

# When Music Goes Up in Flames: The Impact of Advising on Music Major Burnout

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*Bringing their personalities and experiences to their relationships with students, academic advisors engage with a diverse population of students every semester. However, they meet with many students who display cynicism and exhaustion, known as burnout, toward their major. Over 300 music majors across the country were surveyed on their perceived academic advisor support, basic psychological needs, and burnout levels. Perceived student dissatisfaction of advising was positively correlated with burnout, such that larger measures of dissatisfaction are associated with larger measures of burnout. In addition, using basic psychological needs as mediators, we found numerous predictive relationships between advising factors and burnout; these findings suggest that advisors should consider the psychological needs of their students.*

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## Burnout

Although part of everyday life, too much stress in the workplace can spill over into personal life, causing burnout. First described by Freudenberger (1974, 1975), who embraced the dictionary definition of this concept, burnout is characterized by exhaustion and “excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources” (Freudenberger, 1974, p. 159). A person experiencing burnout may present with several unpleasant physical symptoms, including ulcers, headaches, insomnia, and back or neck pain (Maslach, 1976). Someone suffering from burnout may notice changes in behavior, including increased risk taking, irritability, helplessness, frustration, and depression (Cardinell, 1981). Burnout is correlated with alcoholism, suicide, and lasting mental health issues (Maslach, 1976). Additionally, untreated burnout can lead to psychological repercussions later in life, such as a midlife crisis (Cardinell, 1981). Maslach and Jackson (1981) devised a three-factor model to explain burnout: emotional exhaustion, deperson-

alization, and personal accomplishment. According to their research, *emotional exhaustion* describes feelings of being stretched too thin; *depersonalization* describes the loss of compassion for others, and *personal accomplishment* describes overall competence and self-worth related to work.

Recent work has focused on the stress and burnout of college students. With deadlines, exams, and term papers, students feel as much stress and burnout as professionals in the workforce. In addition, students are faced with the pressures of transitioning from high school to college; for example, many incoming college students are moving away from home for the first time in their lives (Ross, Niebling, & Heckert, 1999). Wu (2010) suggested the increased competition for employment in today’s workforce may contribute an additional cause of burnout in students; however, according to Hamann and Daugherty (1985), students with lower levels of burnout are more likely to hold jobs. Students suffering from burnout are more likely to experience a decline in academic performance due to poor memory and low self-esteem, which can increase the already large pressure to succeed and make good grades (Meier & Schmeck, 1985). Although researchers have examined burnout and stress in undergraduates in numerous academic disciplines across the globe (Schaufeli, Martinez, Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002; Yiqun, Jiayin, & Yiling, 2007), we specifically focus on music major’s burnout because of their rigorous major demands (Bernhard, 2005, 2007, 2010).

## Advising

This increased stress and competition in academia and the job market have elevated the roles of higher education professionals. At many universities, students are required to meet with academic advisors as part of enrollment requirements, and these meetings provide a potential way to prevent student burnout. As they guide students from high school seniors to college graduates, supportive advisors have transformed some students from frustrated almost-dropouts to successful students graduating with honors (Drake, 2011).

Not surprisingly, quality academic advising has been named an important predictor of college persistence and retention (Kuh, 2008; McLaughlin & Starr, 1982). While lower attrition rates have been linked to students who receive high quality advising than to students who experience low quality advising, any student with an academic advisor will more likely persist than those who receive no academic advising (Metzner, 1989). Generally speaking, students who perceive high quality interactions with individuals concerned about their well-being and progress will likely remain in school; certainly, academic advisors fit the role of interested and communicative institutional personnel (Drake, 2011; Habley, 2004).

### **Music Majors**

Music majors face numerous and unique difficulties and stresses. Time management can create tremendous issues for music majors. Students in a focus group performed by Conway, Eros, Pellegrino, and West (2010) described the constant struggle of balancing the simultaneous demands of completing homework, practicing their instrument, and taking care of themselves. Music education majors are expected to find time for observing and teaching at local schools. Student musicians, in general, must divvy their time between music courses, general college courses, off-campus employment, and musical ensembles (Hildebrandt, Nübling, & Candia, 2012; Schneider & Chesky, 2011; Stephenson & Quarrier, 2005).

