

Social Comparison on SNS & the Relationship Between Defense Mechanisms and the Degree of SNS Use

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I. Introduction

The purpose of our UCC project is to portray the defense mechanisms that appear among teenagers on social media, offering them comfort while also giving a subtle warning about the potential risks.

II. Methodology

1. Analysis of Feynman's defense mechanism theory

Before studying the comparative psychology of adolescents on SNS, we studied the types and meanings of defense mechanisms to explore the defense mechanisms that arise according to comparative psychology.

Definition of defense mechanism: an unconscious psychological mechanism for reducing or eliminating unpleasant feelings arising from unacceptable or harmful stimuli. The purpose of the defense mechanism is to provide shelter for the mind from unaffordable situations, and to protect oneself from emotional wounds.

The defense mechanism can be referred to as classified by two characters, Anna Freud and Baylunt.

(1) Anna Freud's classification of defense mechanisms

A. Repression: By pressing thoughts and emotions that are difficult to accept into the unconscious mind so that they are unconscious

An example is not being able to remember childhood trauma.

B. Denial: Denial without acknowledging the painful part of reality

An example is trying not to believe in the death of a loved one.

C. Projection: By turning one's negative emotions and desires onto others

An example is that you hate someone, but rather think, "That person hates me."

D. Rationalization: Justifying failure or misbehavior for good reason

An example is when you don't take the test and say, "The test was too difficult anyway."

E. transposition: to attribute emotions to an object or opponent other than the original object

An example is when you're angry with your boss at work, but you're annoyed with your family.

F. Reaction Formation: Unacceptable Emotions by Performing Actions Against Desire

An example is the case of being too nice to someone you really hate.

G. Regression: a return to childhood behavior in stressful situations

An example of this is when an adult is under stress, swears or cries like a child.

H. Sublimation: to convey socially unacceptable impulses in a socially recognized way

An example is the use of aggressive tendencies in sports or artistic activities.

I. Identification: It is to protect one's self-esteem by imitating or using a strong person or a person you respect as one's own

Examples are when a child tries to act like a parent, or when a weak person tries to protect himself by imitating a strong person.

J. Cancellation: To do the opposite to invalidate an idea or action

An example is excessive kindness after saying bad things to someone.

(2) Classification of defense mechanisms by Harvard Medical School Professor Baylunt

a. Disease defense mechanism: It is difficult to live a normal life due to severe distortion of reality

Examples are delusions (to have beliefs that are far from reality) and hallucinations (to sense what doesn't actually exist).

b. Integrated defense mechanism: When used by adults, it is easy to cause problems in interpersonal relationships

Examples include projection (blaming my negative senses) and passive attacks (attacks indirectly, not directly expressed), and actuation (to release emotions into action instead of words).

c. Neurotic defense mechanism: Stress can be controlled to some extent, but in severe cases, it can cause anxiety or neurosis

Examples include oppression (burying uncomfortable memories in the unconscious), reactionary sentences (doing the opposite of hateful feelings), and mainstreaming (only dealing with problems rationally instead of emotions).

d. Mature defense mechanism: To improve psychological health and to a level that has a positive effect on social life

Examples include altruism (relieving one's anxiety by helping others) and humor (overcoming difficulties with laughter), sublimation (transforming negative emotions into socially positive directions), and suppression (consciously pushing uncomfortable thoughts for a while).

By connecting Freud's classification of defense mechanisms and comparison psychology on social media, we had a time to analyze the types of defense mechanisms that can appear on social media and classify them among ourselves.

The first is Identification, which is the unconscious imitation of another person's characteristics or behavior and adopting it as one's own. This manifests itself on social media, for example, in the desire to be like influencers or celebrities and to copy their style, mindset, and lifestyle. We concluded that this is a subconscious attempt to preserve self-esteem, but it can lead to a loss of self.

The second is projection, which involves blaming others for your negative feelings or flaws. An example of this is when we turn our feelings of envy and inferiority into criticism of others on social media, saying, "That person is just trying to show off." It's a defense against uncomfortable feelings by pushing them outward.

The third is rationalization, which literally means justifying failure or inferiority with plausible reasons. This is one of the most common types of defense mechanisms on social

media, where people say, "I don't do that because I'm not interested in social media," when in fact, it's the behavior or psychology of hiding fear or inferiority.

