

SARAH SYED

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EDUCATION

Tufts University Medford, MA 2020 – 2024
BS Psychology & BA Community Health | Summa Cum Laude *Psychology GPA 3.98 | Cumulative GPA 3.94*
Honors Thesis: *Prejudice and Bias Awareness in Anticipated Interracial Interactions* (Advised by Keith Maddox, PhD)

AWARDS AND HONORS

Student Poster Award Winner, Society of Pediatric Psychology (2024). Nominated and selected by SPP board members, honoring students who are first author of a poster presented at the annual SPP conference

Priscilla N. Dunne Prize Award, Tufts University Department of Psychology (2024). Awarded annually to an undergraduate psychology major with an excellent record and great promise of future achievement in the field

Senior Thesis High Honors, Tufts University Department of Psychology (2024). Evaluated by thesis chair and second reader on research design and methods, written work, and oral defense

Summa Cum Laude, Latin Honors, Tufts University (2024). Awarded to graduating students with a cumulative GPA of 3.80 or higher

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

- Freibott, C., **Syed, S.**, Barnard, E., Nicole-Herrera, C., Lipson, S. K., Duncan, A., & Clark, J. (2026). POC youth perceptions of sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination in mental healthcare settings. *International Journal of LGBTQ+ Youth Studies*. In press. [Manuscript](#)
- Pizzagalli, D. A., Lam, C. S. T.*, **Syed, S.***, & Shiva, A.* (2026). Reward dysfunction in time: Toward a dynamic psychiatry of motivation and pleasure. *Biological Psychiatry: Global Open Science*, 6(6), Article 100801. [DOI](#)
*Equal contributions
- Oh, S., Nicole-Herrera, C., Duncan, A., **Syed, S.**, Xu, C., Brown, E., Brown, H., Henderson, D., Were, L., & Oblath, R. (2026). Racial and ethnic variations in a multi-channel psychiatric emergency services program. *Community Mental Health Journal*. [DOI](#)
- Oblath, R., Beaugard, C. A., Nicole-Herrera, C., Xu, C., **Syed, S.**, Sadatis, C., Duncan, A., Gann, G., Plange, E., Ferguson, T., Khan, S., Katkhuda, F., Henderson, D. C., Savage, J., & Morabito, M. S. (2025). Bridging crisis and care: Exploring the role of behavioral health professionals in a police co-response model. *Health & Justice*, 13(1), Article 72. [DOI](#)
- Rudolph, K. A., Beaugard, C. A., Xu, C., **Syed, S.**, Duncan, A., Brown, H. E., Henderson, D. C., & Oblath, R. (2025). Psychiatric emergency service use trends: Adults experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts from 2005–2020. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 36(1), 240–256. [DOI](#)

MANUSCRIPTS UNDER REVIEW AND IN REVISION

- Syed, S.**, Oh, S., Nicole-Herrera, C., Ferguson, T., Brown, H. E., & Oblath, R. (2026). Elevated acuity in crisis: Clinical pathways in psychiatric emergency services among Asian American and Pacific Islanders. *Manuscript revised and resubmitted for publication to the Asian American Journal of Psychology*. [Manuscript](#)
- Syed, S.***, Dan, R.*, Hutson, L. M., Brown, A. R., Wang, C., Stein, A., Chen, X., Du, F.†, & Pizzagalli, D. A.† (2026). Glutamatergic and Redox Abnormalities in Major Depressive Disorder: Links to Childhood Maltreatment and Perceived Stress. *Manuscript submitted for publication to Biological Psychiatry*. [Preprint](#)
*Co-first authorship; †Co-senior authorship
- Dan, R.*, **Syed, S.***, Hutson, L. M., Brown, A. R., Palermo, E. H., Belleau, E. L., Kaiser, R. H., Du, F., & Pizzagalli, D. A. (2026). Brain age gap, cortisol reactivity, and developmental timing of childhood maltreatment in major depressive disorder. *Manuscript submitted for publication to Translational Psychiatry*. [Preprint](#)
*Co-first authorship
- Nicole-Herrera, C., **Syed, S.**, Freibott, C., Lipson, S. K., Duncan, A., & Clark, J. (2025). Assertion, adjudication, and shared decision making in psychiatric emergency services: Perspectives from youth of color and guardians. *Manuscript revised and resubmitted for publication to the Children and Youth Services Review*.
- Cárdenas, S. I., Dan, R., Schoonmaker, J., **Syed, S.**, Brown, A., Hutson, L., Palermo, E., Hollman, S., Du, F., Marmarosh, C., & Pizzagalli, D. (2026). Attachment and fronto-limbic morphometry in women with depressive symptoms and childhood sexual abuse histories. *Manuscript submitted for publication to the Journal of Mood and Anxiety Disorders*.