Performances, considered by many as the main focus of musicians, place immense pressure on students. Seventy-nine percent of interviewed students link their self-esteem to their levels of performance (Dews & Williams, 1989). Performances take the form of large ensembles (e.g., orchestras and choirs) or small ensembles (e.g., quartets and trios). Some large ensembles require competitive auditions, and conductors hold extremely high expectations for the group (Sternbach, 1993). Students typically lead small ensembles, which enhances leadership skills but also forces participants to negotiate new roles and sometimes clashing personalities (Alverno, 1987). When music students are not participating in large and small ensembles, sitting in class, or working, they spend a majority of their remaining time practicing their instrument. After spending many hours alone in a practice room, some music majors feel exhausted, isolated, and lonely; in one study, students rated practicing as an unfriendly activity (Butler, 1995). A competitive and exhausting

environment can lead to anxiety, stress, and mental health issues (Dews & Williams, 1989; Young & Hipple, 1996).

### **Mental Health**

Both anxiety and stress have enormous impacts on music majors. In a 1989 survey, Dews and Williams found that music majors identified stress as their biggest concern. Music students experience the same stressors that other college students do, such as financial problems, strained relationships, and family emergencies (Butler, 1995). Additional stressors resemble those of the music profession, such as a perceived lack of musical progress, fear of job insecurity as a musician, and the struggle to find the balance between music and personal life (Dews & Williams, 1989; McCready & Reid, 2007; Young & Hipple, 1996).

The pressure to attain perfection in a competitive field may uniquely intensify student anxiety. Sternbach (1993) observed the differences between music and sports: "A major league ballplayer with a .300 batting average may be a star; however, no audience would tolerate a musician who missed 7 out of every 10 notes" (p. 284). In addition to performance-related stress, their taxing academic work includes assignments in music theory courses that create high cognitive loads for students and require efforts and abilities that extend beyond those expected in memory research (Knowlton, 2007). All of the stressors add up: Spahn, Strukely, and Lehmann (2004) found that music majors experienced elevated anxiety symptoms at a greater rate than medical students or student athletes.

The mental health of students involved in music and other artistic studies has attracted attention in the literature for good reason. Research indicates that students involved in artistic programs, including music, art, drama, and writing, are more likely to suffer from depression symptoms than students not involved in the arts (Young, Winner, & Cordes, 2013). By the end of their first year in college, music majors scored higher on scales of depression, exhaustion, and stage fright than they did at the beginning of their first semester (Hildebrandt et al., 2012). Young and Hipple (1996) studied the complaints of music students who visited college counseling centers; when asked how much their distress affected their lives and academic performance, students respond with respective mean scores of 6.4 and 5.7 on a 0- to 9-point Likert-type scale. Students seeking professional mental health counseling differ from most music students, who

rely on friends and family when experiencing overwhelming stress (Dews & Williams, 1989).

In response to a survey, more than 50% of music students reported at least one anxiety-related symptom that interfered with daily function, and 9% of those students sought treatment. Also, almost 60% of music students who reported never receiving treatment for depression indicated as many as four symptoms that mildly affected their daily function; 7% reported experiencing five or more symptoms that severely affected their daily function (Wristen, 2013). In addition, as part of mental health research, psychologists have examined the ways motivation can affect psychological well-being. Specifically, self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) pinpoints three constructs that people consider important to their health: the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy reflects the perceived ability to direct and control one's own personal life and decisions, competence is expressed as confidence in activities and tasks, and relatedness explains the need to engage in meaningful relationships with others (Reeve, 2008). Basic psychological needs and self-determination theory have been linked to academic advising in previous research (Burt, Young-Jones, Yadon, & Carr, 2013), and therefore, we added an assessment of the degree to which basic psychological needs were met to analyze the relationship between mental health and the other factors addressed in this study.

