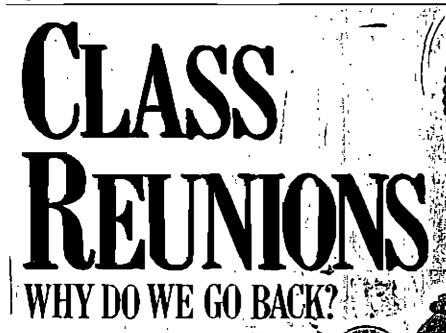
# PSYCHOLOGYTODAY

JUNE 1986 \$195



How to Negotiate Anything

# Aging Well

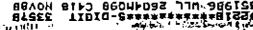
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### DRUG ABUSE

#### MDMA: 'Madness, not .:) ecstasy<sup>1</sup> mon .

With a single twist on a chemical formula, "basement chemists" have sent. legislators, researchers and psychiatrists into bitter battle. The latest ca round of controversy centers on -MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymetham-); phetamine), known as "ecstasy" to 18 some and trouble to others, be and the

A chemical relative of methamphet-hailed by users since its street debut in the late 1970s as a "safer" psyche-i delic drug. Free for the most part of the hallucinations produced by other psychedelics, the distilled effects, users say, leave them feeling more empathetic, more insightful and aware. Some paychiatrista have spoken in favor of its limited use in therapy, was it claiming that it lowers patients' de fenses, improving treatment progreas. (See "MDMA: Psychedelic Drug Faces Regulation," May 1985.) But 1843. there is evidence that even short-term use can cause long-term; irreversible ! effects on the brain, and other stud-: tes have shown MDMA's addictive all potential,从此的是中国的人们的情况的经历的社会是

Last year the federal Drug En-its forcement Administration (DEA) took "emergency" action, temporarily in the placing MDMA on Schedule I of the federal Controlled Substances Act. 11 Alongside heroin, LSD and marijuana, at this level of control, producers, distributors and possessors of a drug ! can incur penalties of up to 15 years in jail and/or \$150,000 in fines, A final decision on MDMA's permanent? acheduling is expected soon. A way 15

The DEA's decision came after. consideration of a series of biochemical and behavioral studies conducted: on rate and guines pigs by paycho-&; pharmacologists Lewis Seiden and M Charles Schuster. They found that MDMA causes long-term and perhaps irreversible effects on the brain. Serotonin (a neurotransmitter involved in ) the regulation of sleep, sex, aggres sion and mood), in particular, reached

an alarmingly low level viere it ਾਂ 'We've looked at rats eight weeks after they've received MDMA," Bays Seiden. 'Their brains are still depleted in serotonin, and there doesn't seem to be a hint that it's going to Without a government go-ahead. MDMA cannot be obtained for re .! search or any other purpose. For S therapists who had previously been using it in treatment, and for re- with searchers wishing to study it, getting federal approval can involve a lot of & paperwork and a measure of stigma, says Frank Sapienza, a chemist with the DEA. "Schedule I drugs are harder to get," he says. "And with this 🖓 placement, MDMA would seem as 🦂 bad as heroin or LSD."[[15] 14][[5] [15] Seiden, Schuster and others, how-ever, see these drugs as appropriate company for MDMAL"Its therapeutic use, to me, is completely unproven," says Sidney Cohen, a former LSD researcher at the University of California. Los Angeles: "There has never of been a single article published on its ? therapeutic value. We have to ask why why we have to ask

Psychopharmacologist Ronald K. Siegel agrees. "MDMA' has been pro? moted as a cure for everything from personal depression to allenation to a cocaine addiction," he says. "It's got

a lot of notoriety, but the clinical claims made for its efficacy are totally unsupported at this time."

MDMA's acute physical and paychological effects resemble those produced by mescaline or MDA, another chemical relative, Siegel sava, In addition to its "mind-expanding" properties, some users he has interviewed ... report side effects such as nausea 🕥 and dizziness as well as jaw pain lasting for weeks after taking MDMA.... They also use terms such as "energy tremor" and "de atressing" to de scribe their experiences, phrases Siegel says are euphemisms for muscle spasms and nauses and vomiting.

"I've seen people get ecstatic and I've seen people crawl into fetal positions for three days," he says, here' "When doses are pushed, we get uso!" D Based on their animal studies, were Seiden and Schuster conclude that w doses harmful to the brain are only is about two to three times greater than the average street dose. This finding. worried the DEA, "Seiden and in b Schuster identified a dose of MDMA! close enough to street doses to con- ! cern us," Sapienza says, sestlaturem in

The concern has spread to other researchers, who have been studying the substance for its abuse potential. Psychopharmacologist Roland Grif- 1.

as a chipping in the properties and \_\_\_\_ to e decrease while a pil s S ... mobragaji Had/ The bus gladenting (1) 2(11) ct 252 - 1 नता म कुर्सुक्**रम्|िस्**रकाट र र असीतनेत्री भाग 12.15 Adle 23 (108) La Contain de la langua de la contain de la 

