

SERENA DESTEFANI

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ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Postdoctoral Fellow, The Ohio State University, Psychiatry Department, August 2023 - present

EDUCATION

Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ
PhD, Cognitive Psychology, October 2023

Rutgers University Center for Cognitive Science (RUCCS)
Cognitive Science Certificate, October 2022

Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ
Master of Science, Cognitive Psychology, May 2019

Columbia University, New York, NY
B.A. in Psychology and Statistics, magna cum laude, May 2015

FUNDING & AWARDS

OSU postdoctoral summer fund, 2025
OK-PROS (Kellogg Foundation Postdoctoral Recruitment and Onboarding Supplement), 2024
NSF EAGER Grant 2122119, "Cognitive Models of Human Social Wayfinding for the Redesign of Public Spaces" 2022 - 2023
COVID relief fund (HEERF III), 2021- 2022
BITSS Research Transparency and Reproducibility Training Financial Support, 2018
Columbia University School of General Studies William W. Strong Scholarship, 2013 - 2015

REFEREED PUBLICATIONS

DeStefani, S., Stromswold, K., & Feldman, J. (2020). Integration of visual and spoken cues in a virtual reality navigation task. In S. Denison, M. Mack, Y. Xu & B. C. Armstrong (Eds.), *Proceedings for the 42nd Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*, Cognitive Science Society.

Sohn, S., **DeStefani, S.**, Kapadia, M. (2018). Dynamic Cognitive Maps for Agent Landmark Navigation in Unseen Environments. MIG 2018 Proceedings, Limassol, Cyprus.

Sohn, S., **DeStefani, S.**, Schwartz, M., Roberts, F., Stromswold, K., Kapadia, M., Feldman, J. (2025). On the Separability of Human Navigational Behaviors in Virtual Reality. *Proceedings for the 47th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*, Cognitive Science Society.

UNDER REVIEW (* student co-author)

DeStefani, S., Sohn, S., Schwartz, M., *Sharma, Y., Roberts, F., Stromswold, K., Kapadia, M., Feldman, J. (2025), Behavioral effects of anti-pandemic preventive measures: a VR study

DeStefani, S., Blain, S., Kraft, J., Locarno, L., Mathis, K., Lasagna, C., Colombi, C., Burton, C., Turner, J., Thakkar, K., Tso, I. (2025) The dynamics of social gaze: visual attention and autonomic arousal among individuals with varying levels of autistic traits

Kemp, K., Blain, S. D., Zehra, S., **DeStefani, S.**, Locarno, L., Mathis, K., Lasagna, C., & Tso, I. F. (2025). Sex Differences in Social Cognition: Insights from a Sample Enriched for Social Dysfunction.

*Kvetnoy, A., Suchojad, J., **DeStefani, S.**, Stromswold, K., Feldman, J. (2024) The role of eye gaze in social wayfinding

PRESENTATIONS AT CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS (*student co-author)

DeStefani, S., Blain, S., Kraft, J., Locarno, L., Mathis, K., Lasagna, C., Colombi, C., Burton, C., Turner, J., Thakkar, K., Tso, I. (2025) The dynamics of social gaze, Conference poster presented at the Society for Research in Psychopathology annual conference, Los Angeles, CA

DeStefani S. Blain, S., Locarno, L., Mathis, K., Lasagna, C., Colombi, C., Burton, C., Turner, J., Thakkar, K., Tso, I. Altered eye movements as the missing link between basic vision impairments and social-cognitive dysfunction in psychosis (2025) Consortium for Vision and Oculomics in Psychiatry, Second Annual Conference, Rochester, NY

DeStefani, S., Blain, S., Kraft, J., Locarno, L., Mathis, K., Lasagna, C., Colombi, C., Burton, C., Thakkar, K., Tso, I. (2024) The dynamics of social gaze: how task demands influence visual attention Presentation, STEAM Exchange, The Ohio State University

DeStefani, S., Sohn, S., Schwartz, M., Sharma, Y., Roberts, F., Stromswold, K., Kapadia, M., Feldman, J. (2023), How Social Affordances Shape Spatial Cognition. Poster presented at the Rutgers Robotics Workshop, New Brunswick, NJ

DeStefani, S., Sohn, S., *Kabir, A., Feldman, J., (2022) How Optimal is too Optimal? Expectations About Performance in the Traveling Salesman Problem, Conference poster presented at CogSci Conference. Toronto

DeStefani, S., Feldman, J., How Negative Schizotypy Influences Decision-Making in the Beads Task. (2022) Poster presented at the CPC++ conference, New York, NY

DeStefani, S., Stromswold, K. & Feldman, J. (2022). Social Factors Influence Indoor Virtual Navigation. Conference poster, VSS, Tampa, FL.

DeStefani, S., Sohn, S., *Kabir, A., Kapadia, M. & Feldman, J. (2021) Local and Global Strategies in Navigational Decisions. Poster presented at the Rutgers Robotics Workshop, Piscataway, NJ.

DeStefani, S., Sohn, S., *Kabir, A., Kapadia, M. & Feldman, J. (2021) The Interplay Between Local and Global Strategies in Navigational Decisions. Conference poster at CogSci Conference, online.

DeStefani, S. (2021). How Negative Schizotypy Influences Decision-Making in the Beads Task, Talk, Rutgers-Princeton Center for Computational Cognitive Neuro-Psychiatry (CCNP)

DeStefani, S., Schaumann, D., Zhang, X., Feldman, J., & Kapadia, M. (2020). Spatial and Non-Spatial Factors in Wayfinding. *Journal of Vision*, 20(11), 1664-1664, Conference Poster.

