

**Sample Discussion Questions for Jennifer Morton's *Moving Up without Losing Your Way: The Ethical Costs of Upward Mobility***

**Objective:** The goal of this document is to encourage reflection on the ethical costs of upward mobility—the broken ties with family and friends, severed connections with former communities, and loss of identity— which disproportionately affect low-income and first-generation students.

**Introductory Questions**

1. Which students does Jennifer Morton classify as strivers? (4-5)
2. What is Jennifer Morton's definition of an ethical good? What is her definition of an ethical cost? (19-20)
3. What are the main characteristics of an ethical good that Jennifer Morton talks about? (25-26)
4. What is Dr. Morton's definition of an ethical conflict? What is her definition of a trade-off? (34)
5. Come up with a personal example of an ethical good. What is something that you value in life that is particular to you and that cannot be easily replaced? Discuss your answer with a partner. (25-26)
6. Come up with a personal example of an ethical cost. What is something that you had to sacrifice or give up in order to obtain an ethical good? Think of your own college experience as a starting point. What is something that you had to give up in order to pursue a higher education? Was this an ethical cost? Discuss your ideas with a partner. (19-20)
7. Come up with a personal example of an ethical conflict. In other words, name a time when two things you valued were at play and you could not choose them both. What did you end up choosing? Discuss your ideas with a partner. (34)
8. Come up with a personal example of a trade-off. In other words, name a time when you had to make a sacrifice in one area of your life to make progress in another. Discuss with a partner. (34)

**Advanced Discussion Questions**

9. What makes the experiences of strivers and the types of ethical conflicts they face unique? Pay particular attention to the story of Sandra on pages 37-39.
10. What assumptions are often made about strivers? How are they inaccurate? How do strivers fail to consider the ethical conflicts that they face on a daily basis? (39-40)
11. How can understanding the ethical conflicts that strivers face make us more empathetic? (39-40)

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12. What is codeswitching? How can codeswitching be difficult for strivers? Pay close attention to the example of Isabella on pages 78-80.
13. What is unreflective codeswitching? How is it detrimental to strivers? (95-97)
14. According to Morton, there is a form of codeswitching which is less detrimental to strivers. What is this type of codeswitching called? How is it different from unreflective codeswitching? (95-97)
15. According to Morton, how are strivers in a unique position to make the world a more equitable place? (108)
16. Why is it important for strivers to find time for reflection? Why is finding time to reflect often difficult for them? (115-116)
17. Why are liberal arts courses, which ask “big questions” such as “How should the world be?”, particularly important for strivers? How does excluding strivers from this type of liberal education negatively impact society? (116-118)
18. Name at least two social structures that make upward mobility more difficult for strivers. In other words, why do strivers face more ethical costs when they attempt to pursue upward mobility? (120-121)
19. How can we construct a more ethical narrative of upward mobility? How is this ethical narrative beneficial to strivers? (147-149)
20. How can colleges and universities better support strivers in their pursuit of higher education?

### **Case studies**

21. Revisit the case of Todd (28-29). What did Todd have to give up or sacrifice in order to obtain a college degree? In other words, what ethical costs did he face?
22. Revisit the case of Henry (30-31). What ethical conflict did Henry face while pursuing a college education? Why did Henry feel guilty despite everything he had accomplished?
23. Revisit the case of Carlos (53-56). What obstacles did Carlos face during his time in college? How would his experience have been different if his family had money and greater access to resources?