

Demographics: Straight, black man. Medium Income. Relationship status: single, on dating apps.

Interview Summary:

Prevalent Themes:

1. The gamification of dating
2. Difficulty finding partners online
3. Lack of commitment in online dating
4. Online vs. In-person norms

Interview date: 11/15/2023

Transcript:

Interviewer: So, just to start, like how old are you? What do you do for work? Where do you live? And just kind of like Democrat demographic-esque stuff.

Interviewee: All right from the top from the top, from the top. Okay, I am 26 years old. I work at currently as an assistant video editor, working on commercials, short films and TV shows. I currently reside in Greenpoint, New York. Yeah. I identify as straight and I am not in relationship. I am single right now.

Interviewer: Are you on any dating apps?

Interviewee: Oh, yes, I am on all all. t's, um, it's Hinge, Tinder, Bumble, fDelds. And there's one more inch Tinder bumper field. I think I got them all. All right. Yeah. That's all I can think of. Yeah.

Interviewer: What are each of them for, like, are they do use this apps for the same thing? Or are they kind of do each of them play a bit of a different role in your life?

Interviewee: They so ... originally, I kind of used them for all like the same thing. In my mind, I didn't really see as much of a difference. The only one I knew that kind of like stuck out really heavy was Field because Field people are very, very communicative of what their interests are. And they're more open to more of like sexual talk and more of like, sexuality and like, what they exactly what they want. They're very specific, which I think is cool. Whereas like, stuff like Hinge and Tinder, initially, Hinge was a little bit more of like defined like, oh, as like the relationship world, people were mostly looking for relationship, which is what I initially I was, which was I was, which is what I am currently looking for a relationship ultimately. And so I was originally on hinge primarily, but over time, it's kind of turned into like, a Tinder kind of blended into this kind of thing where it's like, yeah, there are people's relationships. But no one's really explicit about it. But then people on Tinder also try to hook up and there are people on Tinder who also trying to get release. Yeah, because it was very confusing as to what the lines were, was like Tinder. I

feel like now. It's kind of around. It's bad. Just like the hookup app. Yeah. And people kind of like see it as that. And maybe you'll get sprinkled, people were like, oh, yeah, I'm looking for a relationship, where it's like now I'm kind of, I primarily use tinge, because I want to find a relationship. But I go on Tinder, just like just for funsies, sometimes to see what's going on. Because I kind of have all of them just couple of characters to spread my, my radius a little bit, because I know sometimes you might, the algorithm on each app is different. So I'm like, I'm on them to kind of just get different pools of different people, per se. I think that's a very long winded answer.

Interviewer: No, it's interesting, like the different kinds of people and like uses that each app attracts. Yeah, I think let's focus on hinge because that's the one that most people have been telling me about. And this paper is essentially becoming a hinge paper. Let's go. So like you open up hinge and kind of talk me through like what your what you do on the app.

Interviewee: Okay, so I kind of have like, I kind of, it's kind of funny to say this, because I'm trying to be more a little more active in my daily life for this time period of my life. So I was very passive with it over like the past like six months or so. So like now I kind of like block off times during the day, either whether morning or evening. So I log on to the app. And I don't have the paid subscription. So I kind of only got like a select number of likes. Because I think you only get like 10 per day. Is it 10? I don't know exactly what number I never counted. So I kind of just like first I kind of go through use up the lights that I have kind of like scroll through to try to find someone who's like, I assumed it's attractive or like intriguing to me. And I generally like to keep the radius a little bit like local no more than like five miles I don't really want to travel, like far and wide like I want to go to Jersey, like go on a date. So I kind of keep it a little bit close. Then I kind of like go through the messages and see if there's like any conversation I noticed there like picking up steam or like people are showing interest in because sometimes like on profiles like profile, I think, oh, this person might be very interesting or they're attractive. I think we might strike up a conversation. Oftentimes easy for me. I should say personally, that conversation doesn't really go much of anywhere. For the person who just doesn't respond to me. So it's very interesting how it's different because I don't really get maybe like, into my algorithm per se, once a while, because like random times where like, I would get sporadic, random people who like me. But then there are all a lot of times where it's just like, weeks and I don't get a single like. Yeah. Not sure if the algorithm is in my favor.

