

Pace University

DigitalCommons@Pace

---

Honors College Theses

Pforzheimer Honors College

---

12-2020

## The Show Must (Not) Go On: The Effects of COVID-19 on New York's Broadway Professionals

Lucy Yezulinas

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.pace.edu/honorscollege\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.pace.edu/honorscollege_theses)



Part of the [Arts Management Commons](#), and the [Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#)

---

The Show Must (Not) Go On:  
The Effects of COVID-19 on New York's Broadway Professionals

Lucy Yezulinas

December 2020

Arts and Entertainment Management

Advisor: Chris Ramos

Lubin School of Business, Pace University

**Advisor Approval Page**

### **Abstract**

Live events have been drastically impacted during the coronavirus pandemic, especially Broadway. The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the struggles being faced by Broadway professionals as a result of Covid-19 and Broadway shutting down. As for the methodology, it was decided to interview various Broadway professionals about their experience working in the industry during a worldwide pandemic. The main areas of focus were financial and psychological repercussions. The analysis section discusses the negative financial impact of the shut down, the impact of not having the 2020 Tony awards, as well as the psychological impact on unemployment. The results of the discussion showed that Broadway professionals are struggling with their finances as well as their mental health because Broadway is now a temporarily lifeless industry. For further research, it is recommended to compare the impact of Broadway and live theatre on New York's economy to how little government funding the arts have received during the pandemic. Additionally, it would be interesting to compare Broadway's impact on New York's economy before and after the shutdown.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Broadway, New York City, Finance, Psychology, Theatre Industry, Broadway Professionals

## Table of Contents

<b>Advisor Approval Page</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Background and Review of Literature</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Previous Broadway Shutdowns</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>The Negative Financial Impact of Unemployment on Broadway</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The Impact of the Tony Awards</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Psychological Impact of Unemployment on Broadway</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Primary Research</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>1st Interview: Matt Brittan</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>2nd Interview: Michael Clinton</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>3rd Interview: Jackson Thompson</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>4th Interview: Sam Clark</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>5th Interview: Justin Adams</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>6th Interview: Julia Dunetz</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Analysis</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Negative Financial Impact Experienced by Individuals &amp; Small Businesses</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>The Tony Awards and The Future of Broadway</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Psychological Impact of Unemployment of Broadway Professionals</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Survey Discussion</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Works Cited</b>	<b>31</b>

**Appendix**

**Interview Questions**

**34**

**Survey Questions**

**34**

**Survey Answers**

**34**

**35**

## Introduction

On March 12th, 2020, every light on Broadway went out and we are still waiting for them to come back on. In March, New York's Governor, Andrew Cuomo, ordered all Broadway Theaters to shut down immediately due to the CoronaVirus pandemic (Huston, March 2020). Originally, the shutdown was only supposed to last until April 12th, 2020 but orders have since been extended. The latest statement from the Broadway League set the reopening date for May 30th, 2021, offering ticket refunds through that date (Broadway League, 2020). Broadway has survived other shutdowns in the past, but never for this amount of time, and never due to a public health reason (Russo, 2020).

The other most significant shutdown in Broadway history happened after the events of September 11th, 2001. Most transportation was shut down, the tunnels and bridges were closed, so people couldn't get in and out of Manhattan, and the subways were shut down. Even though the city government did not issue an order that said that the Broadway theaters needed to close, it was impractical because even the workers couldn't get to the theatres, let alone audiences (Russo, 2020). Broadway remained shut down from September 11th through the 13th, attendance dipped 80% and \$5 million in ticket sales were lost, five shows ended up closing permanently by September 23rd, 2001 (Dziemianowicz, 2011). One of the major differences between the 9/11 shut down and the one we are currently experiencing is that Broadway received tremendous financial help from the government in 2001 and has yet to receive much this year (Pogrebin, 2002).

Broadway is a very lucrative business, meaning that Broadway is contingent upon having a certain capacity of seats filled. With this in mind, the question that arises is how will a year-long shutdown impact Broadway, specifically the professionals working on Broadway. This paper will provide answers to this question by shedding light on different struggles currently

being faced by professionals in the theatre industry. This paper will discuss the financial and psychological impact that Covid-19 and the Broadway shut down have had on people working in the industry. Lastly, it will be interesting to see if the future of Broadway can be predicted based on the opinions of those working closest to it.

## Literature Review

### Previous Broadway Shutdowns

In 2004, Marvin Carlson discussed the financial and artistic impacts of the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks had on the theatre industry in New York City. According to him, the Alliance of Resident Non-Profit Theatres estimated a \$5 million loss for 2001 as a direct result of the 9/11 attacks and a \$16.3 million loss for 2002. The losses for Broadway were even more extreme. In December of 2001, the administration of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani spent \$2.5 million dollars to buy fifty thousand theatre tickets to Broadway shows. One-third of the tickets were given to the World Trade Center rescue workers and the families of victims. The rest were dedicated to a program entitled “Spend Your Regards to Broadway,” which was designed to stimulate tourism and shopping in Manhattan once again (Carlson, 2004). Trav S.D. (2001) discussed the financial impact of the shut down as well, stating that without tourism, New York City was losing up to \$5 million a week in 2001.

The theatre community in New York was also impacted drastically in artistic ways. Carlson (2004) stated that there was not an immediate change in the subject matter of shows, but a gradual one. After the first stunned reaction to the events of 9/11, the theatre community was able to rally. The theatre community wanted to bring hope and joy to the city of Manhattan in a time of darkness, “in reaction to the strategies of the administration’s *war on terror*, [New York

Theatres] began to produce the most concentrated and dedicated political theatre to appear in America since the 1960s” (Carlson, 2004).

