In a recent paper, Lidz (1978) employs a case study of an intraorganizational power struggle within a drug treatment program to critique Lemert's (1962) work, "Paranoia and the Dynamics of Exclusion." Specifically, he challenges Lemert's conclusion that the conspiracies seen by paranoids have a factual basis in their interactions with others and imputes the findings to Lemert's ability "to put himself in the paranoid's shoes and see the world in a 'paranoid' manner" (1978:16). According to Lidz (1978:5), "there are no clear-cut grounds for determining whether or not an event called a conspiracy really exists." I will argue that, in fact, through consistently misinterpreting or misrepresenting Lemert's paper, Lidz constructs a nonexistent "straw man" which serves as a foil for his own point of view. After briefly summarizing Lemert's theory of the development of paranoia, I will point out several of these errors and argue that, if Lemert's criteria for determining the presence of a conspiracy are properly used, one exists in the case study presented by Lidz.

Drawing on data from case studies of paranoids, most of whom had been hospitalized, Lemert proposes a theoretical alternative to Cameron's (1943:37) view that conspiracies are the creations of paranoids' flawed perceptions.

The community he (the paranoid) forms not only fails to correspond to any organization shared by others but actually contradicts this consensus. More than this, the actions ascribed by him to its personnel are not actually performed or maintained by them. They are united in no common undertaking against him.

For Lemert, the conspiracy is real. His thesis is that paranoia is the result of a communication breakdown arising from a process of informal and formal exclusion involving reciprocal perceptions and actions occurring between an individual and a group. Following an initial stage during which an individual has experienced persistent interpersonal difficulties because of a perceived status threat, he or she is redefined by others as a person who is "dangerous," "unreliable," and "untrustworthy." During this second stage, others begin collective actions to exclude the individual from informal social relations. In some cases, an organizational crisis heightens existing tensions so that efforts are made to formally exclude the person from the group. Later stages of the process are
characterized by delusions as the "paranoid" is shut off from communication channels and thus is unable to realistically estimate the scope and form of his or her opposition. The important point is that the conspiracy has an independent existence prior to the paranoid's delusions.

Lidz's first error is to simply dismiss Lemert's arguments as the result of his taking the perspective of the paranoid too seriously. He (Lemert) overlooked the fact that, when trying to demonstrate that an actor's perspective is a realistic reaction to objective external events, the researcher cannot undertake to look at the events through the actor's eyes. Specifically, if one looks at the world through the eyes of a paranoid, it is not surprising that one sees conspiracies (1978:5).

Lidz's reasoning is correct and should receive few disclaimers from other sociologists. It is not, however, an accurate assessment of Lemert, who stresses the need to employ an interactional approach.

The paranoid relationship includes reciprocating behaviors with attached emotions and meanings which, to be fully understood, must be described cubistically from at least two of its perspectives. On one hand the behaviors of the individual must be seen from the perspective of others or that of a group, and conversely the behavior of others must be seen from the perspective of the involved individual (1962:6).

In addition, there is no evidence to support the argument that, regardless of stated intentions, Lemert infers the reality of the conspiracy from data obtained largely or exclusively from paranoids. His argument for the conspiratorial nature of the exclusion process is based on interviews with family members, work associates, and others arrayed against the paranoid (1962:11-14). Lidz's assertion that Lemert's conclusions are a result of his taking the point of view of the deviant has no foundation.

Secondly, Lidz states that Lemert sees the conspiracy as a necessary cause of paranoia: "For Lemert ... the conspiracy is a universal and essential feature of the situation of the paranoid. Paranoia does not exist without a conspiracy" (1978:5). Nowhere does Lemert make such a claim. The strongest statement of a relationship between conspiracy and paranoia is:

... while the paranoid person reacts differently to his social environment, it is also true that "others" react differentially to him and this reaction commonly if not typically involves covertly organized action and conspiratorial behavior ... (italics mine) (Lemert, 1962:3).

Thirdly, Lidz argues that, even if one grants the reality of the conspiracy, there can be no strong causal relationship between conspiracies and paranoia because the former are relatively common in organizations while the latter is relatively rare. The logic is flawless, but the opponent is illusionary. Lemert's theory is neither causal nor deterministic. The initial formation of a conspiratorial group is seen to produce several outcomes, including an attempt to remove the paranoid from his or her position, the development of a compromise that preserves