

# The Advisor

Newsletter of the Educational Studies Program at  
Eastern Michigan University

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## Editors

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Dr. Yasmin Snounu at Commencement in 2019 with her mother and daughter and her dissertation chairperson, Dr. Joe Bishop

## Alumni Spotlight: Dr. Yasmin Snounu

Dr. Yasmin Snounu earned her PhD in 2019 with her dissertation, “A critical ethnographical exploration of disability under apartheid conditions: The promising potential of Palestinian higher education institutions.” She completed her degree while balancing responsibilities as a doctoral fellow and mother. Since then, she has worked as a research and translation consultant for the sociology department at EMU and as a volunteer consultant with the National Organization for Vehicle Accessibility. She took some time to reflect on her experiences in the Education Studies program and share advice for current students.

Dr. Snounu noted keys to her success in the program: attending conferences, ongoing communication with her dissertation chairperson, and support from family and friends. “Going to conferences,” she explained, “kept me in the loop, helped me to talk about my research, and gave me an opportunity to connect with scholars and professors.” Communication with her dissertation chairperson made a difference for her when she felt confused or overwhelmed. She said, “Professor Joe Bishop always put me in the right direction; most importantly, he encouraged me to think critically about my work.” Finally, she included asking for help as a factor in finishing her dissertation. Family and friends assisted with childcare, and she sought help from the University Writing Center to improve the quality of her drafts.

The Educational Studies program shaped the skills and knowledge Dr. Snounu uses in her scholarship and work. Her coursework helped her hone her qualitative research skills. She said, “I learned how to represent my participants’ voices, and maintain the ethics of conducting qualitative research.” This, as well as the ability to examine issues and phenomena from a variety of perspectives, have powered her professional growth.

Reflecting on her doctoral studies and dissertation, she regards faculty support as the greatest strength of the program. She especially appreciated the encouragement she received during her studies and the ability to bring her daughter to class while nursing.

To current students, Dr. Snounu advises flexibility and careful planning. She recommends that students also learn to defend their ideas with confidence and to ask for help when needed. She encourages students preparing for their dissertations, “Never procrastinate. Plan and get the work done ahead of time.”

## Dear Dr.

*It's hard to feel focused and motivated working and studying at home. What advice do you have for increasing motivation during the pandemic?*

Dear Stressed Out Doc Student,

First, it isn't you. When I was in graduate school, one of my friends used to remind us, "It's not paranoia when they're really after you." In this case, it is normal to feel stressed in a stressful situation. Doctoral programs are stressful. Doctoral programs in a pandemic are stress squared. And as your educational psychology colleagues can tell you, brains don't work their best when bathed in stress hormones. In this particular time, it may be that the best thing you can do to become more efficient is to be mindful of your stress levels and self-care. Of course, you have to work hard. But it is also important to stop, walk outside, do yoga, eat delivery cookies, play with your pets, or whatever else you can do to bring down your stress level. It makes a difference to both your mental health and your ability to work.

Once you have your stress levels at a manageable level—or what passes for manageable in 2020—we can think about motivation. There are numerous theories, but one that can be helpful is self-determination theory. Self-determination theory says that intrinsic motivation is built through feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. That is, we are most motivated when we feel ourselves making progress, when we feel we have some choice in the tasks before us, and when we are in a supportive community. You can build those things with your Educational Studies colleagues. Here are three places to start.

1. Celebrate small successes, for yourself and others. If you found five new sources, had a successful interview, or finally understood probability levels, give yourself credit for those accomplishments. Do the same for your colleagues. In a good learning community, one person's success is everyone's success. Notice when people do well and tell them.
2. Take advantage of the flexibility offered in your program to find places you can make choices. Where you can, choose to study things you care about. Remind yourself that you are creating your own scholarly path. It won't be just like anyone else's.
3. Finally, I can't emphasize enough the value of community. You are here with colleagues who may be part of your world for the rest of your professional life. They can be your most important supports. Who else can understand when you need to vent about seeming endless transcriptions or readings that seem to be written in another language? Be friends. Be honest with one another. Celebrate your successes and stand together when things get tough. It definitely takes a village to earn a Ph.D.

- Dr. Alane Starko

If you have questions about activism, education, scholarship, or career, please email Jennifer Bennett at [jvance@emich.edu](mailto:jvance@emich.edu) for inclusion in a future newsletter.

