

Demographics: Straight, white man. High Income. Relationship status: in a relationship not from an online platform

Interview Summary:

John is a thoughtful and engaging high-income white man who is 26 years old and lives in Manhattan. He is in a relationship that was not formed via a dating app. He has used them in the past, and was overall unhappy with his experience, especially in New York, due to the inability to find compatible partners on the app. He expressed feelings of burnout after going on too many dates.

He spoke about the difference in accountability felt when dating someone you meet organically versus on the app, as well as how differently a romantic relationship can blossom over time as opposed to being jumpstarted by an online dating environment where you already know as much information about someone from first glance that you'd traditionally find out over months.

He echoed other interview's feelings that the apps are like a "lottery" (or a game) and that there are things that one must learn about the system itself before it can work in your favor.

Prevalent Themes:

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

Interview date: 11/14/2023

Transcript:

Interviewer: Okay. Okay, so to start, can you just give me like a little bit of demographic information as much as you're comfortable with? So like, sexuality, ethnicity, age, like income bracket generally and whether or not you're in a relationship? And if that relationship was found online or in person

Interviewee: So demographic information, 26 year old heterosexual male living in New York City in Manhattan? Yeah, approximately approximate income. One 140 to 200, somewhere like that... I'm a software engineer at a biotech company. And I think those are all the demographic questions. And then in terms of current relationship, yes, currently in a relationship. And we met in person, not online.

Interviewer: Awesome. Have you ever prior to this relationship been on a dating app of any kind? And if so, which one?

Interviewee: Yes, I had been on hinge, bumble, and Tinder. All of the above. I felt that the success that you had on any one of those three apps was kind of personality-dependent on what you were looking for. So I have had friends, for instance, who have had luck finding people that they've dated on Tinder. And then I personally never really found that. So I found that I had the most success, primarily on Hinge but sometimes on Bumble hinge was definitely like the one that I had the most success on. But even then, I feel like in the last year before I started being in a relationship, my experiences on dating apps were like, overwhelmingly negative. I have had very positive experiences on dating apps as well. Yeah. So living in New York, experiences on dating apps have been overwhelmingly negative living in other places experience and on dating apps, specifically? Positive meaning positive?

Interviewer: Interesting. Alright, so a few things I want to touch on. Firstly, this last idea you mentioned, like a geographic difference. So like, in your like, lived experience, what has been the difference between New York and another city?

Interviewee: Yeah, I mean, this disclaimer, this could have just been because dating apps have changed over time. However, I lived in DC and then moved to New York. So there wasn't really a large difference in time. So I do think that it was primarily demographic when I was living in DC, and a lot of luck on Hinge. And I would go on a lot of dates. And when I moved to New York, that stopped being the case, I kind of stopped really going on dates. And that probably mirrored what I was looking for in DC, I would go on dates. And even if the date didn't lead to anything, I would almost always have like a very positive experience with the person and you have a lot in common. And then in New York, I found that I kept on going on. Like, whenever I would get a date from him, it would just be like the worst date, it wouldn't be fun. There was not a second day. That kind of sums up the experience, I would say.

Interviewee: So specifically to New York, walk me through your general experiences on Hinge.

Interviewer: Yeah, I definitely think the ritual would be I would go on the dating apps. But I would go on the apps. And I would kind of be trying, I was definitely looking for a relationship. I wasn't necessarily looking for something casual. And so I would try and look for someone who matched that criteria, specifically, obviously, like physical attraction, which is the basis of any dating app, but then also trying to find, like themes within your profile that we would get along or that they would be interesting or fun to talk to, or we would have shared interests. I think that's kind of what I was looking for. So like physical appearance, do we have shared interests? Do they seem like an interesting person who I could talk to, and then it would be, you know, you'd kind of do the whole swiping thing, and then you'd have a match, you try and send some kind of message that what you stand out from the sea of other people who you're assuming are also matching with that person. And then I think, generally speaking, after like five or 10 messages, you'd be pretty clear if there's any kind of chemistry there. And then you can try and find a date from there. I think that was generally the ritual. Now, why it didn't go? Well. I think one part was, after a certain period of time on the dating apps in New York, I just stopped getting any kind of matches, I wouldn't get a match, a month would go by with no match. And that's kind of when I was like, I'm done with this. But before that, when I actually was getting

matches, and then subsequently turning those into a date or like a real life encounter, then it would be oftentimes, I felt like, it just wasn't a match in terms of what were, like what I was looking for, or the kind of person they were looking forward to, and really just felt like culturally, we're coming from a different place. And I guess like to elaborate on that more. There's like one instance, that I think was pretty telling us like, why it didn't work and mash. I remember, I went a national went on a few days. With this one woman, I forget her name. It's been a while now, but specifically matched because she was really into doing outdoor stuff. And she like ski and loved like hiking and stuff. And I remember being attracted that in this concrete jungle where you don't get any of that. And we only had a few days, and there was like, clearly no chemistry. But both of us failed to realize it because for like a few days, because we were both like, oh, cool, another person who likes nature. And so like, I don't know, there, there's just, we're no chemistry, but we both had the shared interest. So it just seemed like the de pool of what I was looking for, like shared interests plus chemistry was like small. And there's there are a lot of misses. In essence, that makes sense.

