Tsion A. Eshetu

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Research interests

Visual attention, learned distractor suppression, eye movements, individual differences, cognitive control.

Education

Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC Expected May 2027
MS, Psychology. Advisor: Dr. Brad T. Stilwell

University of Rochester, Rochester, NY May 2022
BA, Psychology and Brain and Cognitive Sciences (double major)
With High Distinction, Cum Laude, Cumulative GPA: 3.79
Minor in Business, Cluster in American Sign Language

Conference presentations

Eshetu, T. A., & Stilwell, B. T. (2026, November). *Skill-based learned oculomotor avoidance*. Oral presentation accepted at the Object Perception, Attention, and Memory (OPAM) Conference, San Diego, CA.

Eshetu, T. A., & Stilwell, B. T. (2026, November). *Skill-based learned oculomotor avoidance*. Poster presentation accepted at the Psychonomic Society Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.

Stilwell, B. T., **Eshetu, T. A.**, & Mu, B. B. (2026, November). *The skill of learning to suppress distractors: Learned oculomotor avoidance*. Poster presentation accepted at the Psychonomic Society Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.

Eshetu, T. A., & Stilwell, B. T. (2026, May). *Skill-based learned oculomotor avoidance*. Poster presentation at the Vision Sciences Society (VSS) Annual Meeting, St. Pete Beach, FL.

Eshetu, T. A., & Stilwell, B. T. (2026, March). *Skill-based learned oculomotor avoidance*. Poster presentation at the North Carolina Conference on Cognition, Durham, NC.

Dennis, H., **Eshetu, T. A.**, Dougherty, M., Elacqua, M., Silverstein, S. M., Lalor, E., & Thompson, J. (2025, September). *Sensed presence experiences in individuals with and without schizophrenia: Clinical and perceptual correlates*. Poster presentation at the Society for Research in Psychopathology (SRP) Annual Conference, Los Angeles, CA.

Eshetu, T. A., Defayette, A. B., Blose, B., Benwitz, S., Brumfield, A., Curran, C., Leege, S., Pirro, M., Soe, S. L. Y., & Silverstein, S. M. (2024, October). *Baseline suicide ideation in first-episode psychosis from AC-EPINET in Rochester: A comparison between schizophrenia and psychosis with mood patients*. Poster presentation at the SRP Annual Conference, Montreal, Canada.

Tran, T., **Eshetu, T. A.**, Thompson, J. L., Robinson, B., Kenney, J., Williams, T. F., Waltz, J. A., Levin, J. A., Kafadar, E., Gold, J. M., Schiffman, J., Ellman, L. M., Walker, E. F., Strauss, G. P., Mittal, V. A., Zinbarg, R. E., Corlett, P. R., Powers, A. R., Woods, S. W., & Silverstein, S. M. (2023, September). *Increased face perception on the Mooney Faces Test in a clinical high-risk sample: Replication, extension, and symptom and functioning correlates*. Poster presentation at the SRP Annual Conference, St. Louis, MO.

Manuscripts in preparation

Eshetu, T. A., & Stilwell, B. T. (in preparation). *Skill-based learned oculomotor avoidance*.

Research and lab experience

Graduate Student Researcher, SLAP Lab, Wake Forest University August 2025 to present

Advisor: Dr. Brad T. Stilwell

- Authored project summaries and communications for a variety of audiences, from field experts to the general public, and presented findings at professional conferences, seminars, and classroom lectures.
- Trained students in research methodology and analysis techniques.

Project: Skill-Based Learned Oculomotor Avoidance (first-year project) Aug 2025 – May 2026

- **Research question:** Does learned suppression of a salient distractor reflect avoidance of fixating on it, faster disengagement once it is fixated on, or both?
- **Methods:** Designed and ran a visual search task with high- and low-frequency singleton distractor colors; recorded eye movements with an EyeLink 1000 Plus eye tracker across 14 blocks; analyzed response time, first-fixation probability and dwell time on the distractor using MATLAB and R.
- **Results:** Distractor cost, first fixations on the distractor, and dwell time on the distractor all declined across blocks, and more so for the frequent color, supporting a combined learned oculomotor avoidance mechanism.

Project: Individual Differences in Learned Distractor Suppression (master's thesis) Jun 2026 – present

- **Research question:** Do individual differences in working memory, anxiety, mind wandering, or action video game experience predict how well people learn to suppress distractors?
- **Methods:** Extending the first-year project eye-tracking search paradigm with individual-difference measures to test whether distinct traits relate to different components of the learned-suppression skill.
- **Status:** Design and measures currently in progress.

