THIS IS RAPE CULTURE
Comedian to teach students about safe and consensual sex

BARBARA BRITES
Staff Writer

Maria Falzone, comedian and one of the most sought-after college speakers, wants to teach students about sex and as part of sexual assault awareness month, the Women's Center is bringing her to the University.

On April 13, Falzone will host a speaker series called “Sex Rules! Laugh and Learn the Rules to Greater and Safer Sex.”

“...We live in a society where sex sells, but we’re often told not to have it outside of a heterosexual marriage, so we don’t get sex advice, detailed education on consent, and how to prevent STIs apart from abstinence,” Meredith Morgan, Coordinator of the Women’s Center at BBC said.

According to Meredith Morgan, coordinator of the Women’s Center at BBC, “Sex Rules!” is a comedy show about how to have great sex that is safe and consensual, while building in topics such as self-esteem, sexual transmitted infections and relationships. Her message is inclusive of and relevant to all genders, sexualities, and races.

Morgan also explained that they chose Maria Falzone because talking about consent is often a dreaded topic for students. The topic is often approached with a tone that everyone is a potential perpetrator of sexual violence, and this approach doesn’t empower people to be active bystanders and practice consent. Falzone uses humor and entertainment, Morgan says, to show how fun consensual sex is, what the rules are, and how to love and enjoy your sex life in a safe way for you and your partners.

As part of a larger initiative to increase awareness of sexual assault, the Women’s Center at the Biscayne Bay Campus also screened “Audrie & Daisy,” a Netflix documentary exploring rape, trauma, power, and coming of age of life in the world of social media to help prevent sexual assault.

“...We live in a society where sex sells, but we’re often told not to have it outside of a heterosexual marriage, so we don’t get sex advice, detailed education on consent, and how to prevent STIs apart from abstinence,” Morgan said.

Morgan thinks that students will be empowered to create the safe sex they need for themselves — including abstinence, if that’s what they choose. They will learn how to communicate with potential sexual partners so that their sex is safe, fun, and consensual.

The documentary highlights the re-traumatization of victims after sexual assaults, according to Morgan. “Audrie & Daisy” show the story of two girls who were sexually assaulted at parties at the ages of 14 and 15. After the assaults, the girls were bullied and harassed.

“It’s important that students watch this film because many people don’t think about the aftermath of sexual assault — they only think about the assault itself,” Morgan said.

Daisy was taunted in school and social media, and was shunned from her community. Pictures of Audrie’s rape were shared among her classmates. One week after Audrie’s assault, she committed suicide, and Daisy attempted suicide three times.

Morgan explained that victims are often blamed for their assault, and if they speak out about it, they are stigmatized and harassed. This can lead to dropping out of school, inability to work, and even suicide.

“It’s important that we not only work to prevent sexual assault by creating a culture of consent, but that we also work to prevent bullying — including cyberbullying — in order to properly care for victims and prevent retraumatization,” said Morgan.

The “Sex Rules!” event will be held at the BBC on April 13 in Wolfe University Center ballrooms from 5 p.m. until 6:30 p.m. and MMC on April 14 in the Graham Center Ballrooms from 7 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. This and other upcoming events can be found on their social media accounts: Facebook: Women’s Center FIU and Instagram: @womencenterfiu.
It’s our job to lead the charge against sexual violence

Rape culture is a sociological concept used to describe a setting in which rape is pervasive and normalized due to societal attitudes about gender and sexuality.

In laymen’s terms, this translates to a society in which a victim is asked how much they drank prior to being violated and assaulted: a question that tells victims that they were asking for their assault based on the clothes they wore on the way they behaved.

Rape culture is wrong. Being that April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, it’s important that we bring light to the resources and conversations on campus.

We want to break the silence that surrounds sexual assault and rape culture.

To do that, we put together a magazine that features information from the Title IX Office of the Victim Empowerment Program and the National Organization of Women.

As an editorial board, we fight to dispel the myth of the perfect victim. Anyone, including men, can be a victim of sexual assault, regardless of their creed, religion or other background factors.

It’s On Us to stop sexual assault on campus, and we at Student Media would like to lead the charge.

