Congratulations to the 2021 SWS Barbara Rosenblum Dissertation Scholarship for the Study of Women and Cancer Winner, Trang Thu Đỗ

Sociologists for Women in Society is proud to announce the recipient of the 2021 Barbara Rosenblum Scholarship for the Study of Women and Cancer, Trang Thu Đỗ. Special thanks go to the 2021 Barbara Rosenblum Scholarship for the Study of Women and Cancer Subcommittee: Rebecca Hanson (Chair), Jean Elson, Gloria Gadsden, Tashelle Wright and Ana Porroche-Escudero. This scholarship was established with a bequest from Barbara Rosenblum, an active and longstanding SWS member, who died February 14, 1988 after a long battle with breast cancer. Colleagues, friends, and family made contributions to the fund in Barbara's memory, and fundraising efforts continue to ensure that a $2500 scholarship can be offered every year. The purpose of the scholarship is to encourage doctoral research in sociology, anthropology, psychology, and related fields on women’s experience of breast cancer and other reproductive cancers and the prevention of these cancers. Another goal of the scholarship is to encourage scholars to make this type of research accessible to the public through speaking and publishing for lay audiences.

Trang Thu Đỗ is a PhD Candidate in Anthropology at the Faculty of Arts, Monash University in Australia, pursuing her doctoral research on understanding the experiences of women living with breast cancer in Vietnam. She has experience as both a social researcher and practitioner for over ten years in Vietnam, her home country, where her work has focused on issues related to women’s health, gender, poverty, and social inequality. Her scholarly works have been published in internationally peer-reviewed and high impact journals, such as Social Science & Medicine, Health Sociology Review, and Sex Roles. Prior to coming to Australia, via her position at the Institute for Social Development Studies, Đỗ closely engaged with local civil society, government agencies, and development partners in shaping and delivering development policies and projects aimed to empower and improve the well-being of vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities, rural low-income women, and sexual minorities.
In her present study, Đỗ explores the lived realities of breast cancer in Vietnam where the disease has become the most common cancer for women, claiming over 9,300 deaths in 2020. Her research illuminates how social and structural factors figure into how women patients and their families make sense of, approach, and manage this life-threatening disease. Đỗ followed cancer patients in the central region of Vietnam throughout their treatment journey and everyday life at different hospital, community, and peer support group settings. In her year-long ethnography, she also interviewed healthcare providers, family members of cancer patients, and laypeople to unfold the various aspects surrounding women’s construction of breast cancer understandings and care-seeking behaviors.

With insights from social science perspectives into the social burden of living with a pathological condition, her research addresses the current theoretical and empirical gap in relation to scholarship on cancer’s lived experiences in a developing country context. Her findings emphasize the need to attend to how the experiences of living with a chronic health problem for people in resource-constrained settings are shaped by and contribute to social and economic inequalities. Đỗ believes in the power of research to initiate and achieve positive social changes. By amplifying voices from underserved populations, she expects that her research could inform the design of socially and culturally appropriate care and more effective programs to improve the lives of women living with breast cancer in different parts of Vietnam, as well as in other under-resourced contexts.

SWS will honor Trang Thu Đỗ and all of our 2021 Summer Award recipients via a Virtual Awards Presentation. Our Awards Reception is scheduled to take place on Friday, July 9, 2021 between 6:00 pm EDT- 8:30 pm EDT. If you are interested in making a gift to support the Barbara Rosenblum Scholarship for the Study of Women and Cancer, please contact Barret Katuna, Executive Officer, at swseo.barretkatuna@outlook.com, or make a gift via this form: https://sws.memberclicks.net/donation-form.