Interviewer: Have you ever gone on a date in person off of hinge?

Interviewee: Oh, yeah. There's plenty. That has been my like, I've gotten most of my dates in the past, like, because I've been a hinge for a few years now, probably two. In the span of two years, I've gotten a lot of dates from hinge in the span of two years. And a lot of them, they kind of like go in that direction of as my kind of say, it's become like this kind of a gray area where it's like, initially, you would think the person you're talking to is like, Oh, they're looking for, like a connection. So instead of, then we meet them in person. It's like the way they act and might be a little different. They treat you like you're like, it's so confusing, because there are times where it's like, oh, this person might be interested in me, I would like to go on more dates. And they

kind of like disappear, hit you up, like, you know, like two weeks later. And they're kind of like, Oh, what are you doing tonight? And it's kind of like, interesting. It's weird. So yeah.

Interviewer: So can you contrast that at all with like, any relationships you've had that haven't started on hinge? Like, I guess, is the kind of like ritual around an online relationship versus an in person relationship?

Interviewee: Yeah, it's been a while since I have been on an in-person first dates, I think, because the last relationship I was in was in 2019. And I met that person off Tinder, ironically. But prior to that, the last like long term relationship I was in, was in like, 2016. And I met that person at like a conference somewhere. And I would say, How is it how it developed, it did take a little bit longer than the online dating relationship, it took like probably like, almost like half a year before we like officially started like dating. Because it was very much like, Oh, I'm not sure at this conference, oh, we follow us on Instagram. And like, we we interact with each other's content. Because it was a it was It started off long distance because they were living in Connecticut at the time. And then it wasn't until they moved, because they went to Fordham for undergrad and then they were in the city for undergrad. So I saw them more often. Within about six months prior to that we were just kind of like messing each other back and forth. And then when they came into the city, that's when like to start seeing each other and that we went on dates. And that's when it kind of like developed into a relationship where as opposed to the tinder one we like went on a date. And then we were like kind of talking to each other almost like every day, which at the time, I was just kind of oh, this is fun. But that ultimately kind of like lead to our demise is like, everything kind of fizzled out very fast, because we only did it for like nine months. But the conscious that haven't caught up to speed really fast, because we were talking when on like first or second date within the first like two weeks, which is I think it's pretty normal. But then we were kind of getting to what we were seeing each other like, all the time, which I think was great. But then it officially turned into a relationship after like, a month and a half, I'd say, which was much quicker than the one I had met someone not online. But since that 2019 relationship, I haven't really been in a long term relationship has been a lot of very much on and off kind of situations where it's kind of like, I was to meet someone they would say after the second date and I into it. But then if I'm seeing someone else, like over time, that would probably last more than last time like a month or two. Yeah. And then they kind of just like either ghost me or they're like, Oh, hey, I'm not feeling it. Yeah. So it's been a while since I've been in a long term relationship.

Interviewer: Does the does the kind of like lack of commitment on dating apps frustrate you at all? Or does it feel like it's just kind of like par for the course.

Interviewee: It's interesting, because I feel like this is kind of what I've gathered. I feel like people lack commitment. It's all I think it's all like person dependent to me. Because there's so many times I've gone on dates with someone. And we're like talking, we're hanging out each other. It's like a few weeks passed, then they tell me because like sometimes I think they might be being genuine, but sometimes I might think it's like a cop out. Or they say Oh, I'm not really looking for relationship. I'll make sure that's fine. We go our separate ways. Like say we're like

still following each other on Instagram. Then like two months, two months later, they're like, oh, my how are you. So I think for me, in my experience, I would say A lack of commitment is kind of like person dependent. Where it's like if they meet someone, and they're like, Oh, I'm into this person, then they're like I'm committed now, who as opposed to me, that's just the way all traditionally I could be wrong. Maybe the way I interpret it, yeah. That they might ultimately always be looking for something more committed. But they just don't want to, like say they are. And they kind of just don't like open, per se. Yeah. Interesting. Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you feel as though it's come up in a lot of these interviews has been kind of feeling like, the app is almost like, a part of the dating process, like it kind of like is like the algorithm kind of like, changes your chances of like meeting someone. And you have to kind of like appease the app, whether that's like your profile, or like, whatever, like whatever things you do, do feel like that is part of your experience at all.