Interviewer: You mentioned you were kind of going into them looking for like a partner .. did you feel like it was more of like a non committal?

Interviewee: That's a really good question. I'm not sure I don't think I had a good pulse on that.

Interviewer: Did you find like, with the dates that you went on, like, this woman's, for example, with this woman, for example, or with others, like, any sort of qualitative difference between your experience with them versus like someone you were to meet organically through a social circle outside of the internet?

Interviewee: Good question. I think in New York, I don't have the best gauge on that. But in general, on dating apps, then. I mean, I'm assuming that that is the case, because I dated two people from dating apps. And both of them were people that I had actually met in real life or like, had connections with, like, somehow... Or it's like, oh, my friends know this person. So there's some other like, kind of, there's like something stronger, that put us together rather than just like this person that like, oh, and honestly, I think, like, total conjecture, but part of that could have just been that. Like, there's a little more skin in the game. So it was it was a little bit easier to just like, continue going on more dates until a connection was formed.

Interviewer: Can you expand on that more like what do you mean by skin in the game?

Interviewee: Yeah, like, when I matched with one of these people then. Like, like, the instance like the two people that I've dated from dating apps, one of one of them, I was able to text one of my friends and be like, Hey, who's this person? And my friend was like, Oh, my God, Sarah is great. Like, you guys would totally get along, etc. So that's kind of like, I don't know, getting like a second opinion, third perspective, I think definitely helps. And then the other instance, it was someone that I had, like, met once in college, we both happen to live in the same city.

Interviewer: That's is useful perspective. Did you feel more accountability from people who you also had a touch point within the *air quote* real world?

Interviewee: So, for sure. From what I saw, in New York, it seemed that because there were there were always more options.... It was kind of like you're trying to play the lottery, and you're trying to hit the jackpot. But feelings, like a lot of times, I think, aren't just going to appear out of nowhere. Do it's probably not going to be after your 50th Blind Date, because you'll be jaded and won't actually, like have the emotional capacity to do it. That's kind of what I felt. So I felt like I had better dates in the first month of using dating apps. And then, as time went on, I became more and more jaded. And I started being a little bit more like, just going through the motions. And then at that point, there was no way that I was ever going to find someone that I like actually had chemistry with, because I was going into everyday tired. And like I don't actually like it.

Interviewer: You mentioned the lottery--did you feel like the process felt like a game at all?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think so. To elaborate on it, I think there are two components that I can think the first component is that, you need to have a pretty solid understanding of what the meta of the app is, it's just like a video game, when you're gonna have a good understanding of the meta that you're gonna, like, make some sort of faux PA and your profile is not going to land with the broader audience. And an example of that is like, failing to realize that like, dry humor probably won't land if it's in your bio, right? Because, you know, sarcasm is hard to communicate over text. And it's very challenging. And I think the other thing is that, if you like, mess up on a dating app, then you're you. I mean, I don't know if this is still how they work. But I know that for time they were based on like, scores, same rating as chess. So if you go against someone and they swipe left on your yellow score drops, to if you have a really bad profile card that you get a really bad a yellow score. And you're just showing people who you have nothing in common with who you don't find attractive.

Interviewer: Do you consider yourself like how do you feel about being in a relationship now that is organic and non non hinge and do you have any feelings?

Interviewer: No. I think that once you're in the relationship, then I don't think the origin story matters a ton. I agree that it can be pretty exhausting to tell people that you met on Hinge. I haven't really experienced that too much in the past, but I I do think that like coming from like, once you're in the relationship, it doesn't super matter term and it's annoying, but actually getting into the relationship can be challenging because you're never seen each other organically and letting feelings grow in this way where you see someone from afar and you're like aware that they exist and you, you, your friends, talk about them or you talk about them with friends. And as a result, I don't know feelings take a while to develop. And I think that meaning organically lets you get like a jumpstart on that for a few weeks before you're actually Oh yeah, like this person that you're excited about.

Interviewer: Sweet, yeah. That makes sense. Ok well thank you so much for the time.