



TIKTOK: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MARCH 15th-17th, 2024



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents.....	1
MSUMUN Notices.....	2
Committee Content Warning.....	2
MSUMUN Statement on Mental Health.....	3
MSU Provisional Land Acknowledgement.....	4
Rules of Procedure.....	5
Letter from the Crisis Director.....	8
Letter from the Chair.....	10
Additional Staff.....	11
Overview of TikTok.....	13
TikTok and Privacy.....	16
The Contents of TikTok’s Privacy Policy.....	16
Automatically Collected Information:.....	18
How This Information is Used and Shared.....	20
Your Rights/Choices With Your Consent.....	22
U.S. Response to TikTok’s Data Usage.....	23
TikTok’s Reaction – Project Texas.....	24
Social Media and Mental Health.....	26
Social Media Addiction.....	26
The Mental Health Impact of Tiktok.....	28
How TikTok Curves the Crisis.....	29
V. Safety.....	30
Child Exploitation.....	30
Dangerous Trends.....	32
Content Moderation.....	35
The Algorithm: Into the Rabbit Hole.....	35
Shadow Banning.....	37
Hate Speech.....	38
Misinformation.....	41
Characters.....	43
Members of the Board of Directors.....	43
Outside Consultants to the Board of Directors.....	49

MSUMUN NOTICES

Committee Content Warning

While MSUMUN values the discussion and awareness of most topics and a delegate's obligation to accurately represent their assigned role, all participants who engage in any bigoted, racist, sexist, homophobic, ableist, fatphobic, xenophobic, or other such comments or sentiments will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action at the discretion of MSUMUN's Secretariat. Additionally, in all things, MSUMUN pledges its Secretariat and staff to maintain approachability and inclusivity; if any participant has any questions, comments, or concerns they are encouraged to contact MSUMUN's Secretariat or, in the case of delegates, its staff. If you have questions or concerns regarding this, please reach out to your committee's senior staff before conference weekend.

MSUMUN is committed to fostering a safe and secure environment for all delegates, staff, and advisors. In this, MSUMUN operates with a zero-tolerance policy concerning any and all instances of harassment and discrimination. Further, MSUMUN is committed to promoting the mental health of its participants and requires all participants to act with compassion, grace, and understanding. MSUMUN encourages participants to step out of their committee room and/or speak with a trusted individual if they are feeling overwhelmed or are otherwise uncomfortable.

All participants should be aware that MSUMUN's Secretariat and staff are designated mandatory reporters with MSU's Office of Institutional Equity while operating within their roles before and during the conference.

MSUMUN Statement on Mental Health

MSUMUN is committed to fostering a safe and secure environment for all delegates, staff, and advisors. In this, *MSUMUN* operates with a zero tolerance policy with regard to any and all instances of harassment and discrimination. Further, *MSUMUN* is committed to promoting the mental health of its participants and requires all participants to act with compassion, grace, and understanding. *MSUMUN* encourages participants to step out of their committee room and/or speak with a trusted individual if they are feeling overwhelmed or are otherwise uncomfortable.

Moreover, *MSUMUN* recognizes that some of its committees may include references to or discussions of sensitive topics. While *MSUMUN* values the discussion and awareness of these topics and a delegate's obligation to accurately represent their assigned role, all participants who engage in any bigoted, racist, sexist, homophobic, ableist, or other such comments or sentiments will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action at the discretion of *MSUMUN*'s Secretariat. Additionally, in all things, *MSUMUN* pledges its Secretariat and staff to maintain approachability and inclusivity; if any participant has any questions, comments, or concerns they are encouraged to contact *MSUMUN*'s Secretariat or, in the case of delegates, its staff.

All participants should be aware that *MSUMUN*'s Secretariat and staff are designated mandatory reporters with MSU's Office of Institutional Equity while operating within their roles before and during the conference.

MSU Provisional Land Acknowledgement

“We collectively acknowledge that Michigan State University occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Lands of the Anishinaabeg – Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples. In particular, the University resides on Land ceded in the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw. We recognize, support, and advocate for the sovereignty of Michigan’s twelve federally-recognized Indian nations, for historic Indigenous communities in Michigan, for Indigenous individuals and communities who live here now, and for those who were forcibly removed from their Homelands. By offering this Land Acknowledgement, we affirm Indigenous sovereignty and will work to hold Michigan State University more accountable to the needs of American Indian and Indigenous peoples.”¹



¹ “Land Acknowledgement,” American Indian and Indigenous Studies, accessed December 5, 2021, <https://aiis.msu.edu/land/>.

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Article I: General Rules

1. Delegates are expected to adhere to all regular MSUMUN XXIII rules and standards of decorum.
2. In the event of a dispute over the Rules of Procedure, either those of MSUMUN generally or the TikTok Committee, the MSUMUN Secretariat will be the ultimate authority of appeal.

Article II: Meetings

1. All of the TikTok Committee meetings shall be attended by all specified members of the committee, unless otherwise authorized by the MSUMUN Secretariat.
2. Unless otherwise indicated by the MSUMUN Secretariat or the TikTok Committee staff, all meetings of the committee will be held in the specified TikTok Committee room as designated by MSUMUN.

Article III: Agenda

1. Items for debate may be pulled from the background guide, but are not limited to what is explicitly mentioned. Staff would like to see well-rounded and well-researched delegates bring new and relevant topics to the table.

2. Any Committee member may make a motion to restrict debate to one topic. If this motion passes, debate shall be limited to the topic specified until such time as another motion is made to either change the topic under consideration or return to general debate.
3. The Agenda is to be set at the beginning of committee, formal debate on committee topics may not begin until the Agenda has been set.
4. A Speaker's List may be opened at any time when motions are being entertained. Additionally, a delegate may request to be added to the Speaker's List at any time. If the Chair is not actively calling for speakers to be added, a delegate may send a note to the dias.

Article IV: Conduct of Business

1. The TikTok Committee proceedings shall be conducted in the form of a permanent Moderated Caucus until such a time that a committee member makes a motion to change this.

Article V: Types of Proposals

1. Directive: A directive requires only one sponsor, though it may have more. The number of required signatories is up to the discretion of the Chair. A committee member need only move to introduce a directive in order for it to be considered by the entire committee.
2. Press Releases: A press release is usually passed in lieu of a directive if doing so is more likely to make the committee's intentions clear. A press release is written either in the form of a directive or a press release; it requires the same number of sponsors and signatories as a directive.

3. **Communiques:** A communique is an external communication from the entire committee with a non-committee member. Such a communication can include anything from a request of support to negotiations to even a threat. Passing this type of document can also result in the person being contacted meeting with the committee if requested.

Article VI: Voting

1. Votes may be entered as For, Against, or Abstentions.
2. Any delegate who designates themselves as “Present and Voting” during roll call may not abstain on any matter.
3. Votes on non-substantive proposals or procedural matters will be passed by the affirmative vote of a simple majority of committee members. Abstentions are allowed on non-substantive proposals, but not procedural matters.
4. Votes on substantive matters will be passed by the affirmative vote of a simple majority of committee members.
5. In all cases, a simple majority constitutes more than half of the For and Against votes.

Remaining Points

1. Any rules and regulations are subject to change at the discretion of the Chair.
2. If you have additional questions, please visit the [MSUMUN Website](#)

LETTER FROM THE CRISIS DIRECTOR

Hello Delegates,

I hope that you are doing well and getting excited for MSUMUN! On behalf of all of the lovely staffers here at TikTok: Board of Directors, I assure you that we are very excited to host you all in a few weeks. We have been preparing for this committee for several months now and are so excited to see how you all interpret our ideas.

My name is Malerie Birkel and I am your Crisis Director for TikTok: Board of Directors. I am a sophomore here at Michigan State University and am double majoring in History and Finance, with a minor in Spanish. Last year, I have worked in the backroom for the Republic of Pirates committee. This is my first year as a senior staff member and I am so excited to explore the complex digital world of TikTok with everyone. I am looking forward to seeing what crazy backroom arcs you all come up with and how you use that creativity to push forward with your front room goals. In addition to scheming in my own backroom arcs, I am also involved in MSU's Mock Trial team. My hobbies include hiking, playing card games and thinking lovingly of my home state: Nebraska.

My favorite thing about any crisis committee are the unique backroom arcs. If you are unsure of what a backroom arc or crisis note is, please take a look at our online resources available at this [link](#). In real life, TikTok is such a fast-paced, high-stakes environment and I'm looking forward to seeing that reflected in the committee. You all will need to be able to think on your feet and come up with creative solutions that benefit both the company and yourselves. In frontroom, we ask that your characters behave professionally and ethically. Backroom, however, is a bit of a different story. Be ready to scheme, plot, and manipulate your way into power and

influence!² Also, please note that some of the characters are fictional. You may not be able to find any information about them as a person, instead read their bios and research what their job would typically be. While this may be daunting to some, please remember that this gives you a little bit more creative freedom over the character. This only applies for Members of the Board (as opposed to Consultants) as there is less information about them readily available. If you have any questions while researching or preparing for committee, you may feel free to reach out to us. Just send us an email at crisis1@msumun.org.

See you soon,
Malerie Birkel (she/her)
Crisis Director
TikTok: Board of Directors



²Again, within reason. Please read the content warning contained in this background guide and reach out if you are worried your idea might take things ‘too far’. We want to create a safe environment that welcomes everyone.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Delegates,

Hello! My name is Cassidy Lynn and I am your chair for TikTok: Board of Directors. I am a junior in James Madison College studying Social Relations and Policy with a minor in history. I have previously been Assistant Chair for the Daily Gavel at MSUMUN last year.

I am also a member of the executive board of MSUMUN's sister organization, MSUIRO, where I am Vice President of Development. MSUIRO is a competitive collegiate team where we discuss issues we are passionate about in incredible cities like Boston or Montreal. I found Model United Nations my freshman year of college, and absolutely fell in love with it. I am very interested in politics and more specifically how policies impact everyday people, which I think really shines through in crisis style committees. TikTok is a super interesting topic to tackle because it is very relevant to our everyday lives, and what happens with it has real life consequences, not only on the people that use it, but also our political system. I am addicted to TikTok and love the creativity and craziness that comes with it. When I am not scrolling TikTok, you can find me playing Pokemon games and watching period dramas. Very excited to meet you all and discuss all the fun details of TikTok at MSUMUN!

If you have any questions about our committee or anything else, feel free to reach out to us at crisiscommittee1@msumun.org!

