

REFLECTIONS ON DEPARTMENTAL SENSE OF COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

Sense of community has been written about for over fifty years, and in a variety of contexts from rural sociology to psychology. There are many definitions for sense of community, along with a variety of models, constructs, measurements. Very little, however, has been written about the sense of community within academic departments. This article focuses on presenting an overview of the components of psychological sense of community within academic departments. The emphasis is on a long-term administrator's reflections regarding a variety of behaviors which can have a significant positive or negative influence of sense of community.

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago I listened to an international management consultant discuss *sense of community*. He had traveled the world as a consultant, dealing with companies and various subunits (e.g., plants and offices). The gist of his discussion was that upon arrival, he first tried to grasp and define the problem areas, and then focused his efforts most heavily on that unit's sense of community. He typically found that when problems were severe enough to call in a consultant, the unit also possessed a fractured sense of community. He contended that if he could help heal the sense of community, then the vast majority of specific problems could then be addressed much more easily.

While it was the first time I had heard the term, I was intrigued. *Sense of community* resonated with several of my disconnected thoughts. Since that time, I have reflected on both past experiences and current situations relative to overall departmental performance and sense of community. The focus of this article is to share the resulting nuggets.

BACKGROUND AND ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES

Understanding my background should help you better understand my perspective on academic departments. My early years were fairly typical for a business faculty member. I spent fourteen years as a full-time faculty member, at three progressively larger universities. I then took the plunge into administration, serving five years as an Associate Dean, with one of those years also

serving as Interim Graduate Director for the College. I then left that university to begin my “deaning” journey, spending eighteen years as a Dean at four different types of public universities, ranging from R1 land grants to moderate sized regional universities. The largest had 5,000 business students, 120 faculty, and 6 departments. The smallest had about 1,000 students, 35 faculty, and 4 departments. I am currently serving as a Department Chair in a small liberal arts college.

In addition to the jobs, I have been active with the AACSB International accreditation process. This volunteer work has included serving on numerous Peer Review Teams, mentoring, consulting, and other AACSB committee work. Consequently, I have had direct involvement with dozens of academic departments and fairly close observation of many more. My reflective conclusion is that the international consultant was correct – there is a close correlation between a department’s sense of community and overall performance.

WHAT IS SENSE OF COMMUNITY?

From a lay perspective, it is generally understood that sense of community, or psychological sense of community (PSOC), refers to feelings of belonging, identity, and mutual support. A department with a strong, positive PSOC can be thought of as the opposite of a dysfunctional department. Powers and Maghroori (2006) contend that a dysfunctional department tends to start with “aberrant forms of department culture that develop when one person or a small group of people *exert a defining and negative influence on collegial discourse* over an extended time period. The evolution of departmental dysfunction can be traced to behavior that *shape a departmental culture of interpersonal fear and suspicion*, which leads to defensive governance as people unwittingly scale back on program improvement efforts in favor of a strategy of placating outburst-prone faculty.

They present a specific set of common behavioral denominators that have a pronounced negative impact on department culture:

1. a pattern of reactions that makes others hesitant to express their views,
2. a tendency of strategically introducing inaccuracies as “factual” premises in discussions,
3. a knack for diverting collaborative deliberations away from reaching votes on central questions someone doesn’t want to deal with,
4. failure of some to carry an equal share of the collective responsibility for program delivery,
5. a zero-sum view of prestige, which leads some people to delegitimize the activities of others with whom they feel they are in status competition, and
6. asymmetric application of principles (such as “the group should not have ‘tyranny of the majority’ over me but no individual should ‘obstruct’ my proposals by voting against them”).

While this article is not designed to be a true research article, there has been much written about PSOC. Much of the current literature refers to the conceptualization of Tönnies (1955), who made a distinction between *Gemeinschaft* (sometimes thought of as the village or small town with strong kin and friendship linkages), and *Gessellschaft* (the impersonal city).

Two scholarly definitions are:

1. "the perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, and the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure." (Sarason, 1974, p. 157)
2. "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together." (McMillan & Chavis, 1986)

Gusfield (1975) proposed two dimensions of community: the territorial and relational dimensions. While some communities do not have territorial demarcations (e.g., a community of scholars), other communities can be defined by territorial boundaries (e.g., an academic department). The relational dimension of community concerns the nature and quality of relationships in a specific community.

