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TEACHING, LEARNING,
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MID-CAREER TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE SUSTAINING POWER OF
HOPE: A Q METHODOLOGICAL STUDY (233 pp.)

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Public school teaching is notorious for being a high-stress profession with significant attrition rates. Most educational research typically focuses on factors that influence teachers' decisions to leave the profession, yet little is known regarding what *sustains* teachers to remain, particularly those who are in their mid-career (teaching between 6–15 years). One factor considered influential in teachers' decisions to stay is that of hope, as it can offset factors that lead to burnout.

Q methodology, a mixed methodological approach that explores subjectivity, was utilized. Twenty-five mid-career public school educators were recruited from rural, suburban, and urban school districts in Ohio, New Jersey, and Maine. The multidimensional hope model developed by nurse researchers Farran, Herth, and Popovich (1995), modified to highlight the aspect of time, served as the conceptual basis for this dissertation research.

Four distinctive factors or themes emerged from factor analysis and interviews. Factor 1 (Making a Difference Through Advocacy) stresses teacher advocacy, caring relationships with students, recognition of the importance of time in terms of student learning, and the deep need for friends and family as a hope-sustaining influence. Factor 2 (Faith-Based Calling to Teach) favors the building of supportive relationships with colleagues, the felt-sense of being called to teach, and the power of religious and/or

spiritual faith. Factor 3 (Professional Autonomy and Respect) centers on the need for control, being acknowledged and respected by colleagues and administrators, and, as with the first factor, reliance upon friends and family. And Factor 4 (Total Reliance on God) relies solely on God for its source of hope.

Based on the findings, suggestions for hope-sustaining, burnout prevention strategies that could be utilized by individual teachers, school districts, and teacher education programs are offered.