Cassidy Lynn (she/her)

Chair

TikTok: Board of Directors

ADDITIONAL STAFF

Varoon Patel, Assistant Crisis Director

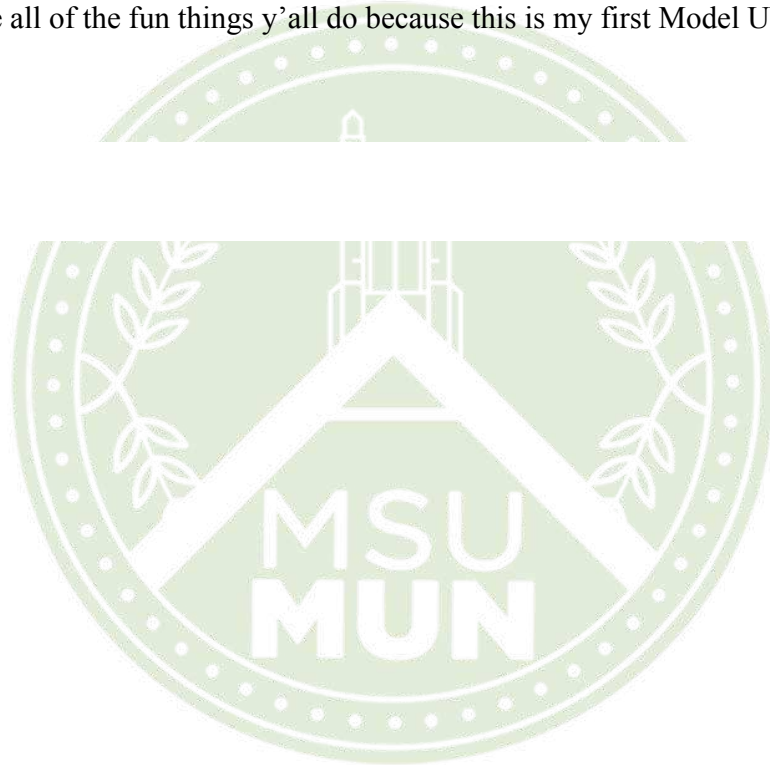
Hi everyone! My name is Varoon Patel (he/him), and I am a junior staffer for the TikTok Committee. I am a sophomore in the College of Social Science as a Political Science/Pre-Law major. I come from Portage, MI and in my free time I like to go to the gym, go hiking and kayaking, and on the other hand, I love playing video games. In high school my mom forced me to do competitive public speaking and oddly enough I fell in love with it. So as soon as I got to MSU I decided to join as many clubs as I could that involved public speaking such as: Mock Trial, Spartan Speech, MSUMUN, MSUIRO, as well as MMA Club as an instructor. I take a lot of inspiration from my friends whom I view very highly and as such I try to join a lot of clubs and do a lot with my free time just like they do! Anyways, I am really excited to be on this committee and I'm really looking forward to meeting you all and seeing you at MSUMUN!

Izzy Ruoff, Assistant Crisis Director

My name is Izzy (she/her), and I am a freshman at James Madison College. I'm thinking about majoring in Social Relations and Policy and minoring in Urban planning. I hail from Meridian, Idaho (make all the potato jokes you want I promise I've heard them all) and I love consuming any type of media and analyzing them, like movies, TV shows, anime and animation. I also am a big fan of 90s punk rock and have an unhealthy parasocial relationship with Kurt Cobain. I love being on this TikTok committee because I find it so interesting how Gen Z's culture surrounds the platform. I am so excited to see what y'all do with it!!

Kylee Tabler, Assistant Chair

Hello everyone! My name is Kylee Tabler (she/they) and I am a sophomore at Michigan State. I am double majoring in Social Relations and Policy and International Relations. I typically reside in Oregon, Ohio (I know being from Ohio is unfortunate) where I've worked making a mean ice cream cone. In my free time at MSU I am a part of Delta Phi Epsilon (a professional foreign service sorority) and co-host a NCAA Men's and Women's Basketball podcast (Check the Net). I cannot wait to see all of the fun things y'all do because this is my first Model UN experience!



OVERVIEW OF TIKTOK

In the fast-paced world of social media, TikTok has emerged as a cultural phenomenon, captivating audiences with its short-form videos and innovative content creation tools. The history of TikTok is a tale of evolution, from its early days as Musical.ly to its global dominance as a platform for creativity and self-expression.

TikTok's origin can be traced back to an app called Musical.ly, founded by Alex Zhu and Luyu Yang in 2014. Initially, Musical.ly allowed users to create and share short videos, primarily lip-syncing to popular songs. The app gained traction, particularly among teenagers, amassing millions of users worldwide by 2016. In a strategic move, Chinese tech giant ByteDance acquired Musical.ly in 2017 for approximately \$1 billion. This acquisition marked a crucial turning point, setting the stage for the integration of Musical.ly into ByteDance's own short-form video app, TikTok.

TikTok, as we know it today, was officially launched in September 2018 for the international market. The merger with Musical.ly brought a new dimension to the app, blending lip-syncing with a broader range of creative content. TikTok's interface was intuitive, making it easy for users to shoot, edit, and share engaging videos. TikTok quickly gained momentum, captivating users with its "For You" page – an algorithm-driven feed tailored to individual preferences. This feature proved instrumental in keeping users hooked by presenting them with a curated selection of content. The app's popularity skyrocketed, reaching over 2 billion downloads globally by 2020. Despite its success, TikTok faced challenges on multiple fronts. Privacy concerns related to user data, combined with the app's Chinese ownership, led to scrutiny from various governments. The United States and India, among other countries, contemplated or

implemented bans on TikTok. These challenges underscored the complex relationship between technology, privacy, and geopolitics.

TikTok transcended being merely a social media platform and became a cultural force. It influenced trends in music, fashion, and even political activism. Content creators, known as "TikTokers," gained immense popularity, with some crossing over into mainstream entertainment. TikTok became a launchpad for viral challenges, dance trends, and internet sensations, shaping online culture in unprecedented ways.

The history of TikTok is a testament to the dynamic nature of social media. From its humble beginnings as Musical.ly to its evolution into a global cultural juggernaut, TikTok has redefined the way we engage with content and express ourselves online. Its impact goes beyond entertainment, leaving an indelible mark on the digital landscape and influencing the future trajectory of social media platforms. As TikTok continues to evolve, one thing remains clear – its journey is far from over, and it will undoubtedly continue to shape the digital era for years to come.

TikTok, a social media phenomenon, has transformed the digital landscape with its innovative approach to short-form video content. The platform has become a global sensation, especially among younger audiences. TikTok is a social media platform designed for creating, sharing, and discovering short-form videos. Its primary focus is on user-generated content, with a strong emphasis on creativity, music, and engagement. Users, often referred to as "TikTokers," produce a wide array of content ranging from lip-syncing to original dances, comedy sketches, and educational content.

Central to TikTok's operation is the For You Page (FYP), an algorithmically curated feed that surfaces content tailored to each user's preferences. The FYP introduces users to a mix of

popular and personalized videos, keeping the content discovery experience dynamic. TikTok also provides an extensive set of creative tools that empower users to produce captivating content. These tools include filters, effects, text overlays, and a diverse music library. The platform's intuitive editing features enable users to seamlessly edit and enhance their videos. Newer additions such as TikTok's collaborative features, such as Duet and Stitch, allow users to interact with and respond to each other's content. Duet enables side-by-side video collaborations, while Stitch allows users to incorporate segments of another user's video into their own.

A defining feature of TikTok is its integration of music. Users can choose from a vast library of licensed songs, sound effects, and snippets from popular culture. The ease of adding music to videos has contributed significantly to the platform's appeal, fostering the creation of viral dance challenges and trends. TikTok has implemented robust privacy and safety measures. Users can set their accounts to private, control who can comment on their videos, and restrict interactions. The platform employs a combination of automated systems and human moderation to detect and remove content that violates community guidelines.

TikTok's success lies in its ability to transcend cultural and geographical boundaries. The platform has been influential in shaping internet culture, spawning trends that extend beyond the app itself. TikTok challenges and dances, for instance, often gain popularity in mainstream media. In addition to its global reach and cultural impact, TikTok has introduced various features for content creators to monetize their efforts. The TikTok Creator Fund, live gifts, and brand partnerships provide avenues for users to earn income. This has led to the emergence of TikTok influencers and a vibrant ecosystem of content creation.

TikTok's success can be attributed to its user-friendly interface, algorithmic content discovery, and a focus on creative expression. By seamlessly blending music, video creation

tools, and a diverse community, TikTok has redefined social media. As it continues to evolve, TikTok remains a cultural force, setting trends and influencing the digital landscape in unprecedented ways.

TikTok and Privacy

The Contents of TikTok's Privacy Policy

The contents of TikTok's Privacy Policies are intended for all affiliated with the "Platform" as in the app itself, website, and/or software utilized via any device that can harbor its data. The original TikTok Privacy Policy, intended for users over the age of 13, "explains how [they] collect, use, share and otherwise process the personal information of users and other individuals."³ The type of information that TikTok Inc. collects is separated into three main categories listed as so: "Information You Provide", "Information from Other Sources", and "Automatically Collected Information". It promptly goes into detail on how TikTok utilizes and shares this information, your rights and choices as an active user (what can be changed in settings), their policy on children and teens, as well as some miscellaneous rights they hold as a company.

Information you provide:

When creating a TikTok account, users have options to input as much or as little personal information as they see fit. However, the more a user puts in, the more personalized and accurate it becomes, improving the overall user experience. Any regular use of the Platform, such as creating an account, uploading content, and/or contacting TikTok directly requires basic information in order to perform those tasks. A user may provide some or all of this information within 5 main categories based on preference and necessity.

³ "Privacy Policy." TikTok, May 22, 2023. <https://www.tiktok.com/legal/privacy-policy?lang%3Den>.