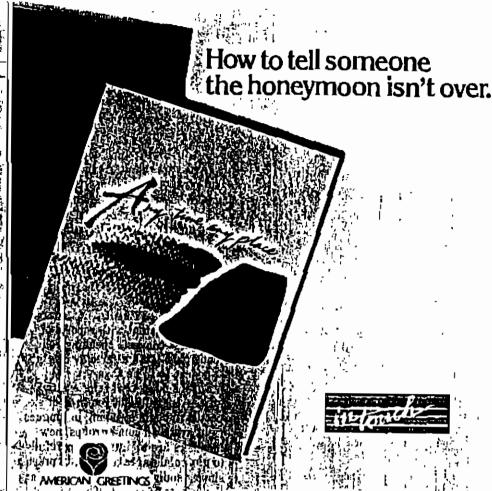
fiths and colleagues studied baboons to see whether they would inject themselves with MDMA. When all themselves with MDMA. When all lowed to administer the drug intravenously at will, the animals did so at fregular intervals. Since lab animals do not usually take to psychoactive the drugs purely for their hallucinogenic effects, the baboons' behavior angests that MDMA has some other that maturally reinforcing properties, Griffiths says. Other researchers have found similar behavior in monkeys allowed access to the drug, findings and they say should alert those who use all MDMA recreationally or therapeutically to its abuse potential.

Although the DEA has until July 1 to decide on a permanent scheduling to decide on a permanent scheduling to MDMA, theoretically that decide ion has already been made. In February, the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs placed the fill drug on Schedule I of an international treaty that theoretically binds 78 is altreaty that theoretically binds 78 is including the United States, to its regulations. This decision limits the use of MDMA in those nations to medical and scientific settings under the government control.

Strict regulation of MDMA, however, will not prevent the creation and is abuse of chemical successors. Researchers at the National Institute on Drug Abuse have already begun to (it study the effects of MDE ("Eve"). Interest of MDE ("Eve"). Interest is considering several in hills that would prohibit the manufacture and distribution of drugs similar to those previously placed on Schedule I or II. 14 that would not obtained the several in the previously placed on Schedule I or II. 14 that will not obtained the several in the se

Without this sort of preventive approach, the MDMA story will be told and retold, with only a slight variation in format. There's no end to the possibilities of drugs that can be end gineered. Siegel says. Designer of drugs present a real law-enforcement alghtmars. Marjory Roberts

Seiden and Schuster are at the Uni-lility versity of Chicago. Siegel is at the W. University of California, Los Ange Tiles. Griffiths is at the Johns Hopkins. Medical Institutions.



## SEXUAL ETHICS: Who Knows What's Right Or Wrong?

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Dear Editor, May 29,1986

Your article on MDMA in the Crosstalk section of the June issue was remarkably ironic. Between the opening words "Drug Abuse" and the closing word "nightmare", not one psychotherapist who has used MDMA was quoted. And within days after <u>Psychology Today</u> painted a frightening picture of MDMA, the Administrative Law Judge of the DEA declared that MDMA does have a currently accepted medical use, is safe for use under medical supervision, and does not belong is Schedule 1, but rather in Schedule 3.

Judge Young found that the studies the DEA cited as proving the addictive potential of MDMA "lack significant indica of reliability to be given any weight. They certainly fail to butress the Agency's position that MDMA has a "high potential for abuse" in humans. They are immaterial."

The studies suggesting that MDMA causes permanent brain damage were also discounted by the Judge. He wrote "the study on which this conclusion was based indicates only that the MDMA was injected into rats...Humans are known to take MDMA orally, not by injection. This difference is of great importance, and renders the test meaningless for our purposes." Judge Young continued "the drug fenflouramine has been determined to produce the biochemical effects in rats of which MDMA is suspected, but at much lower dosage levels than in the case of MDMA... Nonetheless, FDA has approved the daily use of fenfluramine in humans on a chronic basis."

Research groups at Harvard Medical School, University of New Mexico Medical School, and the University of California San Francisco are in the process of seeking FDA approval for MDMA research in humans. I hope that Psychology Today will see fit to report on their findings, for only when MDMA is submitted to scientific scrutiny unclouded by politically-motivated interpretations will the true potential of MDMA be elucidated.

## Sincerely, Rick Doblin

President, Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, Inc. (MAPS)

(MAPS submitted MDMA animal toxicity studies to the FDA, and holds. Drug Haster File 6293. Researchers interested in studying MDMA can write to MAPS and request permission to cross reference the toxicity data in our DMF. At oral doses of 100 mg/kg per day for 28 days, there was no evidence of MDMA related brain damage in rats.)

2105 Robinson Avenue Sarasota, Florida 33582

Editor- if you need to shorten my letter, I suggest that you eliminate the two paragraphs quoting Judge Youngs findings. I am enclosing a complete copy of his recommdation for your review.