Trav S.D. (2001) discussed how particular theatre companies around the nation reacted to the terrorist attack. All across the United States, both commercial and non-profit theatres either postponed, cancelled, modified, and re-examined theatrical works in response to 9/11. In New York, the theatre scene was quiet, “within days, the disastrous economic effects on the New York theatre were clear, with some productions operating at 20% capacity and a few shutting their doors for good” (S.D., 2001). Many theatres responded proactively, mounting commemorative events and trying to use the trauma to progress the arts community. Broadway’s twenty-three theatres were shut down for two days, and, according to the New York Commissioner of Cultural Affairs, attendance dropped 20% (S.D., 2001). This affected not only the theatre industry but restaurants, parking lot owners, and many other businesses as well. Tourism declined drastically, resulting in a \$3-5 million loss each week. Mayor Giuliani announced, “If you really want to help New York City, go see a [Broadway] play!” (S.D., 2001). Broadway Cares/ Equity Fights Aids donated \$50,000 to the Twin Towers Fund and theatres across the country helped with relief efforts, soliciting donations during and after performances, as well as at charity events. Theatres in New York City and Washington DC also served as collection centers for donations of food, clothing, and other supplies (S.D., 2001).

### **The Negative Financial Impact of Unemployment on Broadway**

Cristobal Young (2012) tracked the subjective well-being of individuals as they entered and exited unemployment stating that "Job loss is a salient trigger event that sets off large changes in well-being" (Young, 2012). The main result of the study was that unemployment is a *trigger event* that prompts a broad shift in people’s subjective well-being, on an order of degree

greater than the effect of changes in family structure, home ownership, or parental status. Loss of work is particularly hard to take. In addition, Young (2012) also found that reemployment leads to a clear, strong improvement in well-being, but the gain from finding a job is significantly smaller than the initial hurt from losing a job.

Other related research stated that unemployment can taint a person's job application in a similar way that having a criminal record does. It can create skepticism among employers about the value of the job applicant and push applicants towards the bottom of the pile. Because of this, job loss tends to carry lasting financial scars. Unemployed workers eventually find new jobs, oftentimes with substantially lower pay (Young, 2012). On top of this, starting a new job search could send a negative financial shock that requires additional family members to work. People who change jobs often see an increase in income, but people who become unemployed typically end up in new jobs that pay significantly less money and have poorer working conditions: "This emphasizes how recessions generate inequality in both income and well-being: people who lose their jobs bear a disproportionate burden..." (Young, 2012 ). Being unemployed not only causes financial insecurity but emotional insecurity as well. The emotional insecurity is caused by being financially insecure.

In the book *Stage Money*, the chapter "Intermission: The Glut of Performers—Actors' Earnings and Actors Equity Association" (Donahue & Patterson, 2010) discusses the earnings of actors on Broadway, Actors Equity Association, and the economic glut that actors struggle with. The economic glut discussed by Donahue and Patterson is defined as an overcapacity of actors, meaning that there are more actors than the market cares to "buy." The market consists of producers, not-for-profit theatres, directors, writers, and many more. Of Equity members who earned anything in 2007, only 21% earned \$25,000 or more. The average yearly income for actors was \$23,400; for the civilian labor force, it was \$30,100. About 61% of the civilian

workforce was employed for the full year, full-time; and for actors it was just over 15%. Most actors knowingly sacrifice financially in order to pursue their art; however, they have a hard time maintaining a living wage so most have other jobs (Donahue & Patterson, 2010).

Actors Equity Association is an unusual labor organization. Most established labor groups want more members to increase the organization's reach and power, but equity actually limits the number of members they have. Actors Equity was founded in 1913 to address the issue of pay and other issues of health and safety of actors. Virtually all Broadway employees are union members, but the performing arts has a productivity problem. The costs of producing all the performing arts, including theater, rise faster than the general rate of inflation in the United States (Donahue & Patterson, 2010).

Chapter 4 of the book *Theater Careers* by Donahue & Patterson (2012) is titled "*Theatre Career Income Varies.*" In this chapter, the authors discuss the varying income of different careers in theatre and compare them with the careers of the average, non-theatre workers. Theater and other media professionals historically earn less than the average worker, according to the American Community Survey. Many creative workers in all media are self-employed. The American Community Survey reports, 29.7% of actors are self-employed compared to just 10.2% of the civilian labor force. The Five-Year Census Bureau reported that theater workers are less likely than the average worker to be employed full-time. In its sample from 2007, the Five-Year Census Bureau found 3,423 theaters and dinner theaters employed a little more than 69,000 people, and that the total salary expenditure for theaters was estimated to be under \$2 billion. Donahue and Patterson concluded that the average salary for theatre workers in 2007 was \$28,844 and the average salary for all businesses with employees in the United States was \$41,310 (Donahue & Patterson, 2012). One can infer that theatre workers were making more than 25% less than everyone else in the United States on average.

In chapter 5 of the book *Theatre Careers*, titled “*Theatrical Unions Make Rules but Not Jobs*,” Donahue and Patterson (2012) discuss the various theatrical unions across the country and how a membership does not necessarily guarantee work. Union membership in the United States has been steadily declining since 1983, and today only about 12% of the U.S. workforce is represented by unions. As discussed in chapter 5, Actors Equity Association (Founded in 1913), strives to create safe and fair work environments for actors and stage managers. Over the years, Actors Equity has required producers to buy bonds to guarantee that salaries earned will be paid (should a production suddenly fold). Equity has also negotiated minimum salaries and rehearsal pay, regulated safe and sanitary workplaces, enforced restrictions on the employment of foreign actors, and established protections for actors and stage managers in dealings with theatrical agents and producers (Donahue & Patterson, 2012). Equity also now offers pension and health-care benefits for some members and promotes safety rules to protect actors on increasingly dangerous computer-controlled stages. The average earnings from theater work, for those members of Equity who worked in the 2006-2007 season were \$7,688. Earnings of union stage actors can vary, but most members have no reported income as actors or stage managers in a given year (Donahue & Patterson, 2012).

