on the musical repertoires that receive the most attention on TikTok. This analysis does not focus on criteria that are typically applied in the context of jazz-related canon building beyond the platform, such as the artistic merit of the songs performed. However, processes of cultural hierarchization based on categories of social difference, such as origin and gender, which also substantially shape canon-building processes, are clearly reflected in the context of TikTok. Moreover, in contrast to its Chinese counterpart Douyin, TikTok is tailored to Western markets and evidently reflects a markedly Western-influenced, or more accurately, U.S.-centric perspective on jazz. This perspective, which is strongly contextualized within Western frameworks, has been a defining feature of jazz-related canon-building processes for decades, with U.S. repertoires and musicians typically accorded greater prominence.

7.3   Cultural Hegemonies on TikTok (and Beyond)

The findings of this study demonstrate that the homogenization tendencies observed on TikTok influence not only the musical repertoire performed, but also specific demographic groups. It is evident that body norms and beauty ideals play a pivotal role in this context. These social categories have historically exerted a considerable influence on the negotiation of media visibility, long before the advent of digital platforms. In such contexts, the human body should be understood as a medium for the construction and representation of social categories of difference, including but not limited to gender, *race*, and class (Degele 2006, 579). In this way, specific normative ideas of beauty, which are linked to social power, are inscribed in the body. Individuals who conform to specific, conventionalized beauty norms generally enjoy numerous privileges. The results of socio-psychological research demonstrate that individuals who are perceived as attractive can earn a higher income, find sexual and life partners more easily, and are perceived by others as being more likeable and competent (Degele 2006, 584). In this sense, the body can to a certain extent be used as capital to compensate for a lack of economic or cultural capital (Degele 2017, 116). This phenomenon is also evidenced by an analysis of the popularity peaks of jazz musicians on TikTok. The platform allows musicians to strategically utilize their bodies to gain popularity early on, circumventing the traditional gatekeepers of the music industry, such as record labels and managers. The results of the interviews show that, in addition to music-related aspects such as the choice of repertoire, the targeted staging of one's own body and

thus also the perpetuation of normative ideas of beauty can significantly influence the likelihood of success or failure. It is evident that the category of *race* also plays a pivotal role in this context. As demonstrated in chapter 4.8, specific relations of inequality are reproduced on TikTok. BIPoC face significant challenges in generating long-term visibility on the platform. This power imbalance is also clearly reflected in the field of jazz popularity peaks on TikTok, where *white* musicians in particular are apparently afforded the opportunity to achieve substantial success on the platform. Specific body norms, particularly those pertaining to notions of attractiveness and the categories of *race* and gender, undoubtedly exert a profound influence on the negotiation of visibility on TikTok. Consequently, various categories of difference are inextricably intertwined on the platform, mutually reinforcing each other intersectionally under certain circumstances (for a detailed examination of intersectionality, see Collins and Bilge 2016; Winker and Degele, 2009; and Suzuki 2013, who offers a particularly insightful analysis of the phenomenon of intersectionality in the context of jazz).

The interviews conducted revealed that some musicians engage in targeted experimentation with their appearance, identifying specific patterns of success over time and subsequently presenting themselves in alignment with these patterns. This form of self-representation is thus tailored to the perceived demands of the TikTok platform, as imagined by the musicians themselves. Although these practices are clearly oriented towards the affordances of the platform, the underlying principle is not a novel concept. People have long engaged in social positioning through their appearance in a multitude of contexts, and they adapt their physical appearance to meet the requirements of specific occasions and contexts. Such beauty practices can be defined as work on one's own body and include any practices that aim to modulate one's appearance. These physical beauty practices are primarily associated with women and encompass makeup, hairstyles, and clothing, as well as measures related to hair removal and dieting (Goldmann and Herbst 2023, 939). The practice of social positioning through physical appearance can serve a variety of objectives, including establishing an identity and attracting attention (Degele 2006, 580). In the context of TikTok, attention is a valuable form of currency, which, as the findings of this study demonstrate, can be attained, among other means, through the presentation of particular physical characteristics. In particular, a platform like TikTok can contribute to the further perpetuation of specific body norms through its virality-centered and iterative functional logic. This is because successful TikTok creators can

potentially serve as a benchmark for numerous users and aspiring creators, and their content has a greater chance of being noticed by many people on Tik-Tok and subsequently being shared. Furthermore, the process of optimizing cultural objects for platforms can also be observed to entail the optimization of one's own body in accordance with established standards. Content creators who aim to achieve the highest degree of visibility are compelled to invest significant effort into enhancing their physical appearance (Goldmann and Herbst 2023, 940).