DeStefani, S., Schaumann, D., S., Zhang, X., Feldman, J. & Kapadia, M. (2020). The Space Within. 3MT competition, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ

DeStefani, S. (2019). How Negative Schizotypy Influences Decision Making. Talk, Cognitive Science Graduate Talk Series, Rutgers University, Piscataway, NJ.

DeStefani, S., Kowler, E., Stromswold, K., *Akhter, S., and Feldman, J. (2019). A Model of Prior Beliefs about the Trustworthiness of Navigational Cues Explains Bias Toward Auditory Stimuli. Conference Poster, APS, Washington DC.

DeStefani, S., Schaumann, D., S., Zhang, X., Feldman, J. & Kapadia, M. (2019). The Influence of Space Semantics on Navigational Choices in Virtual Settings. Conference poster, VSS, Tampa, FL.

*Kabir, A., **DeStefani, S.,** S., Sohn, Feldman, J. & Kapadia, M. (2019) Perception of Intelligence in Decision-Making, Aresty Research Program, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ.

DeStefani, S., Sohn, S., Kapadia, M., Feldman, J. & Pantelis, P. (2018). Efficiency in Solving the Traveling Salesman Problem as Predictor of Perceived Humanness. Conference poster at CogSci Conference, Madison, WI.

DeStefani, S., *Akhter, S., Kowler, E., Stromswold, K. and Feldman, J. (2018). The Effect of Multimodal Information on Virtual Navigation. Talk, AttLis Workshop, Trondheim, Norway

DeStefani, S., Sohn, S., Kapadia, M., Feldman, J. & Pantelis, P. (2018). Perception of Intentionality in Avatars and AI Agents. Conference poster, VSS, Tampa, FL.

DeStefani, S. (2018). Computational Models of False Beliefs. Talk, Cognitive Science Graduate Talk Series, Rutgers University, Piscataway, NJ.

Sohn, S., **DeStefani, S.,** Kapadia, M. (2018). Investigating the Role of Memory and Communication in Navigating Unseen Environments Using Cognitive Maps. Extended Abstract, AAMAS 2018 Proceedings, Stockholm, Sweden.

DeStefani, S., Sohn, S., Kapadia, M., Feldman, J. & Pantelis, P. (2018). Comparing Solutions to the Traveling Salesman Task in a Turing Test Situation. Poster presented at the Rutgers Postgraduate Symposium, Piscataway, NJ.

DeStefani, S., Cornwell, J.F.M., Higgins, E.T. (2017). Prosocial Behavior and Attitude Change. Conference Poster, APS, Boston, MA.

DeStefani, S., Kowler, E., Stromswold, K., *Akhter, S., and Feldman, J. (2017). Multisensory Integration in a Virtual Reality Maze. Conference Abstract, Journal of Vision, 2017, Vol.17, p1351, VSS, Tampa, FL

DeStefani, S., *Akhter, S., Kowler, E., Stromswold, K. and Feldman, J. (2016). Decision Making in a Virtual Reality Maze. Poster presented at the Perceptual Science Forum, Rutgers University, Piscataway, NJ.

DeStefani, S., Cornwell, J.F.M., Higgins, E.T. (2014). The Role of Self-Perceived Success in Altruistic Behavior. Conference poster at the Stanford University Undergraduate Psychology Conference, Stanford, CA

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ

Expository Writing, Instructor, Fall 2020

Quantitative Methods in Psychology, Instructor, Summer 2020, Summer 2018, Summer 2017

Research Design & Analysis, Teaching Assistant and Lecturer, Fall 2017

Cognition Lab, Instructor, Fall 2016 – Spring 2020

Sensation and Perception, Teaching Assistant, Spring 2016

Cognition, Teaching Assistant, September 2015 – May 2016

Columbia University, New York, NY

Introduction to Psychology, Teaching Assistant, and guest lecturer, Spring 2013 – Spring 2014

Peer Advisor, Psychology department Fall 2013 – Spring 2015

Columbia University American Success Program (ASP), Teaching Assistant, Summer 2013

ISERP Summer Undergraduate Research Program, Research Assistant, Summer 2013

PEDAGOGY TRAINING

Introduction to College Teaching Course, Spring 2021

Online and Hybrid Teaching Course, Spring 2021

Supporting an Inclusive Classroom Workshop, Spring 2019

STUDENT SUPERVISION

Fall 2022: Alexis Kvetnoy, Xiaohui Meng

Summer 2022: Rachel Kaniuk, Richard Ruiz

Spring 2022: Jill Patel, Cynthia Lando, Prajna Kurkal, Brian Kong

Spring 2020: Li-Jie Lin

Fall 2020 – Spring 2021: Adeeb Kabir

SERVICE

The Ohio State University Postdoctoral Association Co-Chair, Spring 2025 - present
The Ohio State University Postdoctoral Association Co-Chair for the Professional Development Committee, Fall 2024 - present
Rutgers Psychology Department Diversity Committee, graduate advisor, Fall 2020 - Spring 2022
Rutgers Cognitive Science Graduate Student Organization, Treasurer, Fall 2017 – Spring 2023
Rutgers Graduate Workshop on Language and Cognitive Science, organizer, 2018
Columbia University GS Alumni Association, Board Member (since 2017) and Award Committee Co-Chair (since 2022)

AD HOC REVIEWER

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders
PLOS ONE
Cognition
Cognitive Science Society

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Languages:	English (fluent), Italian (native)
Programming:	R, Matlab, Python
Study Design:	PsychoPy (advanced), Qualtrics (advanced)
Data Analysis:	Regression, factor analysis, Bayesian multilevel modeling