, R.**, Feldman, J. (2025). Beyond Mutual Information: Does Utility Affect Categorical Perception? Rutgers Annual Robotics Workshop.
- **Contofalsky, R.**, Feldman, J. (2025). Beyond Mutual Information: Does Utility Affect Categorical Perception? Rutgers Annual Cognitive Science Forum.
- Andrews, C., Angne, H., **Contofalsky, R.**, Dana, K., Padilla Garcia, R., & Wilson, A. (2025). Better anticipating the geographies of robotic and autonomous systems. Paper Presentation at the American Association of Geographers (AAG) 2025 Annual Meeting. Detroit, MI, United States.
- Skvortsova, A., Carrier, S., **Contofalsky, R.**, & Lima V. L. (2022). Nocebo Hyperalgesia In Male but Not Female Mice Is Mediated by CCK-B Receptors. Poster Presentation at the IASP 2022 World Congress on Pain. Toronto, Canada.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

### McGill University

*Undergraduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Psychology*

Montreal, Canada

September 2021 - December 2021

- Course: PSYC 332, Intro to Personality
- Assisted in the delivery of course content to a class of 400 students
- Gave class tutorials, generating and evaluating exam material, enhancing course instruction

## PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

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### Rutgers University

New Brunswick, NJ

*Cognitive Psychology Brown-Bag Series – Organizer & Host*

- Independent weekly colloquium with Faculty & Students, advancing scientific discussions & research projects
- Focused on Student-led presentations in front of the cognitive psychology area
- Provided formal speaking opportunities for PhD students to fulfill dissertation presentation requirements and gain experience presenting research to faculty

## SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

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### R-Academy - Founder, Host & Producer

June 2023 - Present

*Platforms:* [YouTube](#), [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#) — [robertcontofalsky.com/#podcast](https://robertcontofalsky.com/#podcast)

- Creator and producer of an academic podcast dedicated to breaking down complex scientific concepts for a general audience, bridging the gap between academia and the public
- Featured discussions and interviews on various topics; cognitive science, linguistics, moral psychology, and neuroscience, ultimately translating them into relatable and understandable narratives
- Conducted extensive literature reviews for each episode, ensuring accuracy and comprehensiveness

## PRE-DOCTORAL RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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### Intact Financial Corporation

Montreal, Canada

*Behavioural Science Intern – IntactLAB*

January 2023 - June 2023

- Created an internal emotional resilience program; increasing employee retention across Canada
- Analyzed data for 2000+ employees with R; informing company interventions
- Optimized sales processes for IFC products using various cognitive bias tools
- Bi-weekly solution presentations to stakeholders led to the adoption of key strategies
- Conducted a SWOT analysis on AI, contributing to the creation of a roadmap for AI integration

### Douglas Mental Health University Institute

Montreal, Canada

*Research Assistant - Eating Disorders Continuum*

June 2022 - September 2022

- Developed an online psychoeducation tool using LimeSurvey & Qualtrics
- Translated grant proposals, study materials, and email communications from English to French
- Managed a database with over 6000 participants & 6000 variables using Excel & SPSS
- Organized weekly group therapy sessions for 4 clinicians to serve 15-30 patients each

### MOGILab

McGill University

*Thesis Student* (Principal Investigator: Prof. J. Mogil)

September 2021 - September 2022

- Conducted research on mice & humans regarding the novel “nocebo conditioned hyperalgesia effect”
- Performed ANOVA's on over 400 mice and controlling for 3 independent factors using Excel & SPSS
- Upcoming publication expected

### Communication and Consciousness Lab

McGill University

*Thesis Student* (Principal Investigator: Prof. S. Harnad)

December 2020 - September 2021

- Designed and managed a pilot study in auditory categorical perception in humans using Python and Javascript for website building
- Executed Regression Analyses on four sets of 100 supervised learning trials each, using Excel and SPSS, to determine the presence of an auditory categorical perception effect