The last is denial, which is the refusal to acknowledge an uncomfortable reality and turn away from it. "Everything on social media is a lie," they say, avoiding the relative inferiority of reality and denying its existence rather than acknowledging and adjusting to the problem.

2.Survey of Students

According to the results of this survey, the use of social media is a significant factor in the development of comparative psychology in young people, and the employment of different defense mechanisms is part of the process.

The very high occurrence of projection and identification denotes that the understanding of others and the forming of one's self are through social media very much closely linked.

Also, it turned out that a lot of teenagers did not know that defense mechanisms were working, and besides that, a predisposition to conscious emotional reactions (depression) was also noted.

The findings can be interpreted as empirical support that includes the theory of defense mechanisms by Freud.

TTU Survey

드라이브에서 모든 변경사항이 저장되었습니다.

질문 응답 69 설정

TTU Survey: Correlation between SNS Use and Comparative Psychology of Teenagers

Based on Anna Freud's defense mechanism theory, we are conducting a social psychology study on the correlation between SNS use and adolescent defense mechanisms. We are conducting a survey to derive statistics on the correlation between SNS use and comparative psychology. Please answer the survey honestly.
-jae seung

하루 동안 핸드폰을 사용할때 페이스북, 인스타그램, 유튜브 등 자신의 사용 시간은?

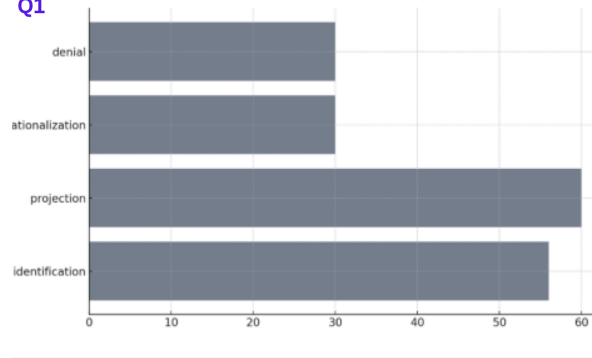
☐ less than 1h
☐ 2-3 hours
☐ 3-5 hours
☐ 6h or more

SNS를 사용하면서 경험한 적 있는 현상을 모두 고르시오

☐ Identification: 인물꾸안서나 유명인의 스타일, 사고방식, 생활방식을 따라해본 적 있음

- Q1. Select all phenomena you have experienced while using social media.
- Q1. Have you ever experienced the above phenomena without being aware of it?

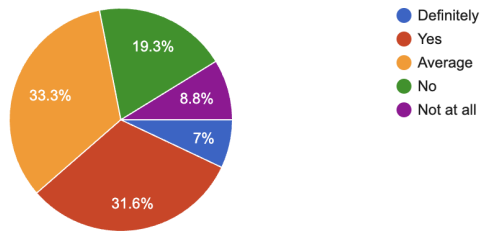
Q1



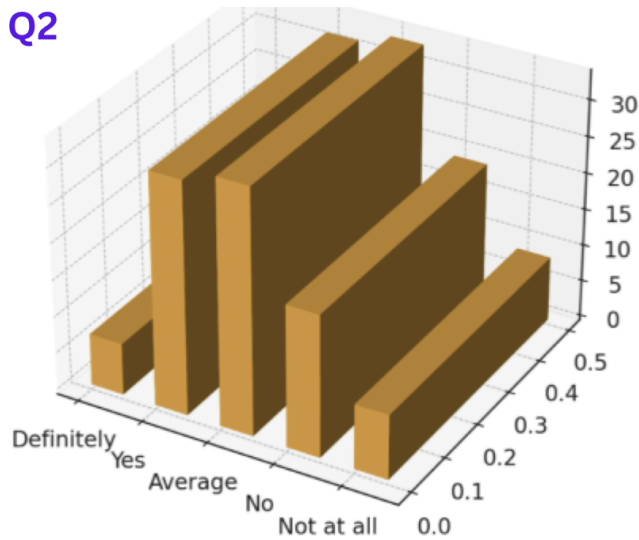
의식하기 못한 사이에 위와 같은 현상이 일어난 경험에 있는가?