### **The Study Overview**

All of the combined stresses can lead to burnout and attrition for music majors, and burnout is emerging as an issue in higher education programs, including music. Bernhard (2007, 2010) conducted two studies examining different music student burnout experiences and the relationship of burnout with year in school, instrument, time spent on relaxation and practice, and specific major. In both studies, he found that music students, in general, experienced high levels of emotional exhaustion, moderate levels of depersonalization, and moderate levels of personal accomplishment. These findings coincide with results of an earlier study in which 71% of music students scored moderate to high on measures of emotional exhaustion, 67% scored moderate to high on depersonalization measures, and 70% scored moderate to high on personal accomplishment rankings (Hamann & Daugherty, 1985). Traits typical of burnout were also described for personalities of students in artistic fields; of the

different disciplines, musicians were described as "the most cynical, resigned, and world-weary group" (Marchant-Haycox & Wilson, 1992, p. 1065).

As with most college majors, attrition is emerging as a growing concern in postsecondary music programs. Music students who eventually withdraw from the program or institution had matriculated with the same levels of enthusiasm as students who persist, complicating the identification of at-risk students (Gavin, 2012). Personal situations play a role in attrition: Butler (1995) found that students who suffered loss or belonged to a family of nonmusicians struggled academically and were at risk for withdrawing from the program or university. Music-specific situations also complicate the experience: Students have cited negative experiences in music programs and a perceived lack of fit as reasons for withdrawing from the program (Gavin, 2012).

Despite all of the research regarding burnout, academic advising, social support, and the mental and physical health of music majors, researchers have not published investigations on the impact of perceived advisor support on the potential burnout of collegiate music students. However, based on discussions with music majors who utilized counseling centers, Young and Hipple (1996) suggested that quality academic advising is crucial to the success of music majors. Through this study, we aimed to fill this gap in the literature by constructing the following research hypotheses:

- H1.** Perceived advisor support positively correlates with burnout such that as dissatisfaction with the advisor grows so levels of burnout grow.
- H2.** Levels of unmet basic psychological needs mediate the relationship between perceived advisor support and the level of burnout in music majors.
- H3.** Music students with academic advisors, regardless of perceived support, experience less burnout than music students without academic advisors.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

The Institutional Review Board at the university approved this study. Although we collected

data from 345 participants, responses from 36 advisees were excluded from further analyses because of multivariate outliers on two out of three surveys, as measured using Mahalanobis distance ( $n = 7$ ), or due to missing data from two or more surveys ( $n = 29$ ). As a result, we analyzed data from 309 participants. The sample consisted of 205 females (66.3%), 98 males (31.7%), and 6 students who did not indicate gender (1.9%). The average age of the sample was 21.47 years ( $SD = 4.06$ ). Participants indicated as predominately White ( $n = 233$ ) (75.4%), Asian American/Pacific Islander ( $n = 17$ ) (5.5%), Hispanic/Latino ( $n = 16$ ) (5.2%), Black ( $n = 14$ ) (4.5%), bi/multiracial ( $n = 11$ ) (3.6%), and other ( $n = 3$ ) (1.0%). Nine participants did not indicate their ethnicity. Numerous musical disciplines were represented. The largest subsamples included education ( $n = 138$ ) (44.7%), performance ( $n = 81$ ) (26.2%), and double major ( $n = 52$ ) (16.8%). Participants identified from 55 colleges and 23 states. Instrument families represented included voice ( $n = 95$ ) (30.7%), woodwinds ( $n = 85$ ) (27.5%), brass ( $n = 50$ ) (16.2%), strings ( $n = 34$ ) (11.0%), piano/organ ( $n = 28$ ) (9.1%), and percussion ( $n = 15$ ) (4.9%). Two participants indicated that they did not play an instrument or sing.