In addition, chapter 5 (Donahue & Patterson, 2012) also discusses the earnings of stagehands and other backstage workers. About 350 to 500 union stagehands work on Broadway at any given time. Broadway union stagehands fall into four wage categories. At the top are head carpenters and electricians who are paid a minimum of \$1,600 a week for a running show, or a yearly salary of \$83,200. Stagehands in the lowest category were paid a minimum of about \$1,225, or \$63,700 yearly. But there is no guarantee that a stagehand would work for an entire year.

The articles and study mentioned above discuss the financial statistics of working on Broadway and the financial impact of unemployment. It can be inferred that when a full-time, Broadway union member is unemployed, not only are they losing their main source of income, but the production is losing money as well. Being unemployed on Broadway can leave financial scars that some artists may never be able to recover from.

### **The Impact of the Tony Awards**

In 2017, Russell Thomas Warne conducted a study that determines the relative impact of different Tony Award nominations and wins on the financial successes of a Broadway production, as defined by the length of the production's run. The study utilizes David Cox's hazard regression model to identify the impact of Tony Award nominations and wins. The study included categories such as type of production (play or musical, revival or original Broadway production), production costs (operationalized via the cast size), the month and year of opening, and initial marketing success (defined as the percentage of first full week's ticket sales). The award with the strongest relationship with production longevity was the Tony Award for Best Musical. Several other awards had a relationship with production longevity, but most were not statistically significant. The results supported previous cultural economics research on the role of the Tony Awards in the Broadway industry. For producers, the awards can be used as a marketing tool to encourage audiences to purchase a ticket to their production. For audience members, the Tony Awards are important pieces of information that can lead them to choose to attend a production that they are more likely to enjoy (Warne, 2017). This reduces the risk that comes with purchasing an expensive good.

Melissa Boyle and Lesley Chiou (2009) explored the effects of a Tony nomination or win on the demand facing a Broadway production using a panel of weekly revenues for Broadway

productions from 1996 to 2007. The results showed that the effect of a nomination or win is positive in the week of the announcement. The effect gradually increases in the following weeks, due to publicity and word of mouth. Winners can experience an increase in demand as late as one year later when awards are publicized for the following season. Nominees that do not win tend to be penalized heavily in the weeks following the award announcement. Moreover, the authors found that winning a Tony Award increases a production's revenues by 12% in the week immediately following the awards. They found that winning a Tony Award is associated with increased longevity for the show, but only receiving a nomination might not result in any change. They also found that both Tony nominations and wins decrease the show's likelihood of leaving Broadway. This study established that a Tony win has a substantial influence on consumer demand for a Broadway production, and it documented the evolution of that effect over time (Boyle & Chiou, 2009).

The studies done by Russell Thomas Warne (2017) and Melissa Boyle and Lesley Chiou (2009) discuss the impact of Tony awards on consumers, producers, and the longevity of a Broadway show. It can be concluded that a Tony win always has a positive effect on the show or person that won it. This will present a problem when Broadway finally reopens in 2021 because the Tony Awards were not held this year. There is going to be a virtual Tony Awards held sometime this winter, but not nearly as many shows, and therefore actors, are eligible as in previous years.

### **Psychological Impact of Unemployment on Broadway**

A study on the role of self-esteem in qualitative and quantitative job insecurity (Callea et al., 2019) examined a moderated mediation model of the relationship between job insecurity and well-being at work. The focus of the study was on the mediating effects of job insecurity and the

moderating effects of self-esteem in the previously mentioned relationships. Callea's study (2019) which drew from Peter Warr's model of "Work, Happiness, and Unhappiness," included four indicators of well-being at work (vigor, emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, and psychological symptoms). This offered a more detailed analysis of the consequences of job insecurity. The study took a sample of 751 Italian employees that participated in a self-report questionnaire. The results supported their hypothesis; the direct effects of job insecurity on vigor, emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, and psychological symptoms were not significant, whereas indirect effects via qualitative job insecurity were significant. Moreover, the authors stated that

“Employees with higher self-esteem and who perceive that they may lose some important job features (e.g., pay increase and career opportunities) react to such an increase in job insecurity by feeling less satisfied with their job, given that their disconfirmation and subsequent disappointment are greater” (Callea et al., 2019).

It can be inferred that employees with high self-esteem feel less satisfied with their jobs if they believe they may lose important job features such as promotions. Employees with low self-esteem tend to be more susceptible to job stressors (job insecurity) than those with higher self-esteem. On the contrary, employees with higher self-esteem are expected to be more adaptable to external circumstances and stressors. Individuals with high self-esteem can more easily counteract the negative consequences, showing better coping strategies in response to stress.

Christopher J. White, Eudora Tong, and Michael Schwartz (2019) conducted a study on basic psychological needs and harmonious passion in relation to the performing arts. The study employed a web-based survey to collect data from 15 professional music organizations that ranged from a large symphony, youth and community orchestras to key educational, and media

organizations promoting classical music. The organizations advertised the survey link in their weekly and biweekly newsletters in exchange for the study's result summaries. A total of 444 usable questionnaires were received from a diverse group of people (White et al., 2019).

The study aimed to enhance knowledge of factors that influence classical music concert participation. As the authors predicted, basic psychological needs satisfaction was a significant predictor of harmonious passion. Moreover, the authors stated that "People seek activities that will satisfy their basic psychological needs, and activities that are liked and have value and meaning are internalized into their identity and become passionate" (White et al., 2019). Higher levels of basic psychological needs satisfaction create an independent, rather than controlled, internalization of an activity. This results in a balanced form of passion that is characterized by a lasting and beneficial relationship with the activity. Basic psychological needs fuel motivational constructs such as passion, as with every increment of need satisfaction, harmonious passion increased by 0.385 (White et al., 2019).

