numerous young individuals to process their experiences of the pandemic and share their perspectives with others (Klug, Kaufman, and Evans 2023, 153). TikTok served as a crucial coping tool for individuals grappling with mental health challenges stemming from social isolation. Additionally, the platform's array of entertaining content, despite its occasional frivolity, provided a much-needed source of distraction and enjoyment during a challenging period (Klug, Kaufman, and Evans 2023, 164).

4.3 Mimetic Practices

TikTok offers a plethora of features that are, at least in part, constitutive of various other short-video platforms. The "social media platform features" (Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022, 72) typically offered by TikTok include functions such as liking, commenting, sharing content, and mentioning other users. Mentioning occurs via an @-symbol in the comment sections or video descriptions, which are linked to the user's profile. The use of hashtags is also prevalent; videos are typically tagged with multiple hashtags. Selecting a hashtag generates a list of all videos that utilize that hashtag, arranged in descending order of popularity (Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022, 73–74). Additionally, TikTok provides a live streaming feature and an assortment of video effects and filters, which are accessible to the user via a categorized list in the control panel of the in-app video production tools (Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022, 71).

Although all of these features are integral to common TikTok usage practices, it is the various interaction-enhancing features that distinguish TikTok from other short-form video platforms. Interaction with other users is a fundamental aspect of media platforms, including TikTok. On TikTok, however, the focus is not necessarily on interacting with one's own followers or friends. Rather, the focus is on the creative editing of videos by users who are not necessarily connected on the platform (in contrast to, for example, Facebook, where users are required to establish a connection). TikTok employs specific "platform features" (Kaye 2022, 60) to encourage editing of existing videos, thereby facilitating the creation of new content. In this sense, the platform offers a clear affordance aimed at the co-creation of audiovisual content.

The *duet* feature represents a fundamental aspect of this process. An existing video is integrated into a newly recorded video, resulting in a synchronous presentation of both videos in a split-screen format. A similar feature was al-

ready available on the Smule app, which was launched on iOS in 2012, and Musical.ly, TikTok's predecessor, also had a duet feature. However, it was not possible to record new audio tracks as part of a duet on Musical.ly. The feature was designed for lip-syncing and dance videos, and recording additional audio tracks was thus neither intended nor necessary. The duet feature was added to TikTok in 2019 and updated a year later to allow users to add their own audio tracks (Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022, 65).

It can be argued that creative mimetic practices, in which users build on existing content from other users in individual ways, are central to the functioning of TikTok. The platform initially gained prominence for lip-syncing videos and dance challenges, which are based on the creative imitation or editing of existing TikTok videos (Kaye et al. 2021, 3196–97). The *stitch* and *use this sound* features are also integral to mimetic practices. The stitch feature enables users to extract a segment from an existing video and insert it at the beginning of their own video, maintaining both the original video and audio track, as well as the visual effects and on-screen text. TikTok users can ascertain which video a given audio track was initially used in and the number of subsequent videos created by other users based on that track (Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022, 66). Another feature designed for interaction with other users is *video reply to comments*, which was officially launched in June 2020. This feature enables TikTok users to record new videos in response to comments made by other users in the comments section of one of their videos. The corresponding comment is then displayed in the video window of the newly produced clip (Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022, 67).

4.4   Algorithmic Curation: The For You Page

Another key feature of TikTok that underscores the importance of algorithmic moderation to the platform is the *For You page*. This is the landing page that is automatically displayed when the app is opened on a smartphone. On this landing page, each user is presented with an algorithmically curated and individually personalized selection of videos. In this way, users are theoretically offered an "endless scroll of new videos" (Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022, 58), because if they don't like a video, they can simply swipe it away and the next one is immediately displayed. Musical.ly already had a similar scroll feed, and it was one of the first features to be adopted on Douyin based on the Musical.ly model (Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022, 51).