1. Your “name, age, username, password, language, email, phone number, social media account information, and profile image.”⁴ These aspects both allow a sense of individuality and creativity for the user as well as determining whether the individual is even eligible to use this version of the app.
2. Content that users can create themselves such as “comments, photographs, live streams, audio recordings, videos, text, hashtags, and virtual item videos.”⁵ This information is public profile information (PPI) and can be made public to other users, depending on personal preference.
3. Messages you create and send with “merchants” and other users through the Platform’s message functions. This is also relevant when trying to contact TikTok customer service directly.
4. With specific permission, data located on a user’s personal device such as images, videos, text, phone and social networking contacts can be accessed. If a user chooses to find other users through this method the Platform will collect your PPI as well as the names and files of said social network contacts.
5. “Information you share through surveys or your participation in challenges, research, promotions, marketing campaigns, events, or contests such as your gender, age, likeness, and preferences.”⁶

Information from Other Sources:

If a user chooses to sign up/log in through a third party source such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Google, or if a user links it to one of these sources, TikTok is able to collect PPI from those third parties. Additionally, “advertisers, measurement and other partners share

⁴ “Privacy Policy”, 2023

⁵ “Privacy Policy”, 2023

⁶ “Privacy Policy”, 2023

information with us about you and the actions you have taken outside of the Platform, such as your activities on other websites and apps or in stores, including the products or services you purchased, online or in person.”⁷ Hashed email addresses, mobile identifiers for advertising (unique strings of letters assigned to mobile devices by the operating system. Used by developers, marketers, and advertisers to track user activity⁸), phone numbers, and cookie identifiers help match your action outside the Platform within the Platform.

Furthermore, TikTok has the ability to “obtain information about you from certain affiliated entities within our corporate group, including about your activities on their platform.” As well as if they receive information about you through publicly available sources “including where you are included or mentioned in User Content, direct messages, in a complaint, appeal, request or feedback submitted to us, or if your contact information is provided to us.”⁹

Automatically Collected Information:

When using the TikTok Platform, they automatically collect certain pieces of data for personal advertisement adventures, ensuring an overall good user experience. This includes “internet or other network activity information such as your IP address, geolocation-related data, unique device identifiers, browsing and search history (including content you have viewed in the Platform), and Cookies.”¹⁰ Then further allocated and expanded upon into 6 categories that follow, User Information, Device information, Location Data, Image and Audio Information, Metadata, and Cookies.

1. User Data or, “information regarding your use of the Platform and any other User Content that you generate through or upload to our Platform.”¹¹

⁷ “Privacy Policy”, 2023

⁸ “What Is a Mobile Ad Id?” Narrative Knowledge Base. Accessed November 11, 2023. <https://kb.narrative.io/mobile-advertising-ids>.

⁹ “Privacy Policy”, 2023

¹⁰ “Privacy Policy”, 2023

¹¹ “Privacy Policy”, 2023

2. Device information including “your IP address, user agent, mobile carrier, time zone settings, identifiers for advertising purposes, model of your device, the device system, network type, device IDs, your screen resolution and operating system, app and file names and types, keystroke patterns or rhythms, battery state, audio settings and connected audio devices.”¹² If using multiple devices this information as well as activity on and off the Platform, it may use this information to display advertisements that tailor to your interests, preferences, and characteristics as a user.
3. Location Data is collected based on your approximate location and IP address and SIM card, as well as other location information such as tourist attractions, shops, or other points of interest. However, “current versions of the app do not collect precise or approximate GPS information from U.S. users. If you are still using an older version that allowed for collection of precise or approximate GPS information (last release in August 2020) and you granted us permission to do so, we may collect such information.”¹³
4. Image and Audio Information, or information about the videos, audio and images that can be part of curated User Content. For example, “identifying the objects and scenery that appear, the existence and location within an image of face and body features and attributes, the nature of the audio, and the text of the words spoken in your User Content.”¹⁴ Biometric identifiers and information can be collected with the user’s permission and in accordance to US laws.

¹² “Privacy Policy”, 2023

¹³ “Privacy Policy”, 2023

¹⁴ “Privacy Policy”, 2023

5. Metadata, or data about data¹⁵ essentially describing “how, when, where, and by whom the piece of User Content was created, collected, or modified and how that content is formatted. It also includes information, such as your account name, that enables other users to trace back the User Content to your user account.”¹⁶ This also includes hashtags for keywords to the video and captions.
6. Cookies are utilized by TikTok and their various business partners. They “automatically collect information, measure and analyze how you use the Platform, including which pages you view most often and how you interact with content, enhance your experience using the Platform, improve the Platform, provide you with advertising, and measure the effectiveness of advertisements and other content.” Certain Cookies on the Platform can be disabled through various settings. However, “[TikTok is] not responsible for the privacy practices of our service providers and business partners, and the information practices of these service providers and business partners are not covered by this Privacy Policy.”¹⁷

How This Information is Used and Shared

There are many ways in which the information previously mentioned is used in a common user experience. As stated in the first section of the “How We Use Your Information” section of the Privacy Policy “[TikTok uses] your information to improve, support and administer the Platform, to allow you to use its functionalities, and to fulfill and enforce our Terms of Service. We may also use your information to, among other things, show you suggestions, promote the Platform, and customize your ad experience.”¹⁸ The Platform uses an

¹⁵ Kononow, Piotr. “What Is Metadata (with Examples) - Data Terminology.” Dataedo, September 18, 2018.

<https://dataedo.com/kb/data-glossary/what-is-metadata>.

¹⁶ “Privacy Policy”, 2023

¹⁷ “Privacy Policy”, 2023

¹⁸ “Privacy Policy”, 2023

amalgamation of all three previous sections of data collection to curate a seemingly personal user experience. The data used ranges from performing fundamental app functions, like supporting social capabilities (sharing content, Find Friends function, troubleshooting, training and improving machine learning models and algorithms), making a customized ad experience (recommending similar content a user has liked, services based on country settings, to understand the effectiveness of advertisement curated, use User Content to promote the Platform), enforcing the Terms of Service (detecting abuse, fraud, illegal activity, confirming a user's identity, scanning, analyzing, and reviewing User Content for violations), to contacting a user (sending promotional materials on behalf of TikTok and its affiliates, announce a user as the winner of a contest or promotion, changes in services).¹⁹

In a specific disclaimer in this section the Privacy Policy states: “We are committed to maintaining your trust, and while TikTok does not sell your personal information or share your personal information with third parties for purposes of cross-context behavioral advertising where restricted by applicable law, we want you to understand when and with whom we may share the *Information We Collect* (this is a hyperlink to the top of the Policy) for business purposes.”²⁰ The term they use dubbed “cross-context behavioral advertising” is an advertising technique in which a user's online behavior influences which ads they see. Mainly using non-identifiable information like device type, browsing history, and location data to create targeted ads.²¹

The data gathered from the “Information You Provide”, “Information From Other Sources”, and “Automatically Collected Information” are shared with various service providers

¹⁹ “Privacy Policy”, 2023

²⁰ “Privacy Policy”, 2023

²¹ Admin. “What Is Cross Context Behavioral Advertising.” Foxvisits, June 6, 2023. <https://www.foxvisits.com/what-is-cross-context-behavioral-advertising/>.

and business partners for: “research, payment processing and transaction fulfillment, database maintenance, administering contests and special offers, technology services, deliveries, sending communications, advertising and marketing services, analytics, measurement, data storage and hosting, disaster recovery, search engine optimization, and data processing.”²² These partners include payment processors and transaction fulfillment providers, customer and technical support providers, researchers, advertising, marketing, and analytics vendors as well as entities within the Platform’s corporate group. TikTok also may disclose any of the previously mentioned data collected in any legal proceedings the company is involved in including “subpoenas, court orders, legal process, law enforcement requests, legal claims, or government inquiries.”²³

Your Rights/Choices With Your Consent

The Platform may share the information a user has provided for other purposes (with consent) with third parties. For example, third party services like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Google offer a sign-up, log-in, and content sharing experience. Depending on the permissions a user grants, the Platform can share information (like your account activity) and the third party will be able to access account information. A user has the right to request to know, access, correct or delete the information the Platform has collected, which includes: “what personal information is collected the business or commercial purpose for collecting or sharing personal information, the categories of third parties to whom we share the personal information, and the specific pieces of personal information we have collected about you.”²⁴ Additionally, within a user’s device browser settings they can control the information the Platform collects. For example, there is an opt out setting for Cookies, targeted advertising, third party advertising preferences, whether TikTok collects your mobile advertising identifier, as well as marketing

²² “Privacy Policy”, 2023

²³ “Privacy Policy”, 2023

²⁴ “Privacy Policy”, 2023

emails. The Platform has a right to retain this various data for as long as necessary for the previous reasons listed. The retention periods vary based on the type of data (personal profile information is stored as long as you have an account). But disclaiming that “TikTok may transmit your data to its servers or data centers outside of the United States for storage and/or processing. Other entities with whom TikTok may share your data as described herein may be located outside of the United States.”²⁵

U.S. Response to TikTok’s Data Usage

Since early 2019, TikTok - and the parent corporation known as ByteDance - have been subject to numerous investigations regarding the Privacy Policy and how user data is used and stored. These range from state level class action lawsuits to former President Trump’s attempt on a ban in 2020 through executive order.²⁶ Most notably, however, would be the TikTok congress hearing in March of 2023 with CEO Shou Zi Chew. The U.S government raised many concerns regarding TikTok’s collection and storage of data in the hands of a Chinese owned company ByteDance. Specifically citing that China’s cyber security and data security laws to enable the government to conduct and influence operations that shape public opinion as well as the safety of children and teens on the app. Congress considered many options with the intention of maintaining national security, including a national ban, forced sale, as well as how these impact other technology platforms in the future.²⁷

²⁵ “Privacy Policy”, 2023

²⁶ Perault, Matt. “Project Texas: The Details of TikTok’s Plan to Remain Operational in the United States.” LawFare, January 26, 2023. <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/project-texas-the-details-of-tiktok-s-plan-to-remain-operational-in-the-united-states>.

²⁷ Perault, Project Texas, January 26, 2023

TikTok's Reaction – Project Texas

Since 2020, the Committee of Foreign Investment in the United States or CFIUS has been negotiating with TikTok to allow continued U.S. operation under certain obligations.²⁸ “CFIUS is a U.S. government agency charged with reviewing and monitoring foreign investments in the United States to protect against national security threats. When CFIUS determines that a transaction may pose a risk to national security, it may enter into a mitigation agreement with the entity, and then conduct ongoing monitoring to ensure that the entity complies.”²⁹ The 1.5-billion-dollar project known as “Project Texas” attempts to mitigate four concerns, (1) unauthorized access to data, (2) state influence over content (prioritize content threatening the U.S.), (3) untrustworthy software and systems (intentional and unintentional vulnerabilities in preventing unauthorized access), (4) creating a data security precedent (the U.S. has no comprehensive privacy legislation).³⁰ An essential part of Project Texas was the creation of the USDS, or U.S Data Security which is an “entirely independent business entity tasked with managing all business functions that require access to user data identified by the U.S. government as needing additional protection and safeguarding the systems that deliver content on the app in the U.S. to ensure that it is free from foreign manipulation.”³¹ This includes transferring all data previously stored in foreign entities like Singapore, to American based data storage facilities, known as the “Oracle”. Stating on the USDS website that: “We still use our US and Singapore data centers for backup, but as we continue our work we expect to delete US users' private data from our own data centers and fully pivot to Oracle cloud servers located in

²⁸ Morrison, Sara. “TikTok's Master Plan to Win over Washington.” Vox, January 17, 2023. <https://www.vox.com/recode/2023/1/17/23552716/tiktok-ban-cfius-bytedance>.