Research Assistant, Wake Forest University June 2026 to September 2026

Supervisor: Dr. Will Fleeson

- Reviewed, cleaned, and de-identified data from a large backlog of studies (each containing multiple sub-studies with 10+ SPSS/Excel files) to prepare them for IRB closure, consulting with the lab's data manager on proper de-identification protocol.
- Reviewed open-ended survey responses to identify and remove private or identifying information.
- Authored a data de-identification manual for the lab, documenting the workflow for future research assistants to follow.

Clinical Research Coordinator, Center for Retina and Brain, University of Rochester Medical Center September 2022 to June 2025

Supervisors: Dr. Steven M. Silverstein, Dr. Joy J. Choi, and Dr. Judy Thompson

- Served as the University of Rochester's point of contact for AC-EPINET, a multi-site early-psychosis research network spanning multiple universities.
- Contributed to study design, manuscript preparation, and IRB setup and management across multiple other ongoing studies focused on retinal biomarkers in schizophrenia and other serious mental illnesses.
- Recruited participants by giving presentations on study opportunities to community organizations and hospital staff, and oversaw day-to-day study operations from recruitment through data quality checks.
- Administered and scored clinical interviews (MINI) and cognitive assessments (MoCA, TICS, MCCB), and collected physiological and imaging data via EEG, ERG, and OCT/OCTA.
- Trained and supervised two undergraduate research volunteers, managed the study cash funds, and maintained data entry and quality-control procedures.
- Collaborated with colleagues to write up findings for conference presentations, and helped organize and volunteered at the inaugural meeting for the Consortium for Vision and Oculomics in Psychiatry (CVOP).

Undergraduate Research Assistant, Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, University of Rochester Medical Center February 2021 to May 2022

Supervisor: Dr. Lynne E. Levato

- Coded child language samples from recorded research visits using the Assessment of Phase of Preschool Language (APPL) for a study of evidence-based interventions in autism spectrum disorder.
- Managed and organized study data to support ongoing analysis.

Lab Coordinator, Lab for Behavioral Health Skills, University of Rochester February 2021 to May 2022

Supervisor: Dr. Wendi Cross

- Led planning and execution of a large-scale psychiatric de-escalation simulation-training program for nurses, psychiatrists, social workers, crisis specialists, and safety officers: including budgeting, stakeholder outreach, scheduling and running sessions; findings from the program were later published in the *Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association* (Bowllan et al., 2025).
- Co-developed and ran simulation-based trainings in trauma-informed care and suicide prevention; recruited, trained, and scheduled actor-educators for all sessions.
- Hosted and facilitated suicide-prevention interactive simulation trainings for nurse practitioners, and reported outcomes to clinical supervisors.
- Authored training manuals for the lab's simulation programs, and produced and edited training videos.

Teaching experience

Lab Instructor, Research Methods in Psychology (PSY 211), Wake Forest University Spring 2026 to present

- Teach experimental design and statistics using SPSS, and guide students through APA-style writing for their research report assignments.
- Review and provide feedback on student papers.

Teaching Assistant, Methods in Psychological Research (PSY 210), Wake Forest University Fall 2025

- Graded papers and exams, constructed grading rubrics, and managed the course Canvas site for the instructor.
- Hosted weekly Q&A sessions to review lecture material.

Teaching Assistant, Introductory Psychology (PSY 151), Wake Forest University Fall 2025

- Graded exams and research-article assignments, and proctored exams.

Teaching Assistant, Neuropsychology (PSYC/BCSC 242), University of Rochester Fall 2021

- Led weekly recitations reviewing course material and developed student assignments, and hosted review sessions and Q&A before exams.
- Graded assignments and exams.

Awards and honors

Professional Development Award, Object Perception, Attention, and Memory Conference	2026
Second Place, Graduate Student Division, Sigma Xi Student Research Showcase	2026
ComSciCon-Triangle Workshop, selected participant (1 of 50 selected statewide)	2026
Psi Chi Honor Society	2021 to present
University of Rochester Dean's Scholarship ($36,000)	2018 to 2022
University of Rochester Dean's List	2018 to 2022
University of Rochester Kearn's Scholar	2019
University of Rochester Research and Innovation Grant ($4,500)	2018

Ad hoc journal reviewing

Journal of Vision

Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance

Professional affiliations

Psychonomic Society, graduate student member	2026 to present
Vision Sciences Society, graduate student member	2025 to present
Consortium for Vision and Oculomics in Psychiatry, associate member	2023 to present
Society for Research in Psychopathology, associate member	2022 to present

Skills and certification

- Eye-tracking (EyeLink 1000 Plus)
- ERG (Electroretinography)
- EEG (Electroencephalogram)
- Fundus Photography
- OCT/OCTA (Optical Coherence Tomography/Angiography)
- MATLAB
- R, SPSS, SYSTAT
- MINI (Mini-International Neuropsychiatric Interview)
- SCID-5 (Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-5)
- MoCA (Montreal Cognitive Assessment)
- MCCB (The MATRICS Consensus Cognitive Battery)