Elizabeth Cashdan is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Utah. She uses the theoretical perspectives of behavioral ecology and evolutionary psychology to understand various aspects of human behavior. She has conducted fieldwork in Botswana, Tanzania, and Tonga, with a primary research focus on hunter-gatherers.

Her research has followed two primary threads. The first is understanding the ecological determinants of how humans use space. This research thread includes earlier work on hunter-gatherer mobility and territoriality, and more recent work on ethnic diversity and its environmental determinants. The second research thread is aimed at understanding the adaptive significance and proximate (hormonal) correlates of sex differences in competition, aggression, and, most recently, spatial cognition.

Cashdan’s professional life is highly interdisciplinary. She is currently President of the interdisciplinary Human Behavior and Evolution Society, and worked with colleagues in Biology to develop an interdisciplinary minor in Integrative Human Biology at the University of Utah. She is currently PI on two interdisciplinary NSF grants. The first, through IBSS (Interdisciplinary Behavioral and Social Science), is examining the links between navigation, mobility, and spatial ability, with coPIs in Anthropology, Psychology, and Geography. The second, from NSF’s DLS (Development and Learning Sciences) program, will be extending that work to children. Both are cross-cultural, with a focus on forager-farmer communities. The IBSS-sponsored Spatial Cognition and Navigation (SCAN) Project website is http://www.scanproject.org, and describes her current research.