

**Demographics:** Straight, Native American / White man. High Income. Relationship status: not in a relationship , on dating apps

**Interview Summary:** Charlie is a sweet and calm man. He finds the conversations on Hinge to be surface-level and repetitive, centered around profile prompts, making the interaction feel unnatural and formulaic. He feels frustrated with maintaining witty banter and the feeling that the conversations are not geared toward real connection. He feels that there is a replaceable nature of relationships on the app. He also feels that the conversations on Hinge give a false sense of familiarity, which impacts the dynamics of first dates. He contrasts this with meeting someone through mutual connections, which he finds to be a more organic and potentially successful way of forming relationships.

Charlie acknowledged the positive aspects of dating apps, such as mutual consent and the ability to flirt without the awkwardness of unsolicited approaches. He finds the cycle of it all demoralizing though and superficial.

**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
5. Dating apps as a third party in the dating process

**Interview date:** 11/15/2023

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**Transcript:**

**Interviewer:** I am a 27 year old Native American male living in New York City. I guess, income level is hovering around 200k Gross a year. I am single as of November 15. I am only on hinge at the moment. That everything?

**Interviewee:** Um, I think that is basically everything. Um, so talk to me a little bit about hinge, I guess like, you open the app walk me through like what your your ritual is on there.

**Interviewer:** All right, I'll start off by saying I am very inconsistent with my usage of the app determines my success rate. But I kind of go through kind of phases where I'll just apply to like a long kind of backlog of messages that I have not been ignoring for multiple days. And then I will just go on and habitually, like go through either like incoming likes or that doubt likes and then I basically just go go through it and using the waves, and then I just kind of annoy annoyed with it and the way and then back to it when I need some validation. It's very, like, kind of like all it's like, zero. Like, opening it, like, looking at it being like, I'm not excited. Closing it. Or I'm like sitting on it for like, two hours. replying or sending out likes for, like that period of time. Interesting encounter No, between, like, there's no like, I feel like I'm very rarely, like, responding to multiple messages in the same conversation. When I use the interesting.

**Interviewee:** Do you feel like, talk me through a few things is like you mentioned getting kind of, like, frustrated with it or like annoyed with that.

**Interviewer:** I think you're frustrated with it, because I feel like the conversations are very surface level and kind of repeated topics. I mean, I think you can only have so many topics about like, the prompts you have. Yeah. And then, like, replacing the prompts is an annoying thing. Because you're thinking about like, what am I like, trying to attract? So I think it just gets very stressful and like, you just kind of get in your head. But I think also the the, ah, ah, no, it just it feels very much like a like, you're not having a real conversation. It doesn't feel natural. And that is frustrating. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** What part of it doesn't feel natural?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, I think there's definitely the curation I definitely kind of resonate with but I think more for me, it's cuz it's just a like it's you're not actually connecting with anyone you're just kind of manufacturing this like flirty conversation until you someone like we're just a gap and like you meet in person but it's like almost like a like there's like a formula to it may feel very, like replicable. I use the word formulas already but it just it feels formulaic. Like you're just like, Okay, how do I, you know, I need to say something witty when like, someone likes my photo, or like someone likes my, you know, respond to respond, we have to keep this like witty banter up for like, five or six messages. And then you have to decide like, okay, and like, go and say we're going to meet up or am I going to, you know, not respond anymore, you know, like, what is it? Like, it's just like a, you have to kind of like, play this game before you can just suggest like, okay, are we going? Are we interested in each other or not? And then I think it's very easy to lose interest. I mean, I find myself losing interest in those conversations all the time.

**Interviewer:** Interesting. I want to touch on like a few parts of that. What part of it feels feels formulaic?

**Interviewee:** Like the conversation feels formulaic. I mean, there, there are a lot of parts that are formulaic, but I'd say that, in particular, it's frustrating. And is just an annoying thing to have to continue to do. And just feel like you're just, I feel like that's the part that you have to replicate the most like, you're going a lot of first aid you go and more, you have more of these conversations before the first day. So I need to convert every one of these conversations into a first day at first. So you can also people feel have a similar kind of dynamic to it. But this, in particular, I'd say has like the highest amount of volume, you just have to like just even an effort, you have to like put into it.

**Interviewer:** Interesting. And when you said like you find yourself losing interest. Can you talk me through that a little bit?

**Interviewee:** Sure. I mean, definitely, relationships feeling replaceable. There's something there's another option or more options out there. I don't know it just Yeah, it definitely feels like they're just you have the same conversation over and over again, about like, just like something in your profile, or like someone just like, you're it feels like the conversation feels so forced. And then you're just like, people are grasping on what they know about you, which is just your profile this point. So you're like repeating a lot of like, things about you that are just not that interesting. Just like things you've talked about before, yeah, on that exact same. It's just like, because you're in the same environment that you're having those conversations. In, you're just stuck talking to another person who you really only know you can really differentiate them by a picture for a while like it feels very interesting. It feels very interesting.