PRESENTATIONS

Poster Presentations

1. Dan, R., **Syed, S.**, Hutson, L., Brown, A. R., Palermo, E. H., Belleau, E. L., Kaiser, R. H., Du, F., & Pizzagalli, D. A. (2027, January 10–13). Brain age gap varies with the developmental timing of childhood maltreatment and cortisol reactivity in major depressive disorder. American College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ACNP) Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.
2. Cárdenas, S. I., Dan, R., Schoonmaker, J., **Syed, S.**, Brown, A., Hutson, L., Palermo, E., Hollman, S., Marmarosh, C., & Pizzagalli, D. A. (2026, November 11–13). Adult attachment and fronto-limbic morphometry in women with depressive symptoms and childhood sexual abuse histories. International Society for Developmental Psychobiology Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA.
3. **Syed, S.** (Presenter), Dan, R., Hutson, L. M., Brown, A. R., Palermo, E. H., Wang, C., Stein, A., Chen, X., Du, F., & Pizzagalli, D. A. (2025, September). Glutamatergic and immuno-oxidative stress abnormalities in major depressive disorder: Links to early childhood maltreatment and lifetime stress. Society for Research in Psychopathology Annual Conference, Los Angeles, CA. [Poster](#)
4. **Syed, S.** (Presenter), Dan, R., Palermo, E. H., Hutson, L. M., Brown, A. R., Zhu, C., Stein, A., Chen, X., Du, F., & Pizzagalli, D. A. (2025, February). Multi-modal investigation of the relationships between stress and brain aging. Annual Harvard Psychiatry Research Day, Boston, MA. [Poster](#)
5. **Syed, S.** (Presenter), Dan, R., Palermo, E. H., Hutson, L. M., Brown, A. R., Zhu, C., Stein, A., Chen, X., Du, F., & Pizzagalli, D. A. (2025, January). Multi-modal investigation of the relationships between stress and brain aging. Annual McLean Research Day, Belmont, MA. [Poster](#)
6. **Syed, S.** (Presenter), Nicole-Herrera, C., Oh, S., Brown, H. E., & Oblath, R. (2024, April). Trends in psychiatric emergency service use by Asian American youth before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Society of Pediatric Psychology Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA. [Poster](#)
7. Gouse, B. M., Baul, T., **Syed, S.**, Boliver, E., Lancet, J., & Brown, H. E. (2024, April). Burden of physical illness in schizophrenia: Exploring the impact of sociodemographic factors on risk of multimorbidity. Annual Congress of the Schizophrenia International Research Society, Florence, Italy. [Poster](#)
8. Oblath, R., Nicole-Herrera, C., Xu, C., **Syed, S.**, Henderson, D. C., & Duncan, A. (2023, May). Racial and ethnic differences in pathways to care, diagnosis, and disposition among youth at a multi-modality psychiatric emergency services program. Annual Meeting of the American Psychiatric Association, San Francisco, CA. [Poster](#)
9. Nicole-Herrera, C., **Syed, S.**, Freibott, C., Duncan, A., & Clark, J. (2023, May). Consequences from prior health care interactions on the use of psychiatric emergency services by youth of color. Annual Meeting of the American Psychiatric Association, San Francisco, CA.
10. Nicole-Herrera, C., **Syed, S.**, Freibott, C., Duncan, A., & Clark, J. (2023, April). Shared decision making among youth of color, guardians, and clinicians during psychiatric emergency services visit. Society for Pediatric Psychology Annual Conference, Chicago, IL.

Conference Oral Presentations

1. Nicole-Herrera, C., **Syed, S.** (Presenter), Freibott, C., Duncan, A., & Clark, J. (2022, November). [Shared decision making among youth of color, guardians, and care team during psychiatric emergency services visit](#). Oral presentation, American Public Health Association Annual Meeting and Expo, Boston, MA. [Slides](#)
2. Freibott, C., **Syed, S.**, Duncan, A., Clark, J., & Nicole-Herrera, C. (2022, November). [LGBTQ+ youth of color perceptions of sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination in mental health settings](#). Oral presentation, American Public Health Association Annual Meeting and Expo, Boston, MA.