We invited current full-time college students majoring in music to complete the survey. To recruit a diverse population of student musicians from across the country, we utilized snowball sampling through our connections at midwestern colleges and music-affiliated organizations (e.g., Mu Phi Epsilon and Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia). We also offered the opportunity to take the survey to those in the introductory psychology participant pool database at a large midwestern university to reach any music majors enrolled in an introductory psychology course, and students reached via this method were given one study credit for completing the survey. Using thesis funding from the university's graduate college, participants were offered a chance to win a gift card.

### **Inventories and Procedures**

Participants completed an online survey created through Qualtrics software. The instrument consisted of demographic questions (gender, age, major-related information, etc.), the *Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey* (MBI-SS) (Schaufeli et al., 2002), the *Advising Support Scale* (Burt, Buchanan et al., 2013), and the *Basic Need Satisfaction in General* scale (Gagné, 2003). Once the survey was completed, all

participants were thanked, debriefed, and given the opportunity to enter the Wal-Mart gift card drawing.

The *Maslach Burnout Inventory*, first introduced by Maslach and Jackson (1981), was created as a measurement of burnout for human services workers. Schaufeli et al. (2002) adapted the instrument for students, thus creating the MBI-SS with subscales used to measure exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy. The scale consists of 16 statements (e.g., "I feel emotionally drained by my studies") and a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*always*). In all subscales, high scores indicate burnout. For the overall MBI-SS, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .89$ ; it was .84 for the cynicism, .71 for the professional efficacy, and .89 for the exhaustion subscales.

The *Advising Support Scale* (Burt, Buchanan et al., 2013) is used to examine the relationship between perceived academic advisor support and institutional outcomes such as retention and student engagement. The three factors of autonomy, interpersonal relationships, and engagement were shown to be reliable and invariant across groups. The scale consists of 23 statements (e.g., "My advisor encourages me to get involved") and a Likert-type scale from 1 (*agree*) to 7 (*disagree*). Therefore, a low score indicates more favorable rankings of perceived advisor support. For the advisor support scale, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .97$  for the overall instrument; it was .95 for the autonomy, .93 for the interpersonal relatedness, and .89 for the engagement subscales.

The *Basic Need Satisfaction in General* scale (Gagné, 2003), referred to henceforth as the *Basic Psychological Needs* scale, is used to measure the extent to which a person's basic psychological needs are met. The scale consists of 21 statements (e.g., "People in my life care about me"), and each item falls into one of three subscales (autonomy, competence, and relatedness). It features a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all true*) to 7 (*very true*) such that a high score indicates that basic psychological needs are met. For the overall scale, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ ; it was .69 for the autonomy, .73 for the competence, and .82 for the relatedness subscales.

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Overall, students reported satisfied feelings (lower scores indicate more satisfaction) on all three subscales of perceived advisor support, including autonomy ( $M = 2.38$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ),

**Table 1.** Correlation table of variables used in the current study

Measure	Advisor Support (AS)			Psychological Needs (PN)				Burnout (BO)			Total
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
1. AS Auto	.77**	.82**	.96**	-.22**	-.22**	-.17**	-.24**	.13*	.20**	.18**	.19**
2. AS Engage	—	.73**	.86**	-.23**	-.22**	-.20**	-.26**	.16*	.28**	.22**	.24**
3. AS Inter		—	.92**	-.18**	-.18**	-.15*	-.21**	.09	.22**	.16**	.18**
4. AS Average			—	-.22**	-.23**	-.18**	-.25**	.12*	.24**	.19**	.21**
5. PN Auto				—	.60**	.52**	.85**	-.47**	-.49**	-.46**	-.56**
6. PN Comp					—	.42**	.80**	-.46**	-.56**	-.49**	-.60**
7. PN Relate						—	.81**	-.28**	-.47**	-.40**	-.44**
8. PN Total							—	-.48**	-.61**	-.54**	-.64**
9. BO Exh								—	.43**	.66**	.87**
10. BO Prof									—	.56**	.75**
11. BO Cyn										—	.88**