If you have been a victim of a sexual assault, the University’s Victim Empowerment Program is equipped to assist in moving forward, regardless of if the report is rescinded.

VEP is located in Student Health Center 270 at MMC and Wolfe University Center 320 by appointment only at BBC.

FIUPD offers free self-defense program

Consent: Continuous ‘enthusiastic yes’ rather than just a definitive no

A seven-letter word stands between sexual assault and consensual sex, and that word is consent.

Alyssa Delgado, lead peer educator of the Counseling Center and Victim Empowerment Program at the University, said that the difference between rape and sexual assault is that rape includes penetration, whereas sexual assault is nonconsensual sexual contact.

According to Daniela Valdes, president of the National Organization of Women at FIU, consent has to be a “continuous yes” rather than just a definitive no.

“There’s been a lot of campaigns about how ‘no’ means ‘no’ and that’s … defining what consent is but I think a better way to put it is that it has to be a continuous yes – saying gray areas … it makes it really easy for people with what you’re doing,” said Valdez.

Delgado stated simply that consent is essentially giving your explicit permission that you are OK to start or continue in a sexual act.

She then explained that both people should be able to enjoy any type of sexual contact.

“Oftentimes (sic) especially [with] people in relationships, we find that you have to know how to read their body language,” said Valdes. “You have to know how to read the person … you’re engaging with and if they’re uncomfortable … you [have] to know that’s not an enthusiastic yes. Consent would be a very happy resounding yes the whole time you’re doing whatever you’re doing,” said Valdes.

She adds that by not defining consent, it leaves room for miscommunication and can blur the lines of consent.

“You have people who say that if someone was drinking a certain amount, then that means that … they’re looking at the situation and not the individuals.”

Delgado said. She then explained that this also applies to couples who made the decision prior to drinking.

“She’s a friend, it’s a boyfriend, it’s a girlfriend. It’s a friend, it’s a boyfriend, it’s a girlfriend,” Delgado said.

Valdes echoed that sentiment on the gray areas that may occur under the influence.

“If you have two people who are both drunk, that’s the only scenario that I can of where it could be really murky,” said Valdes.

However, Valdes was reluctant to admit of a gray area because it may be used to excuse sexual violence.

“I think it [gray areas] happens most with people [who] are with a boyfriend or girlfriend … it seems like there would be, but you have to be completely sure that the person you’re with is happy and content with what you’re doing,” said Valdez.

When you start saying gray areas … it makes it really easy for people to justify all of their terrible actions,” said Valdes.

Delgado said: “So, if you don’t define consent initially … if you don’t know what a happy willing partner looks like, then you’re going to get into the realm of sexual assault really quickly.”

For more information on consent, visit vp.fiu.edu or their offices at the Modesto Maidique Campus in the Student Health Center, room 270 or by appointment at the Biscayne Bay Campus.
FIU changes its ‘application’ of discrimination law

JOSHUA CEBALLOS
Assistant Entertainment Director

FIU students who are the victims of sexual misconduct such as harassment, inappropriate touching, rape, or discrimination, can report the incidents with the office of Equal Opportunity Programs and Diversity (EOPD) in PC 321.

Shirlyon McWhorter is the director of EOPD and a Title IX coordinator. McWhorter oversees the operations of her office and others, and ensures that FIU is adhering to the Title IX law.

“Title IX is a 1972 law that’s been around for quite some time. Most people are familiar with Title IX as it applies to sports... Title IX applies to any type of discrimination based on sex or gender,” said McWhorter.

Whereas people normally think of Title IX as the law that requires women’s basketball teams to be treated just as fairly as men’s basketball teams, FIU takes their approach to a different level, according to McWhorter.

“The law didn’t change, but our application of this law has changed. Now we’re looking at it holistically. Any type of behavior dealing with sexual misconduct [or] dealing with sex and gender... what Title IX says is that educational institutions, are not to discriminate or to allow discrimination at your school,” said McWhorter.

EOPD handles cases of sexual misconduct that occur between a student and a staff member, or a student and a faculty member. Cases of misconduct between students are handled by Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution, according to the sexual misconduct informational pamphlet provided by the EOPD.