Internal Oral Presentations

1. **Syed, S.** (Presenter), Dan, R., Hutson, L. M., Brown, A. R., Palermo, E. H., & Pizzagalli, D. A. (2025, October). Multi-modal investigation of the relationships between stress and brain aging. Joint lab meeting, Lab for Affective and Translational Neuroscience & UC Irvine Noel Drury, M.D. Institute for Translational Depression Discoveries. [Slides](#)

PEER REVIEW AND EDITORIAL SERVICE

Ad Hoc Reviewer

Harvard Review of Psychiatry

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Laboratory for Affective and Translational Neuroscience (PI: [Diego A. Pizzagalli](#), PhD) June 2024 – Present
McLean Hospital Center for Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Research, Harvard Medical School Belmont, MA

Clinical Research Assistant II

- Independently direct all day-to-day operations of an NIH-funded R01, [Early Life Stress and Depression: Molecular and Functional Imaging Approaches](#), examining neurobiological mechanisms linking childhood sexual abuse to MDD through multimodal imaging (fMRI, MRS) and behavioral paradigms (Emotional Conflict, Value of Control)
- Manage the full participant pipeline for adults with current and remitted MDD: phone screening (**n=560+**), informed consent (**n=60+**), clinical assessment, MRI/MRS sessions, and 6- and 12-month follow-up (**n=35+**)
- Independently process and bank biospecimens (saliva and blood for DNA, RNA, serum, cortisol; **n=140+**)
- Lead statistical analyses in R integrating multimodal data (structural MRI, metabolic neurochemical [MRS], salivary cortisol, and self-report measures of childhood trauma, maltreatment, and lifetime stress), informing **2 first-author manuscripts** and **2 first-author conference posters**
- Serve as primary regulatory contact for the IRB: author amendments (**n=45+**) and continuing reviews, prepare data for NIH progress reports and 2 no-cost extensions, and execute semiannual NIMH National Data Archive submissions
- Recruit, train, and supervise **10+ research assistants** and undergraduate student volunteers across research and administrative procedures; run team meetings and onboarding

Office of Clinical Assessment and Research, OCD Institute (PI: [Martha J. Falkenstein](#), PhD) April 2026 – Present
McLean Hospital Belmont, MA

Clinical Research Assistant

- Coordinate 2 NIH-funded Hybrid Type 1 effectiveness-implementation trials of scalable digital interventions: the [iChange smartphone app, which delivers Cognitive Bias Modification for Interpretation \(CBM-I\) to target interpretation bias in OCD](#) and an [intervention for postpartum intrusive thoughts](#)
- Consent and manage the full participant timeline for the CBM-I trial's waitlist arm, extending the iChange smartphone intervention to patients before they begin formal OCD Institute treatment; deliver up to 8 training sessions per participant and run baseline, mid-, and post-training assessments
- Co-lead qualitative analysis (open and axial coding, Strauss & Corbin paradigm) of stakeholder exit interviews (**n=20**) for the CBM-I implementation-effectiveness manuscript, building and reconciling a **64-code** codebook across a 3-person coding team; co-author manuscript and wrote the Introduction
- Lead adaptation of a single-session intervention for postpartum intrusive thoughts, condensing the 7-module P-POD curriculum (Steinman, University of Vermont) and reformulating adolescent-focused Project ACCEPT content (Serody, Stony Brook; Schleider, Northwestern) for postpartum parents; applied FRAME and ADAPT when considering modifications, and conducted feasibility testing of the intervention in REDCap

Boston Emergency Services Team (PI: [Rachel Oblath](#), PhD) January 2022 – April 2026
Boston Medical Center, Department of Psychiatry Boston, MA

