

Within this framework, a minor incident can trigger the violent act. Often the threatening incident is half real and half misinterpreted.

In nine of the cases in this study, the murder was committed on the basis of an instant decision or impulse secondary to a perceived danger. There were, however, four other cases in which some forethought was involved in the intent.

One man "tracked down" his victim.

Even within this context of pursuit of the victim, there is often a singular event that triggers the violence.

In fact, in Smith's 1972 descriptions, nonfatal pursuits are not uncommon—Kramer and others, 1967—have stated that these games are often only half serious. Thus, although chronic amphetamine abuse may set the stage for violence, it is the phase of acute changes in sensibilities that is actually associated with misinterpretation and the violent act.

At this point, a note of caution is indicated. Homicides related to amphetamine abuse certainly pale in significance when one considers the incidence relative to alcohol related violence.

This does not mean that the fewer episodes of stimulant facilitated homicides are not critically important, but we should maintain a perspective with respect to alcohol.

Finally, the question can be asked whether there are residual psychological changes that remain after one has developed the amphetamine psychosis.

The amphetamine paranoid psychosis is a well-known phenomena associated with chronic amphetamine use—Connell, 1958; Kalant, 1966.

Although single large doses of amphetamine can produce a toxic hallucinatory paranoid panic state, amphetamine psychosis most often results from chronic abuse and develops gradually; when seen by the examining physician, the process often has extended to the point where a picture of paranoid schizophrenic-like psychosis is present—Ellinwood, 1969.

In fact, many patients have not infrequently been wrongly diagnosed as such.

The paranoid syndrome usually does not begin until after the initial few weeks, or even months of amphetamine abuse.

Mr. GORDON. Doctor, may I interrupt you just 1 second?

You mentioned alcohol. In one of your journal articles you referred to poly-drug abuse, and you state:

Reports on several persons who have committed quite serious assaults indicate that when combining amphetamines with other drugs, staggering amounts of alcohol or sedatives can often be consumed. Without the amphetamine use, the individual would have passed out.

Would you say this is an additional danger of amphetamines?

Dr. ELLINWOOD. Yes; I would say so.

Mr. GORDON. That you would consume much more alcohol?

Dr. ELLINWOOD. Yes; and the combination often ends up with a fairly activated individual, who has lost a considerable amount of his judgment.

Otherwise, a similar amount of alcohol, he would frequently pass out.