Young (2012) conducted a study that tracked the subjective well-being of individuals as they entered and exited unemployment. "Job loss is a salient trigger event that sets off large changes in well-being" (Young, 2012). The main conclusion of the study was that job loss is especially hard to take. The results showed that unemployment is considered a triggering event that can cause a large shift in one's subjective well-being, on a larger scale than the effect of changes in family, home ownership, or parental status. Young (2012) also found that reemployment leads to a clear, strong improvement in well-being, but the gain from finding a job is significantly smaller than the initial hurt from losing a job.

When an individual loses their job, it raises questions about the nature of their character. The jobless themselves internalize the process, accept the negative judgments, and come to feel

unworthy, incomplete, or inferior. Katherine Newman stated in her study of unemployed Manhattan professionals (as cited in Young, 2012),

“In the many hours they spend alone with their thoughts, displaced managers seek explanations for their job loss . . . Simultaneously inquisitor and accused, they peel away the layers of their own personalities, delving deeper and deeper for the character defects or other failings that led to their demise” (Young, 2012).

Newman’s opinion (Young, 2012) is not a result of less income, but instead a reaction to the status of being unemployed, and being separated from one’s identity as a productive person. Unemployment also disrupts people’s career paths, tags workers as *non-useful* for employers and can shake people’s confidence in a long-term way. Due to the drop in social status, job satisfaction, and self-confidence, being unemployed could leave reemployed workers with a lasting sense of insecurity.

The above studies, (Callea et al., 2019; White et al., 2019; and Young, 2012) evaluated basic psychological needs at work and in dealing with one’s passion. In the theatre industry, work and passion are often one and the same, as many professionals have a deep love for the theatre. Taking all three studies into consideration, it can be drawn that one’s passion is directly impacted by basic psychological needs and whether or not they are met. Being unemployed can leave workers feeling useless and deter them from their career path. Because of Covid-19, theatre industry professionals are lacking self-esteem in regards to work because they are simply not working. With Broadway shut down, the industry may become less passionate due to their basic psychological needs not being met.

### **Methodology**

As for the methods used in this paper, it was decided to mainly rely on primary research, in this case on the structured interviews and survey conducted with industry professionals about

how Covid-19 has affected them personally. Additionally, secondary research in the form of reviewing academic articles will provide additional information on the subject. The following paragraphs will include more in-depth information on the research including a summary of the structured interviews conducted with industry professionals.

### **Primary Research**

Experts in various fields have been interviewed to gain insight into their perspective based on their first-hand experiences in the Broadway industry. The following part will not only provide a short biography of the interviewed industry insiders but also an overview of the information gained.

#### **1st Interview: Matt Brittan, CEO Broadway Brands**

The first interviewee was Matt Brittan, CEO of Broadway Brands and creator of the Broadway Briefing, a popular email subscription in the Broadway industry. He also created Broadway News, a popular, reliable, theatrical news source. Prior to creating the briefing in 2014, Matt was an executive producer for Odyssey Theatricals as well as for *BLANK! The Musical*. Broadway Brands produces the Drama Desk Awards every year and Matt is the executive producer on that project as well. Through his versatile experience in the industry, Matt was able to give valuable information about what the industry is going through during the pandemic.

As a business owner, Matt was able to talk at length about how the pandemic has changed day-to-day work in the industry as well as future goals. According to Matt Brittan (Personal Interview, September 29, 2020) in-person meetings were a huge part of the Broadway industry, people were always going out to lunch or grabbing drinks to discuss new projects. Now, that is not so much the case. All meetings have to be scheduled down to the minute over

Zoom. There are no longer instances where people run into their industry friends in the office and decide to go to lunch or randomly see a show. This alone was a big part of the change that overtook the industry.

Another large part of that change was figuring out what future projects could and should be started. In the interview, Matt said “We are constantly trying to prepare for a future that is ever changing” (Personal Interview, September 29, 2020). Because everything is so up in the air, it is hard to say when an industry like Broadway will be back to the way it was. Covid-19 made Matt realize how adaptable he has to be as a Broadway professional, but how unadaptable Broadway is.

## **2nd Interview: Michael Clinton, Office Manager/Executive Assistant at 101 Productions**

The second interviewee was Michael Clinton, who is an Office Manager and an Executive Assistant at 101 Productions, a general management and producing entity. Some of their past Broadway productions include *Pretty Woman: The Musical*, *Dear Evan Hansen*, and many more. Before the shutdown, they were working on *Plaza Suite* with Sarah Jessica Parker and Matthew Broderick. Through his experience in working on current Broadway productions at the time of the shutdown, Michael was able to give valuable information about how the pandemic impacted those who were dependent on Broadway.

As soon as Broadway shut down, 101 Productions stopped running and therefore, making money. According to Michael Clinton (Personal Interview, October 1, 2020), Broadway is only a lucrative business because they spend millions to make millions. Therefore, when the pandemic hit, everything came to a screeching halt. At first, they were all working full time, remotely, making their normal salaries. After this, the job for a lot of General Managers on Broadway became rebudgeting the finances that were already in their accounts so they could pay their employees. Many people had to take drastic pay cuts. Some companies, like 101 Productions,

kept most of their employees on fewer days a week for less money. Michael went from working six days a week to only one, for less than \$200 a day (Personal Interview, October 1, 2020). Because the company did this, their employees were collecting their salaries and still able to collect Unemployment Benefits.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, Michael has decided to leave the theatre industry and go to medical school. With Broadway being so unpredictable, Michael said that he longed for a more stable career. He had to move out of his apartment in Manhattan and back in with his parents on Long Island and is taking online classes for medical school. He does plan to return to Broadway in the future if he can and this is probably how a lot of young professionals in the Broadway industry are feeling.