“Students can report [sexual misconduct] in a number of ways... they can come in in-person; they can call us on the telephone. What we try to do is make ourselves accessible to the students so that we can contact them and of sexual harassment, EOPD and Student Conduct makes sure that students get the proper psychological help from CAPS if necessary, helps refer students to the Victim Empowerment Program, and also accompanies victims in reporting the incident with the police department on or off campus if the student feels it is necessary.

For those who may not know where EOPD, McWhorter said that FIU is consistently replacing what is broken. EOPD is necessary.

Approximately 23 percent of females and 5.5 percent of males experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence or incapacitation, according to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network.

RAINN, an anti-sexual violence organization that aims to enlighten, protect and provide for victims of sexual assault, rape or abuse and those who witness it, created the national “It’s On Us” campaign to address sexual assault on college campuses.

A few issues “It’s On Us” aims to solve or regulate includes the stigma of a rape victim being a woman. A crime can not, in any way, shape or form, be genderized.

Rape victims and perpetrators can at any time, any place and for whatever reason, be both male and female in no relation to the other.

The “It’s On Us” campaign here at FIU is consistently contributing to the culture of FIU through events, open discussions, tabling and even speakers. But, aside from our own “It’s On Us” campaign, students and parents nationwide are upset, claiming that numerous universities are downplaying assault as a whole and are practicing the act of not reporting “on-campus” sexual assaults and/or rapes.

According to the Washington Post, incidents that have occurred included a “university policy [that] report effectively to reports of sexual assault involving football players and others.”

“Universities need to stop trying to treat this as a PR problem, and treat it as the civil rights and public safety issue that it is. It’s happening on their campuses, undeniably. There’s no use putting their heads in the sand,” Lisa Maatz, vice president of government relations at the American Association of University Women, said to the Washington Post.

However, legislative action has tried to minimize the attitude universities have towards rape. In 2016, for example, students and parents were able to access for the first time precise data on the volume of rape reports on each campus due to a modification within their disclosure rules.

Colleges were once required to disclose under the federal Clery Act the number of “forcible sex offenses,” reports which cover a variety of crimes including rape.

But, since 2016, these reports are now deciphered based on the precise act and as a separate statistic, along with modifications to the definition of rape: “Penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.”

But, what is new is not replacing what is broken. Despite the new changes to regulations, many rapes are still going unreported.

“Political” did their own investigation stating, “Florida’s colleges and universities report among the lowest rates of on-campus rape in the nation, and relatively few of the state’s higher education institutions are under federal investigations...”

SEE REPORT, PAGE 5

PURPLE FLAGS TO RAISE AWARENESS

LAQUAVIA SMITH
Equity Opportunity Programs and Diversity

LAQUAVIA SMITH
Equity Opportunity Programs and Diversity

WHAT'S UP FIU

Shirlyon McWhorter
Title IX Coordinator

One of our concerns is not just addressing the investigation... but also, first and foremost, to make sure that that student is okay, to make sure that that student is whole.

For me, all of the events and this display... is meant to help people know that they are not alone, that it is okay to talk about [sexual assault], and that it is not the victim’s fault, it’s the perpetrator’s fault.
Victim Empowerment Program seeks to ‘promote recovery’

ANGELIQUE DUCOUNGE
Staff Writer

Ninety percent of all campus rapes occur when alcohol was used by either the victim or the assailant; most victims, both male and female, are raped by an acquaintance or a romantic partner, not a stranger.

This is where the Victim Empowerment Program at FIU comes in.

“Our mission is to promote the recovery of victims of violent crimes,” said Sharon Aaron, licensed clinical social worker and director of the VEP program. “Also to prevent retraumatization in the aftermath of their victimization, and to promote awareness through prevention education for the university.”

The program focuses on relationship violence, including sexual battery or stalking, while the center’s licensed clinicians also work to provide assistance and support for victims of hate crimes and biasing.

“What we do is we explain choices and help identify needs and do safety planning, then lay out whatever options there are depending on what’s happened or is happening with the student but we only fulfill the options that they choose,” said Aaron.

In addition to supportive crisis counseling, the center also offers accompaniment meetings which sees a licensed staff member accompanying students to places like the courts or rape treatment centers.

They can provide assistance with filing for restraining orders or student conduct complaints against their assailants, as well as facilitating academic accommodations by speaking with financial aid or professors when a crisis causes disruption in a student’s academic life.