Lead Undergraduate Research Assistant

- **First-authored a manuscript** on encounter setting, diagnosis, and discharge disposition among Asian American adults and youth in a psychiatric emergency services EHR database (**N=38,170**), independently leading every phase from research question through submission: data extraction, multivariate logistic regression, and writing; under review at *Asian American Journal of Psychology*
- Contributed to **3** further published manuscripts from the same database on disparities in emergency psychiatric care, service use among adults experiencing homelessness, and police-clinician co-response models
- Led NVivo thematic analysis of 18 interviews with youth of color and their guardians for the NIMH-funded [Youth in Emergency Study](#), yielding **2 manuscripts in revision**; co-wrote sections and peer-review responses, and presented findings at a national public health conference
- Recruited and consented participants (**n=50+**) in psychiatric emergency departments and locked inpatient units, screening by chart review for eligibility (**n=100+**)

Wellness and Recovery After Psychosis Clinic (PI: [Hannah Brown](#), MD) September 2023 – May 2024
Boston Medical Center, Department of Psychiatry Boston, MA

Undergraduate Research Assistant

- Authored literature reviews on service patterns among high utilizers of psychiatric emergency services with schizophrenia, shaping study design and clinical framing for a published manuscript

- Led recruitment and consent (**n=30+**) of individuals with active psychotic symptoms across clinical settings, adapting communication strategies to engage participants with limited decisional clarity
- Managed systematic chart review (**n=205+**) and longitudinal data quality control for the Massachusetts Psychosis Network Treatment Battery

Disparities Research Unit (PI: [Margarita Alegría](#), PhD)

January 2024 – May 2024

Massachusetts General Hospital

Boston, MA

Undergraduate Research Assistant

- Administered structured psychiatric assessments (PHQ-9, GAI, HSCL-25, WHODAS, PCL-5, MoCA) by phone (**n=35+**) at 6- and 12-month follow-up for the *Positive Minds–Strong Bodies* RCT, a combined psychoeducational and exercise intervention to prevent disability and reduce mood symptoms in minority and immigrant older adults

Social Cognition Lab (Advisor: [Keith Maddox](#), PhD)

June 2023 – May 2024

Tufts University, Department of Psychology

Medford, MA

Honors Thesis Student

- Designed and independently executed a year-long mixed-methods honors thesis on symbolic racism, bias awareness, and anticipated interracial anxiety among people of color, from research question through defense; awarded High Honors
- Built an original Qualtrics experimental paradigm using deception to capture emotional shifts during anticipated cross-racial interactions, pairing validated instruments with open-ended measures of my own construction
- Authored and secured IRB approval for the protocol and debriefing plan; independently recruited and managed the full participant sample
- Analyzed results via linear regression in R and built a **77-code** NVivo framework to synthesize narrative responses
- Defended before faculty committee and presented at university research symposium

SKILLS

Statistical Analysis: R (linear and logistic regression, data cleaning and wrangling, reproducible workflows in R Markdown)

Qualitative Analysis: NVivo (open and axial coding, thematic analysis, codebook development and inter-coder reconciliation, coding matrices, and frequency queries across large interview datasets)

Neuroimaging & Psychophysiology: fMRI task administration in MATLAB; MRI preprocessing with fMRIPrep; high-density 96-channel EEG acquisition (BrainVision Recorder), including electrode preparation and impedance management

Data Systems: REDCap and Qualtrics (database and instrument design, branching logic, calculated fields); EHR data extraction

Regulatory & Study Operations: Independent authorship of IRB protocols, amendments, continuing reviews, and adverse event reports; compliance record maintenance; NIMH National Data Archive submissions; recruitment campaign management across clinical trial recruitment platforms, patient data repositories, and social media

Wet Lab: Saliva and blood collection and processing (DNA, RNA, serum, cortisol); centrifugation, pipetting, biospecimen storage

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Member: American Public Health Association | Psi Chi, International Honor Society in Psychology | Society of Pediatric Psychology | Society for Research in Psychopathology

REFERENCES

Diego A. Pizzagalli, PhD: Principal Investigator, Lab for Affective and Translational Neuroscience; Founding Director, Noel Drury, M.D. Institute for Translational Depression Discoveries; Distinguished Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior & Department of Neurobiology and Behavior | dpizzaga@hs.uci.edu

Rachel Oblath, PhD: Principal Investigator, Boston Emergency Services Team Partnership for Behavioral Health, Racial, and Social Justice; Director of Research Methodology, Boston Medical Center Department of Psychiatry; Assistant Professor, Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine | roblath@bu.edu

Martha Falkenstein, PhD: Director of Research, OCD Institute Office of Clinical Assessment and Research; Professor in Psychology, Harvard Medical School | mfalkenstein@mclean.harvard.edu