²⁹ Perault, 2023

³⁰ Perault, 2023

³¹ “Safeguarding U.S. User Data.” TikTok, March 22, 2023. <https://usds.tiktok.com/safeguarding-us-user-data/>.

the US.”³² As the market for TikTok is mainly located in the U.S. - and therefore the majority of their profit - maintaining international relations with the U.S. government and Chinese owned companies is imperative.

Since this program is in its beginning stages, only being instated early July 2022, the potential benefits and dangers to the company of TikTok are still in development. However, they have had some success in the perception of Project Texas, even using it as a marketing technique to new users. It is the first of its kind on such a large scale, in which they can establish a precedent for other tech giants. Now they can claim it is the safest place to hold your data as a result of these new measures. However, there are some potential logistical and legal downsides to the enactment of the USDS and Project Texas. For example, “[given] that the complexity of the USDS data storage model would likely have some impact on app performance and stability. In general, app performance lags when there is a greater distance between the location where data is stored and the user trying to access that data. Creating USDS will require some user data to transit significantly longer distances. In addition, because most data held outside the U.S. will not be able to flow into USDS, USDS will not be able to use large portions of TikTok’s global data set to train its algorithm in the United States.”³³ Additionally, as a result of the contents of the Federal Trade Commission Act it severely limits the amount of affiliate data sharing between the USDS and the Chinese parent, in which they will prosecute in found that this is the reality.³⁴

³² TikTok. “Delivering on Our US Data Governance.” Newsroom, August 16, 2019. <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/delivering-on-our-us-data-governance>.

³³ Perault, 2023

³⁴ Perault, 2023

SOCIAL MEDIA AND MENTAL HEALTH

Social Media Addiction

Addiction to social media plagues children and adults alike. Tiktok took the world by storm, amassing a huge following within a short seven years. The app has been downloaded over 2 billion times³⁵. There are around one billion monthly users that actively use Tiktok. Their average usage across the app is 10.85 minutes per session, which is the highest amount of usage time on any social media platform. Also, Tiktok has experienced a tremendous amount of scrolling since 2020, seeing Americans ages 18 and over spending a total of 1.43 billion hours on the app³⁶.

The numbers easily show just how addictive the app has become for people, especially young adults and children. The teenage population suffers the most from “doom scroll” and TikTok addiction. Doom scrolling is the act of continuously using TikTok for excessive amounts of time without realizing how long someone has been on the app. It leads to losing minutes and even hours of the day or it prevents focus on more important activities. Doom scrolling tends to be a symptom of TikTok addiction.

Due to the pandemic, teens looked to new options of entertainment and different social media platforms. TikTok became the easiest way for teens to occupy themselves. A study done during the peak of quarantine, June 2020, showed that adolescents ranging from ages 4 to 15 spent over 80 minutes per day on TikTok. Once activities started to open up again, teens realized they had become addicted and some took preventative measures. One teen, Yency Alvino, made the decision to delete the app. He realized that it was taking over his life and had negative effects

³⁵ “Is Tiktok taking over the lives of teenagers?” 2021. The Westwind. <https://awestnews.com/features/2021/04/21/is-tiktok-taking-over-the-lives-of-teenagers/>.

³⁶ Dean, Brian. 2023. “TikTok User Statistics (2023).” Backlinko. <https://backlinko.com/tiktok-users>.

on his school work³⁷. Many students feel similar to Alvino and question the addictive nature of TikTok.

Many different factors explain why Tiktok is extremely addictive. One of the biggest is the mechanism of the “like button.” The like button gains information about a user's preferences and uses the algorithm to tailor content to the user. This allows TikTok to keep people on the app more engaged without specifically asking about their preferences. Another interesting aspect of “likes” is the reward-based mechanisms. Likes affirm the enjoyment of something and an MRI study showed that the act of liking something caused neural activity in the sections of the brain associated with rewards. Likes satisfy the human desire to be accepted and praised by other people. The more people post and the more they like, the more time users spend on TikTok . Another aspect of the reward system revolves around follower count. The more “friends” or followers a person collects, the better they feel about themselves. When a person gets a jolt of dopamine, they search for more, which encourages them to use TikTok more often. Also, liking videos acts as an investment in an app. More likes equate to a larger investment and a larger amount of time on an app. A very interesting aspect of the app layout helps to aid its addictive nature. The refresh feature requires users to slide down on the app, which simulates a slot machine. The reward that users receive: a new set of entertaining and enticing videos³⁸. Overall, TikTok possesses major power over the users of the app. However, many of the addictive factors work in tandem with personal behaviors. Setting good limits for oneself is the best way to combat addiction and, if necessary, deleting the app.

³⁷ “Is Tiktok taking over the lives of teenagers?” 2021

³⁸ Petrillo, Sophia. 2021. “What Makes TikTok so Addictive?: An Analysis of the Mechanisms Underlying the World’s Latest Social Media Craze.” Brown Undergraduate Journal of Public Health, (December). <https://sites.brown.edu/publichealthjournal/2021/12/13/tiktok/>.

Interestingly enough, there are identifiable symptoms of TikTok addiction that people can look out for. Different symptoms can include nervousness, irritability, anxiety, or sadness when not using the app. They can differ as well, but these are the ones most consistent with social media addiction. Also, there has been a stark increase in the number of patients being treated for social media addiction. People begin to access social media platforms at a younger age, which puts them at a higher risk for developing addiction. Specialists have found that abstinence-based treatment has not been effective because of society's general reliance on the Internet. They lean towards identifying a person's triggers, setting certain boundaries and limits, and encouraging interacting with the outside world on a more consistent basis³⁹. Healthy moderation is the best way to handle social media usage.

The Mental Health Impact of Tiktok

The prevalence of social media in everyday life has had a mass impact on society. The mental health of adolescence has suffered due to increased amounts of social media addiction. TikTok shows children a filtered and tailored version of reality, which takes an extreme toll on their mental health. Many experts believe that TikTok can lead to an increase in the chance of developing depression, anxiety, and/or eating disorders. In 2021, the Wall Street Journal conducted a study to investigate the algorithm promoting content related to depression, anxiety, etc. They created 100 different bots consisting of different ages, genders, and interests. They were programmed to linger on their specific programmed content interests. One of the bots had an interest in depression-related content, so it lingered. The algorithm learned of the bots' specific interests and promoted that specific content within thirty-six minutes of using the

³⁹ Smith, Adam. 2022. "New study identifies 'TikTok addiction' and the symptoms that show when users have it." The Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/tech/tiktok-addiction-symptoms-study-users-b2072116.html>.

TikTok. After a little while, the bot's For You Page was over ninety three percent depression and sadness content⁴⁰. Many professionals and studies have shown direct connections between social media usage and eating habits or disorders⁴¹.

Many adolescents find their sense of community and identity from TikTok. The idea of the "culture of comparison" proves harmful for the self-image and mental health of young people. They compare themselves with the number of followers, likes, and shares they have on social media. If adolescents do not believe they have enough, their mental health can suffer as a result. Some continuously have the idea that they will never be as good as the people they see on social media platforms, like TikTok. For kids who are already predisposed to issues with self image, TikTok usage could exacerbate their problems⁴².

TikTok not only creates mental health issues, it also has the ability to intensify established issues as well. Studies have shown that children with existing conditions have shown increasing or worsening symptoms after spending time watching TikTok content. There is also research showing that adolescents with different stressors can experience temporary declines in mental health and increases in aggression⁴³.

How TikTok Curves the Crisis

Although the outlook might be bleak, TikTok offers many resources for adolescents to learn about mental health and how to seek help. One of the biggest programs TikTok has established gives healthy reminders to stop scrolling after an extended period of time on the app.

⁴⁰ Nash, Ashley. 2022. "Investigation: Is TikTok dangerous for the mental health of children?" Deseret News. <https://www.deseret.com/2022/3/3/22959801/investigation-tiktok-a-bad-effect-on-kids-mental-health-depression-anxiety-eating-disorder>.

⁴¹ Petrillo 2021

⁴² "TikTok and Youth Mental Health: Weighing the Pros and Cons." n.d. Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance. Accessed November 10, 2023. <https://www.dbsalliance.org/education/newsletters/tiktok-and-youth-mental-health/>.

⁴³ "TikTok and Youth Mental Health: Weighing the Pros and Cons" n.d.

They have well known TikTokers make announcements and suggestions to take a break or grab some water. It is extremely beneficial and can interrupt the doom scrolling.

TikTok exposes users to many different aspects and types of mental health issues. Their content helps to show compassion and make audiences aware of the effects of mental conditions. TikTok also encourages working with therapists and other mental health professionals⁴⁴.

One of the best things about TikTok is the community it provides for its users. Many adolescents have the resources to find people who share similar struggles, experiences, and interests. Mental health has been a rather taboo subject and TikTok has helped to open the door for more constructive discussions⁴⁵.

The impact that TikTok has had on aspects of user's mental health is wide reaching and far ranging. The perception of most parents, experts, and even users is that TikTok has a largely negative impact on the mental health of those who use it. However, TikTok also has intense influence over conversations surrounding mental health on their app and could potentially change public perception about its harm with the right policies and campaigns.

V. SAFETY

Child Exploitation

Social media and family accounts go hand in hand. Since the beginning of social media, parents have often shared pictures and videos of their children in their day to day lives. What started out as harmless sharing of pride, took a turn for the worst as social media became more prevalent. BYU family life professor Sarah Coyne said that women tend to be more

⁴⁴ "TikTok and Youth Mental Health: Weighing the Pros and Cons" n.d.