“We want to help students recover and not get so far behind in their lives and their goals that it becomes a thing that really is disruptive and has a lasting impact on their lives,” said Aaron.

A 24-hour support hotline rotates between victim advocates to ensure someone will always be at hand to answer the phone. Depending on the severity of the situation, the center’s licensed clinicians and support for victims of hate crimes, relationship violence, including sexual battery or stalking, while the center’s licensed clinicians also work to provide assistance and support for victims of hate crimes and biasing.

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RAPE CANNOT BE IGNORED

Society needs to confront rape culture’s toxicity

PANTHER HEALTH

MAYTINEE KRAMER

According to a 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violent Survey, “sexual violence, stalking and intimate partner violence are major health problems in the United States.”

Our understanding of these forms of violence has gradually grown over the years, but rape culture is still perpetuated by society, and gives men the idea that they can get away with things simply because “boys will be boys.” Rape culture is a complex of beliefs, but for the most part, normalizes and condones physical and emotional terrorism against women.

What people need to realize is that all forms of sexual assault and harassment are traumatic, instead of brushing them aside. In other words, there needs to be a cultural shift to fix rape culture.

As defined by the United States Department of Justice, sexual assault includes “sexual activities as forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, child molestation, incest, fondling, and attempted rape.”

However, studies done people don’t know what rape culture looks like, therefore they don’t understand what rape culture is.

In the comment sections even after comments calling Affleck degrading names?

Where were the avalanche of comments calling Affleck a “manwhore” to describe Heard’s now ex-husband, Depp.

Depp’s domestic abuse scandal emerged last year, I was both shocked and disappointed. I will never see Depp the same way again.

What shocked me more, however, was the unwarranted hatred that was directed at his now ex-wife, Amber Heard, mostly by his fans.

Depp’s fame, wealth and status in Hollywood, the repercussions for his supposed actions against Heard would’ve destroyed his career in the blink of an eye.

The fact is, many people can’t find it in themselves to believe that their beloved actor, actress or musician could commit such a horrible crime.

They raise their celebrity to the level of a deity and thus, the latter becomes untouchable.

Denial sets in and anger is then shoved onto the accuser, who is made to look like the villain.

Unfortunately, Depp’s abuse towards Heard is not an isolated event. Public figures who’ve abused their partners.

Actors and musicians alike such as Sean Penn, John Lennon, Chris Brown and Michael Fassbender have already been accused or abuse by their former girlfriends and wives. And it’s been happening for a long time.

In Penn’s case, he committed violence against his then wife Madonna (yes, the Material Girl) by torturing her for nine hours in 1987, according to The Huffington Post.

Without much regard to his treatment of Madonna, Penn became successful in the industry.

The same Huffington Post article states that Penn “has gone on to star in dozens of critically acclaimed movies, won two Academy Awards, and become a champion of numerous political and social causes.”

This occurs with many celebrity cases, where the man walks away from the ordeal without so much as a scratch on his career.

Casey Affleck has had several allegations of sexual harassment and verbal abuse against him and yet, he still won Actor in a Leading Role at the Academy Awards earlier this year.

Where was the outrage? Where were the avalanche of comments calling Affleck degrading names?

Heard and the other women who were brave enough to report their abusers didn’t gain anything from their accusations. They risked their careers by calling out and then thrown on their alleged behavior.

Victim-blaming only prevents a woman from reporting a crime and creates a cycle where abuse lingers. It also permits these celebrities, who are used to being acclaimed with praises and awards, to continue their actions without punishment.

A line has to be drawn somewhere. People should be aware that their favorite actors, musicians, NFL players or whoever are capable of being awful people, just like anyone else.

Fame and fortune does not excuse someone for their actions.

Caroline Lozano is a contributing writer for Panther Press. Her columns, “Seriously, Folks,” is a commentary on the arts and entertainment industry and how it relates to society today.

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FAME NOT AN EXCUSE FOR VICTIM-BLAMING

SERIOUSLY, FOLKS

CAROLINE LOZANO

I’ve always admired Johnny Depp for his acting ability and the films he starred in. Some of his films like “Edward Scissorhands” and “Corrie Brat” remain among my favorites even today.