Interviewee: I do feel like it's a part of my experience, because I feel like I kind of have to, because how do I word this? I feel like the algorithm I'm trying to find the best way to say this. But I do agree with those other people's like, points like, I don't have to put on like a persona, per se. But I feel like the algorithm does favor certain people. Because I do feel like there's like, I could grant it could also be like, what's the thing? I think I saw like a YouTube video about this. Like, it could also be a race thing as well as too, I know that I'm probably like, tossed in the back of the pool per se, in comparison to like other people who aren't. Because when I would talk to my other friends who are aren't black and my other counterparts, they would share with me like, oh, yeah, Limbo, and just to some days, and experience might not be always like positive, but it seems a little bit more active in comparison, interesting, like more of like, progressive, because they'd be like, oh, yeah, I've been seeing this person for X amount of days. I've seen this person through whatever whatever. This person is very active and wants to hang out with me all the time. With me, I'm always constantly Oh, yeah, I haven't really seen this person much. And sometimes they want to hang out, but they're not that engaged. So I feel like maybe the algorithm might be putting me in the back of the pack. Like I've had to put on this kind of like persona to kind of project me further up, which I really want to do. Yeah, no, that's not who I am. Yeah, try to stay as genuine as possible.

Interviewer: Talk to me a little bit about like, what, like that persona you think would like look like like, what are you? Where do you kind of like mitigating against, I guess.

Interviewee: So it's kind of like, because I know, people might tell me, sometimes my personality can come off a little strong. And feel it. I know, people will say, Oh, but you got to be genuine. So I always try to like dial back my personality just a little bit. Because I know I can be like, very like, Haha, fun. Whatever kind of person for a rah rah, ya know, like, oh, it's like a first date. I can't be all rah rah, because then I got to be more like, what's it called? Mysterious and interesting. Then like, I gotta be attractive, but yeah, I've been a goon the whole time. It's like, oh, they won't like you. But then people say, but you shouldn't change who you are. Yeah, it's like, if I be who I am, it's always a constant, repetitive pattern. Because then I was being told that I either A, they can't see me in a romantic light. So it's kind of like, it's tricky. So it's kind of

puts me in this light. Where it's like, oh, do I really have no rizz? Or is it just because? I don't know. It's like, it feels like you kind of have to play the game a little bit. Because I want to stay as genuine as possible.

Interviewer: Talk to me a little bit about like, I think something that's come up as well, in a ton of interviews has been this idea of like, how gamified it all feels and like people have called it like, it's a lottery like it's a video game. Like, I guess talk to me at all about and you said like it feels like a game sometimes. So like, I guess dig into that feeling a little bit for me.

Interviewee: Yeah, it feels like a game because like, I always try to like remind myself that at the end of the day, the people who design this app, they want to make money. So I feel like especially in like such a big city like New York. The game kind of turns into there's always someone better so I feel like when you're talking to someone I always put in the back of my mind. Always try to remember that oh, there's probably someone thinking like, this person that you're really into, but there might be really just someone else but that person they're talking to you might be related to someone else. Yeah. The game is that like the average kind of gets you think there is someone always better out there. So people are always constantly trying to chase that better, which then would constantly keep them on the apps. And so it kind of creates this like cycle of like, it's a game like, there's always something better. Or I don't know. That's how I feel like it isn't gained an aspect also the way sometimes people treated it ... sometimes feels like a game. Because they'd be like, oh, yeah, I want to like X amount of dates or like, yeah, me country, just like, like a prize or something. Yeah, cuz that's how I tried to like, kind of rationalize myself to like, at the end of the day, they may say, Oh, we're trying to help you find love, but they're still trying to make money regardless. And I remember watching countless of documentaries, breaking down how the algorithm succeeds that way, because I think, because I think there's, um, would they do that? I think I remember I could be wrong, because you do all the resources, you could probably correct me if I'm wrong, that I think the app would does that tools together, like the top and show them to those to like, the masses. So the masses think that they're going to keep seeing these like really attractive or interesting people. But then it's like, only like a small window. I don't know. I forgot I saw like a YouTube documentary and the guy from like, vice or something, say explaining it. Something along those lines. And so it kind of puts to your mind that there's always something better out there. Yeah. I don't know I could be totally wrong, but