### **3rd Interview: Jackson Thompson Co-Founder of Broadway Crew**

The third and fourth interviewees were with Jackson Thompson and Sam Clark, Co-Founders of Broadway Crew, a promotional staffing and marketing resource for Broadway, Off-Broadway, and live events. Jackson and Sam founded Broadway Crew in 2018 with the belief that they could create “a place where artists can find meaningful work in the theatre industry they love without destroying their artistic passions” (Personal Interview, October 1, 2020). Broadway Crew has done promotional work for *Mean Girls*, *Slave Play*, *Beetlejuice*, *Moulin Rouge*, and many more Broadway and Off-Broadway shows. Jackson and Sam were able to give valuable information about how Covid-19 impacted small business owners in the industry.

According to Jackson Thompson (Personal Interview, October 1, 2020), Broadway Crew had to shut down entirely and most employees were laid off, making them able to start collecting unemployment immediately. Jackson and Sam’s best-case scenario was reopening in the Fall of 2020, and their worst-case scenario was reopening in Spring 2021, so they budgeted out what

they had left to be able to make it to that Spring date. Being small business owners, they were eligible for Paycheck Protection Program Loans (PPP) as well as Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EDIL), which is emergency relief for small businesses during the pandemic. They were able to qualify for these loans based on the income of Broadway Crew from the last two years. Because of these loans, their company is able to stay afloat even with no work. The PPP loan allowed them to bring back a few employees at significantly lower rates and also helped supplement their unemployment insurance. The EDIL loan has very favorable terms, according to Jackson, “It’s like free money!” (Personal Interview, October 1, 2020). Both Jackson and Sam are currently living off of the EDIL loan and have cut their salaries in half.

The loans not only helped pay the owners and employees, but it also allowed the company to improve upon their digital platforms. Because of the extra money provided, they were able to improve their website, start an email newsletter, and revamp their social media. This is so important right now because practically everything is done digitally at this point. Jackson and Sam are the only ones currently employed at Broadway Crew, and they have been accepting some work on a rolling basis. For example, they just finished doing telemarketing for Ken Davenport’s Producer’s Perspective Conference, which will focus on marketing and productivity in a work where everything is digital. This was a really different experience for them because Broadway Crew is mainly an in-person, direct marketing company.

#### **4th Interview: Sam Clark, Co-Founder of Broadway Crew**

As mentioned in the previous section, Sam Clark is a Co-Founder of Broadway Crew (along with Jackson Thompson). Broadway Crew is a marketing resource for all live events in New York City. Sam was able to give additional information about how Covid-19 impacted small business owners in the industry.

According to Sam Clark (Personal Interview, October 2, 2020) there is not much to be done for Broadway Crew until Broadway and live theatre come back to New York. Right now, Sam and Jackson are trying to keep their costs as low as possible, and right now that means not accepting a lot of work. You have to spend money to make money, but there is not much opportunity out there for a company like Broadway Crew and it would not make sense for them financially to try and “come back to life” right now (Personal Interview, October 2, 2020). Sam and Jackson plan to wait this out and then pounce when things start opening back up. They believe that their business is uniquely suited and there will be a high demand for their services because there will not be many forward ticket sales available, most tickets will be purchased same-day. Sam believes that Broadway Crew is “uniquely positioned in that space [to be able to] take advantage when things open back up” (Personal Interview, October 2, 2020). However, in order to do this, they just have to wait.

#### **5th Interview: Justin Adams, Head of Theatrical Accounts at Broadway Crew**

The fifth interviewee was Justin Adams, Head of Theatrical Accounts for Broadway Crew, the promotional staffing and marketing resource for Broadway discussed prior. Justin started working for Broadway Crew as a Brand Ambassador in 2018 and worked his way up in the company. Justin has also worked as a freelance Social Media Manager since 2016. Through his experience losing his main source of income, Justin was able to provide valuable information about the unemployment experience for those in the industry.

Justin was let go from Broadway Crew immediately after Broadway shut down. He went from being on salary to having no income at all. According to Justin Adams (Personal Interview, October 8, 2020), because Broadway was one of the first entities in New York to fully shut down, Broadway professionals were able to be some of the first applying for unemployment. Because of this, Justin was able to file right away, and he did not have many issues with it. This

was not the case for all New Yorkers though. A lot of people waited months for their unemployment to go through. Justin's unemployment benefits, along with payment from free-lance social media clients, became his main source of income. According to Justin, his experience with unemployment was, overall, a positive one. But, because of the drastic decrease in his income, Justin moved home to Georgia to save money.

#### **6th Interview: Julia Dunetz, Associate Producer at Sea View Productions**

The sixth interviewee was Julia Dunetz, a Producer who worked for Sea View Productions before the pandemic. Sea View Productions is a Broadway producing entity that produced *Slave Play*, *The Band's Visit*, *Dear Evan Hansen*, *Hello, Dolly!*, and many more. Julia worked as an Associate Producer on *Slave Play*. She was unemployed for a few months and is now working as a Virtual Theatre Producer and has worked on projects such as *Broadway Does Mother's Day* and the *Unofficial Tony Awards*, before they were canceled. Through her experience actively producing projects through the pandemic, Julia was able to give beneficial information about how Broadway could come out of this as well as what the financial outlook for Broadway is.

The Broadway League officially announced that Broadway is going to be shut down through May 2021 (Broadway League, 2020). According to Julia Dunetz (Personal Interview, October 9, 2020), Broadway is going to be a commodity that people are craving in a way they haven't in a very long time. The need for human connection, to sit in a room and experience something together is going to be more in demand than ever before. However, reopening is also going to come with a host of barriers and difficulties. Before the pandemic, the biggest issue with Broadway was the inaccessibility, leaving most of the audiences to be older, richer, and white. Broadway's older audience members will probably not be comfortable returning to an 800+ seat theatre, so the reopening will be a lot about expanding audiences and making live

theatre more accessible. Now, Broadway will be losing bodies in seats because the older demographic is not going to want to come back, and probably shouldn't for health reasons. So the question is, how do they fill those seats? Julia believes that this problem can be solved by creating a new revolution of an audience, "let's do the Hamilton thing again and get young people in the audience because theatre changes lives" (Personal Interview, October 9).

