

**Workplace
Within**
Psychodynamics
of work

Source: Larry Hirschhorn, The Workplace Within

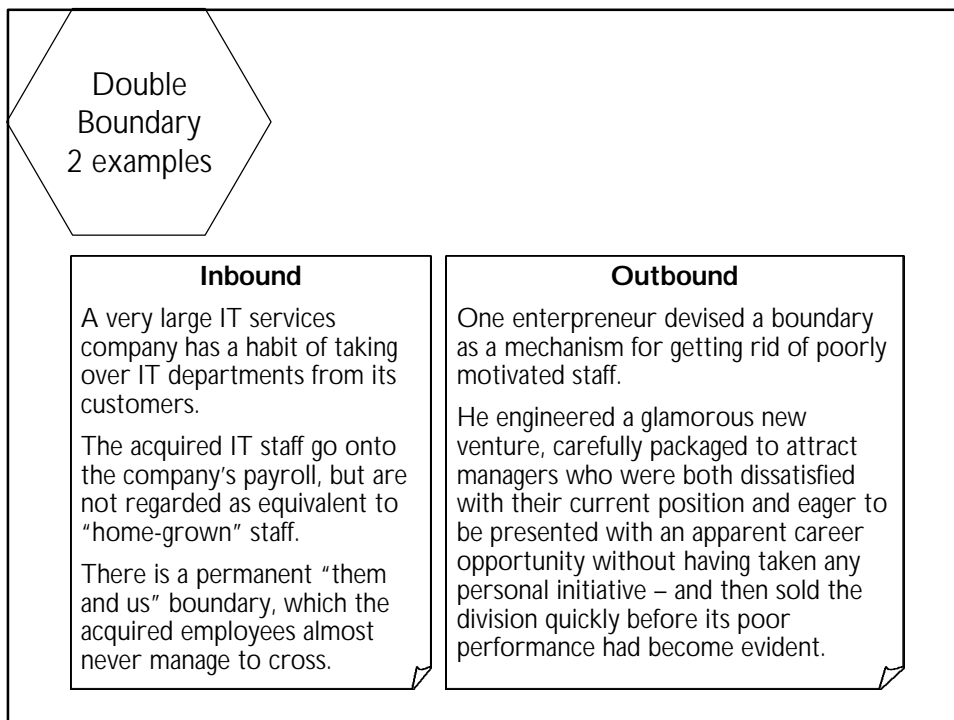
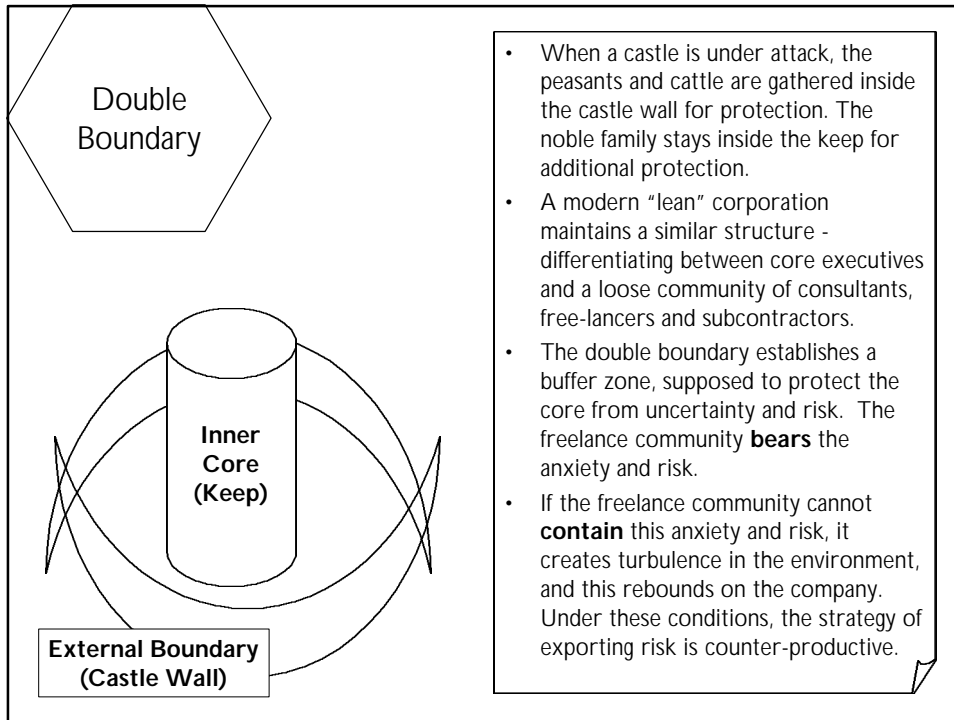
- Feelings of anxiety are the fundamental roots of distorted or alienated relationships at work.
- A work group manages its anxiety by developing and deploying a set of social defences.
- The social defences at work frequently create a distorted relationship between the group and its wider environment, that is its customers, clients and competitors.
- Group development takes place when group members stop scapegoating others.