McMillan & Chavis (1986) expanded number of dimensions to four elements.

1. *Membership*. Membership includes five attributes:
 - a. boundaries
 - b. emotional safety
 - c. a sense of belonging and identification
 - d. personal investment
 - e. a common symbol system

These features fit together in a circular, self-reinforcing way, with all conditions having both causes and effects.

2. *Influence*. Influence works both ways: members need to feel that they have some influence in the group, and some influence by the group on its members is needed for group cohesion.
3. *Integration and fulfillment of needs*. Members should feel rewarded in some way for their participation in the community. Essentially, the community group must provide satisfying experiences.

4. *Shared emotional connection.* This emotional connection may be the most important element of sense of community. It includes shared history and shared participation (or at least identification with the history).

Based on the above dimensions, Chavis developed the Sense of Community Index (SCI), a widely used quantitative measure of sense of community in the social sciences. It has been used in numerous contexts, urban, suburban, rural, tribal, workplaces, schools, universities, recreational clubs, internet communities, and so on. (www.communityscience.com)

The SCI has been found useful in several other investigations, in reference to several different referents of community (Pretty, 1990; Pretty & McCarthy, 1991; Pretty, Andrews, & Collett, 1994) and seems to lend support to the usefulness of conceptualizing sense of community as a multidimensional construct.

THE ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT AS A COMMUNITY

An academic department can be viewed as a community. The four constructs posited by McMillan & Chavis (1986) are used to frame this concept.

1. **Membership.** Academic departments possess the five membership attributes. Departments have *boundaries*. For example, a Marketing Department consists of the individual marketing faculty members in a College who are responsible for developing and teaching the marketing curricula.

Department members have *emotional safety* in that they have colleagues to rely upon for a variety of assistance, such as pedagogical approaches, research collaboration, and so on. A faculty member “belongs” to a department because he or she is assigned to the department for administrative purposes. A *sense of belonging and identification*, however, is different – it involves the issue of “emotional attachment.” Consider, for example, how a faculty member might respond to the question “What kind of work do you do?” The response “I teach finance” might indicate little identification with the department. Now consider the responses “I am in the finance department at ABC University” or “I am on the finance faculty....” Both of these responses tend to indicate more identification with the unit.

Faculty members make many kinds of *personal investments*. They have a personal investment in students (some too much, some too little). They invest in their careers and their discipline via teaching and research efforts. Regarding a department’s level of PSOC, the major personal investments derive from service activities and personal interactions with colleagues.

Perhaps the major component of a department's *common symbol system* is the specialized language used by the relevant discipline. Other components might include any actions or outcomes which have a commonly interpreted meaning in that department – essentially, “X symbolizes Y” for that group. In some departments, for example, publishing an article in a Class A journal symbolizes high quality; in other departments, only funded research symbolizes quality (and in some departments such activities are irrelevant).

2. **Influence.** As discussed above, influence is a two-way street. First, a department will have better PSOC if all faculty members feel that they have some influence on departmental decisions (more than a mere vote). Envision a department in which all decisions (including teaching schedules) are dominated by the senior faculty, and untenured junior faculty members are forced to just “go along.” Such departments generally do not have a strong sense of community.

Secondly, group cohesion is enhanced when the department influences its members' behavior and attitudes. Without departmental influence on individuals, the department simply consists of a list of names and possesses little or any PSOC.

3. **Integration and fulfillment of needs.** A department's PSOC is enhanced when it provides satisfying experiences. At minimum, most faculty members prefer a pleasant work environment. Many also enjoy the intellectual stimulation that can exist. Unfortunately, some faculty members do not care about “pleasant” and seem to enjoy constant turmoil and drama.
4. **Shared emotional connection.** When all of the above elements are “right,” the department members generally have an emotional connection, which may be the most important element of sense of community.

WHAT FACTORS HELP ENRICH A POSITIVE SENSE OF COMMUNITY?

In my experience, the sense of community for academic departments ranges from “off the charts” positive to absolutely toxic – fortunately, most departments fall into the acceptable middle ground. The following discussion focuses on highlighting those behaviors that serve to enrich departmental PSOC, and some behaviors likely to destroy PSOC.

