

**Adventures in Leadership Book Club, Graduate School of Management,  
St. Edward's University, April 2004**

Discussion Questions on David Callahan's *The Cheating Culture* (2004).

- I. "In his book *Integrity*, Yale law professor Stephen Carter suggest that integrity requires three steps: discerning what is right and wrong, acting on what you have discerned, and saying openly that you are acting on your understanding of right and wrong. Of course, to show integrity you need to know the difference between right and wrong—which is easier said than done nowadays. Notions of right and wrong are not only shaped by our family and friends and by work or academic environments but also by the broader culture" (p. 105).

How did your own notions of right and wrong develop? Do you find it difficult to express your understanding of right and wrong in groups that do not agree with you?

- II. "I see three changes as especially connected to the rise in cheating: individualism has morphed into a harder-edged selfishness; money has become more important to people; and harsher norms of competition have spread, while compassion for the weaker or less capable has waned" (p. 107). Do you agree with this assessment?

- III. Callahan cites three tasks necessary to change the societal forces that are creating American's cheating culture. What can we each do to help accomplish those tasks?

1. "We must forge a new social contract in the United States . . . . Anyone who plays by the rules can get ahead. Everyone has some say in how the rules get made. Everyone who breaks the rules suffers the same penalties. And all of us are in the same boat, living in the same 'moral community' and striving together to build a society that confers respect on people based on a wide variety of accomplishments" (p. 262).

This task has three parts: everyone who can should work and those who work should be able to climb up the economic ladder, access to higher education should be expanded, help should be available so people can build wealth and personal assets, and key economic insecurities should be reduced.

2. "We must reform key professions and instill new codes of conduct in the workplace" (p. 262).

Callahan quotes Lynn Sharp Paine: "Today's leading companies are expected not only to create wealth and produce superior goods and services but also to conduct themselves as 'moral actors'—as responsible agents that carry out their business within a moral framework . . . society has endowed the corporation with a moral personality" (p. 284).

3. "We must strengthen the ethics of new generations of Americans" (p. 262).

"We don't have to alter the DNA of Americans to create this kind of society. Most of us want it already. However, in addition to other sweeping reforms, we do need to alter the attitudes of young people. If the next generations of Americans are to help build a more ethical society and sustain it, they must come of age within institutions that are far less tolerant of cheating than today's high schools and universities. They also must learn early on to commit themselves to principles beyond their own individual self-interests" (p. 286).

"Certainly, many of the reforms needed to curb cheating will be harder to enact as long as the United States remains so deeply in the grips of laissez-faire ideology and market values continue to reign with such influence in our culture and our economy" (p. 291).