But when news about Depp’s domestic abuse scandal emerged last year, I was both shocked and disappointed. I will never see Depp the same way again.

What shocked me more, however, was the unwarranted hatred that was directed at his now ex-wife, Amber Heard, mostly by his fans.

Comments ranging from “gold digger” to “attention-seeking” to describe Heard were thrown around in the comment sections even after she released proof of his assaults with photos.

At first, I couldn’t understand why so much anger was being forced onto the shoulders of this young woman. What exactly did Heard do to merit this type of hatred?

So much so, that we commonly engage in together as a society that excuse or tolerate sexual violence. Moreover, we need to look at the way society thinks about rape.

It’s the idea that only certain people rape — and only certain people get raped; it’s reifying women to be “more responsible” or “don’t dress a certain way”; it’s the assertion that wives, sex workers and sisters can’t be raped; it’s the man who forces himself onto an attractive woman because “he couldn’t help himself” and so much more.

All of this is the myriad ways in which rape is tacitly and overtly encouraged.

More often than not, sexual assault, rape and sexual violence are ignored, trivialized, normalized or made into jokes. Women and victims of rape culture are oppressed and blamed for leaving them feeling alone, trapped, and ashamed.

While it’s crucial to take action to stop rape culture from saturating our lives and contributing to a toxic mindset, it’s even more important that everyone has a clear understanding of what falls under the umbrella of sexual assault.

In partnership with PSA from the “It’s On Us” campaign, former Vice President Joe Biden recently tweeted, “The correct word for sex without consent is rape. Period.”

All incidents need to be taken seriously and treated as crimes and it’s important to confront rape culture as the toxic it is.

Maytinee Kramer is the Assistant Opinion Director for Panther Press. Her column, Panther Health, is a commentary on maintaining one’s health during college.

FABIANNE FLEURANTIN

Women are not objects

Grocery shopping should be a no brainer right? Get in, get out and bring your groceries to your respective transportation.

Well, two girls tried that approach, but it didn’t turn out so well.

They just exited a Publix with a few grocery bags and as they passed a Dollar Tree on their way to the bus stop, the girls caught unwanted attention from two men perched on the wall beside the store.

The girls walked on, one oblivious to the sudden matching footsteps that lurked behind them while the other grew more wary because they entered an empty mall parking lot.

The two men began catcalling them, telling them to stop and wait for them, but the girls didn’t slow down. Trying to be safe and sensible, they headed towards the nearest store in the mall to surround themselves with people.

One of the men, however, saw the girls go inside, and continued to follow them. The girls screamed and went on their way hoping to get on the bus one way or another.

One of those girls was me.

This is something that many women and girls experience when they walk the streets alone.

Not only do we fear for our safety, but we have to abide by the unspeakable rules that we have to censor our freedom of expression in order to save ourselves.

According to stopthestephemrassment.org, 75 percent of female respondents have been followed by an unknown stranger in public. More than 27 percent have been followed at least six times. About 62 percent of women say a man has purposely blocked their path at least once and 23 percent said this has happened at least six times.

Nearly 57 percent of women reported being touched or grabbed in a sexual way by a stranger in public while about 18 percent said they have been touched sexually at least six times.

It’s the sad truth that some people believe women crave attention based on the way they dress or claim they want something by the way they dance. In reality though, we are just trying to enjoy ourselves, for ourselves, by ourselves. We don’t want any extra attention.

If we continue to perpetuate this rape culture that we’ve created...we will denigrate the female gender altogether.

Fabiennne Fleurantin is a staff writer for Panther Press. Her column, Politicbuzz, is a commentary that raises awareness about political issues in the US and worldwide.
Sexual assault can happen to anyone, anywhere

When it comes to sexual assault or harassment, there is no such thing as a “perfect” victim.

Nothing is black and white. Anyone can be assaulted and no victim of any assault should be blamed.

Men, women, and all races, religions, nationalities and socioeconomic statuses are at risk of rape because no one has inherent immunity. The fact that the idea of a standard “victim profile” for cases of rape exists is telling of blatant rape culture. No other crime profiles or shames its victim as much as rape.