### McGill University Health Centre

McGill University

*Research Assistant* (Principal Investigator: Prof. M.O. Martel)

August 2020 - September 2021

- Aided a chronic back pain study; collected data, recruited patients, organized study materials

- Received high praise and recognition for singlehandedly recruiting over 70% of the active participants

#### McGill Human Motivation Lab

McGill University

*Thesis Student* (Principal Investigator: Prof. R. Koestner)

May 2020 - October 2020

- Invited by Dr. Koestner to analyze longitudinal data on Covid lockdown impacts on students from a Self-Determination Theory lens
- Conducted Regression Analyses & ANOVA's on 380 participants across 5-time periods using SPSS
- Research efforts culminated in a co-authored publication in *The McGill Journal of Human Behaviour*

## UNPUBLISHED PROJECTS

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- **Contofalsky, R.,** Gastellu, N., McGuinness, B., Al Kharusi, S. (2023) [Can ChatGPT Accurately Represent Human Moral Reasoning?](#)

## TECHNICAL SKILLS

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- **Organizational Software:** Advanced Microsoft Office, Zoom & Microsoft Teams, Google Drive, Sharepoint
- **Statistical Software:** Advanced SPSS, Intermediate R
- **Programming:** Intermediate C++, Java, Python, HTML/CSS, SQL & Beginner PHP
- **Bibliographic tools:** Zotero
- **Digital Media Production & Broadcasting:** Adobe Premiere Pro, Adobe Audition, Photoshop, YouTube Studio, Spotify for Podcasters & Apple Podcasts

## LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

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- English (Native Speaker)
- French (High level reading, writing and speaking)
- Slovak (Basic level reading and speaking)

## VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

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#### Private Neuropsychologist Clinic

Montreal, Canada

*Personal Assistant*

January 2020 - January 2021

- Supervisor: Dr. Genevieve Gagnon
- Helped with administrative tasks in a private clinic

## WORK EXPERIENCE

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#### Bar Bello

Montreal, Canada

*Waiter*

July 2023 - August 2024

- Collaborated closely with bartenders, ensuring timely restocking and seamless service
- Engaged with a diverse clientele to foster a welcoming environment
- Expanded knowledge of drink mixology

#### Health Care Relocation

Montreal, Canada

*Hospital Relocation Technician*

May 2021 - August 2021

- Deployed across various hospitals, successfully adapting to various working environments
- Managed cross-hospital equipment relocations, ensuring operational integrity and safety compliance.
- Inspected and maintained medical equipment integrity within health and safety compliance parameters

#### Costco Wholesale

Saint-Bruno, Canada

*Meat Department Assistant*

June 2018 - May 2022

- Served 20+ members daily, enhancing satisfaction and earning team lead praise
- Resolved member issues personally by coordinating with over 6 departments
- Helped achieve weekly targets, generating \$300,000 in weekly profit

#### McDonald's Corporation

Greenfield Park, Canada

*Team leader*

September 2016 - June 2018

- Led a team of 15 employees to run the most profitable franchise in the South Shore
- Recognized for being among the top 10 fastest drive-thrus in Canada

## REFERENCES

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- **Dr. Jacob Feldman**  
Professor, Department of Psychology; Rutgers University  
Email: jacob@rucss.rutgers.edu
- **Dr. Richard Koestner**  
Professor, Department of Psychology; McGill University  
Email: richard.koestner@mcgill.ca
- **Dr. Marc-Olivier Martel**  
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Dentistry; McGill University  
Email: marc.o.martel@mcgill.ca
- **Dr. Jeffrey Mogil**  
E.P. Taylor Professor, Department of Psychology; McGill University  
Email: Jeffrey.Mogil@mcgill.ca
- **Dr. Stevan Harnad**  
Adjunct Professor, Department of Psychology; McGill University, UQAM, Soton  
Email: harnad@uqam.ca