

Demographics: Straight, Asian woman. Medium Income. Relationship status: not in a relationship , on dating apps

Interview Summary: Victoria is a funny, 23 year old woman living in the East Village. She has limited experience with dating apps and finds the concept of online dating unnatural. Her previous relationships were formed organically through friends, making the idea of meeting someone entirely outside her social circle a new and somewhat uncomfortable experience.

She finds it challenging to gauge someone's personality and compatibility based on their online profiles and prompts. This difficulty stems from her belief that people can curate their online presence in a way that might not accurately represent who they are. She also mentions a discomfort with the idea that online dating sets an immediate expectation of romantic potential, unlike her past experiences where relationships evolved naturally from friendships or acquaintances.

The interviewee has gone on a few dates via Hinge but still feels like a novice in the online dating world. She expresses a preference for meeting people organically ("in the wild") but acknowledges the challenges of doing so in her current environment. She feels that online dating, while not ideal, might be the most practical way to meet people at her age and in her city.

Prevalent Themes:

1. The ubiquity of online dating platforms
2. Online vs. In-person norms

Interview date: 11/15/2023

Transcript:

Interviewer: I would just love to hear a little bit about your, like experience dating in New York, especially like on dating apps if you've ever used them. So can you tell me a little bit about yourself like age, sexuality, ethnicity, like like kind of demographics, and then whether or not you are currently looking for relationship and if you're looking for it online.

Interviewee: So I'm just doing 23 In October, and I'm cisgender, heterosexual. My race, I'm Asian American. And I am currently single and kind of dating. I've tried dating apps before and then currently on one, I'm on a hinge. I don't have a ton of experience. So with going on actual dates, because I guess this is kind of like, also good insight as to my experience on them or me, the reason why I've only gone on, like three years because of my experience as men, but I think the concept to me is just weird in general. And that's like, partly just because I need to get a read on my own end of like, embrace the cringe. But I think it's really hard to kind of gauge what someone's going to be like, based on like pictures and a few prompts. And it's just like a weird way to meet people. And that also everyone I've ever dated, I knew beforehand for a friend or because they were my own friend. Or I had like so many Mutual's with them. So this concept of like, meeting someone, I don't know, from my own circles is also just different from me. But

yeah, I am super not like, still novice and like, the dating. sense with app. So I went on my first ever hinge date in January. And it didn't work out. And I knew it. Like three minutes into our, our date, we went and got drinks somewhere kind of near my apartment. It was like a positive experience. And it made me feel like okay, I can do this, and I'm not going to be like, abducted, or I can actually have a conversation with a stranger. Also, which is good. Actually, I just went on my second date, like, two weeks ago. So that's like my again, like, I don't know, sorry, I don't know if like your focus group needs to be like people who have used at a tim.

Interviewer: I feel like you've just like touched on so many things that I would love to like, dig in on a little bit. So firstly, this idea that like, your previous relationships have all been like, kind of formed more organically, like, can you talk to talk me through like a bit of like, what feels different about, like, meeting on hinge versus meeting organically in person?

Interviewee: Yeah. So for me, I would say like, I would say, I just knew everyone I've dated, I've known a good amount about them before we were ever like romantic or intimate. And so one thing that's different about doing it in this way of meeting someone for the first time in just in general, but I would say there's two things that feel really different for me and the first one is that the first time you meet them, there's already a an established sense of like this is to try to find something romantic, whereas like, before when I met people organically but it's because I already knew them. So that's another thing. It's not like I just met them organically like at a bar or something, but organically through my own circles. I didn't need them going into it, in the sense of like this is we're trying to make this something romantic. So that's different. I think in general, they're like, meet someone and have that sort of like precedent already set. And then The second part is it's you, I'm still trying to figure out like, how to get to know someone like from the start, but make it feel organic. I'm just not good at like, being like, okay, like, I was someone that you're meeting for the first time, you don't know anything about that you need to learn about how many siblings they have. Do they have any siblings? Do they have parents like, what's their race? That's honestly another question. I don't know how to ask people because, like, it's there, all these things that like, I want to know about a person. But there's so many things in such a small in such a short amount of time that I'm still trying to figure out how to do that in a way that feels normal and not invasive, or just super? Like, on organic, I would say like.

Interviewer: It definitely makes sense. What would you say about hinge makes it feel so inorganic?

Interviewee: Yeah, I would say the part that feels inorganic, I don't know if it's the fact that it's the app itself. Or it's just a concept of online dating, for me to see your point of like, okay, there is definitely like a game gamified aspect to it, like there's an algorithm and that is also different, because I don't, since I don't like going on the apps, I don't use them very often, like, I'll delete them for like, three months at a time and then redownload. And then it takes a lot of scrolling and a lot of people before I even match with someone, and then it takes a lot for me to engage in conversation with them. Yeah. So I almost feel like you have to do it often, in order for the algorithm to understand like, what you're looking for, which makes sense, like any other app, it needs that data. And I can tell I actually haven't really thought about this or talked to anyone

about it. But I think they do read your conversations, ask for my numbers, or been on Facebook, the app, either they're reading the conversation, or they're talking like the, like amount of engagement between two people because I'll get like a notification that pops up. And it's so those people specifically that I've exchanged numbers with or have had, like, a good amount of conversation with and that will be like, have you met with this person? And then there's the option of yes or no, or something like that. And that's only for the people that I had, like some level of engagement with like a good amount, not just like three words exchanged.