⁴⁵ "TikTok and Youth Mental Health: Weighing the Pros and Cons" n.d.

relationship-focused, hence their general desire to want to keep existing or create new relationships online (BYU). Family accounts on social media often only portray the positives of their daily lives; therefore, families often view themselves negatively when they aren't as perfect as the accounts they view daily. However, the families that create this content also experience negative effects as well. For example, famous TikToker Katrina Strobe, often posted videos and photos of her children, aged 3 and 4, playing in parks and swimming pools. This came to a screeching halt in the spring of 2022 when she discovered a stranger online had been saving her content and reposting it as their own pretending to be her children's guardian. She now refrains from posting any pictures that contain her children's faces. Shyla Walker was also a social media influencer who decided to no longer show her toddler's face on any of her high-traffic platforms. This was after she told Insider: "I wish I would have known sooner how innocent things can be used in not-so-innocent ways . . . I would post innocent photos of her in a bikini, and now I just cringe when I look back because I feel I was essentially just feeding her to child predators."

The process of sharing photos, videos, and parenting techniques is known as "sharenting." Stacey Steinberg, a Professor at the University of Florida, explains that sharenting can have a lot of benefits, such as connecting with faraway family and friends to build communities, networks, and online relationships. However, like many things on the internet, it has many negative effects as well. Over three-quarters of parents have shared stories, videos, or other images of their children or step-children on social media; and in these posts over 80% of parents use their children's real names. Going further from this, 76% of parents do not ask permission from their children or step-children every time when sharing pictures, videos, or stories prior to sharing that content. And over 32% of parents report sharing a story, image, or video of their child after they were asked to not share it. According to Steinberg, "Lack of

consent in sharenting is a problem as parents shape their children's online reputation without their permission." One alarming statistic shows that 64% of parents reported their child being cyber bullied on TikTok alone.

Social media can affect certain lives in other ways as well. Hollywood child stars are people who reached celebrity status at a very young age. An example of this is Britney Spears, who achieved this status at a mere 15 years old. The problems within Britney Spears' fame lie within the decision to make her father, Jamie Spears, her conservator. In doing so he was in charge of her finances as well as many of her early career choices. Research has found that as adults, former young performers whose parents served as their professional managers viewed their parents as less caring and more overcontrolling than did performers whose parents were not their managers. However, Britney Spears isn't the only example of this phenomenon, more examples include Lindsay Lohan, Mara Wilson, and Macaulay Culkin. It is unclear how child social media fame will affect children, but historically, mass popularity at too early of an age can severely negatively impact the lives of children – even into their adult lives.

Dangerous Trends

Social media as a whole has been known to foster dangerous trends. As digital wellness expert Joanne Orlando, PHD, states "One of the best ways [for people] to get noticed on TikTok is to jump onboard with the trends." These dangerous trends often garner a lot of attention causing others to also want to participate. Even Dr. Rutledge agrees stating that, "Challenges are a dare. Dares trigger our innate needs to fit in and be accepted, show ourselves off well — a badge of honor — not as cowards." As more people begin to do these trends as well it can create an echo chamber surrounding the activity. General members of the public can begin to believe

that doing these trends is 'okay' and as more begin to do it the more the trend spreads around the world affecting more people. While many trends on TikTok are harmless, with some even creating positive change, there are also trends and challenges that have created serious safety concerns for users and others (ex. TidePod challenge, devious licks). When these trends stick, it's often TikTok that receives the blowback from the public for allowing such dangerous content/behavior to proliferate on their app. As such, finding more unique ways to combat harmful social media trends is a key priority of TikTok.

However, this isn't the only echo chamber social media can create. Psychologist and member of the American Psychological Association board Mary Ann McCabe states that during the first year of the pandemic, they began to see a flurry of new diagnoses of eating disorders in her teen patients and their friends. McCabe goes further to explain this ideology, "These kids often reported that they started by watching something relatively benign, like exercise videos," she said. But their social media algorithms doubled down on that content, offering up more and more material related to body image and weight. 'It was an echo chamber,' McCabe added." Like dangerous trends, as social media feeds begin to show the same feed over and over again, it leads to the viewers accepting these trends as common and normal.

TikTok has taken action against these dangerous trends by implementing strategies for parents to use in order to keep their children away from these trends. Within their help center they offer a variety of solutions such as: a user safety guide, family pairing, and even a guardian guide. Within their user safety guide they explain to parents how to activate restricted mode which allows them to access a variety of solutions to dangerous trends. The restricted mode allows for a feed to be filtered based on keywords, allowing parents to assure their children won't see dangerous trends. This safety guide also explains how a parent can activate family

pairing on their child's TikTok feed. In doing so, it allows a parent to access a plethora of information regarding their child's feed such as: linked account activity, deactivating the search feature and limiting it as well, restricting direct messaging, discoverability, and even activating a STEM feature which only allows their feed to consist of educational content. Going further from this, TikTok has also released an article titled the "Guardian Guide," which supports parents in their endeavor to limit dangerous trends and their spread. It gives them information on the resources listed previously as well as certain methods to keep their children away from dangerous trends.

TikTok has also implemented changes to their app in accordance with the user's age. In their new guidelines they explain that users under the age of 13 can't post videos or comment, and content is curated for a younger audience. Other policy mandates that users aged 13-15 can't post videos or comment, content is curated for a younger audience, and there is a time limit of 60 minutes a day for users under the age of 18. This allows children to have less access to their feeds, limiting echo chambers and content of dangerous trends. TikTok has also released numerous statements acknowledging dangerous trends as well as discouraging influencers from posting this type of content. They also ask for influencers to discourage others from participating in these trends when appropriate.

CONTENT MODERATION

The Algorithm: Into the Rabbit Hole

TikTok is unlike many other social media platforms because users use the app to stream content, rather than create it. For platforms, like Instagram or X (formerly known as Twitter) users are often the ones creating the content through posts or tweets. Apps like Snapchat are used primarily for communication. Although anyone can create content on TikTok, the vast majority of the content made on the platform is made by a small number of creators. This makes it much more similar to YouTube or Netflix than more traditional social media apps. Studies estimate that 90-95% of the content viewed on TikTok comes from the 'For You Page'.⁴⁶ When users scroll through the 'For You Page', they are not searching for any specific content. Instead, the TikTok algorithm is feeding them recommendations. As a person spends more and more time on TikTok, the algorithm begins to learn their preferences and can become much more accurate in its predictions of which videos a user would be interested in. This secretive, yet powerful algorithm has been a key component to TikTok's success by creating long-term users who invest more and more time into the app.

According to their website, TikTok officially describes their algorithm as a recommendation system "designed to help people have a more personalized experience". The three factors they claim to use are: user interactions (like, share, follow, etc), video information (caption, hashtags, song), and device settings (language and country setting).⁴⁷ By measuring

⁴⁶ WSJ. "Investigation: How TikTok's Algorithm Figures out Your Deepest Desires." July 21, 2021. https://www.wsj.com/video/series/inside-tiktoks-highly-secretive-algorithm/investigation-how-tiktok-algorithm-figures-out-your-deepest-desires/6C0C2040-FF25-4827-8528-2BD6612E3796?mod=hp_lead_pos5&mod=article_inline

⁴⁷ Newsroom | TikTok. "How TikTok Recommends Videos #ForYou," August 16, 2019. <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/how-tiktok-recommends-videos-for-you>.

these individual data points for each user, they can find similar videos to recommend and continue to add onto the endless scroll of content available. They work to keep updated on a user's interests, by adding in different types of videos every so often in order to see if that will pique a user's interest. A leaked internal document, titled "TikTok Algo101" revealed TikTok explains their algorithm to non-technical employees using four tenets: user value, long-term user value, creator value, and platform value.⁴⁸ On the whole, TikTok is very private when it comes to how exactly their algorithm works. While all social media networks use algorithms to recommend content, none are as strong as TikTok's which has the power to change how we think.⁴⁹

The Wall Street Journal set up an experiment where they created 100 bot accounts with programmed 'interests', unbeknownst to the algorithm. They then had these accounts scroll through their 'For You Pages'. These accounts were trained to not 'like' or 'comment' on videos that piqued their interests, but instead would linger on the videos longer or even rewatch them.⁵⁰ After about thirty minutes, the algorithm began to rapidly increase the number of recommended videos that fell within the pre-programmed interests. This type of aggressive predication can lead to a Rabbit-Hole effect, where users are fed videos about a narrow topic.⁵¹ As these niches get more and more narrow, videos that are not moderated as closely are then recommended to users. These unmoderated videos can potentially be dangerous and promote harmful behaviors, which is why TikTok must be careful when determining the relative strength of their algorithm.

TikTok's unique algorithm has been credited to its rise in popularity. Because TikTok collects so much data on its users and is able to accurately predict content that will engage them,

⁴⁸ Smith, Ben. "How TikTok Reads Your Mind.", December 6, 2021, sec. Business. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/05/business/media/tiktok-algorithm.html>.

⁴⁹ Smith, 2021.

⁵⁰ WSJ, 2021.

⁵¹ Staff, W. S. J. "Inside TikTok's Algorithm: A WSJ Video Investigation.", July 21, 2021, sec. Tech. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/tiktok-algorithm-video-investigation-11626877477>.

they are able to retain long-term users.⁵² The combination of short, attention-grabbing videos and a powerful algorithm recommending them, means that users become more and more addicted to the app. This can be detrimental to the user's health, but very beneficial to TikTok's massive profits.

Shadow Banning

While 'shadow banning' is not an official part of TikTok's content moderation process, it is a phenomenon that has been observed by various creators and users alike. Because TikTok controls the algorithm, they can pull certain videos from the 'For You Page' without banning them from the platform entirely. This can cause creators to have much lower views than expected on certain videos, which can negatively impact sponsorship deals and their share of the creator fund. While there is no official guideline for what types of videos will typically be shadow banned, observers have noticed that videos containing adult content, bullying or harassment, and/or copyright infringement are more likely to be shadow banned.⁵³ These shadow bans are largely automated which is why creators will typically shy away from violent or suggestive words that could potentially have their video flagged and shadow banned. However, many activist creators have also brought forth allegations against TikTok that their content is often shadow banned because of their political messaging. Shadow banning brings up many free speech concerns for users and creators alike and is a process that could bring more negative attention to the platform if used incorrectly.

⁵² Williams, Tracy. "Why Is Tiktok So Addictive? Experts Weigh in Amid New Safety Feature."(blog), April 13, 2023. <https://www.healthtechdigital.com/why-is-tiktok-so-addictive-experts-weigh-in-amid-new-safety-feature/>.

⁵³ "TikTok Shadow Ban: What It Is & How It Happens." Accessed November 8, 2023. <https://later.com/blog/tiktok-shadowban/>.