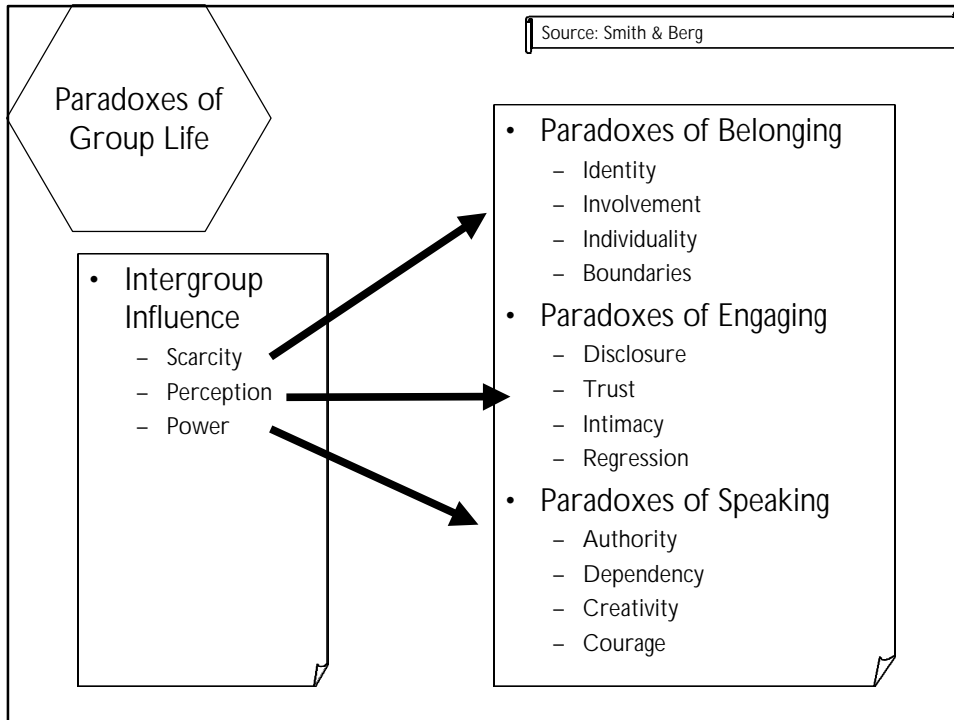
- Although people depend on social defences to contain their anxiety, they also desire to restore their experience of psychological wholeness, and repair the real of imagined psychological damage they have done in devaluing others.
- In the postindustrial milieu, the division of labour is reversed. Ironically, an imploding world may create even more pervasive and violent psychological splits.
- People may be unable to restore psychological balance to their work lives by relying on the resources and support of a single organization. Economics and culture set the conditions for each person's capacity to repair his or her relationship with the world.

**Symptoms of
Flawed
Boundaries**

- **Dependency** Mismatch of power, proximity and interest. Typically an individual or group has responsibility for achieving something, or has a requirement for something else, but lacks the authority or influence to make it happen.
- **Alienation** Mismatch between objective interest and subjective interest. An individual or group behaves as though something were not important.
- **Blame** The "outside" is scapegoated or devalued in some way to preserve the "inside".

- **Leakage** Inappropriate transmission of knowledge or information. The boundary is too porous.
- **Secrecy** Inappropriate retention of knowledge or information. The boundary is too impermeable.
- **Hesitation** An individual or group possesses authority or influence or knowledge, but is reluctant to use it.
- **Abdication** An individual or group renounces authority or influence or knowledge. Typically, this leads to a false culture of pseudo-democracy.





Reading

- Madeleine Davis & David Wallbridge, *Boundary and Space: An Introduction to the work of D.W. Winnicott* (Karnac)
- Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Routledge)
- R.D. Hinshelwood, *What Happens in Groups* (Free Association Books), *A Dictionary of Kleinian Thought* (Free Association Books)
- Larry Hirschhorn, *Beyond Mechanization* (MIT), *The Workplace Within* (MIT)
- Peter Marris, *The Politics of Uncertainty* (Routledge)
- Kenwyn Smith & David Berg, *Paradoxes of Group Life* (Jossey-Bass)