

MY NGOC TO

Curriculum vitae

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Colorado State University
School of Social Work
121 Education, 1586 Campus Delivery
Fort Collins, CO 80523-1586

APPOINTMENTS

2025 Assistant Professor
Colorado State University School of Social Work, Fort Collins, CO

EDUCATION

2025 Doctor of Philosophy
University of Denver, Graduate School of Social Work
Dissertation: *"It's really bitter... but it's sweet": Healing historical trauma among Vietnamese Americans in the WEALTH program*
Dissertation Chair: Nicole Nicotera, PhD

2021 Master of Social Work
Simmons University, School of Social Work
Concentration: Trauma Practice

2016 Bachelor of Arts
Harvard University, Harvard College
Major: Cognitive Neuroscience

AREAS OF INTEREST

Research Engaged mindfulness | intergenerational & historical trauma | identity development | immigrant and refugee mental health | qualitative and community-engaged research methods | intervention research

Teaching Mind-body practices in social work | anti-oppressive pedagogy | power, privilege, and oppression | research methods (evidence for practice, qualitative, community-based)

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Published / Accepted

1. De Fries, C.M., **To., M.N.**, Zhang, P., Ea, E., Sun, F., Wu, B., Levkoff, S.E., Wang, K. (2025). End-of-life care planning among older Vietnamese and Filipino Americans: A

- qualitative analysis. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*. 1-22.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01634372.2025.2535480>
2. **To., M.N.**, Sliva, S., Valdovinos, M. (2025). Exploring the impacts of engaged mindfulness on women residents in a community corrections facility: A narrative analysis. *Contemporary Justice Review*. 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2025.2527622>
 3. Wang, K., Sun, F., Zhang, P., De Fries, C.M., Li, X., Zhu, K., **To, M.N.** (2025) Culturally tailored community brain health education for Chinese Americans aged 50 or above: A mixed-methods open pilot study. *Geriatrics* 10(2), 58.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/geriatrics10020058>
 4. Lutz, J., Gawande, R., Comeau, A., Gan, J., **To, M.N.**, Desbordes, G., Griswold, T., King, J., Loucks, E., Napadow, V., Schuman-Olivier, Z. (2025). Neural regulation of pain anticipation is associated with mindful behavior change in patients with anxiety or depression: a pilot study. *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging* 347, 111941.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychresns.2024.111941>
 5. **To, M.N.**, Nicotera, N., Wang, K. (2024). To move or not to move: Factors of mind-body practice engagement in a population-based study. *Journal of Integrative and Complementary Medicine* 31(4), 358-366. <https://doi-org.du.idm.oclc.org/10.1089/jicm.2024.0288>
 6. Beltrán, R., Alvarez, A., **To, M.N.**, Dunbar, A.Z., Pacheco, B.A., Valdovinos, M. (2024) “I hope this brings comfort to others; it’s brought me comfort too”: Ceremony-based participatory practice research as Indigenist feminist methodology. *Affilia* 40(2), 220-239.
<https://doi-org.du.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/088610992412882>
 7. Gawande, R., Creedon, T., Comeau, A., Griswold, T., Smith, L., **To, M.N.**, Wilson, C., Luocks, E., Cook, B. (2024) Change starts with the body: Interoceptive appreciation mediates the effect of mindfulness training on behavior change. *Psychiatry Research*, 342, 116230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2024.116230>
 8. **To, M.N.**, & Schuman-Olivier, Z. (2024). Integrating choice points into mindfulness training for the dissociative subtype of PTSD: A case report. *Psychiatry Research Case Reports*, 3(1), 100218. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psycr.2024.100218>
 9. **To, M.N.**, Beltrán, R., Dunbar, A.Z., Valdovinos, M.G., Barillas Chón, D.W., Pacheco, B.A., Hunte, O., Hulama, T. (2023). Like water, we re-member: A conceptual model of identity (re)formation through cultural reclamation for indigenous peoples of Mexico in the United States. *Genealogy*, 7(4), 90. <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy7040090>
 10. Xu, H. W., Liu, H., Luo, Y., Wang, K., **To, M.N.**, Chen, Y. M., ... & Xu, B. (2023). Comparing a new multimorbidity index with other multimorbidity measures for predicting disability trajectories. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 376(1), 167-173.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2023.11.014>