It is evident that the media has played a pivotal role in the representation of particular body norms even prior to the advent of digital platforms. This is because ideals of beauty and body norms have historically been negotiated and discursively produced within media spaces. However, digital platforms appear to merely replicate familiar homogenizations, as evidenced by current studies on popularity peaks on various platforms and in different content segments. A study conducted by Nicola Döring in 2023 revealed a striking gender imbalance in the top one hundred most subscribed YouTube channels. The author found that 75% of the corresponding YouTubers are male, while social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram exhibited a more balanced representation of genders (Döring 2023, 964–66). In this context, YouTube reflects well-known gender stereotyping. For example, only five of the fifty most subscribed YouTube channels in Germany are run by individuals who identify as female. Additionally, the content of these channels also focuses on stereotypically feminine beauty topics. As Döring notes, no channel in the top two hundred and fifty German YouTube channels run by a woman addresses topics such as gaming, news, politics, or science, and only one channel is dedicated to sports (Döring 2023, 967). Well-known content creators who are active on platforms must establish connectivity within specific reference systems in order to be authenticatable for their followers. This often occurs within a heteronormative gender framework, which is why the channels of very high-reach female individuals are often about cosmetics, for example, while the channels of their male counterparts are about gaming (Schuegraf 2023, 959). Among the most popular content creators, there are only a few examples across platforms that deviate from these norms, such as individuals who create content related to the LGBTQ+ community or whose content is explicitly political in nature. The creators who generate the most attention appear to be those that reproduce gender-related differences and body norms that have become deeply entrenched in traditional mass media over decades and have ultimately been transferred to the platform context (Jost 2022, 416; Schuegraf 2023, 960). This gives the im-

pression that, in the field of popularity peaks on digital platforms, everything is largely the same – despite the fact that, in principle, more people can participate in public discourse in digital spaces than ever before. This illustrates once again that, with regard to the most visible content and content creators, well-known cultural hegemonic structures are reproduced on digital platforms. Despite the diversity of voices that exists in principle, there is often a lack of democratic tendencies in digital spaces.

The portrayal of female jazz musicians on TikTok exhibits clear parallels to earlier media representations of women in jazz history. Some of the musicians interviewed for this study gained prominence on TikTok for their instrumental performances, particularly Kellin Hanas and Brooklyn Stafford. The remaining musicians occasionally play the guitar or piano to accompany their singing, but it can be assumed that they are still primarily perceived as singers. This example demonstrates that some established jazz-related patterns of canon building have remained consistent on TikTok. Sherrie Tucker has already performed a historical analysis of the "gender-coding of musical instruments" in jazz (Tucker 2002, 978–79). This refers to the historical fact that various instruments that have long been core features of jazz – such as drums, bass, and brass instruments – have always been typically associated with male musicians, while female musicians in jazz have essentially been accepted only as singers, if at all (see also Pellegrinelli 2008). The consequences of such gender-coding processes (and the corresponding omission of female musicians from the annals of jazz history) are still discernible today. This is apparent upon even cursory examination of the conventional overviews of jazz history, wherein at most a handful of female vocalists are juxtaposed with a multitude of male instrumentalists (see DeVeaux and Giddins 2015 as a typical example). These are representative of the gender-coded processes that are typical in the field of (music) historiography. The category of gender affects who can and may write history and who and what is (or can become) the subject of historical representations (Paletschek and Reusch 2013, 7). It is therefore unsurprising that jazz historiography, which has been heavily influenced by men from the outset, has always revolved around musicians who are perceived as male (Dunkel 2014).