I have organized the discussion around a simple “formula:” PSOC = f(6 Cs + DREAMPLE)

Or, from a behavioral perspective, PSOC is a function of (or affected by) various behavioral elements. These elements are summarized with the two acronyms: 6 Cs and DREAMPLE, which are discussed below. You will see that there is sometimes a great deal of overlap among the various elements.

The 6 Cs

The 6 Cs are:

- Competence
- Collegiality
- Civility
- Cooperation
- Constructiveness
- Commitment

1. **Competence.** In this context, I am referring to competence in teaching, research, and service. People generally feel good about any organizational membership if they can look around and see other individuals who are competent and generally striving for continuous improvement. Conversely, if a faculty member feels that many of his or her colleagues are poor teachers and/or researchers, while others put either little effort or destructivity in their service work, PSOC will certainly be damaged.

2. **Collegiality.** Collegiality lies at the heart of PSOC. Collegiality does NOT mean that everyone in a department has to be likeable, sociable, or exude friendliness. Nor mean does it mean that everyone has to agree on everything and with everybody! We are all in the “academy” -- one hundred percent agreement on everything would scary! Collegiality does mean working well and positively with others, even with those you might not like!

Our academic world seems to be changing relative to collegiality. Relative to job satisfaction, the size of junior professors' paychecks is not nearly as important as how well they get along with their colleagues. Consider the results of a survey by Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. It found that tenure-track faculty members care more about departmental climate, culture, and collegiality than they do about workload, tenure clarity, and compensation. The results suggest that today's young professors differ markedly from previous generations, whose single most important concern was autonomy in the workplace, according to Cathy A. Trower. Ms. Trower, a Harvard researcher, and Richard P. Chait, an education professor there, directed the survey. (Fogg, 2013)

I attended an outstanding webinar focused on collegiality conducted by Dr. Bob Cipriano, who provided additional downloadable materials. One item was an intriguing document

which contained a list of collegiality “do’s” and “don’ts,” something akin to “You might be collegial if...” Much of the following two lists of “tips” were drawn from this material.

When faculty members exhibit the following behaviors, departmental PSOC is enhanced.

- *Be humble about your greatness.* Conversely, bragging and other forms of self-promotion are detrimental to PSOC.
- *Your word is your bond.* Establish a reputation for being dependable. Conversely, not carrying through on what you say is detrimental.
- *Be absolutely honest with everyone.....always.* Do not manipulate the truth to serve your own purposes.
- *Promote and project a professional image* – within and outside your department. I am referring to demeanor and conduct, not just dress.
- *Be willing to negotiate and compromise.* In an academic setting, the best ideas are those which are a synthesis derived from a thesis and antithesis – the fifth or eighth iteration may be the best idea! All of us have dealt with the faculty member who believes that their first knee jerk idea must be the ideal idea, because he or she thought of it! Again, such behavior is detrimental to PSOC.
- *Demonstrate tolerance toward opposing opinions* of colleagues. Just because someone does not agree with you does not make them an adversary. Sometimes you just have to agree to disagree.
- *Recognize that differences in opinion are inevitable; conflict is optional.*
- *Be a good listener* – team players listen! Everyone knows that listening is a (or the?) critical part of good communication. Listen to understand and build knowledge, rather than to identify the points to use against another person’s argument. When department members practice this art, good PSOC tends to develop.
- *Try to avoid causing colleagues to lose face.* No one is perfect. Help your colleagues recover gracefully from “bad” situations.
- *Respond promptly and politely to e-mail and voice messages from colleagues.* Unfortunately, there are faculty members who check their email only every 2-3 days, and others who simply do not respond at all. This practice shows disrespect towards colleagues.
- *Be consistently helpful to colleagues when they make reasonable requests.*
- *Pride yourself in regularly meeting deadlines.* Examples include co-authoring activities, grading papers, and many others. Do not let your colleagues, students, or any else down.
- *Minimize your risk of being accused of cultural insensitivity or discrimination.*

When faculty members exhibit the following behaviors, a positive PSOC is very difficult to maintain. Or, you may NOT be collegial if:

- You refuse to get involved with student research.
- You refuse to attend department meetings.
- You refuse to prepare adequately for faculty and committee meetings.

