

Anastasiia Titarova

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EDUCATION

Dual Degree	Class of 2027
Duke Kunshan University B.S. in Behavioral Science; Neuroscience Track	Kunshan, China
Duke University B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies; Behavioral Science; Neuroscience	Durham, U.S.

AWARDS & HONORS

2026	Signature Work Research Grant, Duke Kunshan University
2025	Summer Neuroscience Program Fellowship, Duke University
2024-2026	Dean's List, Duke Kunshan University (Fall 2024; Spring 2025; Spring 2026)
2025, 2026	Outstanding Peer Mentor Finalist, Duke Kunshan University
2025	Academic Club of the Year (President, Psychology Club), Duke Kunshan University
2023	Undergraduate Entrance Scholarship (95% tuition scholarship), Duke Kunshan University

MANUSCRIPTS

- Titarova, A.**, Knettel, B., Peela, S., Paredes Montero, A., Iqbal, H., Shrishti, S., & Blackwood, B. (in preparation). *Intensive longitudinal assessment of pain catastrophizing: A systematic review.*
- Titarova, A.**, & Wang, S. (in preparation). *Question order effects in pain-related judgments: A behavioral and EEG study.*
- Gray, C., Lam, K., He, W., Gu, C., Nisa C., **Titarova A.**, Li J., Salm, M. (in preparation). *Comparative clinical, economic, and environmental impacts of acupuncture, psychotherapy, and antidepressant treatment for postpartum depression.*

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Independent Review <i>Project Lead</i> · Remote Supervised by: Dr. Brandon Knettel	January 2026-Present
• Lead systematic review examining how intensive longitudinal methods, including ecological momentary assessment and daily diary approaches, are used to assess repetitive negative thinking, with a focus on pain catastrophizing and its associations with pain perception. • Direct a 7-member research team with Duke and Columbia faculty, leading research meetings and coordinating the review process; independently screen ~5,000 records, conduct systematic data extraction following PRISMA guidelines, lead the study preregistration process, scientific synthesis, and write the manuscript, integrating evidence on clinical and methodological implications of assessing pain catastrophizing in daily life.	

Research Independent Honors Thesis

August 2025-Present

Project Lead · Duke Kunshan University · Kunshan, China

Supervised by: Dr. Shan Wang

- Lead an independent honors thesis examining order effects under a quantum decision model in clinically relevant pain cognitions, including pain catastrophizing, acceptance, anxiety, vigilance, and self-efficacy, and their relationship to experimentally induced pain.
- Independently developed the full experimental protocol, including cold pressor pain induction, EEG acquisition, and paired-question paradigms programmed in E-Prime and PsychoPy; developed IRB, recruitment, consent, and data-management materials and secured \$1,500 in research funding; collected ~100 participants for the online Qualtrics component and conducted quantum decision-model analyses of behavioral data; currently collecting EEG data to test order effects in pain-related judgments and compare quantum and Bayesian models of decision-making.

Circuit and Behavior Laboratory

January 2025-Present

Research Assistant · Duke Kunshan University · Kunshan, China

PI: Dr. Chia-Chien Chen

- Investigate how stress and adverse experiences during development shape neural circuits and behavior, with a focus on microglial responses, neuroinflammation, and anxiety-related outcomes in developmental animal models.
- Conduct immunostaining, two-photon microscopy, as well as tracing and morphological analysis of microglia through Neurolucida to examine cellular changes associated with stress exposure.

Comparative Treatment Research in Postpartum Depression

June 2025-Present

Research Assistant · Duke Kunshan University · Kunshan, China

PI: Dr. Christine Gray

- Contribute to a multidisciplinary investigation comparing acupuncture, psychotherapy, and antidepressant treatment for postpartum depression across clinical effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and environmental impact; initially contributed to clinical trial development before the project transitioned to a literature review.
- Conduct literature reviews and contribute to study development, including designing a framework for assessing the environmental impact of depression treatments and co-developing bilingual English-Chinese patient questionnaires; participated in consultations with clinicians at the Kunshan Mental Health Center and Kunshan Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Early Childhood Cognition Laboratory

August 2025-May 2026

Research Assistant · Duke University · Durham, U.S.

PI: Dr. Tamar Kushnir

- Contributed to two developmental studies examining goal-directed behavior, attention, and action planning through an AI-powered game, and conformity, social influence, and decision-making through an online experimental paradigm with young children.
- Recruited and scheduled families through the Research Participant Database (RPAD), coordinated consent and study logistics, independently conducted experimental sessions online and in a museum setting with ~50 families, and assisted with behavioral coding and quantitative data analysis.

Identity and Diversity Laboratory

August 2025-January 2026

Research Assistant · Duke University · Durham, U.S.