11. Datko, M., Lutz, J., Gawande, R., Comeau, A., **To, M.N.**, Desel, T., ... & Schuman-Olivier, Z. (2022). Increased insula response to interoceptive attention following mindfulness training is associated with increased body trusting among patients with depression. *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging*, 327, 111559. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychresns.2022.111559>
12. Gawande, R., **To, M.N.**, Pine, L., Griswold, T., Creedon, T., Brunel, A., Lozada, A., Loucks, E., Schuman-Olivier, Z. (2019). Mindfulness training enhances self-regulation and facilitates health behavior change for primary care patients: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 34(2), 293-302. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-018-4739-5>

Under Review / Revise and Resubmit

1. **To, M.N.** (under review). "It's not wrong, it's just incomplete": Vietnamese American perspectives on western secular mindfulness. *Journal of Contemplative Studies*
2. Roach-Coye, S., **To, M.N.**, & Walls, N.E. (in press). Measurement considerations for liberatory research. In Ramseyer Winter, V., Daniel, C., Walls, N.E., & Spencer, M., (Eds.), *Decolonizing quantitative methods: Anti-oppressive approaches to social work research*. Cambridge University Press.
3. Beltrán, R., Valdovinos, M., Hunte, O., **To, M.N.**, Hulama, T. (under review) "To heal every little wound": Reconnecting, reclaiming, and revitalizing cultural spiritual traditions among Indigenous peoples of Mexico in the United States. In, De La Torre, M.A., & Aponte, E.D., (Eds.), *Latine Lived Religions and Religious Identities: ¡Presente!* Bloomsbury Publishing.

GRANTS & FELLOWSHIPS

2025	Graduate Education Dissertation Fellowship (\$2,500), University of Denver
2024 – 2025	Enid Opal Cox Endowed Scholarship for PhD students (\$750/year), University of Denver
2023 – 2025	Walter F. LaMendola Pre-Dissertation Assistantship (\$22,921/year), University of Denver, Graduate School of Social Work
2023 – 2025	Graduate Education Doctoral Fellowship for Inclusive Engagement (\$4,500/year), University of Denver, Graduate School of Social Work
2023	Mind & Life Institute Varela Grant Award: "Mindfulness-Based Practices for Healing Intergenerational Trauma Among Vietnamese Americans" (\$20,000), 2-year grant utilized at University of Denver, Graduate School of Social Work

2022	Mentored Summer Scholar Award (\$3,600), University of Denver, Graduate School of Social Work
2021 – 2023	Competitive Graduate Studies Doctoral Fellowship (\$4,500/year), University of Denver, Graduate School of Social Work
2021 – 2023	Graduate Research Assistantship (\$20,000/year + full tuition waiver), University of Denver, Graduate School of Social Work
2019 – 2021	Simmons School of Social Work Merit Scholarship (\$15,000/year), Simmons University, School of Social Work
2013	Edward M. Lamont Public Service Fellowship (\$3,000), Harvard University

HONORS & AWARDS

2022 & 2023	Doctoral Student Conference Travel Award, Society for Social Work Research
2020	Scholarship Award, Mind & Life Summer Research Institute
2020	Outstanding Academic Paper in Social Work Award, Simmons University, School of Social Work
2018	Full Scholarship & Travel Award, Mind & Life International Symposium for Contemplative Research
2018	Best Research Poster Award, Osher Center Integrative Medicine Networking Forum
2016	Vietnamese American Leadership Summit Travel Award, Georgia Delegation of Vietnamese Americans
2016	After Harvard Award, Harvard University (Given to a senior whose personal vision and academic preparation point to a future of commitment and involvement as a crusader for a better world)
2010	Presidential Scholar, U.S. Presidential Scholars Program

PEER-REVIEWED PRESENTATIONS

1. **To., M.N.** (Accepted, 2025, Nov 3-6). Healing Historical Trauma among Vietnamese Americans through Contemplation: A Pilot Study of the WEALTH Program (Oral Paper Presentation). International Symposium for Contemplative Research 3rd Annual Conference, Chapel Hill, NC