- You always get involved/enmeshed in departmental politics.
- You chronically complain.
- You steadfastly decline to advise students.
- You usually refuse to serve on university and department committees.
- You constantly demand more than your fair share of departmental resources.
- You do not do your fair share of student recruitment activities.
- You spend hours (or minutes) at your office (or around campus) gossiping.
- You aggressively discourage your colleagues from conducting research, publishing, or teaching in areas that are of interest to you.
- You are, or you are perceived as being territorial with your colleagues.
- You refuse to mentor young colleagues.
- You do not collaborate with colleagues.
- You refuse to come to campus to attend committee meetings on days when you are not teaching.
- You demand to have your teaching load reduced in order to publish or apply for grants.
- You proselytize colleagues for your religious or moral/ethical beliefs.
- You are insensitive to the feelings of colleagues when commenting on their teaching, service or scholarship.
- You make negative comments to students or peers about colleagues.
- You have developed a reputation for being inflexible.
- You have developed a reputation for not being willing to negotiate and compromise.
- You are often labeled as passive-aggressive.
- You are often thought of as a bully.
- You are viewed as a pot-stirrer and a troublemaker.
- Your professional disagreements often become loud and personal.
- You have a reputation as “never forgetting” a colleague who disagrees with you.
- You have a reputation of a person who loves confrontation.

3. **Civility.** Pick up any dictionary and it will have a definition for civility something like *formal politeness and courtesy in behavior or speech.*

Burgess and Burgess (1997) expand this definition and provide some astute guidance regarding civil discourse. Civility means more than politeness, while it cannot mean “roll over and play dead.” A department cannot avoid important tough questions just because they are unpleasant. Any reasonable description of civility must recognize that the many differing perspectives that can divide our increasingly diverse departments can produce an endless series of confrontations over difficult issues. While continuing confrontation is sometimes inevitable, the enormous destructiveness which often accompanies these confrontations is not.

Burgess and Burgess (1997) use an approach they call *constructive confrontation*. This approach emphasizes how two “opposing” sides can work individually and collectively to increase the constructiveness of departmental debate.

Examples of these elements include:

- *Separate people from the problem.* For a visual perspective, stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the person who is disagreeing, and place the problem on the wall so that you can “look” at it rather than each other. Recognize that other thoughtful and caring faculty members have different “decision filters” that lead to different views. Constructive debate should focus on the problematic issue rather than on personal attacks. Solutions should be based on the relative merits of the alternatives and NOT on personal “us vs. them” animosities.
- *Obtain available technical facts.* Factual disagreements should be resolved wherever possible.
- *Limit interpersonal misunderstandings.* Make an honest effort to understand the perspective and reasoning of other individuals. The challenge in a diverse academic department is that two very bright individuals can easily interpret the same set of data in very different ways. One might, for example, use human factors to dominate their interpretation, while another might use technical or financial analysis to dictate their position.
- *Use fair processes.* Potentially contentious issues should be addressed via processes that are fair in both appearance and actuality. Everyone relevant should be heard. Further, advocates of the status quo (the NO CHANGES ALLOWED perspective) should not be allowed to prevail by introducing endless procedural delays or non-relevant arguments.
- *Limit escalation.* Escalation is potentially the most destructive element in a confrontation situation. It arises when accidental or intentional provocations beget greater counter-provocations. This situation can easily result in an intensifying cycle that transforms a substantive debate characterized by honest problem solving into one in which mutual hatred becomes the primary motive. De-escalation and escalation avoidance strategies are needed to limit this problem.
- *Separate win/win from win/lose issues.* Try to reframe the issues so that it is a win/win situation.
- *Limit the backlash effect.* Short term victories can sometimes generate a powerful backlash. Forcing individuals to do things against their will can be expected to launch a “counterattack” at the earliest opportunity. Limiting this backlash effect involves justifying the decision on the basis of broadly acceptable principles of fairness and greater good. A sound justification can generate more reasonable positions on both

sides, while making it more difficult for contending parties to pursue purely selfish objectives.

- *Keep trying to persuade and allow yourself to be persuaded.* Recognize that it is possible that you are wrong and that someone else might have a better idea. Seriously consider the persuasive arguments made by opponents.
- *More persuasion, more exchange, less force.* The best ways to produce stable, long-term change and a positive PSOC is through (1) persuasion in which individuals are converted to their opponent's point of view, or (2) negotiated, mutually beneficial win-win trade-offs. This implies that the use of force should be minimized wherever possible.