Note. Auto = Autonomy, Engage = Engagement, Inter = Interpersonal, Comp = Competence, Relate = Relatedness, Exh = Exhaustion, and Prof = Professional Efficacy. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

interpersonal relationships ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ), and engagement ( $M = 3.03$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ ), and overall scores ( $M = 2.58$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ). For the MBI-SS (Schaufeli et al., 2002) (lower scores indicate less burnout), students reported low scores on the subscales of cynicism ( $M = 2.00$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ) and professional efficacy ( $M = 1.54$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ), and gave higher ratings, but within the neutral range, on the exhaustion subscale ( $M = 3.21$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ). Overall, students reported low levels of burnout ( $M = 2.18$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ). Finally, students reported neutral to positive feelings regarding their perceived levels of met basic psychological needs as indicated by their ratings on the subscales of autonomy ( $M = 4.88$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ), competence ( $M = 5.25$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ), and relatedness ( $M = 5.71$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ). Across all psychological needs subscales, scores were also generally high ( $M = 5.30$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ).

**Hypothesis 1**

We analyzed bivariate correlations to explore the relationships between advising and burnout. The overall average scores and all correlations between variables are provided in Table 1. The interpersonal relationships subscale was significantly correlated with the burnout subscales of cynicism ( $r = .16$ ,  $p = .01$ ) and professional efficacy ( $r = .22$ ,  $p < .001$ ), meaning that students who reported satisfaction with their advising relationships with their advisors (low scores) also gave low scores to measures of cynicism and feelings of inadequacy. The engagement subscale was significantly correlated with all three burnout

subscales: exhaustion ( $r = .16$ ,  $p = .01$ ), cynicism ( $r = .22$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and professional efficacy ( $r = .28$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These results suggest that students with advisors who encourage involvement reported lower scores for levels of exhaustion, cynicism, and perceived inadequacy. The autonomy subscale was also significantly correlated with all three burnout subscales: exhaustion ( $r = .13$ ,  $p = .03$ ), cynicism ( $r = .18$ ,  $p = .003$ ) and professional efficacy ( $r = .20$ ,  $p = .001$ ) These findings suggest that students with advisors who empowered them to make their own decisions experienced relatively low levels of exhaustion, cynicism, and feelings of inadequacy. Finally, the overall average scores for the advising and burnout scales were also significantly and positively correlated ( $r = .22$ ,  $p < .001$ ), which suggests that students who felt advisor support experienced relatively less burnout. While significant, all of these correlations are small in size. This analysis provided a rationale for concluding that advising and burnout are related, and it justified our examination into the complex, mediating relationships of perceived psychological needs among these variables.

**Hypothesis 2**

We conducted three mediation analyses using the Process plugin for SPSS (Hayes, 2013) to examine the predictive relationships between perceived advisor support, perceived fulfillment of basic psychological needs, and experienced burnout. The steps utilized for mediation analysis are described by Baron and Kenny (1986), and we

**Table 2.** Model summaries for mediation analysis

Model	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Path	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Advising → Burnout	(1, 272) = 11.55	.001	.04	<i>c</i>	0.15	(272) = 3.40	.001
Advising → Basic Psychological Needs	(1, 272) = 18.26	< .001	.06	<i>a</i>	-0.15	(272) = -4.27	<.001
Advising and Basic Psychological Needs → Burnout	(2, 271) = 102.14	< .001	.43	<i>b</i> <i>c'</i>	-0.85 0.03	(271) = -13.60 (271) = 0.85	<.001 .400
Interpersonal Relationships → Burnout	(1, 275) = 8.09	.005	.03	<i>c</i>	0.14	(275) = 2.84	<.010
Interpersonal Relationships → Relatedness	(1, 275) = 6.78	.010	.02	<i>a</i>	-0.14	(275) = -2.60	.010
Interpersonal Relationships and Relatedness → Burnout	(2, 274) = 39.35	< .001	.22	<i>b</i> <i>c'</i>	-0.62 0.05	(274) = -8.28 (274) = 1.85	<.001 .070
Advising Autonomy → Burnout	(1, 272) = 9.03	.003	.03	<i>c</i>	0.12	(272) = 3.01	<.010
Advising Autonomy → Psychological Autonomy	(1, 272) = 12.81	< .001	.05	<i>a</i>	-0.10	(272) = -3.58	<.001
Advising Autonomy and Psychological Autonomy → Burnout	(2, 271) = 64.92	< .001	.32	<i>b</i> <i>c'</i>	-0.50 0.07	(271) = -10.82 (271) = 1.21	<.001 .230