차트 복사

응답 57개



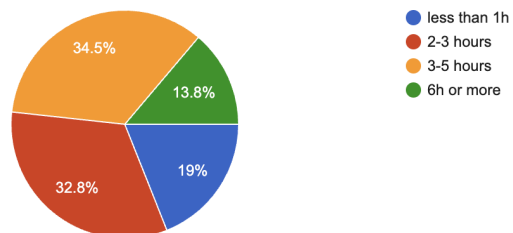
Q2



하루 동안 핸드폰을 사용할때 페이스북, 인스타그램, 유튜브 등 자신의 사용 시간은?

차트 복사

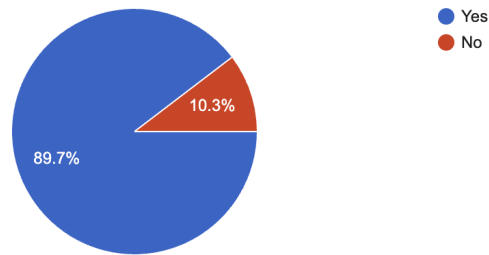
응답 58개



SNS 사용이 비교심리의 형성과 직접적 관련이 있다고 생각하는가?

차트 복사

응답 58개



3.Planning UCC project

The recent surveys and psychological frameworks have helped us to analyze the connection between the use of SNS by adolescents and the mechanisms of defense, but at the same time we came to the conclusion that only research does not lead to a significant behavioral change.

In order to make a more straight forward and powerful impact, we chose to capitalize on our strengths in the areas of music and UCC (User Created Content) production.

Music is a powerful emotional interpreter, a complex psychological states' communicator as well as the instant resonator to the listener.

The pairing of UCC with music, an easy to access and visually immersive format, allows us to speak about delicate subjects to the youth in a manner that is intimate, easy to understand and unforgettable.

With the help of this project, not only do we want to keep people in the know, but also to create awareness, encourageself-examination and transmit the message of the risks of the defense mechanisms exhibited in social media through an experiential method.

For this reason, we decided to transform psychological concepts into an artistic medium and expected to communicate with teens effectively and inspire them to think critically about their digital conduct.

4.Lyric-Writing

During the lyric writing process, we included lines that sound like things people actually say when their defense mechanisms are activated in order to highlight rationalization and denial. To create a steadily intensifying atmosphere, we escalated the degree of rationalization and denial as the song progressed. At the beginning, the lyrics were crafted to seem ordinary so that listeners wouldn't notice anything unusual, while at the climax we aimed to present a level of seriousness that would lead everyone to feel suspicion and confusion. Finally we wanted to give a sense of resolution, so we wrote lyrics that show the character recognizing reality and in the end, sincerely comforting themselves.

OUR FINAL LYRICS:

Verse 1

*You say kendall got a perfect little life now,
New clothes, new smile, walking like she's sky-bound.*

*But I don't mind, no, I don't mind at all—
She says she's got someone waiting by her door,
That's cool, I've got someone, too, he loves me even more.
(Yeah... I'll be fine.)*

Pre-Chorus

*Maybe I'm just tired of falling behind,
So I paint my world in colors she can't find.*

Chorus

*I'll be fine, I'll be fine,
Even when the truth is out of sight.
If I rewrite my life in brighter lines,
I'll be fine, I'll be fine.*

Verse2

*kendall says she's going on a weekend getaway,
I laugh and say, "Oh, same—mine flies me out on Friday."
He's busy, sure, that's why you've never met him,
He's shy, he hates the spotlight—yeah, that must be it.
Don't look at me like I'm the one pretending*

*You don't know what love is like, I'm just defending...
Everything's fine.
(Yeah... totally fine.)*

Pre-Chorus

*And every time I feel the cracks in my mind,
I stitch them up with stories just to stay aligned.*

Chorus

*I'll be fine, I'll be fine,
Even when the truth is out of sight.
If I rewrite my life in brighter lines,
I'll be fine, I'll be fine.*

Bridge

*kendall(ava, chloe, harper, brooke) says she's having dinner with her boyfriend at
nine
Well, mine's taking me somewhere grand, a rooftop skyline.*