The portrayal of female musicians on TikTok found in this study is analogous to the depiction of female jazz musicians in earlier media contexts. This phenomenon can be illustrated with the aid of a historical example: the popularity of all-girl bands in the U.S. between the second half of the 1920s and the immediate post-war period. As McGee (2009) and Tucker (2000) have shown, such bands enjoyed a considerable degree of popularity during this

period. The ensembles were larger in size and comprised exclusively of female musicians. They typically performed in a conventional big band configuration that remains prevalent today. However, on occasion, they employed additional instruments, such as banjos and harps, for stylistic effect. One illustrative example is the band The Ingenues (McGee 2008). Many of these bands performed across the U.S. and were frequently reviewed in music periodicals such as *DownBeat* and *Metronome*. Despite their considerable success, they were occasionally subjected to sexist denigration in these media. During the Second World War, all-girl bands were on the one hand supposed to provide entertainment and variety, and on the other hand were formed to replace the numerous male musicians who were absent due to the war. Following the conclusion of the war and the return of the men, female musicians were – in some instances deliberately and systematically – excluded from the music industry with the objective of reinstating the roles of the (mostly) male musicians. Moreover, music journalists wrote disparagingly about female musicians, deeming them unworthy of artistic recognition and remembrance. Consequently, all-girl bands were excluded from the canon of conventional jazz history narratives (McGee 2009, 245–57).

Nevertheless, the work of these bands is relatively well documented in numerous short films. In these films, the female musicians are occasionally depicted as serious musicians, essentially as instrumentalists. In some instances, however, the women appearing in the films are not, in fact, musicians, a fact that often becomes evident from the awkward way in which they handle the instruments. In such cases, the music was played back from a tape. In instances where the emphasis is not on technical proficiency but rather on other aspects, such as in these short films, female musicians are often depicted in a stereotypical and sexualized manner. The staging is at times evidently derived from the then-popular pin-up girl aesthetic (McGee 2009, 134–67). The parallels in attire and cosmetics between the women featured in these films and the most prevalent female jazz musicians on TikTok are, at the very least, noteworthy. This example illustrates that the stereotypical and sexualized performances of female jazz musicians, as documented on TikTok, can be traced back approximately one hundred years in jazz history. Consequently, the representation of the most popular female jazz musicians on TikTok is part of a long-standing tradition that is being renegotiated and, to a certain extent, perpetuated on the platform under changing media conditions. In the context of new media, certain influencer logics exert a discernible influence on the representation of jazz. These logics posit that female-presenting individuals can achieve a high

reach, particularly within the beauty and lifestyle segment (see above), and they portray themselves accordingly.

A further parallel is that the majority of all-girl bands whose work is documented in short films were comprised entirely of *white* musicians (with a few exceptions, for example The International Sweethearts of Rhythm). Despite the fact that jazz has consistently been shaped by a combination of African and European American musical traditions, it has frequently served as a vehicle for expression among Black musicians over the course of several decades. Nevertheless, since the early days of jazz documented on phonograms in the 1910s, it has been observed that *white* musicians, with the support of the music industry, have on occasion achieved considerable success. This phenomenon is not exclusive to jazz; it can be observed repeatedly in the history of popular music cultures. A case in point is the singer Elvis Presley, who was known as the *King of Rock and Roll*. Throughout his life, Presley was accused of appropriating Black R&B and achieving significant success with it, while the creators of the songs, the musicians who inspired him, and his songwriters remained largely in the background. In the context of jazz, similar accusations have already been made regarding the band that is said to have produced the first-ever jazz recording in 1917 – at least according to the usual account in most jazz histories. This group, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, consisted exclusively of *white* musicians and came from New Orleans, the supposed birthplace of jazz, where there was indeed a tradition of *white* jazz bands. It is notable that the majority of jazz ensembles from this era that have left an enduring legacy in the history of jazz were ensembles comprising solely or predominantly Black musicians. The success of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band's recording, which was significantly influenced by the record company Victor, whose employees first came across the band in the New York nightlife scene and are said to have recognized its commercial potential (DeVeaux and Giddins 2015, 68–69), is still regarded as a pivotal event, both in terms of its cultural impact and its economic consequences. At the time, the music industry was shaped by a pervasive racial bias, which often resulted in the exclusion of Black musicians from recording opportunities and the marginalization of their work in radio programming. Consequently, jazz was often perceived as a form of popular music performed by *white* dance bands (Garofalo and Waksman 2013, 28).