According to Julia (Personal Interview, October 9, 2020), the financial model from Broadway is contingent upon having a certain capacity of seats filled. For most shows, pandemic aside, they need to sell about 60% of tickets to be able to afford to run the show and pay everyone involved. If all of Broadway were to open at a lower capacity, it would not be sustainable. For the future, shows that can afford it (like *Hamilton*, *Wicked*, and maybe some Disney shows) can raise their ticket prices greatly to off-set the money they would be losing. But people would never want to pay that much, and this would only serve to make Broadway more inaccessible. Because of this, it is not very likely that Broadway will be able to come back at a lower capacity unless producers find a way to safely integrate audiences and are able to off-set costs in another fashion.

The financial model of Broadway is very antiquated. Broadway is one of the largest industries in the country that relies solely on private investors and not loans from banks (Personal Interview, October 9, 2020). For example, to raise money for a show, Julia would gather a handful of \$25,000 investors to fund a multi-million dollar production, which is not very sustainable. Live theatre is not a good investment right now, and there is no way of knowing when it will be again. The theatre industry directly contributes \$43 million to the economy of New York City, and Broadway has yet to receive any government funding (Mathtech, 2019). For Broadway to stay afloat financially, there needs to be more government involvement in terms of funding.

In addition to these structured interviews, all interviewees participated in a brief survey consisting of eight simple questions which are listed in Appendix 2. Two of the seven professionals who participated in the survey are part of a union and five are not. Of the seven, two believe that The Broadway League and unions are handling the pandemic in the best way, while 5 believe that they are not handling it the way they should. Five out of seven have lost their jobs due to Covid-19 and all of interviewees said that the pandemic has negatively affected them and their families financially. Three out of seven said that they are more motivated while the remaining four stated that they are less motivated overall.

## **Analysis**

### **Negative Financial Impact Experienced by Individuals and Small Businesses**

Job loss can be a trigger event that sets off larger changes in one's well-being, according to Cristobal Young (2012). The main result of Young's study was that unemployment is a trigger event that prompts a broad shift in people's subjective well-being, on an order of degree greater than the effect of changes in family structure, homeownership, or parental status. Additionally, the industry experts Justin Adams and Michael Clinton supported the research by stating that the Broadway shut down has forced them to reevaluate their careers in New York City. Justin Adams, Head of Theatrical Accounts for Broadway Crew, had to sublet his apartment and move back in with his parents in Georgia because of his loss of income. Michael Clinton, Office Manager and an Executive Assistant at 101 Productions, has decided to leave the theatre industry altogether. Because Broadway is so unreliable at the moment, Michael decided to go back to school to become a nurse.

Other related research stated that unemployment can taint a person's job application and create skepticism among employers about the value of the job applicant. This pushes applicants

towards the bottom of the pile. Because of this, job loss tends to carry lasting financial scars (Young, 2012). Justin Adams shared his experience with unemployment and overall, it has been a positive one. Because Broadway was one of the first entities in New York to fully shut down, Broadway professionals were some of the first people filing for unemployment. The future is very uncertain for Broadway professionals like Justin because there is no knowing how this will impact his future employment.

Most Broadway professionals knowingly make financial sacrifices in order to pursue their art; however, they have a harder time maintaining a living wage (Donahue & Patterson, 2010). Theater and other media professionals historically earn less than the average worker, according to the American Community Survey (Donahue & Patterson, 2012). Because of this, Broadway professionals are already susceptible to earning less than professionals in other careers. With Broadway entirely shut down because of the pandemic, most Broadway professionals have been negatively impacted financially. Jackson Thompson and Samuel Clark have knowingly made many sacrifices in order to give their small business its best chance. Because PPP and EDIL loans are based on the company's income over the past two years, Broadway Crew was already at somewhat of a disadvantage than other small businesses because they statistically made less money, even before the pandemic.

Small business owners and professionals dependent on Broadway for a steady income had the most negative financial impact of all the experts interviewed. All of the interviewees were negatively impacted financially but the professionals mentioned in this section were the only ones who lost their jobs, or their main sources of income, due to the pandemic and Broadway being shut down.

## **The Tony Awards and The Future of Broadway**

For producers, the Tony Awards can be used as a marketing tool to encourage audiences, and for audience members, the awards are important pieces of information that can lead them to choose to attend a production that they are most likely to enjoy (Warne, 2017). This will not be the case this year, for the awards were not held this Summer and when they finally happen, not nearly as many productions will be nominated. This could present a problem for the future reopening of Broadway because a Tony win has a substantial influence on consumer demand for a Broadway production, and it documented the evolution of that effect over time (Boyle & Chiou, 2009).

The lack of Tony Awards this season will negatively impact the future of Broadway because a lot of consumers will not have the way to gauge shows that the Tony Awards provide. However, according to Julia Dunetz, a Broadway producer, Broadway is going to be a commodity that people are craving in a way they haven't in a very long time and the need for human connection is going to be more in demand than ever before (Personal Conversation, October 9, 2020).

The costs of producing all the performing arts, including theater, rise faster than the general rate of inflation in the United States (Donahue & Patterson, 2010). Broadway is one of the largest industries in the country that relies solely on private investors and not loans from banks, this makes Broadway not very sustainable. Because of the lack of Government help that the arts are receiving in the United States, it could take Broadway an extremely long time to recover. There is a large chance that Broadway will not come back in full-swing till there is a vaccine that makes it safe enough to do so (Julia Dunetz. October 9).