Interviewer: Interesting. Did you do the like feeling of like playing to the app? Like, do you have any feelings associated with that either positive or negative?

Interviewee: Negative, I just really don't like, again, like user error too, because I need to use it more. And I need to get over like a lot of just my own stigmas about it. I want to get over this.

Interviewer: Can you explain?

Interviewee: I just think it's like weird, and I'm really picky. And I'm very judgmental. So it's hard for me to look at a few pictures and a few prompts and be like, Okay, I can envision this whole person and I can envision if I would be compatible with them or not like that. It's so crazy to me that people are able to do that.

Interviewer: I mean, what are your personal hesitations around that? And I want to preface by saying I don't think that they're crazy at all. I think a lot of people who I've talked to are kind of like the more unnatural side of it. So, you know, no shame zone. Like any feelings around that, like, tell, give them to me.

Interviewee: Yeah, I don't know, I guess it's like, how? How am I supposed to know? Because, again, that person is at liberty to curate their profile. And it's like, the same thing is social media like Like, say Instagram, you can curate that to look a certain way. And that might not be like, authentic to who you are. And I think that's something that I always think about, like, how, I don't know, I just think there's a disconnect of like, what? Hinge specifically because I've only ever used hinge but on hinge what someone is portraying through like the, like five pictures you got, whenever prompts you pick, and what they're actually like. Like, it's really hard for me to be able to, like, envision what they're really like.

Interviewer: Absolutely, yeah. Um, does it feel like people's profiles are often not what they're actually like, in person?

Interviewee: There's, there's like this hyper-curated profile, which freaks me out. But then there's also like, just bare minimum sort of pictures that people post. Like, and when you see that, it's like, okay, that could go to me, like, let's just say, one of two ways, either, like, they're so your serial killer vibes, like, weird, like, pictures from four years ago. And someone that I might not actually be compatible with, or that I want to meet in person. Yeah. Or a person might actually, like, be compatible with me. But they don't take photos very often. So it's like, I don't

know. It's hard for me to gauge that sometimes. But again, most of the time, I'm like, No, this person is a serial killer, and I want nothing to do with them. And so then I don't engage in like, I think there's a lot of people on the app that I swipe, or I or don't respond to, when I actually maybe could see myself with if I really did kind of think about it more, but it's just not something that I spend a lot of time like, looking at, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah. Like you're kind of detached from the process.

Interviewee: I wish there was one other sort of like, feature or like attribute on it, where it could help you gauge that, but I don't know exactly what that would be.

Interviewer: Why do you think that people's profiles are sometimes not all? Like not truly representative of them in person? It might be an obvious question.

Interviewee: Um, well, yeah, like I was saying, because maybe they look at it to curate it or certain way, and it's not actually like, what they're like, or maybe you just suck at social media. And in turn, you suck at making your hinge profile. Yeah. And that's unfortunate, because maybe like, I don't know, I'm like, if you didn't have shitty hinge profile, making scope, maybe that's just go to say like, if you're like, what's so bad if that is like a sign of what your character is like, but also, you might just really stuck on it. And then maybe people overlook your profile just because of the way you displayed it. I don't know maybe if there was something like some measure of what your compatibility would be like, I guess. Or if anything, because he does do like a little bit of a questionnaire beforehand. If I remember correctly, they're always like, your values. Do you drink? Yeah. Maybe if there was a better like questionnaire beforehand to help you for the app to like, try to find people who are compatible with you, because that's a thing that they do, they'll give you like, still identify people that they think you'll be compatible with, like on the profile at the top? Or could we have bought a banner that says like, most likely to be compatible or something like that?

Interviewer: Do you feel like like, I feel like some of the things you've been saying have been like everyone else is on hinge. So you should be on hinge?

Interviewee: Yes. Because I don't want it to be but I feel like it's the easiest way to meet someone in my current environment, and in the city, and at my age, because that's where everybody is. Yeah.

Interviewer: Would you be open to meeting someone in person? Or are you like now like, full, full sent into online world?

Interviewee: Like meeting someone in the wild? Yeah. No, I would. That's what I want to do. But it's not as easy as it some say it is, I guess. Yeah.

Interviewer: No, that's super interesting. Oh, this has been super helpful. I appreciate you.

Interviewee: I actually went on my first hinge date two weeks ago, and really good. And we went on another date yesterday. For some it's just for a personal update. I need it. So this is not just for I don't think like it doesn't work because I actually am kind of interested in this guy. And like, we're going on a third date and stuff. But another thing to add, and maybe this is just like, who I am a little bit but one thing that made me feel better about this guy is we have like two Mutual's like very loose connections like ties, but that somehow makes me feel better. And maybe it's because I just said, afraid of like, okay, like, someone on the internet. Yeah. And if I don't have someone that I know to, like, vouch for them, or like be like, okay, this person is like, normal, this person is like, safe.