In the subsequent period, the *white* bandleader Paul Whiteman, also known as the *King of Jazz*, achieved considerable commercial success with his *Symphonic Jazz*, which was heavily influenced by European orchestral music. This success, which endured until the 1930s, also led to the production of the

feature-length film *King of Jazz* in 1930. With regard to the accusation that *white* musicians appropriated jazz, one scene towards the end of the film is particularly noteworthy: it features a text panel referring to the U.S. as "The Melting Pot of Music [...] wherein the Melodies of all Nations are fused into one great New Rhythm: Jazz!" followed by a compilation of performances by various dance and music groups. The groups are attired in matching costumes and perform different European and Euro-American music traditions. According to the film, these traditions all contributed to the development of jazz. Notably, the film makes no reference to the significant influence of African American music, instead presenting jazz as a purely *white* musical form. This example illustrates how, by the early 1900s, media-constructed caricatures of jazz history with regard to the category of *race* were already circulating. Further examples of *white* jazz musicians who, having achieved significant commercial success, were accused of exploiting African American music culture can be found throughout the history of jazz. These include well-known swing big band leaders such as the *King of Swing* Benny Goodman in the 1930s and 1940s (Tackley 2012), the pianist Dave Brubeck from the 1950s onwards (Klotz 2023a), and the smooth jazz saxophonist Kenny G, who emerged in the 1980s (Wright 2023; Klotz 2023b). We can also observe a similar phenomenon with singers such as Norah Jones and Diana Krall from the late 1990s onwards (Arndt 2006). These examples demonstrate how economically driven and medially disseminated inequalities between *white* and Black musicians have been a persistent feature of jazz history for over a century. These hegemonies are not a recent phenomenon but are currently being reproduced under the influence of contemporary media, including in the context of digital platforms.

Indeed, the phenomenon of *white* musicians attaining greater success than the original creators of African American cultural forms of expression has been a persistent and recurring theme in the history of popular music cultures for approximately two centuries. In their analysis, Reebee Garafalo and Steven Waksman identify the origins of these developments in the context of minstrel shows, which became a popular form of entertainment in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century. These shows typically featured *white* performers, who racially parodied Black people on stage, often with the use of blackface:

> Minstrelsy established a vexing and recurring pattern of uneven musical exchange in which white interpretations and appropriations of African American culture would receive disproportionate credit in defining mainstream

popular culture, while black performers would struggle for visibility even when black music or culture was being portrayed. (Garofalo and Waksman 2013, 17)

While racist parody ceased to serve as the foundation for such appropriations in subsequent decades, the fundamental tenets underlying these processes remained remarkably resilient.

The Great American Songbook repertoire, so popular on TikTok, is also a product of specific processes of appropriation and reinterpretation of African American musical forms of expression by *white* musicians. Well-known American songwriters such as George Gershwin, Irving Berlin and Cole Porter are generally considered to be representative of and influential for the repertoire of the Great American Songbook. As early as the early twentieth century, they wrote numerous songs for Broadway musicals and Hollywood films which are still well known today in connection with Tin Pan Alley in New York. It has been demonstrated that these *white* songwriters often engaged profoundly with popular African American music, as evidenced by George Gershwin, for example (see Noonan 2012, 148), who took lessons from ragtime pianist Luckey Roberts (Peress 2004, 67–68), among others. In particular, ragtime and early jazz constituted a significant source of inspiration for songwriters, as can be seen in the compositions of Irving Berlin, who himself produced several ragtime songs. The aforementioned songwriters achieved a breakthrough in the U.S. mainstream segment as a result of the influence of African American music culture, which was perceived by many contemporaries as alien (Garofalo and Waksman 2013, 25; Knauer 1990, 65). Notwithstanding the pervasive influence of African American music culture, the professional songwriting circles of the time remained a predominantly *white* space, largely due to the pernicious racial structures that permeated the music industry (Garofalo and Waksman 2013, 29).