## **Psychological Impact of Unemployment of Broadway Professionals**

Employees with high self-esteem feel less satisfied with their jobs if they believe they may lose important job features, and employees with low self-esteem tend to be more susceptible to job stressors (job insecurity) than those with higher self-esteem. On the contrary, employees with higher self-esteem are expected to be more adaptable to external circumstances and stressors. Individuals with high self-esteem can more easily counteract the negative consequences, showing better coping strategies in response to stress (Callea et al., 2019). Every interviewee stated that their mental health has been impacted by the pandemic, and most feel less motivated overall (Personal Survey, 2020). This indicates that those interviewees may have low self-esteem regarding their work, making them more vulnerable to job stressors and less adaptable to external stressors, unable to cope with stress as well as those with high self-esteem in the workplace.

Basic psychological needs satisfaction is a significant predictor of harmonious passion, “people seek activities that will satisfy their basic psychological needs, and activities that are liked and have value and meaning are internalized into their identity and become passionate,” (White et al., 2019). A Broadway Professional’s passion is directly impacted by basic psychological needs and whether or not they are met. Because of Covid-19, theatre industry professionals are lacking self-esteem in regards to work because they are simply not working. Everyone who works in the theatre industry was inspired by theatre at one point or another and theatre is usually their passion. Being unemployed can leave Broadway Professionals feeling useless and deter them from their career path, as discussed above in regards to Justin Adams and Michael Clinton.

Job loss is a notable trigger that can set off large changes in well-being (Young, 2012). These changes have been discussed at length and it can be inferred that unemployed Broadway

Professionals are suffering not only financially, but psychologically as well. Because theatre professionals are so passionate about what they do, being unemployed is much harder for them than it would be for someone who is not passionate about their occupation.

### Survey Discussion

After the structured interviews, the participants followed up by completing a short, five question, online survey and the results are shown in Table 1 below.

	Matt Brittan	Michael Clinton	Jackson Thompson	Sam Clark	Justin Adams	Julia Dunetz
Are you a part of a union?	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Do you think The Broadway League/unions are handling the pandemic the way that they should?	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
Did you lose your job because of Covid-19?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Has Covid-19 negatively impacted you and your family financially?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you feel as though you are less or more motivated overall?	More	More	Less	Less	Less	Less

**Table 1: The Impact of Covid-19 on Industry Professionals**

One can conclude a similarity in that all of the interviewees agreed on question four which was, “Has Covid-19 negatively impacted you and your family financially?” (Personal Survey, 2020). Every participant answered in the affirmative, even the professionals who didn’t lose their jobs. It can be inferred from this that all Broadway professionals have experienced a negative financial impact because of the shutdown, even if they did not lose their jobs. It can also be concluded that a majority of Broadway professionals have lost their jobs (if only temporarily).

## Conclusion

This paper has investigated the different struggles facing Broadway professionals in light of the coronavirus pandemic and analyzed these struggles through the lenses of financial and psychological impacts that they are being faced with. Interviews were conducted with various Broadway professionals including small business owners, producers, general managers, and marketing professionals. Interviews were also conducted with two Broadway actors, though a lot of problems they are facing were very different from those faced by the business professionals that were interviewed. Because of this, the actors' interviews were not included.

The results of the in-depth research show that Broadway professionals are clearly struggling in an unmoving industry. Because Broadway went from thriving to practically nonexistent within days, most Broadway professionals have been negatively impacted financially and are struggling to make ends meet now. The pandemic has also impacted the mental health of Broadway Professionals. While some interviewees answered that they have not been struggling, five out of the six stated that the pandemic has negatively impacted their mental health.

When Broadway reopened in 1975 after being shut down for nearly a month, audiences and theatre professionals alike were thrilled when they reopened stating that "The mood was festive... and there was a fantastic sense of relief!" (Gussow, 1975). Because the shutdown will last for over a year, it is hard to say what the future of Broadway is going to look like. When asked, some interviewees stated that they do not believe much will change, while others are thinking and hoping that everything will change. Although Broadway is not physically running right now, this is a great opportunity for professionals in the industry. Things are always moving very fast paced on Broadway, and now they actually have the time to sit down and make some improvements. Broadway needs to be using this time to create a more equitable, diverse, and accommodating industry to work in.

As for further research, it would be recommended to look at the impact of Broadway and live theatre on New York's economy and compare that to how much government funding the arts are not receiving during this world health crisis. This could provide reasoning for the arts to receive the funding they are going to need to recover from over a year of not running.

Additionally, it would be interesting to compare Broadway's impact on New York's economy before and after the pandemic. This would also provide reasoning for the arts to receive more funding and aid to rebuild the once thriving industry.

### Works Cited

Adams, Justin (October 8, 2020). Personal Interview.

Boyle, M., & Chiou, L. (2009). Broadway productions and the value of a Tony Award. *Journal of*

*Cultural Economics*, 33(1), 49-68. Retrieved June 21, 2020, from

[www.jstor.org/stable/41811011](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41811011)

Brittan, Matt (September 29, 2020). Personal Interview.

Broadway League. (2020, June 29). The Broadway League Announces Fall Performance

Cancellations While Working on Protocols For Curtains To Rise Again. Retrieved

October 16, 2020, from [https://www.broadwayleague.com/press/press-releases/the-broad](https://www.broadwayleague.com/press/press-releases/the-broadway-league-announces-fall-performance-cancellations-while-working-on-protocols-for-curtains-to-rise-again/)

[way-league-announces-fall-performance-cancellations-while-working-on-protocols-for-curtains-to-rise-again/](https://www.broadwayleague.com/press/press-releases/the-broadway-league-announces-fall-performance-cancellations-while-working-on-protocols-for-curtains-to-rise-again/)

Carlson, M. (2004). 9/11, Afghanistan, and Iraq: The response of the New York theatre. *Theatre Survey - the Journal of the American Society for Theatre Research*, 45(1), 3-17.