2. **To., M.N.** (Accepted, 2025, Oct 24-25). Community practice for intergenerational healing: Learning from the WEALTH pilot study. (Oral Paper Presentation). International Vietnamese Mental Health Association 2nd Annual Conference, Orange County, CA
3. **To., M.N.** (2025, Apr 27-May 2). Like water, we re-member: A conceptual model of identity (re)formation through cultural reclamation for indigenous peoples of Mexico in the United States (Oral Paper Presentation). International Network for Indigenous Health Knowledge and Development - Reclaiming Indigenous Ecologies of Love Conference, Albuquerque, NM.
4. **To., M.N.** (2025, Jan 15-19). Healing historical trauma among Vietnamese Americans: Feasibility and acceptability of a pilot contemplative-based program (Oral Paper Presentation). In C. Elsaesser (Chair), Leveraging inner transformation for social transformation: Examining the role of mindfulness in supporting health equity, Society for Social Work Research 29th Annual Conference, Seattle, WA.
5. **To., M.N.** (Accepted, 2025, Jan 15-19). The role of contemplation in healing historical trauma: A scoping review (Poster Presentation). Society for Social Work Research 29th Annual Conference, Seattle, WA.
6. **To., M.N.,** Sliva, S., Valdoninos, M. (2024, Jan 10-14). Impacts of an engaged mindfulness on women residents in a community correctional facility: A focus group narrative analysis (Oral Paper Presentation). In D. Littman (Chair), Narrative analyses of justice processes, Society for Social Work Research 28th Annual Conference, Washington D.C.
7. De Fries, C.M., **To, M.N.,** Sun, F., Wu, B., Levkoff, S.E., & Wang, K. (2023, Nov 8-12). End of life care planning: The role of family for Vietnamese and Filipino Americans. (Poster presentation) Gerontological Society of America Annual Scientific Meeting, Tampa, FL.
8. Wang, K., **To, M.N.,** De Fries, C. M., & Wu, B (2023, Nov 8-12). Factors associated with depressive symptoms among older Southeast Asian Americans. In B. Wu (Chair), Untangling the model minority stereotype: Promoting health equity among Asian American older adults, Symposium at the Gerontological Society of America Annual Scientific Meeting, Tampa, FL.
9. Wang, K., De Fries, C. M., **To, M.N.,** Sun, F., Wu, B., & Levkoff, S. E. (2023, Nov 8-12). Attitudes toward advance directives among older Southeast Asian Americans. In K. Wang & Fei, S (Chairs), Transcending boundaries and barriers: End-of-life care and quality of life for Asian populations, Symposium at the Gerontological Society of America Annual Scientific Meeting, Tampa, FL.
10. **To, M.N.** (2023, Jan 12-16). Vietnamese American perspectives on Western secular mindfulness: A phenomenological study. (Oral Paper Presentation) Society for Social Work Research 27th Annual Conference, Phoenix, AZ.

11. Gawande, R., Creedon, Tim., Comeau, A., **To, M.N.**, Wilson, C., Smith, L. Griswold, T., Cook, B., Schuman-Olivier, Z. (2021, Nov 15-16). Listening to the body as a guide: Interoceptive tendency mediates the effect of mindfulness training on behavior change initiation. (Poster presentation). Osher Center Integrative Medicine Network Forum. Boston, MA.
12. **To, M.N.** (2021, Apr 15). Integrating choice-points into mindfulness training for the dissociative subtype of PTSD: A case study. (Poster Presentation) Cambridge Health Alliance. Cambridge, MA.
13. **To, M.N.** (2020, Nov 6). Reconnecting mindfulness and dissociation: A case study on successful completion of an 8-week mindfulness training by an individual with active dissociation. (Online Poster) Osher Center Integrative Medicine Network Forum. Boston, MA.
14. **To, M.N.**, Gawande, R., Griswold, T., Creedon, T., Pine, E., Brunel, A., Lozada, A., Loucks, E., Schuman-Olivier, Z. (2018, Nov 8-11). Integrating mindfulness into primary care: effects of an insurance-reimbursable Mindfulness on behavior change, self-regulation, and accessibility in primary care patients. (Poster Presentation). Mind & Life International Symposium for Contemplative Research. Phoenix, AZ.
15. **To, M.N.**, Gawande, R., Griswold, T., Creedon, T., Pine, E., Brunel, A., Lozada, A., Loucks, E., Schuman-Olivier, Z. (2018, Nov 18). Impacts of insurance-reimbursable Mindfulness Training for Primary Care (MTPC) on behavior change, self-regulation, and accessibility. (Poster Presentation) Osher Center Integrative Medicine Network Forum. Boston, MA.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor of Record

Advanced Standing: Engaging Anti-Oppressive Social Work (Masters-level course, Online, Summer 2024). University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work. Evaluation Score: 5.96/6

Evidence for Practice (Masters-level course, Online, Summer 2023). University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work. Evaluation score: 5.4/6

Teaching Assistant

Mind-Body Connections and Social Work Practice (Masters-level course, Spring 2024). University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work (Instructor of Record: Dr. Nicole Nicotera)

Power, Privilege, and Oppression (Masters-level course, Winter 2023). University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work (Instructor of Record: Dr. Debora Ortega)