A girl wearing a skirt to a party and getting raped is frequently compared to actions like a bank leaving its safes unlocked and getting robbed, or wearing a meat dress in a shark tank and getting bitten.

“She was asking for it,” is the common phrase, and what an insensitive, untrue phrase it is. Comparing a human being to a building that is only good for storing money is a continued acceptance of the idea that women are property; that they do not have their own autonomy.

There are two major issues with these comparisons. Firstly, the standards for what clothing is considered sexual in nature are arbitrary and have changed drastically over the centuries. In medieval France, it would have been revealing for a woman to show her hair in public. In colonial Europe, showing legs even with hose and bloomers still on was risqué.

The 1920s saw hemlines increase almost up to the knees, which would have been nearly blasphemous twenty years prior. But society today doesn’t concur that if someone walks about with ankles bare and hair flowing in the wind he or she deserves to be raped.

What someone wears or even how someone behaves is not an excuse to attack him or her and certainly not tools with which to blame him or her attacked. Secondly, comparing men (or any attacker) to a shark in a feeding frenzy would suggest that these people, particularly men, can’t control themselves and are slaves to their libidos, regardless of whatever consequences that may bring.

It’s the same as the “boys will be boys” argument. This comparison also implies that women are expected to be the adults, the bigger person, by sitting back and taking whatever comes their way because they’re too ladylike and simultaneously too weak to prevent it.

And lest we forget that men can be raped too, by either sex, this phrase also implies that men are superior and incapable of being attacked in such a way. It is sexist on every front.

The best way to prevent sexual assault is to attack the rape culture that exists all over the world. This way, the disease, rather than symptoms — or worse, the pseudo-symptoms like arguments used in victim blaming — is stopped.

Don’t tell them that wearing what makes them feel good is the price they pay for assault. Don’t persuade them that women are the only ones allowed to be victims of sexual violence. Don’t teach them that men are to be feared and that women are inherently weak.

Instead, raise your children to respect others’ bodies and wishes. Educate them on the importance of consent. Teach them to defend themselves so they have a way to protect themselves in a situation that requires it. And if anyone you know is ever handling sexual assault, be a friend, a parent or a partner who is supportive of the victim’s recovery.

Treat it like any other crime: report it and remind the victim that he or she did nothing wrong, that they did nothing to provoke this, and that it’s nothing that makes him or her any less worthy of self-care and love.

If everyone does this, we can start a revolution in the way the world views rape cases and its victims.

Stop excusing the phrase, “Boys will be boys”

Any woman can empathize with this giving boys the idea that they can because he likes you,” is unfortunately a bad example of children; confining like “boys will be boys” as a prompt to from Psychology Today describes the tumor. Depending on the child’s age we can add some explanation of why some kids might punch, hit, etc. We would explain of why some kids might punch, hit, etc. We would explain

Psychologist Elizabeth J. Meyer from Psychology Today describes the dangers behind the inclusion of terms like “boys will be boys” as a prompt to construct gender stereotypes, leading towards the formation of unconscious biases, which in the end, “buries the full expression of children; confining them to socially constructed pink and blue scripts.”

Unfortunately, these terms eventually follow well into adulthood.

Just look at the recent case of Brock Turner, a rapist who also happened to be an athlete at Stanford University.

Turner’s “mediocrity” stemmed from the light sentence he received; a trifling 6 months in jail as a punishment for “ruining a life” as told by Selena Strandberg from the Observer.

A rapist who also happened to be an athlete at Stanford. According to Persky, Turner was just trying to “have fun” and took it “too far” with his intoxication. He didn’t say “boys will be boys,” but he may as well have done so.

The Stanford case is not the first nor the last to exhibit this apathy towards rape. Many universities such as Harvard and the University of Connecticut have been called out on their aloofness towards the women who have come out to confess their abuse.

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If everyone does this, we can start a revolution in the way the world views rape cases and its victims.
Universities must create ‘zero-tolerance policies’ for student’s safety on campus

There is a lot of alcohol and drug use in these events, and students of both sexes prey on each other. It’s kind of like a game to see who can get wasted and hook up with someone fastest, but the issue comes when they are so intoxicated that they can’t think clearly or express consent.

Daniel Estevez
Junior
Psychology

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