Retrieved from <https://rlib.pace.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.rlib.pace.edu/docview/1859172?accountid=13044>

Callea, A., Lo Presti, A., Mauno, S., & Urbini, F. (2019). The associations of

quantitative/qualitative job insecurity and well-being: The role of self-esteem.

*International Journal of Stress Management*, 26(1), 46–56.

<https://doi-org.rlib.pace.edu/10.1037/str0000091>

Clark, Sam (October 2, 2020). Personal Interview.

Clinton, Michael (October 1, 2020). Personal Interview.

Donahue, T., & Patterson, J. (2012). Chapter 4 (pp. 68-84). Chapter 5 (pp. 85-98). Columbia,

South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press. doi:10.2307/j.ctv6wgjdx.7

- Donahue, T., & Patterson, J. (2010). Intermission: The Glut of Performers—Actors' Earnings and Actors Equity Association. In *Stage Money: The Business of the Professional Theater* (pp. 95-103). Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press.  
doi:10.2307/j.ctv6wgf0s.15
- Dunetz, Julia (October 9, 2020). Personal Interview.
- Dziemianowicz, J. (2019, January 10). Broadway pulled together to resuscitate New York City after Sept. 11 attacks. Retrieved November 29, 2020, from <https://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/music-arts/broadway-pulled-resuscitate-new-york-city-sept-11-attacks-article-1.956976>
- Gussow, M. (1975, Oct 14). Broadway comes to life with opening of musicals: Broadway comes to life with reopening of musicals. *New York Times* (1923-Current File) Retrieved from <https://rilib.pace.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.rilib.pace.edu/docview/120426509?accountid=13044>
- Huston, C. (2020, March 12). All Broadway theaters to shut down, Cuomo orders. Retrieved October 16, 2020, from <https://broadwaynews.com/2020/03/12/all-broadway-theaters-to-shut-down-cuomo-orders/>
- Huston, C. (2020, May 26). Actors' Equity outlines safety plans for the reopening of theaters. Retrieved October 16, 2020, from <https://broadwaynews.com/2020/05/26/actors-equity-outlines-safety-plans-for-the-reopening-of-theaters/>
- Mathtech. (2019, May 15). The Impact of the Broadway Theatre on the Economy of New York City. Retrieved November 5, 2020, from <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/naappd/the-impact-of-the-broadway-theatre-on-the-economy-of-new-york-city>
- Pogrebin, R. (2002, May 22). How Broadway bounced back after 9/11; but downtown theater

- lacked the right ties. *New York Times*, p. E1. Retrieved from [https://link-gale-com.rlib.pace.edu/apps/doc/A86169444/ITOF?u=nysl\\_me\\_pace&sid=ITOF&xid=1668ef2e](https://link-gale-com.rlib.pace.edu/apps/doc/A86169444/ITOF?u=nysl_me_pace&sid=ITOF&xid=1668ef2e)
- Russo, G. (2020, March 12). The history of Broadway shutdowns. Retrieved October 16, 2020, from <https://broadwaynews.com/2020/03/12/the-history-of-broadway-shutdowns/>
- S.D., Trav (2001). 9/11: America's Theatres Respond. *American Theatre*, 18(9), 16.
- The Impact of Covid-19 on Industry Professionals, Personal Survey. Conducted online through [SurveyMonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) (September-October, 2020).
- Thompson, Jackson (October 1, 2020). Personal Interview.
- Warne, R. T. (2017). "I hope I get it": Impact of tony award nominations and wins on Broadway production longevity. *Arts Marketing*, 8(1), 30-46.  
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.rlib.pace.edu/10.1108/AAM-06-2017-0013>
- White, C. J., Tong, E., & Schwartz, M. (2019). Psychological Needs, Passion, and Consumer Re-Patronage Intentions to The Performing Arts. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 31(5), 451–463.  
<https://doi-org.rlib.pace.edu/10.1080/10495142.2018.1526751>
- Young, C. (2012). Losing a Job: The Nonpecuniary Cost of Unemployment in the United States. *Social Forces*, 91(2), 609–634. <https://doi-org.rlib.pace.edu/10.1093/sf/sos071>

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Interview Questions

1. Where do you work and what is your job title?
2. How has the pandemic affected your income?
3. How as Covid-19 affected your business?
4. How has the pandemic changed your day-to-day work and/or the work your company is doing?
5. How have you been making ends meet since the shut down? / what has your experience with unemployment been like?
6. Has quarantine/social distancing affected your mental health? How so?
7. What do you think the future of Broadway is going to look like?
8. Eventually Broadway theaters will be able to open at a lower capacity (let's say 50%). Do you think that is possible and what do you think that will look like?
9. How is Broadway looking financially at the moment? How do you think this will change in the upcoming months?
10. What do you miss the most about pre-Covid New York?
11. Tell me about your personal experience with covid-19.

### Appendix 2: Survey Questions

1. Please enter your name, age, and occupation (written response)
2. Are you a part of a union? If so which one? (written response)
3. Do you feel that the Broadway League and unions are handling this pandemic in the way that they should? (Yes/No)
4. Did you lose your job because of Covid-19? (Yes/No)

5. If you answered no to the previous question, how has Covid-19 impacted your work?  
(written response)
6. If you answered yes to question 3, how have you been able to make ends meet since the shut down? (written response)
7. How has Covid-19 impacted you and your family financially? (written response)
8. Do you feel as though you are less or more motivated overall?

**Appendix 3: Survey Answers**

**Table 1: The Impact of Covid-19 on Industry Professionals**

	Matt Brittan	Michael Clinton	Jackson Thompson	Sam Clark	Justin Adams	Julia Dunetz
Are you a part of a union?	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Do you think The Broadway League/unions are handling the pandemic the way that they should?	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
Did you lose your job because of Covid-19?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Has Covid-19 negatively impacted you and your family financially?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you feel as though you are less or more motivated overall?	More	More	Less	Less	Less	Less