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Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat have risen in popularity since their creation. They help friends and family stay connected even though they might not be physically in the same space. Without these platforms, many friendships would have been lost. With more than half the world using social media, people have even started making friends online without seeing them in person once. However, there are some severe side effects of social media on mental health that scientists have discovered throughout the years. These include loneliness and self-esteem, things these platforms are meant to prevent. Especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, social media usage has risen by 20% and has led to the rise of a new social media platform, TikTok. This Chinese social media app is known for its short-form videos and endless scroll feature. These features make sure that users spend as much time as possible on the app, which “ ‘reduce(s) their real, face-to-face contact with other folks ’ ” (dbsalliance). TikTok has overarching consequences on the mental health of users, especially younger audiences. Since children’s minds have not fully developed, TikTok can have a long-lasting effect on their personality and mental health. Short-form videos decrease attention spans since users will change videos and topics in seconds. Research also shows that usage of TikTok can cause “depression, anxiety and self-harm”, specifically for younger users (Amnesty International). All of this raises the question, is it ethically permissible for TikTok’s software designers and

engineers to cater to younger audiences knowing its effects on their mental development?