Guest Lecturer

Building genuine warmth and presence in social work practice (September 30, 2024). In *The Helping Relationship* (Undergraduate-level course), University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

Asian American pacific islander mental health (March 12, 2024). In *AAPI Communities & Health* (Undergraduate-level course), University of Colorado Denver

Vietnamese American mental health and healing (April 19, 2023). In *Resources for Vietnamese American Studies* (Undergraduate-level course), University of Massachusetts Boston

Working with mess: Processes for moving forward with qualitative projects (April 11, 2023). In *Advanced Qualitative Data Analysis* (PhD-level course), University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work

Improving services for immigrants and refugees with disabilities (November 5, 2022). In *Power, Privilege, and Oppression* (Masters-level course), University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work

Mindfulness & compassion in social work (February 20, 2020). In *Advanced Trauma Seminar* (Masters-level course), Boston University School of Social Work

Course Design

Power, Privilege and Oppression (Summer 2022) University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work (Assistant to Dr. Heather Arnold Renicker)

FUNDED RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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|-------------------|---|
| 02/2024 – 07/2024 | Evaluation Assistant, <i>Kent Monkman Exhibit Evaluation</i> (PI: Ramona Beltrán, PhD).
Funder: Denver Art Museum |
| 12/2023 – ongoing | Mindfulness Research Consultant, <i>Mindfulness-based intervention to address mental distress and burnout among healthcare staff in Vietnam</i> . (PI: Kathy Trang, PhD)
Funder: Mind & Life Institute Varela Grant Award |
| 10/2021 – ongoing | Graduate Research Assistant, <i>Family Involvement in End-of-Life Care among Older Southeast Asian Americans and Chinese Americans</i> (PI: Kaipeng Wang, PhD)
Funder: NIH/NIA P30AG0059304 Subaward, Rutgers University Asian Research Center for Minority Aging Research |
| 09/2021 – ongoing | Graduate Research Assistant, <i>Our Stories Our Medicine Archive (OSOMA)</i> . PIs: Ramona Beltrán, PhD & Miriam Valdovinos, PhD |

Funder: NIH, National Library of Medicine, Award No.
5G08LM013186, University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work

05/2017 – 08/2021 Senior Research Coordinator (2019-2021) & Clinical Research
Coordinator (2017-2019), *Mindfulness Influences on Self-Regulation:
Mental and Physical Health Implications* (PIs: Eric Luocks, MD; Project
PI: Zev Schuman-Olivier, MD)
Funder: NIH, Common Fund Science of Behavior Change Initiative and
National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, Award No.
UH2AT009145, Center for Mindfulness and Compassion, Cambridge
Health Alliance

INVITED COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS

- 2024 Workshop Presenter. *Working with shame: The hidden emotion*. Embracing Emotions AANHPI Mental Wellness Summit. Aurora, CO. (August 31).
- 2024 Speaker. *Mindfulness and healing collective trauma*. Insight Meditation Society. Denver, CO. (June 9).
- 2024 Panelist. *Transforming intergenerational trauma for community healing*. University of Colorado Denver. Denver, CO. (April 25).
- 2023 Workshop Presenter. *Creating comics to capture 1st gen student stories*. University of Denver Libraries. Denver, CO. (October 7).
- 2023 Workshop Presenter. *Mindfulness for living well*. Next50 Initiative for Chinese Speaking Seniors. Denver, CO. (September 23).
- 2023 Panelist. *Measureless melodies*. Modern Poetry in Translation. London, UK. (Virtual). (June 6)
- 2022 Workshop Presenter. *Healing intergenerational trauma through mindfulness practice*. Building Resilience: AANHPI Mental Wellness Summit. Aurora, CO (July 16)
- 2021 Workshop Presenter. Mindfulness for job seekers: Refuge in the midst of transition. Harvard Education Portal. Allston, MA (Online) (March 22)
- 2021 Workshop Presenter. *Memory, mindfulness, and social justice*. Transformative Action Project, Boston, MA (Virtual) (January 7)
- 2019 Workshop Presenter. *Unplug for the holidays: Using mindfulness and compassion to cope with common holiday stresses*. Robbins Library. Arlington, MA (December 11)

- 2016 Keynote Speaker. *The call for political participation among Vietnamese Americans: Shifting the paradigm from surviving to thriving*. Georgia Vietnamese-American Delegation Advocacy Day. Atlanta, GA (June 10)
- 2012 Keynote Speaker. *Starting again with hope: Celebrating world refugee day*. Clarkson Community Center. Atlanta, GA (May 29)
- 2011 Keynote Speaker. *Bringing history into Vietnamese American identity*. Fall of Saigon Memorial Service, Government Center. Boston, MA (April 30)

CREATIVE & PUBLIC FACING WORKS

To, M. N. (2023) Three translated poems of Hồ Xuân Hương. *Measureless Melodies: Focus on Vietnam*. Modern Poetry in Translation: London, UK

To, M. N. (2017). The hidden lives of nail artists. [The Guardian](#).