**Interviewer:** Can you contrast any of like your first dates or like these kinds of experiences on hinge with any like, relationships you've had that have been in person rather than online?

**Interviewee:** Good question. I mean, is this like trying to have a setup, but felt very much like, online? Like, you kind of get to know each other like, in person rather than in? And instead of like knowing a ton about them, like you actually ask those questions. Yeah, kind of, like, do some digging yourself and actually, like, show some interest in their background. Yeah, that's like an interesting, like, I think the conversations you have on hinge kind of give you a kind of a false sense of like familiarity with them start, like, when you have a, when you have a you have a first date, I think it's, I never thought about this before. But like, I do think it kind of like almost dictates, like, what you kind of have, like what you talk about on your first date. Like I'm such true blind date, we actually don't know that person. Maybe you've seen like, one picture that, you know, like how they know your connection with your friend. That's just like, all you can relate to it's kind of forced to, like, expand. And in the indicate case of an app, you can kind of like know, some like, facts about them ahead of time. I honestly, like, I think first date, they're hit or miss, like no matter what. But the problem with with apps is like, you're not really basing your like, you are fundamentally just finding, like, when you get set up with someone, you were, like, just being like, there was a mutual connection that for some reason, thinks you would be a good match. And so I think that is probably a better experience, like on average, compared to like, an app where you're just kind of comparing each other's profiles and like, the chances of success a lot, or like I'd say, a lot lower, like, do you like are like, is this app of good, like summary of their, of your, like, mutual college compatibility, like probably not like, you just start kind of like, going off, like attraction, based on like, five pictures. I don't think that's a good. There's volume that happens in these apps, too. So it's just like, chances of success are, I think, a little, you know, chance of success, but just like, chances of failure or like, mutual disinterest, I think are higher, because you fundamentally are only meeting up because you thought your protocols are attractive. Yeah. I don't really like a mutual connection that like is like, driving this first date.

**Interviewer:** That's super interesting. And that's definitely something that I feel like has come up a lot has been like, this feeling that almost the like, process gets flipped with online dating, where like, you know, all the things that historically, educational setting, you find out like gradually over time, you know, all of that before you've even seen them in person. And so there's like this, this strange, kind of shift. And like, I guess, do you feel like it impacts the quality

of like, a potential relationship? Do you think that there's chance with finding like, how do you feel, I guess about like, the chance of finding a genuine relationship via an app. Do you think that there, there is one or I guess, how open are you to that? Or is it more of like a low commitment thing?

**Interviewee:** I mean, I think it's certainly possible. I know people who have met very happy I think like that. I definitely don't discount that possibility. But I don't know if it's like a I'm I don't know. I think I think the like idea of meeting someone in person. Okay. So let me just finish After the question you're asked, but like, there is one thing that I really do value in dating apps, and it's like mutual consent of like, having attraction to one another. Is not. Does that exist? Like you have to kind of like, feel out? If you're meeting someone for the first time, like in person? Yeah, I'm gonna set up date on a blind date, maybe a little less so because like, you're both doing that, but like, I think there's like this. Okay, it's okay to flirt. It's okay to you can have this kind of flirty interaction without feeling like you have to, like, test the waters. Yeah. Which I think is is a nice, like, it's a can, you can go and expect kind of a backhand, like, in a mutual, flirty interaction. And that is, like, I think totally okay. You do that on like, Instagram that might just be like, it's just, um, you know, like, like, just unsolicited, like, yeah, you know, like, like, like DMS and stuff like that. It's just like, not what it is a kind of a bad like, cultural thing that's happening. I think even just getting hit on at a bar or something like you just like one of those things that like, is kind of an uncomfortable situation that the dating apps are solving, which I think is valuable. However, I think just the sheer volume that you have to kind of go through with any apps makes it very, like demoralizing because you're just like dealing with a lot of rejection, or like ghosting and it just, and also doing that yourself or like, it's not even like a It's definitely goes both ways. But it just is very debilitating. And I think the like, so like my solution to this or not a solution. But like, one of the ways I've like found myself using hinge or like just I felt better when using ng on like the, like the free version where they only give you like five likes or whatever, per day. Yeah, 24 hours. I think that is serves as like a nice moment for myself. Because otherwise I'll just like, yeah, longer. And it just it makes it feel less exciting like it like if I you know, because you get that dopamine hit from like, someone responding to your message. So it's like, you have to when you can limit it. And he kind of makes you. I don't know, I just I feel like that like having a imposed limit on those apps helps, but doesn't like take away all the kinds of negative aspects. But I do think there are positive aspects of the online dating app. Absolutely.

**Interviewer:** How, how long have you use the apps?

**Interviewee:** 2020. So three half years, whatever. Nice.