*Note.* Mediation steps follow traditional Baron and Kenny (1986) procedure: the first variable (advising) as a predictor of the dependent variable (burnout), the first variable as a predictor of the mediator (psychological needs), and the relationship of both variables as predictors of the dependent variable.

used *K*<sup>2</sup> to measure the effect size of the mediation effect as proposed by Preacher and Kelley (2011). The first mediation analysis was based on an overall advisor support scale average that we used to predict the overall MBI-SS average (Schaufeli et al., 2002). We expected the overall average of the fulfillment of basic psychological needs to mediate the relationship between advisor support and burnout. Table 2 shows the model summary statistics and predictor values for each step of the mediation analysis.

First, advisor support was found to be a significant predictor of burnout (pathway *c*), which means that high levels of dissatisfaction with advisor support were associated with relatively high levels of burnout. Second, advisor support (pathway *a*) predicted the fulfillment of basic psychological needs; that is, low ratings for satisfaction with advisor support were associated with low scores on fulfillment of basic psychological needs. The measures of basic psychological needs fulfillment predicted burnout (pathway *b*): When basic psychological needs were fulfilled, burnout was low. Finally, the mediated relationship between advisor support and burnout was examined by controlling for basic psychological needs

(pathway *c'*), and the prediction showed no statistical significance. We used the Sobel test to determine that basic psychological needs fulfillment created a full mediation in the relationship between advising and student burnout with a medium effect size: *z* = 4.07, *p* < .001, *K*<sup>2</sup> = .18.

For the second mediation analysis, we used the interpersonal relationships subscale from the *Advisor Support Scale* (Burt, Buchanan et al., 2013) to predict the overall MBI-SS (Schaufeli et al., 2002) average, and we expected the relatedness subscale from the *Basic Psychological Needs* scale (Gagné, 2003) to be a mediator for interpersonal relationships in advising and burnout. The interpersonal and relatedness subscales were chosen as predictors of burnout because they relate to the development, maintenance, and satisfaction of close relationships with others.

Model summary statistics are included in Table 2. The interpersonal relationships subscale was a significant predictor of overall burnout (pathway *c*) such that dissatisfaction with the advisor–advisee relationship was related to feelings of burnout. The interpersonal relationships subscale was also a significant predictor of the fulfillment of relatedness (pathway *a*).

Dissatisfaction with the advisor–advisee relationship was correlated with lower relatedness measures. Relatedness was used to predict overall burnout (pathway *b*), and we found that high relatedness measures were related to relatively low levels of burnout. The mediated relationship was examined (pathway *c'*) and the prediction values for interpersonal relationship and burnout were not significant. We used the Sobel test to determine that the relationship between the interpersonal relationships measure and burnout was fully mediated by relatedness with a small-medium effect size:  $z = 2.47$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $K^2 = .07$ .

The third mediation analysis was based on the autonomy subscale within the *Advisor Support Scale* average to predict the overall MBI-SS average (Burt, Buchanan et al., 2013; Schaufeli et al., 2002). We expected the autonomy subscale from the *Basic Psychological Needs* scale (Gagné, 2003) to mediate the relationship between advising autonomy and burnout. The subscales from the *Advising Support* and *Basic Psychological Needs* scales were chosen because they both relate to autonomy, which is an important aspect of the advisor–advisee relationship.