*He booked a hotel suite with roses on the floor,
Said he'd carry me inside, close and adored.
He texted me, I swear
(...Wait, where's my phone? I must've left it somewhere.)
I know he's real
I know he's real, right?*

*(Realization)
The mirror's talking louder than the room tonight,
And I see my lips move but the words don't align.
All the stories I built just to feel alive...
They're just echoes, fading in the light.*

*Final Chorus
I'll be fine, I whisper like a borrowed line,
Watching every version of him dissolve in my mind.
If I let the truth in, will it hurt or will it shine?
I'll be fine... I'll be fine.*

*Outro
Turns out the hotel, the roses, the skyline
Every bit of it was mine.
Just something I drew on the inside
A place to hide.
And now it slips away, quiet as a sigh.
Maybe this whole time...
I was only trying to feel alive.
But I'll be fine.*

5. Song composition and arrangement

Rather than simply creating a sad mood song, We wanted the musical structure to trace the process in which self-rationalization and denial build up step by step and then finally collapse into a moment of self-recognition. The harmony/arrangement/sound design were all planned so that they would move in parallel with this psychological trajectory.

The starting point for the theme was the experience of scrolling through a feed and seeing a friend's "perfect life." Even when someone is actually hurt by these comparisons, they often keep telling themselves, "I'm fine," Drawing on my own study of defense mechanisms—especially rationalization and denial. I created a main character who keeps repeating "I'll be fine" as a way of twisting reality to protect themselves. Inspired by the way Oasis's - Don't Look Back in Anger addresses a concrete imaginary listener, we also decided to give specific names (Kendall, Ava, Chloe, Harper, Brooke..etc)

to the “perfect friend” in the lyrics, so that the object of comparison and obsession would feel vivid and realistic, just like the classmates or influencers teenagers actually see on SNS.

The structure of the lyrics was designed to follow the logic of defense mechanisms. In Verse 1 and Verse 2 the protagonist of the song keeps insisting that they are fine while inventing an idealized boyfriend and glamorous situations symbolizing the stage of self-rationalization. The hook line, “I’ll be fine,” is used as a repeated phrase with a gradation effect, so that it feels like the character is injecting themselves with a fake sense of safety. As the song progresses, the stories they tell become more exaggerated and less believable, and this intentional mismatch is meant to make the listener feel a growing sense of discomfort. In the Realization section, the protagonist finally confronts the mirror and recognizes that the world they created was an illusion. In the final chorus and outro, “I’ll be fine” is still said, but it now sounds more like a cautious promise made after facing the truth, rather than a desperate lie.

In the composition process, I first built the rhythmic structure. Using the Splice’s drum sample OS_MN2_clap wild- as the base clap, I layered kicks, snares, and hi-hats to create a groove that feels steady like the repetitive motion of scrolling, but still slightly tense. We actually tried to avoid overly flashy drums and instead focused on a somewhat dry texture, controlling the attack and reverb tail of the clap to shape a subtle sense of space. The track is centered around an Ab key with augmented chords, which allows the harmony to sound both beautiful and unstable at the same time. By repeatedly incorporating Ab A(augmented) chords while keeping the topline relatively lyrical, I tried to make song feel emotionally gentle on the surface but continuously uneasy underneath.