Hate Speech

As defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, hate speech is "public speech that expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group based on something such as race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation".⁵⁴ Due to the relative recentness of hate speech on social media, there is no universal definition, and the concept is still widely in discussion.⁵⁵ This kind of hateful public speech has been known to exist on many social media apps, including but not limited to TikTok.

TikTok's community guidelines prohibit hate speech, as hate speech is considered "incompatible with TikTok's creative and inclusive environment".⁵⁶ TikTok's hate speech guidelines are comprehensive, and prevents speech that is white supremacist, misogynistic, anti-LGBTQ, antisemitic and more. The scope of TikTok's guidelines have greatly improved over time, as they now prevent speech against fourteen identifying groups in 2023, and only protected three groups in 2015.⁵⁷ When users search for offensive content on the platform, they are redirected to the Community Guidelines. TikTok has employed AI to flag offensive and hate speech content on the platform, and then these posts are sent to content moderators for review.⁵⁸ TikTok's safety guidelines suggest that if someone experiences a form of hate speech, they should use TikTok's safety tools, and report this person to TikTok.⁵⁹ In August of 2020, TikTok reported that they had removed more than 380,000 videos for violating the hate speech policy, banned more than 1,300 accounts, and removed over 64,000 hate comments since January.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Cambridge Dictionary- Hate speech. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/hate-speech>.

⁵⁵ United Nations. Understanding Hate Speech: What is hate speech?.

https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/what-is-hate-speech?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIpSj57i8ggMVyPjICh26zgGHEAAYASAAEgI2tvD_BwE.

⁵⁶ TikTok. Countering Hate on TikTok. <https://www.tiktok.com/safety/en/countering-hate/>.

⁵⁷ Mchangama, Jacob, Abby Fanlo, and Natalie Alkiviadou. "Scope Creep: An Assessment of 8 Social Media Platforms Hate Speech Policies." *The Future of Free Speech* (2023): 61

https://futurefreespeech.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Community-Guidelines-Report_Latest-Version_Formated-002.pdf.

⁵⁸ Mchangama Et al. 56

⁵⁹ <https://www.tiktok.com/safety/en/countering-hate/>.

⁶⁰ Mchangama Et al. 63

However, despite these guidelines and results, it seems that hate speech can fall through the cracks on this platform, as hate speech content persists on TikTok.⁶¹ TikTok has continued to promote videos that contain white supremacy and anti-Black racism, both forms of racialized hate speech.⁶² TikTok has also become stages for support of terrorism, extremism, and Holocaust denial. Out of 1,030 videos studied by researchers of TikTok hate speech in 2020, one third of the videos perpetuated white supremacy.⁶³ Some of these videos garnered hundreds of thousands of views, which gives these ideas a large platform, and can expose children to them. The users creating hate speech content will often use video effects, music, or hashtags to “cloak” their videos and make them harder to detect as hate content.⁶⁴

Other social media platforms have also had to tackle the issue of hate speech. Instagram has enacted tough policies to combat hate speech on their platform.⁶⁵ Instagram has stated that a lot of hate speech and abuse stems from direct messages, or DMs, on their platform. Because they want these messages to remain private, Instagram has stated they will not monitor these conversations, but employ specific measures to prevent hate speech. Some specific measures include strict penalties for those who send hate speech messages by banning accounts of anyone who engages in that behavior, and banning any content related to Blackface or antisemitism. In between the months of July and September of 2020, Instagram took action on 6.5 million pieces of hate speech content on Instagram, including in DMs.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Kumar, Raksha. "Hate Speech can be found on TikTok at any time. But its frequency spikes in elections"." Reuters Institute. Last modified August 21, 2023.

<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/news/hate-speech-can-be-found-tiktok-any-time-its-frequency-spikes-elections>.

⁶² Guynn, Jessica. "It's not just Facebook and Twitter. TikTok is 'hatescape' for racism and white supremacy, study says." USA Today. Last modified August, 2021.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2021/08/24/tiktok-videos-hate-white-supremacy-racism-terrorism/824928600/>.

⁶³ Guynn, 2021

⁶⁴ Guynn, 2021

⁶⁵ Cybersmile Foundation. Instagram Introduce Tough New Measures to Combat Online Abuse and Hate Speech.

<https://www.cybersmile.org/news/instagram-introduce-tough-new-measures-to-combat-online-abuse-and-hate-speech>.

⁶⁶ Instagram. An update on our work to tackle abuse on Instagram. Last modified February 11, 2021.

<https://about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/an-update-on-our-work-to-tackle-abuse-on-instagram>.

X, formerly known as Twitter, has received wide criticism in its combating of hate speech on their platform. Researchers have found that since Elon Musk took over as the CEO of Twitter in October of 2022, hate speech on the platform saw a sharp increase.⁶⁷ This is due to the fact many of the accounts that were banned or removed for hate speech previously, were no longer removed under Mr. Musk's ownership. Some of these accounts, such as QAnon, a far-right conspiracy group, were able to buy a verification status on their account. It was also found that X failed to remove a majority of posts within a week of them being flagged for containing "extreme" hate speech, such as racist caricatures or denying of the holocaust.⁶⁸

A problem that relates to hate speech is the idea of the online "echo chamber". An echo chamber is an online environment where the only information or opinions that a person encounters reflects and reinforces their own.⁶⁹ These echo chambers can occur on any platform in which information is exchanged which can include online spaces or in real life. However, social media has allowed people to easily find others with similar perspectives as them, and thus increases the likelihood of falling into echo chambers. Echo chambers can be dangerous because there are no opposing views and thus they encourage misinformation, segregation, and polarization.⁷⁰ These echo chambers can give participants a distorted sense of reality due to the information being perpetuated within them. Echo chambers can encourage hateful ideologies, which in turn leads to hate speech against certain groups. Hate speech can incite violent and intolerant practices and harms the groups that are being targeted.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Frenkel, Sheera, and Kate Conger. "Hate Speech's Rise on Twitter is Unprecedented, Researchers Find." *New York Times*, December 2, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/02/technology/twitter-hate-speech.html>.

⁶⁸ Saric, Ivana. "Watchdog accuses X again of not moderating hate speech." *Axios*. Last modified September 13, 2023. <https://www.axios.com/2023/09/13/x-twitter-hate-speech-moderation-report>.

⁶⁹ "Digital Media Literacy: What is an Echo Chamber." GCF Global. <https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/digital-media-literacy/what-is-an-echo-chamber/1/>

⁷⁰ Grimes, David. "Echo Chambers are dangerous-we must try to break free of our online bubbles." *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/blog/2017/dec/04/echo-chambers-are-dangerous-we-must-try-to-break-free-of-our-online-bubbles>.

⁷¹ United Nations. "Hate speech is rising around the world." <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech>.

Misinformation

With an increase in access to information and the ability to create content in seconds, there has been a dramatic increase in the spread of misinformation. Studies have shown that as much as 20% of videos on TikTok about current events include misinformation.⁷² These videos can range on topics from education to international affairs, but the trend is alarming nonetheless. With a primarily young target audience, these videos can be circulated and are often taken at face value, without any outside research being conducted. Oftentimes, videos about politics contain a lot of misinformation, which can be especially harmful when it comes to election season.

The spread of ‘deepfake’ technology has contributed to this phenomenon, by providing greater access to high quality, but heavily manipulated images or videos. Some of these videos are humorous, such as a recent fake video of President Biden singing ‘Baby Shark’, but for the mal-intended these videos can be used to spread propaganda.⁷³ In response to this, California has passed a law making it illegal to “create or share deceptive deep fakes of politicians within 60 days of an election”.⁷⁴ The impact of these types of images has yet to be seen, but it has rung alarm bells among politicians and world leaders.

While the spread of misinformation may seem initially harmless, after all we were all taught to ‘not believe everything you see on the internet’, recent years have proven this wrong. From the spread of misinformation surrounding COVID-19 to conspiracy theories about a fraudulent 2020 election, have proven just how dangerous this misinformation can be. TikTok has the ability to detect some of this misinformation, but there are often ways for creators to hide

⁷² Tucker, Emma. “TikTok’s Search Engine Repeatedly Delivers Misinformation to Its Majority-Young User Base, Report Says | CNN Business.” CNN, September 18, 2022.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/18/business/tiktok-search-engine-misinformation/index.html>.

⁷³ Hsu, Tiffany. “Worries Grow That TikTok Is New Home for Manipulated Video and Photos.” *The New York Times*, November 4, 2022, sec. Technology.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/04/technology/tiktok-deepfakes-disinformation.html>.

⁷⁴ Hsu, 2022.

their content by speaking in ‘code’ so that the algorithm can not flag it. As board members and consultants, it will be up to you to decide whether or not to crack down on misinformation.

These videos can garner millions of hours of engagement, which makes them profitable, but at a serious social cost.



CHARACTERS

Members of the Board of Directors

Hilary McQuaide (Head Spokesperson for TikTok)

Hilary McQuaide, the Head Spokesperson for TikTok, has worked with the company since 2017.⁷⁵ She has the extremely difficult job of speaking on behalf of the company in times of crisis. This has made her a critical asset in the company's fight against US TikTok bans and other global controversies. This job requires the ability to 'spin positive' when talking to the media or governmental agencies about TikTok's practices. While she is not responsible for all of the sometimes shady business dealings behind TikTok, she is responsible for controlling the public's reaction to it. When done correctly, McQuaide has the ability to soothe over any controversies and strengthen relationships with media outlets and governments alike.

Michael Beckerman (VP and Head of Public Policy)

Michael Beckerman is the current Vice President of TikTok and he began his tenure in 2020. Beckerman received his business degree from George Washington University. He heads TikTok's government relations office and works as a lobbyist in Washington D.C. Before joining the TikTok company, Beckerman served as the president and CEO of the Internet Association for eight years. His expertise has made him pivotal in the fight against security breaches and public outcry. He was hired in 2020, after immense pressure from Washington because of the security

⁷⁵PRovoke Media. "Hilary McQuaide." Accessed January 7, 2024.
<https://www.provokemedia.com/ranking-and-data/influence-100/the-influence-100-2021/profiles/hilary-mcquaide>.

concerns in the U.S.⁷⁶ He works closely with federal agents and congress members to ensure that TikTok's success is not hindered by their political aspirations.