Table 2 includes all relevant model information. The advising autonomy subscale was a significant predictor of overall burnout (pathway *c*); when student dissatisfaction with autonomy, as perceived within the advisor–advisee relationship, was high, burnout was high. Advising autonomy was also a significant predictor of the basic psychological need of autonomy (pathway *a*); that is, low student satisfaction ratings with autonomy perceived in the advising relationship were associated with low scores for fulfillment of overall autonomy. We used autonomy as a measure of basic psychological need to predict burnout (pathway *b*) and found that feelings of overall autonomy were associated with relatively low levels of burnout. We also looked at whether fulfillment in overall autonomy, as measured in the *Basic Psychological Needs* scale (Gagné, 2003), mediated the relationship between student autonomy in the advising setting and burnout (pathway *c'*) and we found that it did. We used the Sobel test to determine that the advising autonomy relationship with burnout was fully mediated with a medium effect size:  $z = 3.39$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $K^2 = .13$ .

### Hypothesis 3

Out of the collected sample, few students reported that they had not been assigned an

advisor ( $n = 12$ , 3.9%) or indicated that they were unsure if an advisor had been assigned to them ( $n = 18$ ) (5.8%). The remaining 279 students (90.3%) reported that an advisor had been assigned to them. Therefore, the collected sample does not warrant comparisons of students with and without assigned advisors because of extremely small and lopsided sample sizes.

## Discussion

### Hypotheses

Of the three proposed hypotheses, the two that allowed for further analyses supported the results predicted. Correlations between advisor support and burnout supported H1; that is, students who reported higher satisfaction with advisor support were likely to report lower levels of burnout. These findings are supported by developmental advising theory (Crookston, 1972/1994/2009), which asserts that academic advisors who empower their students to make decisions for their future help their students get involved, and this rapport with students creates an environment conducive to student success. In support of H2, mediation analyses demonstrated that levels of advisor support predicted burnout, but they also revealed that the psychological well-being of students played an important role in the advisor–advisee relationship and should not be overlooked.

We could not test H3 because of the imbalance of students with and without academic advisors in the collected sample. This sample size issue likely resulted from the snowball sampling technique used. We made no attempt to identify institutions with and without a mandatory advising policy.

Although the effect sizes in this study are small, the impact of results on advisors may lead to important understanding of advising needs for students. At the university level, these small differences demonstrate ways to offer effective advising that may encourage student retention. The small to medium effect sizes for the mediation analyses indicate a trickle-down effect of advising on burnout as directed through perceived fulfillment of basic psychological needs. By bolstering a student's perception of autonomy and improving his or her sense of relatedness, an advisor can potentially lessen burnout and elicit positive outcomes for the student.

### Health-Focused Initiatives for Music Majors

As the first known study to examine academic advising and burnout in music majors, our research sets a precedent for additional research

and development of beneficial resources for the music major population. Administrators of post-secondary music programs and music conservatories should recognize and support academic advising as a high priority enterprise that benefits from in-house training programs that better educators' understanding of burnout in artistic disciplines. Furthermore, we hope music educators and administrators consider creating mental health programs and testing initiatives to identify the unique stressors that may affect students and provide support for those at risk in their programs. Numerous professionals have suggested solutions to lessen issues confronted by music majors. Nagel (2009) called for the creation of mental health programs to assist music majors and recommended college courses dedicated to the physical and psychological effects of music study. Bernhard (2010) recommended health-focused courses for music majors that promote a balanced lifestyle. Music majors would likely welcome such initiatives. Pratt, Jessop, and Niemann (1992) reported that 90% of surveyed music students indicated interest in a music course that addresses performance-related stress reduction techniques. Butler (1995) suggested preventative pre-music college screening to identify at-risk students. Commitment of specialized mental health counselors may help music majors with their distinctive challenges as indicated by a finding that 72% of students surveyed expressed the willingness to meet with a mental health professional who understood the specific stressors experienced by musicians (Dews & Williams, 1989).