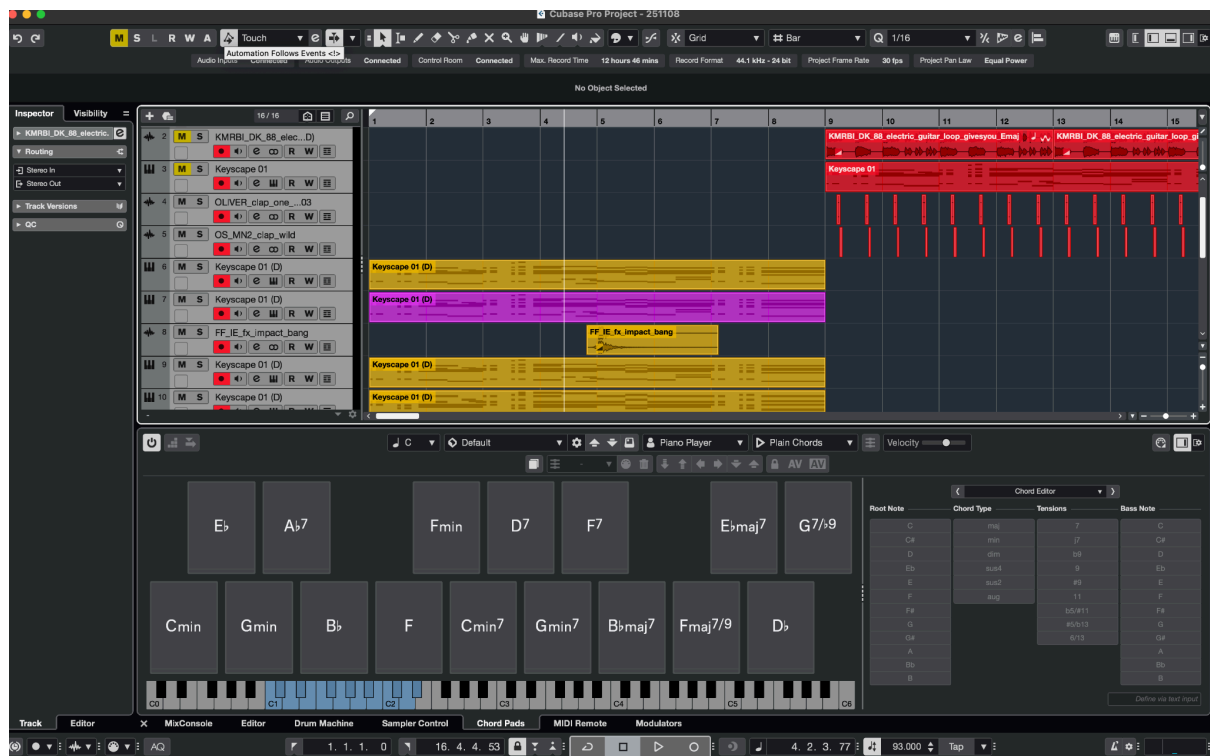
For the main instruments I aimed to blend electronic but in same time classical elements. Using MIDI piano ‘Kescape’ sounds, I created soft pads and synth leads, and added string lines from Kontakt7-string session to give the track a more classical, adding cinematic depth. This combination was intended to mirror the contrast between the polished images on SNS and the deeper, more fragile emotions behind them. I also introduced an electric guitar loop as a key motif running through the song. With a slightly imperfect intonation and a repeating pattern, the guitar represents the protagonist’s anxious fixation. I did not use a perfectly clean tone; instead, I applied a bit of distortion and modulation so that the texture itself would carry tension. The loop becomes especially prominent in the bridge and Realization section, where the character’s mental state is most unstable, drawing the listener’s ear at the critical emotional moment.

From a production standpoint, shaping the overall tone into something both curious and dark was crucial. I used Waves plugins to apply low-cut filters to the main instruments and vocals, cleaning up unnecessary low frequencies and making the mid and high range elements stand out more clearly. In some sections, I intentionally ‘killed’ certain sounds by lowering their volume or softening their high end, so that the mix would feel slightly suffocated like the protagonist of song is suppressing their own feelings. In contrast, during the choruses where the defense mechanism is at its peak I stacked background vocals and pads to make the soundscape feel bigger and more confident, even though the underlying emotion is actually collapsing.