One of the most destructive civility issues in academic departments involves email “nastygrams” to other faculty members or, worse, to the entire faculty of a department or college. In addition to damaging PSOC, nastygrams become part of the “official” record, therefore legal documentation. We have all seen emails which make the sender vulnerable to claims of libel or creating a hostile work environment.

4. Cooperation. Collegiality and civility generally lead to cooperation, and vice versa. Simple cooperation, however, does not necessarily involve conflicts. Consider the following requests from colleagues, administrators, and students:

- I have a doctor’s appointment. Will you take my class for me Monday?
- Will you look over this (completed) manuscript for me?
- Can you attend a committee meeting Friday at 10:00 a.m.?
- We have two electives scheduled for the same time next semester. Are you willing to move your 9:00 section to 11:00?
- Can you attend the student recruiting event on the 23rd?
- Can we move the due date for this project from Friday to Monday?

While you cannot and should not say “yes” to every request, you should certainly strive to be cooperative.

5. Constructiveness. Dictionary definitions of constructiveness contain words such as *servicing to improve, develop, or advance; helpful*. For the academic department, I see this as being willing to help build a better department, college, and/or university.

The polar opposite of constructiveness is destructiveness which involves the tendency or intention to damage or destroy. Fortunately, I have been exposed to only a few instances of

broadly targeted destructiveness efforts (e.g., aimed at another academic department or individual).

Those faculty members who are obstructionist, lie somewhere between constructive and destructive faculty members. We all have dealt with faculty who object to any new idea or change, particularly if it was not their idea.

- 6. Commitment.** Dictionary definitions contain words such as *promise, pledge, engaging oneself*. Do you take ownership in your department? Are you committed to improving your department? Are you committed to improving yourself?

DREAMPLE

DREAMPLE is an acronym for the following elements:

- Dependability
- Respect
- Ethics
- Availability
- Mentoring
- Productivity
- Loyalty
- Energy generator vs. drainers

- 1. Dependability.** Synonyms for dependable include *reliable, trustworthy, faithful, steady, responsible, and steadfast*. The key question here is “Can your institution and colleagues depend on you to do what is right, all of the time?” To me, this is absolutely one of the most important characteristics of a good faculty member. If a department is filled with dependable faculty, it will most likely be one with a high PSOC.

A corollary question is “Are you a “go to” person?” For example, are you a person that the administration can ask to make a presentation to the public? to community or business audience? to an Advisory Board? to prospective students? Are you concerned about being associated with and helping create and maintain excellence?

- 2. Respect.** Respect involves *holding an individual or organization in esteem or honor*. Conversely, rude conduct is usually considered to indicate a lack of respect or disrespect. Haidt (2007) states that respect for tradition and legitimate authority is identified

is one of five fundamental *moral values* shared to a greater or lesser degree by different societies and individuals.

The AAUP guidelines (1999) has this to say about respect: “Membership in the academic community imposes...an obligation to respect the dignity of others, to acknowledge their right to express differing opinions, and to foster and defend intellectual honesty, freedom of inquiry and instruction, and free expression on and off the campus. The expression of dissent and the attempt to produce change, there, may not be carried out in ways that injure individuals....”

It is rather obvious that when all departmental members demonstrate respect for everyone involved – each other, administrators, staff, and students – the department’s PSOC has an excellent chance to be excellent.

Consider the following selected “tips:”

- a. Treat ALL students with respect – not just the “best” ones.
 - b. Separate your evaluation of the PERSON from your evaluation of the person’s PERFORMANCE.
 - c. You may not be able to like everyone, but you CAN treat those you do not like with respect – all the time.
 - d. Treat everyone’s opinions with respect.
 - e. Just because someone disagrees with does NOT make them your enemy!
 - f. Just because someone has a different opinion does NOT mean that they are injuring you!
 - g. We are all members of the “academy.” Different points of view should be expected and encouraged.
 - h. The key is to use disagreements to find a better solution. Remember “thesis → antithesis → synthesis.”
3. **Ethics.** Ethical behavior involves *what people consider moral and right*. It means being politically correct and fair. Good departments contain individuals that are ALWAYS ethical in everything they do.