PI: Dr. Sarah Gaither

- Contributed to an in-person study with Duke University students examining how gesture and racial background influence social perception and communication, and a developmental study examining how social categorization and cognitive flexibility shape creative problem-solving in monocultural and bicultural children.
- Independently conducted experimental sessions with ~20 participants; contributed to study design, Qualtrics questionnaire development, IRB procedures, recruitment, scheduling, and consent/assent; completed an Independent Study involving pilot-study data analysis and manuscript preparation on the association between social categorization and creative problem-solving across cultural backgrounds.

Translational Pain Research Laboratory

August 2025-December 2025

Research Assistant · Duke University · Durham, U.S.

PI: Dr. Andrea Nackley

- Contributed to translational research investigating the neurobiological mechanisms underlying pain using transgenic animal models.
- Performed PCR, gel electrophoresis, tissue collection, and sample preparation to support studies of pain pathways; maintained laboratory records, organized experimental data, and contributed to quality control.

Kunshan Government Consumerism Research Project

March 2025-April 2025

Research Assistant · Duke Kunshan University · Kunshan, China

PI: Dr. Claudia Nisa

- Contributed to a government-commissioned behavioral science project examining international students' consumption patterns, cultural preferences, and accessibility barriers to inform inclusive urban development in Kunshan.
- Designed a Qualtrics questionnaire completed by ~200 students and coordinated in-person participant compensation and brief qualitative interviews about students' living experiences; conducted quantitative and qualitative analyses and co-authored the final policy report submitted to the Kunshan government.

APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY EXPERIENCE**Residential Care and Rehabilitation Center for Adults with Disabilities**

June 2026-Present

Volunteer · Remote

- Participate in weekly/bi-weekly supervised Zoom sessions with adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities undergoing residential rehabilitation, with ~10 sessions completed to date.
- Develop and present accessible Russian-language educational and recreational content, adapting language, complexity, and presentation to participants' cognitive and communication needs under the supervision of a professional psychologist.

IDD Empower Research Project

January 2026-Present

Volunteer · Duke Kunshan University · Kunshan, China

- Design and facilitate skill-building workshops for ~20 youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities, supporting social interaction, communication, and adaptive skill development across repeated sessions.
- Conduct systematic behavioral observations and longitudinal case tracking of participants' responses, emotional expression, interpersonal interactions, and skill development in structured post-interaction notes; adapt communication and engagement strategies within a predominantly Chinese-language setting.

Residence Life

January 2026-Present

Resident Assistant · Duke Kunshan University · Kunshan, China

- Serve as a primary peer-support contact for ~25 residential students, conducting individual wellness check-ins addressing adjustment difficulties, academic stress, interpersonal conflict, and emotional well-being.
- Use active listening, problem-solving, and conflict-resolution strategies to support students experiencing distress; participate in on-call emergency response in coordination with professional staff; design and facilitate community-building and stress-relief activities for residents and collaborate with a ~70-member Residence Life team to identify residential concerns and coordinate programming and community support.

Academic Advising Office

August 2024-May 2026

Peer Mentor · Duke Kunshan University · Kunshan, China

- Provided ongoing one-on-one mentorship to ~15 first-year students throughout the academic year, holding monthly individual meetings to support adjustment to university life, academic stress, motivation, time management, and interpersonal concerns.
- Used active listening and problem-solving strategies to address students' individual concerns; participated in selection interviews for new peer mentors and evaluated applicants' communication skills and empathy in helping interactions.

Psychology Club

September 2023-Present

President/Senior Member · Duke Kunshan University · Kunshan, China

- Led a ~15-member student team in developing psychology initiatives, reaching ~500 participants across campus events and building an educational social media platform with 200+ followers.
- Organize mental health and psychoeducational initiatives in collaboration with university counseling services, the campus clinic, faculty, and the Office of Intercultural Education and Belonging, including Mental Health Awareness Day, sexual health education, disability and chronic illness awareness programming, a podcast on AI in therapy, exam stress relief, and a faculty talk on suicide-prevention hotlines.

Peer for You

December 2023-May 2025

Peer Responder · Duke Kunshan University · Kunshan, China

- Completed certified Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training in recognizing and responding to signs of mental health challenges and providing initial support and appropriate referral.
- Served as a trained peer responder under DKU Counseling Services, holding weekly drop-in sessions for students seeking support with emotional and mental health concerns and providing supportive listening and connection to appropriate resources.

7 Cups

September 2024-March 2025

Intern · Remote

- Completed a structured Active Listener internship requiring 3+ hours of direct one-on-one peer support per week, 10 core training guides, 8+ additional training activities, Verified Listener qualification, and ongoing progress evaluations.
- Provided anonymous, one-on-one text-based emotional support to individuals experiencing personal and emotional concerns, applying active listening, empathetic responding, open-ended questioning, problem-solving, and appropriate boundaries and referral practices.