Cyprus Nguyen (Head of Global Brand & Creative)

Cyprus Nguyen's responsibilities as the Head of Global Brand & Creative for TikTok is to oversee their entire marketing department and control the world's view on the company. Nguyen is in charge of all major marketing movements, to increase brand awareness and clean up the app's global reputation. While TikTok has often been criticized for violating user's privacy and promoting toxic content, Nguyen must ensure that people continue to download the app. This type of creative control over TikTok is very important for the company's image, profitability, and ultimately global influence.

Adam Presser (Chief Operating Officer)

After the previous COO stepped down in June 2023 the previous Chief of Staff, Adam Presser, was promoted to their position. Adam Presser is 38 years old with an MBA from Harvard. Prior to working at Tik Tok he led WarnerMedia businesses throughout China, Australia, and New Zealand. Presser manages and handles the daily business operations of the company, he coordinates with department heads and supervises day-to-day operations. Presser is commonly known as the right-hand man of the CEO, Shouzi Chew, and aims to keep the business side of things running smoothly while the CEO focuses on bigger term projects for the company. As the COO, Presser is involved with all internal issues within TikTok. If employees

⁷⁶ "Michael Beckerman." In *Wikipedia*, May 2, 2023.
https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Michael_Beckerman&oldid=1152820804.

are dissatisfied, there are security breaches or anything else of that nature, Presser is the designated 'fixer'.

Kim Albarella (Head of Global Security)

Kim Albarella is TikTok's Head of Global Security that has been working with the company since July of 2022. Based in New York City she specializes in mitigating risk against information threat vectors (a way for hackers to enter the TikTok network), leading a global team of security professionals, and helping to ensure compliance with global security regulations for TikTok. Externally she has a responsibility for maintaining cyber security education and TikTok's reputation regarding the security and privacy of their platform. Internally, she must develop and implement security policy, standards, guidelines and procedures as well as third party security management mostly present within the apps functions and privacy policy.⁷⁷

Julie Gao (Chief Financial Officer)

Appointed in 2022, Julie Gao is the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for TikTok. Her job is to ensure that TikTok is behaving in a fiscally responsible way.⁷⁸ Although TikTok is rapidly expanding, the CFO must ensure that they budget their resources in a sustainable manner. This can come in many forms, from creating new revenue streams such as TikTok shop and working to broker deals between influencers and sponsors. One potential way to cut costs is to lay off employees and reduce the overall overhead expenses for the company. While unpopular, sometimes a CFO must make the hard decisions. A key aspect of the CFO's position is to

⁷⁷ "Kim Albarella - TikTok | LinkedIn." Accessed December 10, 2023. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/kimalbarella>.

⁷⁸ Yang, Yingzhi, Brenda Goh, and Brenda Goh. "TikTok Owner ByteDance Appoints Lawyer Julie Gao as New CFO." *Reuters*, April 25, 2022, sec. Business. <https://www.reuters.com/business/tiktok-owner-bytedance-appoints-lawyer-julie-gao-new-cfo-2022-04-25/>.

maximize profits and ensure that enough revenue is brought in to cover the expenses of maintaining the global phenomenon that is TikTok.

Nicky Raghavan (Head of Global HR)

Nicky Raghavan is the current Global Head of HR at TikTok. As the head of HR her responsibilities are to manage the employee's wellbeing, as well as developing and executing the global HR strategy, driving HR initiatives, and ensuring alignment with business goals. TikTok's global strategy is to build trust, find new and better ways to connect with candidates, and help everyone in the organization feel heard and seen. In furtherance of these efforts she is also part of the diversity and inclusion council. Thus, Raghavan wants to ensure that there is diversity both within the organization and on the app, for instance by discouraging biases in content moderators. Nicky Raghavan has a rich history of experience with HR working in a managerial position for Target, Red Bull, and Snapchat before moving to TikTok.

Matt Penarczyk (Head of Legal Department)

Matt Penarczyk is the current Global Head of TikTok's Legal Department. He works to protect the TikTok company from legal trouble, and will fight against any legal action taken by the government or other entities. Penarczyk has extensive experience in dealing with the business law of large corporations, as he worked for Microsoft for almost two decades before TikTok.⁷⁹ Thus, he is very familiar with modern technology and its implications for law both internationally and domestically. With TikTok falling into deeper and deeper legal trouble over

⁷⁹ "Matt Penarczyk - TikTok | LinkedIn." Accessed January 7, 2024.
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/matt-penarczyk-61b8968>.

issues of privacy, data storage, and misinformation, Matt Penarczyk must figure out how to fend off legal issues and maintain TikTok's prominence in the U.S.

Cormac Keenan (Head of Trust and Safety)

Cormac Keenan is TikTok's Head of Trust and Safety who has been working with the company since November 2020. He is based in Dublin, Ireland and works with the head of global security Kim Albarella. His main focus is the safety of users in Europe (around 100 million users), as the "Trust and Safety teams" are based in Ireland.⁸⁰ As of March of 2023, he and his team launched new features for teens and families using TikTok. This includes an automatic 60 minute screen time limit for users under 18 with a customizable option for parents, a screen time dashboard (which provides summaries of time on the app, the number of times TikTok was opened, and a breakdown of total time spent during the day and night, and mute notifications.)⁸¹ While he is one of the few board members actively seeking to reduce social media addiction among young users, his policies have been effective so far.

Sarah Gorman (Head Algorithm Engineer)

Sarah Gorman acts as the current Head Algorithm Engineer for TikTok. As such, her responsibilities include overseeing the TikTok algorithm and increasing viewership on TikTok. The goal of the TikTok algorithm is to keep users attached to their phones. As head algorithm engineer, Gorman can alter exactly how the algorithm curates a user's 'For You Page'. If it favors showing users only content they have previously shown interest in, it can lead them down

⁸⁰ "Cormac Keenan on LinkedIn: New Features for Teens and Families on TikTok." Accessed December 10, 2023. https://www.linkedin.com/posts/cormac-keenan-7b88862_new-features-for-teens-and-families-on-tiktok-activity-7036992466834616320-2dVz.

⁸¹ Newsroom | TikTok. "New Features for Teens and Families on TikTok," August 16, 2019. <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/new-features-for-teens-and-families-on-tiktok-us>.

a rabbit hole of radicalization or simply fail to retain their attention if they get bored. If it favors showing users too wide of a variety of content, users may become less attentive to TikTok and choose to consume their content elsewhere. While her job is a balancing act, it holds immense power when it comes to content consumed and spread on TikTok.

Amari Shahid (Head of the Creativity Program)

Amari Shahid is the creator and manager of the TikTok Creator Fund. He launched the fund in 2020 and has been helping many TikTokers grow their platform. Shahid's product rewards creators for having engaging content. The more followers someone earns, the more money they can earn. Shahid said he came up with the idea very shortly after joining the TikTok media empire.⁸² He attends numerous events all over the country in search of donations. However, the Creator Fund disbanded at the end of 2023, but Shahid created a new program known as the Creativity Program.⁸³ After Shahid's input on the project, the Creativity Program emphasizes longer videos instead of the extremely short, viral-type videos the Creator Fund rewarded. The Creativity Program has the potential to pay out creators even more, if they can keep their audiences engaged for longer.

Shannon Ebi (VP of Advertising Management)

Shannon Ebi is the current Vice President of Advertising. As such, she works closely with advertising partners to maintain their continued support that serves as the cash flow that allows the app to operate. Her job is to ensure that TikTok remains a place where companies

⁸² Sato, Mia. "TikTok's \$1 Billion Creator Fund Is Shutting down." The Verge, November 6, 2023.

<https://www.theverge.com/2023/11/6/23949290/tiktok-creator-fund-discontinued-monetization-creativity-program>.

⁸³ "What Is The TikTok Creator Fund? | Dash Hudson." Accessed December 10, 2023.

<https://www.dashhudson.com/blog/tiktok-creator-fund>.

want to advertise and works to make sure that advertisements become as targeted as possible. Ebi also is in charge of maintaining the newly created TikTok Shop. This relatively new project has seen little success so far, but that is something Ebi is hoping to turn around. By balancing the needs/wants of advertisers and the financial demands of fellow board members, Ebi serves as an important connection for the both of them and is vital for fattening TikTok's bottom line.

Outside Consultants to the Board of Directors

Charli D'amelio

Charli D'amelio is a 19 year old TikTok content creator that amassed a massive following due to her dancing videos to viral sounds. Currently with 151.6 million followers and 11.5 billion likes, she was the most followed person on the platform before being surpassed by Khaby Lame in late 2022. Her most notable dance - the "Renegade" - was incorrectly credited to her and made her open to more forms of criticism. Both dubbed the "face of TikTok" as well as being criticized for being "cringe" or "overhyped" she became a meme for other creators to react to. Due to her popularity on TikTok she found many avenues into mainstream media. Appearing in a super bowl commercial, amassing a following on her Youtube channel, having a reality TV show, as well as competing on the popular competition dance show *Dancing with the Stars*.

Gordon Ramsey

Like many traditional celebrities, Gordon Ramsey has a TikTok account. Unlike many traditional celebrities, his TikTok account is a successful one. He primarily creates comedic TikToks in the form of duets, where he will critique another chef's recipe TikTok in his signature over-the-top personality. His videos often go viral and receive millions of views. These videos

also affect the creators he is dueting as they will typically see much more traffic on their page, post-Ramsey duet. This can be good or bad, as sometimes Ramsey's blunt nature can be viewed as 'bullying' smaller and/or younger creators. Overall, Ramsey has amassed over 39.7 million followers and 647.6 million likes which puts him in the Top 100 TikTokers. While he will occasionally promote his own restaurants and recipes, Ramsey will also use his account to promote certain kitchen utensils which has been extremely profitable.⁸⁴

Hank Green

Hank Green is a content creator centered on making educational, humorous and social commentary videos on the TikTok platform. He started creating social media content in 2007 with his older brother, author John Green, in the popular YouTube channel VlogBrothers. Additionally, the pair created and hosted other YouTube channels such as Crash Course and Sci-Show. Amassing over 8 million followers and 603 million likes he gained massive popularity after posting easy to understand educational content in early 2019. In April of 2021 Green announced that he would donate his Creator Fund revenue of about \$35,000 to the First Nations Development Institute. In January 2022, Green released a YouTube video criticizing TikTok for how it pays its creators, pointing out that due to the set value of the Creator Fund, as TikTok becomes more popular, creators earn less.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ "Gordan Ramsey's TikTok Page." Accessed December 5, 2023.

<https://www.tiktok.com/@gordonramsayofficial?lang=en>.