We conducted Google searches for *music major counseling*, *music major anxiety*, and other similar phrases, and we did not find many initiatives described within the .edu domain. The University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire Counseling Services (2012) hosts a web site of readings and support for students with music performance anxiety; they are encouraged to make an appointment with the counseling center. The University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Peck School of the Arts (2014) offers a program through which “students with a serious concern, problem with another student or professor, family matter or just need to talk can stop by one of the Music Department ‘Safe Spaces’” (p. 7).

In contrast to the information based on negative terms, our search for *music major wellness* within the .edu domain yielded many results. The University of Southern California (USC) Thornton School of Music (n.d.) hosts the

Musician’s Health and Wellness resource page with links to recommended readings, wellness-focused elective courses at USC, and campus and community resources. The University of Colorado–Boulder College of Music (n.d.) offers wellness-focused classes, workshops, and guest lectures along with a comprehensive network of medical professionals specifically trained on issues unique to musicians. The Ohio State University School of Music (2015) also offers a program with faculty liaisons in the areas of general, hearing, and vocal wellness.

Missouri State University is currently developing a student-to-student mentorship program through which incoming music majors are paired with upper division music majors to guide them through their studies and transition to college (A. Tiefenbrunn, personal communication, December 11, 2015). The Berklee College of Music (2015) features a well-established program in which new students are assigned both with a peer advisor and a faculty mentor. Other postsecondary institutions, including Augustana College (n.d.) and the University of Rhode Island (2015), boast similar mentoring initiatives but offer little information about them online. The results of our study suggest that other advances may complement the programs currently implemented.

### **Implications for Advising Practice**

Based on H1 results, advisors should incorporate discussions and demonstrations of autonomy, relatedness, and competence into their advising sessions. Along with demonstrating autonomy by encouraging students to take responsibility for their course selection, major, and career exploration, advisors can inquire about student perceptions of autonomy in the classroom; for example, advisors may prompt a discussion by asking if professors champion self-authorship in the classroom. In addition to building rapport with students, advisors can suggest ways to get involved on campus and in the community to fulfill relatedness needs. Advisors can also check with students throughout the semester to determine their perceived competence levels as students and as musicians.

Findings from this study confirm the importance of advising interactions with students. Professional development initiatives at both the local and national levels should further educate practitioners on the importance of developmental advising. Furthermore, advisors need to understand and formulate best practices for encouraging burned-out students, especially in the fine arts.



Advisors who meet with music majors should learn the stressors and challenges associated with the profession to relate to advisees and ensure that their basic psychological needs are being met. Advisors who attend various student performances show particular support for students' hard work and also support the type of interpersonal relatedness found important in this study.

### Limitations and Future Directions

The data showed generally low levels of burnout overall, which contradicts Bernhard's (2007, 2010) findings that music majors displayed moderate to high levels of burnout. The differences in burnout measures may characterize specific differences between participants in each study; however, the time period of data collection could have affected the burnout levels found in our study. Specifically, due to time constraints, we collected survey data at the beginning of a fall semester, but if we had gathered the information at the end of the semester, when students are concluding projects and performing in concerts, we may have found that students ranked their burnout with higher scores. In fact, an investigation on the differences in perceived burnout throughout the course of a semester may yield interesting findings.

In addition, other researchers may consider the generalizability of our overall findings when studying burnout in students with other academic majors. In the future, researchers can examine those studying disciplines in a manner similar to the methods used in our study, or they could survey students to determine if advising diminishes burnout regardless of student major. Investigators could look for differences between burnout levels in advisees with faculty and professional advisors, or they could look at the outcomes of efforts in which faculty and professional advisors work together to support student success and combat burnout. Such studies would expand upon the findings of Burt, Young-Jones et al. (2013), who investigated combined advisor and instructor support as a predictor of perceived fulfillment of students' psychological needs.

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