## Defending in a Pandemic

As with many facets of life in 2020, the ongoing pandemic has made the process of defending a dissertation quite different from years before. Dr. Dyann Logwood defended her dissertation on September 30, 2020 via a Zoom conference. Dr. Logwood notes that the shift to working from home was a transition that took some time; she first had to reimagine her home work space and also analyze her own habits--learning quickly that some things (like watching the news) are not always conducive to a productive writing session! Although much changed, some facets of life remained constant, such as Dr. Logwood's engagement with her community and cohort. When asked, she reported that it is of critical importance to have a circle of people that support you, digitally or otherwise!

Another interesting feature of defending on a Zoom call includes being able to choose whose faces you see looking back at you! Dr. Logwood said she felt encouraged by looking at the first page of meeting participants and seeing her family and support systems smiling back from their computers. After her successful defense, a socially distant driveway celebration was held with family and friends. Congratulations on your success, Dr. Logwood!

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## Community of Scholars

The pandemic has caused everyone to rethink the way that we approach connection, community, and togetherness. We are re-imagining the structure and purpose of Community of Scholars to create a more student-driven space. We will be meeting virtually until we can gather safely again.

Please complete [this form](#) to share your thoughts and scheduling needs as we work to create an accessible and inclusive community. Your thoughts matter!

## Hats off to you!

Congratulations to those who have recently completed their dissertation defense!

- Dr. Kimberly Brown
- Dr. Dyann Logwood
- Dr. Terry Stockton
- Dr. Heather Nicholson-Bester
- Dr. Amanda Maher
- Dr. Samino Scott
- Dr. John Mullen
- Dr. Monica Shields
- Dr. Susanna Coll-Ramirez
- Dr. Yasmin Snounu
- Dr. Brenda Buckle
- Dr. Elaine M. Lloyd
- Dr. Regina George

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## Welcome Cohort 12!

**Jennifer Bennett** is a doctoral fellow in Teacher Education. Her current research interests include the development of resilience in children and adolescents and children's rights issues.

**Christopher Bohle** is the Associate Director of Curriculum and Retention in the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program at U of M. His research interests include critical social theory, equity in higher education, and student leadership.

**Dawn Izzi** is an administrator at Oak Park Preparatory Academy. She is interested in the relationships between implicit bias and punitive discipline practices and the impact on educational outcomes of African American students.

**Racha Kobaia** is an adjunct instructor at Henry Ford College, where her teaching focuses on criminology theories. Her research interests relate to violence in schools, from bullying to shootings.

**Susan McCoy** currently works as the Media Specialist for Plymouth/Canton Public Schools. Her primary research interests focus on the issue of systemic poverty.

**Christine Snyder** is the Director of the U of M Health System Children's Center and an assistant professor at Madonna University. Her research interests include social-emotional & language development, birth to 3.

**Donna Wright** is a nurse professional development specialist and adjunct faculty whose research interests include culturally relevant pedagogical methods in nursing, specifically for nurses of color.

**Adam Bogedain** works for EMU in the Construction Management program. He aims to research teaching and learning in construction education, with emphasis on the flipped-classroom approach.

**Chrissy Harte** is an adjunct professor in the Bowling Green State University and Lourdes University who also works with preservice teachers at EMU. She would like to study effective use of multicultural literature in the K-12 classroom.

**Angela Jesse** is an Early Childhood Consultant for Wayne RESA with Michigan's Great Start Readiness Program. Her research interests include teacher mental health, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and child development.

**Janet Leppala** teaches French at Schoolcraft Community College and is a GA in Aging Studies at EMU. She is interested in research related to bicultural and bilingual education.

**Sara Muchmore** is a doctoral fellow in Teacher Education. She was previously a secondary teacher and coordinator for 10 years. Her current research interests focus on issues of equity in online learning.

**Ennis Soubani** teaches ESL at Frontier International Academy in Detroit. He is interested in researching topics related to Middle Eastern, African, and South Asian immigrant students within the U.S. K-12 system.

### Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies

The Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies prepares educators from a variety of community organizations (P-12 schools, higher education and other community contexts) to engage in effective research and practice about teaching and learning within complex social, political and economic systems. A key underlying emphasis of the program is a focus on poverty and its specific impact on urban, as well as suburban and rural communities.