Here are some examples at least skirt the line of demarcation.

- a. Attempting to manipulate colleagues’ opinions or actions. Be open and up front regarding your personal agendas.
- b. Ignoring the wishes of the department when serving on university committees and, instead, voting based on personal agendas.

- c. Voting on issues based on personal agendas, rather than according to established criteria. This is particularly important relative to tenure and promotion votes.
 - d. Bullying anyone, particularly young faculty! Bullying is the use of force or coercion to abuse or intimidate others. Bullying targets may be the object of unwanted physical contact, violence, obscene or loud language during meetings, disparaged among their colleagues in venues they are not aware of, or face difficulties when seeking promotion.
4. **Availability.** Fortunately, most faculty members feel obligated to share their time with colleagues and students. Unfortunately, some faculty members are like ghosts – they show up only to teach their classes, but are reluctant to keep office hours and are difficult to schedule for committee meetings. Further, some faculty do a poor job of checking and/or responding to phone and email messages (a sign of disrespect!). While information technology certainly makes it much easier to “work from home,” visibility helps foster PSOC.
5. **Mentoring.** Mentoring involves *a personal development relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable faculty member helps to guide a less experienced faculty member*. In addition to answering occasional questions or providing ad hoc help, good mentoring also involves an ongoing relationship of learning, dialog, and challenge. Departments whose members provide rich informal and formal mentoring have a better chance of generating a positive PSOC.
6. **Productivity.** Competence was mentioned earlier. Productivity in this context is a little narrower, specifically focused on research and teaching. Being a productive researcher involves generating publications (and/or grants) in sufficient quantity and quality to help the department achieve its mission. For example, if you are at a school accredited by AACSB International, you need to be “academically qualified.” If you are at a “R1” institution, even more scholarly activity is needed, particularly from a quality perspective. Note that great publishing does not justify slacking off in other areas! We have all encountered faculty members who feel that “I am a great publisher and do not have to do anything else well.” Relative to teaching, productivity relates to generating student credit hours (SCHs). Yes, I know that senior faculty gravitate towards upper level and graduate courses, and that their total SCHs will tend to be smaller than those faculty members who teach introductory type courses. Still, all faculty members should handle their fair share of SCHs.
7. **Loyalty.** Loyalty is generally defined *as faithfulness, allegiance, or devotion to a person, country, group, or cause*. Many young faculty members leave their doctoral programs with a strong loyalty to self and their discipline. As time goes by, this loyalty often expands to include the academic department (hopefully), college, and university. An example of how loyalty can be manifested involves a faculty member coming to the defense of his or her colleagues relative to unjust criticism. Similarly, loyal faculty members will brag on their when appropriate.

8. **Energy generator vs. drainer.** Departments with a healthy PSOC will contain faculty members who are energy generators, rather than energy drainers.

An *energy drainer* is:

- a. generally negative,
- b. makes simple cases more complicated than they really are,
- c. sees a dark side in almost everything,
- d. has a strong tendency to complain about anything and everything, both at home and at work, and/or
- e. tends to blame others for their shortcomings.

The negative and dissatisfactory nature of their comments and behavior tend to waste other people's time, thereby draining their energy. An *energy generator* seldom complains and is almost always positive, even when things go wrong. Instead of wasting the group members' time and energy with complaints, they try to help searching for a constructive solution to problems.

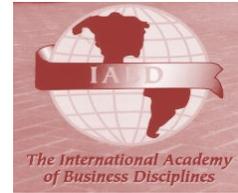
FINAL OBSERVATIONS

Leadership plays an important role in the development of a departmental sense of community. Individual faculty members certainly can exert leadership, hopefully positive. Collectively, department faculty members have a choice regarding whether they want to have a department with a positive sense of community. Further, the department chair or head sets the tone and direction for the evolution of sense of community.

If you have colleagues who are setting a negative tone, *do not let others' behavior affect YOUR behavior*. Yes, people around you and above you will occasionally do things that you find outrageous. Yes, it is difficult to soar like an eagle when you are surrounded by a flock of turkeys, but you need to try! It is so much more fun to go to work when you enjoy the experience. I urge you to be a positive contributor to your department's sense of community.

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