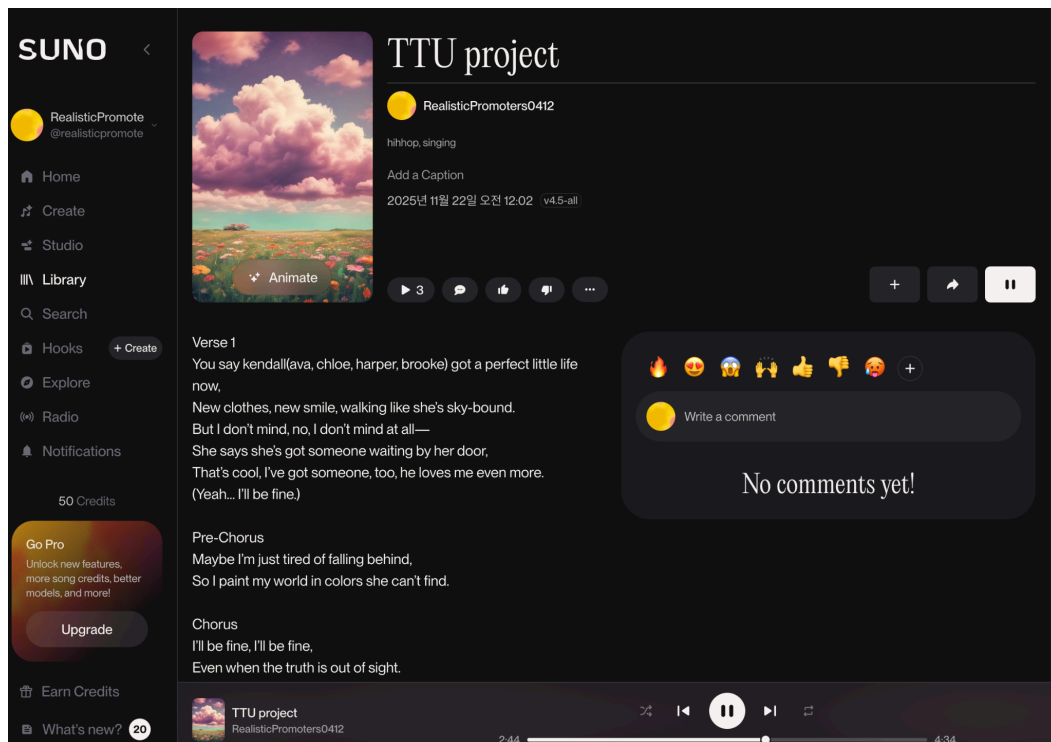
The arrangement was carefully designed so that the progression of the music would move in sync with the protagonist’s psychology. Verse 1 and Verse 2 start with a relatively minimal setup: mainly kick, clap, and a simple pad or string layer, to keep the storytelling calm and conversational. As the song transitions into the pre-chorus and chorus, more synths, strings, and guitar layers are added, giving the impression that the protagonist’s self-rationalization is intensifying. The phrase “I’ll be fine, Everything is gonna be fine..” is not only repeated in the lyrics but also supported by recurring melodic and harmonic patterns, creating a hypnotic effect as if the character is trying to convince themselves by repetition. Rather than building to a huge, explosive climax, I took inspiration from Billie Eilish’s tracks, where the arrangement does not necessarily become louder or busier, but the emotional atmosphere gradually grows heavier and more profound.

After the bridge, in the Realization section, I experimented with turning the genre and arrangement slightly upside down. To express the moment when the protagonist realizes that their story was all made up, I stripped away much of the beat and many of the layers, changed the chord progression, and left mainly a reverberant vocal and minimal accompaniment. This was meant to evoke a feeling “like a dead soul singing”—time seems to slow down, and the sense of rhythm becomes blurry, as if reality and illusion are separating. In the outro, “I’ll be fine” appears one last time, but now as a soft whisper rather than a bold claim, so that it feels like a tentative but honest resolution after facing what is real.

All of these musical choices were designed to interlock with the visual direction. In the imagined video, scenes of endless SNS scrolling and message notifications would be paired with the repetitive rhythm and samples, and it emphasizing a slightly addictive feeling. In moments where reality and fantasy blend, the augmented chords and guitar loop would enhance the visual sense of distortion and unease. In the Realization and outro sections, the visuals would gradually simplify in color and composition until the protagonist is left alone facing themselves with the lingering sound of the music amplifying emotional afterimage.



Also to concretize our creative work, we used Suno AI to establish a basic framework of musical references before we even started.



III. Results

Through our analysis and creative process, we obtained three main types of results: conceptual, empirical, and artistic.

First, on the conceptual level, we succeeded in connecting Feynman’s idea of “not fooling yourself” with classical psychological theories of defense mechanisms. We came to see denial and rationalization on SNS not just as random bad habits, but as structured ways of protecting the self that can sometimes turn into self-deception. This helped us frame teenage SNS behavior in a more nuanced way, not simply blaming individuals but understanding the unconscious dynamics behind their thoughts and actions.