First Year Experience Office

July 2024-September 2024

Orientation Leader · Duke Kunshan University · Kunshan, China

- Served as the primary peer-support contact for an assigned cohort of ~10 incoming first-year students, providing individual support around homesickness, academic stress, social adjustment, and transition to university life.
- Completed a week-long intensive orientation-leader training and facilitated small-group “story circles” on belonging, identity, and adjustment; assisted with Orientation Week planning and guided students through campus and community-based cultural immersion activities.

TEACHING & COMMUNICATION

Academic Advising Office

August 2026-Present

Peer Tutor · Duke Kunshan University · Kunshan, China

- Selected through a competitive interview and faculty recommendation to serve as a Peer Tutor for Behavioral Science 101, supporting students’ understanding of foundational concepts in behavioral science.
- Review course materials and hold drop-in tutoring sessions for a class of ~35 students to clarify challenging concepts and reinforce course instruction; completed certified Tutor Essentials training through Thinkific in preparation for the role.

Medical English Program

February 2026-Present

Teacher · Duke Kunshan University · Kunshan, China

- Teach medical English to Chinese clinicians, having delivered ~30 classes to date focused on terminology and communication related to symptoms, diagnoses, treatment, and patient-provider interactions.
- Design and facilitate interactive lessons using visual presentations, role-play scenarios, and clinical communication exercises to practice describing symptoms, eliciting and expressing patient concerns, and explaining healthcare information while adapting complex medical and psychological concepts for cross-linguistic communication.

Science Mentorship Institute

June 2026-August 2026

Neuroscience Mentor · Remote

- Mentored three high-school students through independent neuroscience projects examining epilepsy, depression, and childhood trauma as part of a virtual research mentorship program expanding access to neuroscience research education for underserved high school students.
- Conducted weekly mentorship meetings and provided individualized neuroscience instruction, literature-search guidance, and iterative feedback on project development; guided mentees in developing scientific posters and preparing for symposium presentations.

Tongren Teaching Program

May 2026

Teacher · Tongren, China

- Selected to teach a class of ~50 primary-school students from underserved communities in Tongren, China, leading lessons in languages, culture, conduct, and other subjects under teacher supervision.
- Adapted instruction and communication to engage young learners in a Chinese-language environment by using visual presentations, translation tools, interactive games, and activity-based learning to facilitate comprehension, participation, and rapport with children.

NeuroCinema Co-Curriculum Education

March 2026-May 2026

Teacher · Canadian International School Kunshan · Kunshan, China

- Designed and taught weekly film-based psychology classes for ~15 middle-school students, developing lessons on emotional signaling, interpersonal boundaries, self-compassion, subjective perception, and other topics relevant to adolescent emotional development.
- Developed original presentations and facilitated hour-long classes connecting characters' behaviors and experiences in pre-selected films with psychological concepts and well-known research studies; incorporated guided discussions and interactive group activities to promote application of concepts and student engagement.

Impulse and Journal of Young Investigators

July 2025-Present

Associate Editor · Remote

- Selected as Associate Editor and Peer Reviewer for Impulse and the Journal of Young Investigators, reviewing undergraduate research in neuroscience and psychology.
- Evaluated ~20 manuscripts to date, providing structured editorial and peer-review feedback on scientific rigor, methodology, interpretation, and clarity to support authors through the publication process.

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Millennium Fellowship

August 2026-Present

Fellow · Duke Kunshan University · Kunshan, China

- Selected as 1 of ~5,500 Millennium Fellows from ~76,000 applicants worldwide to develop an evidence-informed mental health initiative addressing student well-being among Chinese high-school students, with a focus on depressive symptoms and psychological distress during academic preparation for the national college exam.
- Developing a research-informed toolkit to help teachers recognize and respond supportively to students experiencing psychological difficulties and facilitate early connection to appropriate support resources; plan to partner with local schools and evaluate the toolkit's perceived usefulness following implementation.

Student Leaders Board

January 2026-Present

Board Member · Duke Kunshan University · Kunshan, China

- Selected through student endorsement and competitive interview as 1 of 20 Student Leaders Board members representing the student community and advancing student well-being, inclusion, and equitable access to campus resources; lead the university's first approved initiative providing free emergency menstrual products on campus, securing institutional funding, garnering support from ~250 students, and distributing ~1,000 products to date.
- Advocate for menstrual health equity and reduction of period poverty through university-wide engagement; initiative received campus media coverage and has expanded into discussions with university leadership and a Fortune 500 company regarding potential funding.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Languages: Russian (native), English (fluent), Serbian (fluent), Mandarin (intermediate)**Research Methods:** EEG, fMRI, behavioral experiment design, systematic review methodology**Programming & Analysis:** R, Python, MATLAB**Experimental Software:** E-Prime, PsychoPy, Qualtrics