⁸⁵ Ovide, Shira. "Why Not Copy YouTube's Good Idea?" *The New York Times*, January 25, 2022, sec. Technology. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/25/technology/youtube-online-creators.html>.

Dylan Mulvaney

Dylan Mulvaney is a TikTok star who has used her platform to detail her gender transition and bring transgender rights issues to the forefront of the public consciousness. She came out as a trans woman in 2021.⁸⁶ She then began to document her transition on TikTok in March of 2022, known as “Days of Girlhood” where once a day she would give a glimpse into her daily life as a woman going through a gender transition.⁸⁷ Her “Days of Girlhood” videos have now gained over one billion views and she has over 10 million followers on TikTok.⁸⁸

Dylan would go on to gain many sponsorships from brands such as Ulta, Maybelline, and Bud Light. Her work with Bud Light caused a backlash with far-right and anti-trans groups, which led to a swath of hate speech towards Dylan, as well as a boycott of the brand.⁸⁹ Following this event, Dylan has continued to flourish, winning a Streamy Award for breakout creator, Woman of the Year from the magazine Attitude, and named on Forbes 30 Under 30 list, all in 2023.⁹⁰

Representative Jeff Jackson

Representative Jeff Jackson is a Democrat and currently serving as the Congressperson from the 14th district of North Carolina. He first joined TikTok in 2021 and was relatively unheard of. Since then, he has gained notoriety through his unique TikTok page. He promotes transparency in government by using TikTok as a platform to engage with voters across the

⁸⁶ Julius Miller June 1, 2022,

<https://lamag.com/theindustry/dylan-mulvaney-on-transitioning-and-becoming-a-tiktok-trailblazer>

⁸⁷ Shannon McLellan, April 15, 2022

<https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/living/story/trans-tiktoker-shares-transition-journey-millions-vulnerability-power-83940893>

⁸⁸ Ellise Shafer, 2022

<https://variety.com/lists/tiktok-discover-list-2022/dylan-mulvaney-dylanmulvaney-california-usa/>

⁸⁹ Kim Bellware, April 6 2023

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2023/04/06/dylan-mulvaney-transgender-influencer-tiktok/>

⁹⁰ Taijuan Moorman, November 28, 2023,

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/celebrities/2023/11/28/forbes-30-under-30-kendall-jenner-latto-dylan-mulvaney/71730005007/>

country and inform them of what actually happens in Congress.⁹¹ His page is reminiscent of FDR's fireside chats in which he speaks in a plain voice and does not overtly attempt to persuade viewers in one direction or another. His down-to-earth style attempts to rebuild trust between the general public and politicians. While he may disagree with fellow legislators seeking to ban TikTok, he is working to prove it can work as an effective political engagement tool. He currently has over 2.5 million followers and 32.2 million likes.⁹²

The Washington Post

The Washington Post is a newspaper that is over 100 years old and committed to covering national news in America as well as international news. They began the account in May 2019 under the direction of Dave Jorgenson who often appears in their videos. They are certainly not the only traditional news media active on TikTok, they are among the most popular and are unique in the way they choose to present their content. Instead of cutting clips from a news broadcast, the team behind the account are the ones to analyze the stories. Occasionally they will act out figures or situations from the articles in a shortened, often comedic form. This works to keep a younger generation informed on important issues. While misinformation is rampant on TikTok it is the goal of the Washington Post to fight misinformation in politics, health, and news coverage in general. Their account boasts over 1.7 million followers and 84.8 million likes.⁹³

⁹¹ Walerius, Randolph. "Rep. Jeff Jackson, Congress' Biggest TikTok Star, Sees the App as a Tool for Transparency." Roll Call, April 5, 2023.

<https://rollcall.com/2023/04/05/rep-jeff-jackson-congress-biggest-tiktok-star-sees-the-app-as-a-tool-for-transparency/>.

⁹² "Jeff Jackson's TikTok Page." Accessed December 5, 2023. <https://www.tiktok.com/@jeffjacksonnc?lang=en>.

⁹³ "The Washington Post's TikTok Page." Accessed December 5, 2023. <https://www.tiktok.com/@washingtonpost?lang=en>.

Mikayla Nogueira

Mikayla Nogueira is a TikTok Influencer well known for posting makeup tutorials and reviews. Nogueira has been posting about makeup for over a decade as she began posting beauty content on Tumblr in 2013. She joined TikTok in 2020, and within eight months of the creation of her account she had 2.8 million followers. Throughout her time on TikTok she has been through several controversies. One of these controversies surrounds her iconic New England accent, as older videos resurfaced in which she spoke without an accent, leading people to accuse her of faking her accent, which she has denied. Nogueira also has been accused of faking the results of a makeup review, specifically that she used false eyelashes to show the results of a mascara. She wants to promote brand deals and sponsorships as she relies on these to make money and promote her account. Despite these controversies, Mikayla Nogueira remains popular, with 14.6 million followers and 1.3 billion likes on her page.

Brittany Broski

Brittany Broski is a TikTok star who got her start after a reaction video of her trying kombucha went viral in 2019. She has amassed over 7.4 million followers on TikTok and 1.8 million followers on YouTube. She focuses mainly on comedy but has also done interviews of music artists and made her statement on Booktok. Some of her most notable collaborations have involved Trixie Mattel, Hozier, Harry Styles, and Codyko. She also hosted a podcast managed by Tiktok, “For You Podcast”, where she interviewed celebrities such as Jack Harlow and Bill Nye. Because of her success on TikTok, Broski created a podcast, “The Broski Report”, which details the thoughts she had throughout the week. She has appeared in Super Bowl commercials and

produced work for MTV and Comedy Central. Broski even received Paper Magazine's "TikToker of the Year" award.⁹⁴

Max Lodwick (Axe Body Spray)

Axe Body spray is one of the most popular men's fragrances in the world. Their company was established in 1983, in France, then, after large amounts of success, the product was launched in the U.S. in 2002. Over time, their production expanded to antiperspirants, shower gels, and facial care products. Axe joined TikTok in 2021, and in 2023, they reached peak popularity on the app by joining in on the "Alpha Wolf" trend. Popular among the younger generations active on TikTok, Axe Body Spray seems to have found their niche on TikTok. They can advertise directly to their target demographic, even if many of them are likely under the 13-year old age limit set by TikTok. The account has 259.8 thousand followers, 5.8 million likes, and continues to grow.⁹⁵

Sammuel Orssaud (Duolingo)

Duolingo is a popular app that helps users learn new languages, launched by Carnegie Mellon University professor Luis von Ahn and his student Severin Hacker in 2011.⁹⁶ Duolingo features a bright green owl mascot named Duo that became an internet meme in 2017 on the blog website Tumblr.⁹⁷ Duolingo then capitalized on this meme on the TikTok platform under the direction of Zaria Parvez, where videos on their page featured the mascot Duo participating in TikTok trends and using popular sounds to not only reference previous memes but to promote the

⁹⁴ Forbes. "Brittany Broski." Accessed December 10, 2023. <https://www.forbes.com/profile/brittany-broski/>.

⁹⁵ Unilever. "Axe." Accessed December 10, 2023. <https://www.unileverusa.com/brands/personal-care/axe/>.

⁹⁶ <https://university.duolingo.com/our-story-1#:~:text=Everyone%20can%20Duolingo.&text=For%20many%20people%20around%20the,than%20500%20million%20learners%20worldwide>

⁹⁷ <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/evil-duolingo-owl>

app. Duolingo's TikTok page has further cemented Duo's meme status and stardom, garnering 8.3 million TikTok followers and 180 million views on their page.⁹⁸ Duolingo is able to access an entirely different demographic by creating TikToks, and encourages more people to use their educational app.

Noelle Wong (Fenty)

Fenty Beauty is a company founded and run by Rihanna. Rihanna was inspired to create Fenty Beauty after years of experimenting with the best-of-the-best in beauty. She found that within the beauty industry there was still a void for products that performed across all skin types and tones. Fenty Beauty was one of the first brands to join TikTok as a legacy brand in 2017, however it wasn't until 2019 that they really began to try and attract attention within the platform's community. They try to show organic content on the platform in order to garner more attention, they do so by creating videos based on the current trends found within TikTok such as: the Simba Challenge, and many "A Day in the Life of a Fenty Beauty Intern" videos. In doing so they found their views more than tripled in 2019. Fenty Beauty is an exemplary example of a company that uses social media and its trends to promote their products.

Andrea Olson (PeachyBbies)

PeachyBbies is a company based out of Austin, Texas that sells various types of slime. In 2017 Andrea Olson began to sell her slime out of her home with her mother and sister. Unfortunately, in the middle of 2019 when the slime trend began to wind down, she had closed her business. However in 2020, she and her new business partner Tyler invested once again into the business of slime and began to make YouTube videos once again. After not getting as much

⁹⁸ <https://www.tiktok.com/@duolingo?lang=en>

attention and losing her drive to create content, she tried TikTok. Within that same year she reached 20,000 followers and moved the business to a warehouse to increase her slime supply. With celebrities such as Kim Kardashian and her daughter North sharing her product, her TikTok fame skyrocketed and is now at an astonishing 6.2 million followers. With the new intake of sales coming from the platform she was able to increase her business to 20 employees and moved to a larger warehouse where she still makes slime to this day.⁹⁹

Liz Owoc (Bang! Energy Drinks)

Liz Owoc is the marketing director for Bang Energy Drinks, the company that was founded by her husband Jack Owoc. Bang Energy's commercial success has been directly tied to its advertising activities on TikTok and Instagram to promote their products. Bang Energy employs popular social media influencers to show their drinks in their TikTok videos. These videos are tagged with #bangenergy, a hashtag which has amassed 18 billion views, and Bang's own page has 1.5 million followers.¹⁰⁰ Influencers and Bang Energy are in a mutually beneficial relationship, as Bang Energy made over \$780 million in sales in 2020 as a result of influencer marketing on TikTok, and Bang provides influencers with a large amount of their income.¹⁰¹ In 2021, Sony Music sued Bang Energy for using their music in promotional TikToks created by influencers without license, and the music is used to garner views due to the song's popularity.

⁹⁹ PeachyBbies. "PeachyBbies Slime Shop." Accessed December 10, 2023. <https://peachybbies.com/>.

¹⁰⁰<https://www.reuters.com/legal/litigation/warner-music-sues-bang-energy-latest-tiktok-advertising-lawsuit-2022-09-16>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.morningbrew.com/daily/stories/bang-energy-conquered-tik-tok>