The observation that the most prevalent interpretations of this musical repertoire on TikTok are predominantly performed by *white* individuals has the potential to engender a perception of jazz as a *white* space on the platform, not only in terms of visual representation but also with respect to the auditory dimension. The association of certain sounds with racial stereotyping is a phenomenon that has been extensively documented. For instance, specific phonetic and dialectal nuances have been identified as auditory markers of Blackness (Stoever 2016, 8). Over time, norms of timbre have emerged that result in voices being perceived as either clearly Black or *white* by many people

(Eidsheim 2019, 196). In a musical context, tonal nuances such as blue notes, timbre qualities (e.g., roughness), specific rhythmic patterns, and groove characteristics, which are commonly associated with genres influenced by African Americans (e.g., blues, funk, rap, jazz), can serve as markers. The most popular jazz performances on TikTok rarely feature these characteristics. This can result in the most prevalent jazz genres on the platform, which are significantly influenced by *white* artists, being perceived by TikTok users as the norm. This is where Jennifer Lynn Stoever's concept of "whiteness in an auditory sense" becomes evident: namely, the pervasive and unquestioning normalization or naturalization of *whiteness* at a sonic level (Stoever 2016, 12).

The research on racist and sexist biases in algorithmically moderated spaces has repeatedly shown that specific social inequalities are perpetuated in contemporary media cultures (see chapter 4.8). In this context, Ruha Benjamin coined the term *Jim Code* a few years ago, drawing a parallel between the minstrel show character Jim Crow and the discriminatory practices observed in digital spaces. Benjamin underscores the pervasive misconception that technologies are inherently neutral entities. This misperception contributes to the failure to recognize the role of algorithmic systems in perpetuating racist structures: "'[T]he new Jim Code': *the employment of new technologies that reflect and reproduce existing inequities but that are promoted and perceived as more objective or progressive that the discriminatory systems of a previous era*" (Benjamin 2019, 5–6; italics in original). It is important to recognize that racism can be viewed not only as a consequence of technological advancement, but also as a crucial element influencing the evolution of technology itself (Benjamin 2019, 40). On the one hand, self-learning algorithms are shaped by the worldviews of the individuals responsible for their development. On the other hand, the behavioral patterns of users, upon which the algorithms base their learning, also exert a significant influence (Benjamin 2019, 50). In this regard, sensationalist headlines, particularly prevalent in journalistic discourse, in the style of "Is the TikTok algorithm racist?" represent a manifestation of media determinist perspectives and are inherently limited in their scope. They imply that algorithms, in and of themselves, could be inherently racist (Benjamin 2019, 44).

As the examples of relations of inequality in the course of the history of popular music cultures presented in this chapter demonstrate, the events on TikTok analyzed in the context of this study and shaped by various biases have a number of historical antecedents. In this sense, history is, as it were, maintained in the algorithmically moderated spaces on the platform. How-

ever, as the research results presented here clearly demonstrate, this is not contingent on the platform's algorithms alone. Ruha Benjamin underscores the influence of socio-technical constellations in digital spaces with regard to the perpetuation of cultural hegemony, but particularly in relation to the actions and worldviews of human actors who shape the evolution of algorithms. As demonstrated in this study, the content creators' pursuit of visibility and their strategies also play a pivotal role in shaping the representation of music cultures on TikTok. The content creators are guided by two key factors in determining their strategies of action: their own algorithmic imaginaries and their experience and assumptions regarding how TikTok users respond to their videos. The TikTok universe is characterized by complex socio-technical relationships between the platform, its algorithmic system, musicians, and users. These relationships shape the image of jazz that emerges on TikTok, with all the heterogeneous actors involved, human and non-human, playing a role in this process.

7.4   Socio-Technical Canon Building

TikTok has the potential to structure actions and affords certain music-related content and stagings. Concurrently, cultural hegemony exerts an influence over the portrayal of jazz on TikTok, which has been a constitutive factor in the negotiations of media visibility in a comparable form for many decades. Moreover, jazz musicians who are active and successful on TikTok play an active role in the negotiations surrounding the visibility of individuals and content within the jazz context on TikTok through their interpretations of the functional logic of TikTok. Consequently, there are divergences from the predominantly academically constituted jazz canon that has been perpetuated for decades. This is evidenced by the absence of "jazz icons" (Whyton 2010) from the domain of popularity peaks in jazz on TikTok. This is primarily due to the fact that, according to the interviewees, these icons do not align with the platform's logic of popularization. Additionally, TikTok tends to prioritize specific body norms that young female musicians are more likely to conform to.

It is evident that on TikTok, specific aspects of jazz become more prominent than others due to the interplay between human and non-human actors. These processes are not solely determined by technology or exclusively shaped by society. Algorithmic sorting logic and platform-specific affordances influ-