Second, on the empirical level, our small survey provided qualitative evidence that many students experience a gap between what they feel and what they say about SNS. Several respondents reported that they “often” or “sometimes” feel inferior when seeing their friends’ posts, yet they also claimed that they are “fine” or “not really affected” by social media. Many students described thought patterns similar to defense mechanisms—for example, telling themselves that someone else’s post is “fake,” or insisting that their own life is “just as good” even when they feel left out. These responses gave us realistic language and scenarios that later shaped our lyrics and storyboard.

Third, on the artistic level, we completed a full set of lyrics and a demo track that embody the psychological journey we wanted to portray: from social comparison, through layers of rationalization and denial, to a fragile but honest moment of self-recognition. When we shared the draft song with a few classmates, some of them commented that the repeated line “I’ll be fine” felt uncomfortably familiar, as if they were listening to their own thoughts. Others said that the Realization section reminded them of moments when they suddenly became aware that they had been pretending to be

okay. These informal reactions suggested that our attempt to translate abstract theories into an emotional and relatable story was at least partially successful.

IV. Discussion

Our project suggests that defense mechanisms on SNS can be understood as a double-edged sword. On one hand, phrases like “I’ll be fine” and “It doesn’t really matter” can help teenagers temporarily reduce anxiety and survive the pressure of constant comparison. On the other hand, if these defenses turn into chronic denial and rationalization, they may prevent sincere reflection and delay necessary changes, such as limiting SNS use or seeking real support. In this sense, Feynman’s warning about self-deception in science can be re-read as a message for teenagers: if you keep fooling yourself about how SNS affects you, it becomes harder to protect your real well-being.

The process of making music and UCC also taught us about our own tendency to “fool ourselves.” At first, we were tempted to create a very dramatic, obviously “sad” song that would clearly tell the audience what to think. However, we realized that real teenage psychology is more ambiguous: people often laugh, joke, and say “I’m fine” on the surface while being hurt underneath. To respect this complexity, we had to resist the urge to oversimplify the problem just to make the message easier. In this way, trying to maintain artistic honesty became our own small practice of Feynman’s principle.

There are also limitations to our project. Our survey sample was small and limited to our school environment, so we cannot generalize our findings to all teenagers. In addition, although we tried to base our work on psychological theory, our main output is still a creative piece rather than a controlled academic study. Nevertheless, we believe that art can play a unique role in bringing theory closer to everyday experience, especially for audiences who might not read psychological papers or scientific essays.

In future extensions of this project, we would like to gather more systematic feedback from viewers after they watch the final UCC—asking them whether they recognized their own defense mechanisms, whether the piece made them think differently about SNS, and whether it encouraged them to have more honest conversations with themselves and their friends. This would allow us to evaluate more concretely whether our work is achieving its goal of both comfort and awareness.

V. Conclusion

As a team, we also thought a lot about what we want viewers to take away from this project. Our TTU team did not just want people to “watch and forget,” but hoped that something in their way of thinking or feeling would actually shift after experiencing the piece. That is why we deliberately tried to avoid the typical tone of a public service announcement, and instead chose a direction that gives both a sense of warning and an artistic afterglow, so that our intention could be delivered more subtly but more deeply.

In this project, we combined Feynman's principle of not fooling yourself with psychological theories of defense mechanisms to explore how teenagers use SNS, compare themselves to others, and quietly protect their fragile self-esteem. By transforming these ideas into lyrics, music, and an imagined UCC, we discovered that scientific and psychological concepts can be made emotionally accessible through art. At the same time, the process forced us to confront our own small acts of self-deception and to practice a more honest attitude toward our emotions and creative choices.

Going forward, our goal is to develop this project into a complete audiovisual work by producing a full video that brings together the detailed script we have planned and the track we have composed. Ultimately, we hope that our UCC will help young viewers notice their own "I'll be fine" moments, question whether they are really fine, and take one step closer to a healthier and more honest relationship with both social media and themselves.

In the end, what we truly want to understand is not someone else's life, but the face of our own self that can still stand there even after all our defense mechanisms have been stripped away. I hope we can remember this long after this project is over.

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