To, M. N. (2017). An inside look at being premed at Harvard. [Huffington Post](#).

Frank, P. (2016). The radical, feminist comic book we need to survive a trump presidency. [The Huffington Post](#)

To, M. N. War photograph, take 2. (2015). [Metamorphosis Art Exhibition](#). Industry Labs, Somerville, MA.

To, M. N. (2013). *The washing room: A story of stories*. Self-published

MEDIA APPEARANCES

Perez, P. & Rao, A. (2023) (Co-guest) Our fascination with fabulousness: A historical and cultural examination of nail art. WUNC [Embodied Podcast](#)

Parker, M. (2023, Feb) (Co-guest) Healing is inevitable: The power of community, creating our own planets, and radical resistance in academia. [RAGE Podcast](#)

Mills, T. (2021, Feb) Memory, social justice, and mindfulness. [Harvard in the Community](#)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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| 07/2023 – 01/2024 | Child & Adult Therapist, Grace in Balance (part-time). Westminster, CO |
| 10/2021 – 05/2023 | Mindfulness Director, Mindfully (part-time). Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam |

05/2020 – 07/2021	Mindfulness Teacher, Harvard Education Portal (Part-time). Allston, MA
10/2018 – 05/2020	Koru Mindfulness Teacher, Harvard Wellness Center (Part-time). Cambridge, MA
05/2020 – 08/2020	Client Database Assistant, Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence (Part-time). Boston, MA
07/2016 – 01/2017	Emergency Room Medical Scribe, Northside Hospital (Full-time).. Atlanta, GA
01/2015 – 07/2016	Administrative Assistant & Homecare Aid, MedCiphers (Full-time).. Norcross, GA

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

06/2023 – 09/2023	Data Analyst Intern, Philliber Research and Evaluation. Accord, NY
09/2020 – 06/2021	Social Work Intern, The Children’s Room. Arlington, MA
09/2019 – 06/2020	Social Work Intern, Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence. Boston, MA

SERVICE

Service to the Profession

09/2022 – 06/2023 & 09/2024 – present	Student Inclusion and Excellence Committee Member, University of Denver, Graduate School of Social Work. Denver, C
2022 – present	Journal Reviewer, Perspectives in Social Work Journal. Houston, TX
09/2021 – 06/2022	Doctoral Student Leadership Committee Member, University of Denver, Graduate School of Social Work. Denver, CO
09/2021 – 11/2021	Postdoctoral Fellowship Search Committee Member, University of Denver Our Stories, Our Medicine Archive project (OSOMA)/Interdisciplinary Research Institute for the Study of (In)Equality (IRISE)

Service to the Community

08/2023 – Present	Outreach Committee (09/2023 – present) & Center Manager (06/2024 – present), Rocky Mountain Vipassana Association. Elbert, CO
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04/2020 – 03/2022	Newsletter Editor, Sufi Service Committee. Cambridge, MA
08/2019 – 02/2020	Food Collection Volunteer, Food Link. Arlington, MA
04/2015 – 04/2017	Festival and Ceremony Volunteer, Minh Dang Quang Meditation Center. Lawrenceville, GA
01/2015 – 03/2015	Food Pantry Volunteer, My Overcomers House. Snellville, GA

PROFESSIONAL LICENSURES

2023 Licensed Social Worker, LSW.0009924674, Colorado

MEMBERSHIPS & PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS

Society for Social Work Research
 Council on Social Work Education
 Roger Salters Writing Institute (RSI) at Interdisciplinary Research Institute for the Study of (in)Equality
 National Association of Social Workers – Colorado Chapter
 Asian Mental Health Collective

TRAININGS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2022	Restorative Justice Circle Training, Circles Project. Denver, CO
2020	Summer Research Institute, Mind & Life Institute (Virtual)
2019	Mindfulness Training in Primary Care Group Leader Training, CHA Center for Mindfulness and Compassion. Cambridge, MA
2018	Koru Mindfulness Training, The Center for Koru Mindfulness. Long Island, NY