On Teacher Hope,
Sense of Calling,
and Commitment to Teaching

By Robert V. Bullough, Jr. & Kendra M. Hall-Kenyon

Teacher motivation long has been a topic of interest to researchers (Ames & Ames, 1984; Sylvia & Hutchison, 1985). It is widely recognized that the motivations residing behind teachers' actions profoundly shape the nature and quality of those actions and their effects on young people. Surprisingly, while often recognized especially by teachers as an important motivating factor, the sense of a teacher's "calling" or "vocation" has received remarkably little research attention, and been the object of but very few empirical studies.

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Hansen (1995) describes possession of a sense of vocation or calling as involving "a hopeful, outward-looking sentiment, a feeling of wanting to engage the world in some substantive way" (p. 5). On Hansen's view, there are strong links among a teacher's sense of calling and teacher hopefulness and commitment to teaching. Day, Elliot, and Kington (2005) take a similar position and point toward the importance of greater understanding of these aspects of teacher motivation when they write:

the challenge for policy-makers and school leaders concerned with issues of recruitment, retention and the sustaining of high-quality teachers and

teaching, is to create contexts in which teachers can make connections between the priorities of the school and their individual personal, professional and collective identity and commitment. (p. 575)

As Day et al., suggest, efforts designed to improve the quality of schooling that ignore teacher well-being and the values that bring teachers to teaching and keep them engaged in their work are certain to fail. Our purpose in this study is to begin examining teachers' sense of being called to teach in relationship to their hopefulness and commitment to teaching, each, we believe, being a critical element to developing quality school programs.

Background

Calling

Rooted in the traditions of the ministry, the notion of a calling has a long and intimate association with the work of teaching (Mattingly, 1975). To be "called" means responding to a summoning, the sources of which are variously experienced as internal or external. Palmer (1998) describes the call as coming from "the voice of the teacher within, the voice that invites me to honor the nature of my true self" (p. 29). In his studies, Serow (1994) found that responses by preservice teachers to a single question, "I feel that teaching is my calling in life," revealed significant differences in "basic orientations to teaching" (p. 70). What he discovered was a distinctive and deep service ethic among those reporting being called to teach (Serow, Eaker, & Forrest, 1994). Compared to their peers who said they were not called to teach, "those who view teaching as their calling in life display significantly greater enthusiasm and commitment to the idea of a teacher career, are more mindful of its potential impact on other people, are less concerned about the sacrifices that such a career might entail, and are more willing to accept the extra duties that often accompany the teacher's role" (Serow, 1994, p. 70).

How common a sense of calling is among teachers is unclear, but it appears to be more common than generally recognized in the research literature. In a large study of teachers in Australia, New Zealand, and England, Dinham and Scott (2000), for example, report that 49% of Australian, 45% of English, and 46% of New Zealander teachers stated they "always wanted to become a teacher," a statement strongly indicative of a calling to teach (p. 284). Additionally, studies consistently report that teachers find most satisfaction in matters intrinsic to the work of teaching—working with and caring for the young—which lends additional support to the conclusion that a sense of calling is common among teachers (see Richardson & Watt, 2006).

Hope

Interest in the place of hope in teaching and learning has grown recently. Edgoose (2010), for example, explores hope narratives as a way for arguing for the power of the philosopher Hannah Arendt's conception of hopefulness for the

work of educators. Consistent with Edgoose's argument, it is widely held that the predominant source of teacher hopefulness is located in the teacher/student relationship and that "children, by nature, are new and growing" (Elbaz, 1992, p. 425). Drawing on insights from Lazarus (1999), who argues that hope is an emotion, and Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon (2005), who view hope as a cognitive construct, Bullough (2011) explores the place of hope and happiness in teaching and learning, arguing for the importance to the well-being of teachers and children of forming school cultures of hope and happiness.

The most significant body of empirical research on hope is that associated with Snyder and his colleagues at the University of Kansas (Snyder, et al., 1991), developers of the Hope Scale (see Appendix A: Survey). Recognized as a valid and reliable measure of hopefulness, overlapping but distinct from measures of efficacy, the Hope Scale combines self-report items on scales of *agency* (thought of as "will") and of *pathways* (thought of as "ways"). Agency is a "sense of successful determination in meeting goals in the past, present, and future" while pathways is a "sense of being able to generate successful plans to meet goals" (p. 570). As Chang (2003) summarizes, the theory argues that "higher Hope-Agency scores reflect greater thoughts about being able to obtain a goal successfully, whereas higher Hope-Pathways scores reflect greater thought about finding ways to reach a goal" (p. 128).

A wide range of differences among individuals with higher and lower hope scores have been noted. Among these, higher hope individuals report higher self-esteem, greater optimism, less depression, more positive and less negative affectivity, and tend to present themselves in a more positive light to others. Also, they demonstrate better problem-focused coping, a higher sense of well-being, seek more challenging goals, and, in the face of negative feedback, show greater agency and more abundant pathways to problems solved when blocked (see Snyder, Cheavens, & Sympson, 1997). These are impressive findings, which would seem to be of real consequence for teachers and teaching. Further, as Shorey, Snyder, Ran, Hockemeyer, and Feldman (2002) argue, hope can be taught and learned. A limitation to these findings is that they are based almost entirely on research conducted with university psychology students, young adults.

There are very few studies of adult hope, and the Scale has not been used to study teachers with the exception of one study (Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2011). Of the studies of adult hope, the conclusions of four studies reported by Peterson and Byron (2008) that examined the relationship between hope and job performance are suggestive. After controlling for cognitive ability and self-efficacy, they found that for "retail sales associates, mortgage brokers, and executives, more hopeful employees had significantly higher job performance" (p. 794). The fourth study sought to explain this finding and concluded that "more hopeful employees generated more solutions and higher quality solutions in response to a novel and realistic work-related problem" (p. 795). Surveying the results of the three studies, the authors state:

> . . . more hopeful people are more successful at *goal achievement because they approach problems differently than do less hopeful people* (italics added). Specifically, the success of more hopeful employees may be due in part to the fact that they conceive of multiple pathways to reach their desired end. (p. 796)

Seeking to further develop aspects of hope theory, Chang (2003) conducted a study using the Hope Scale to examine the relationship among hope, problem solving and psychological adjustment of 141 middle-aged men and 206 middle-aged women (ages 34-59). Among his purposes was the clarification of the relationship between agency and pathways thinking, hypothesizing that hope and psychological adjustment are likely mediated by problem solving coping. Most important for our purposes, Chang found significant differences between scores of middle-age adults and college students, a potentially very important finding given the origins of the Hope Scale.

Commitment

After being neglected for some years, interest in teacher commitment is growing. Drawing on Hansen's work, noted above, we hypothesized that teachers who reported being called to teach would likely possess both high Hope Scale scores and report high levels of commitment to teaching. Such a link is readily apparent in a study of a small sample of well-experienced English and Australian teachers conducted by Day, Elliot, and Kington (2005). In an extensive review of the relationships among commitment, work conditions and incentives, and indirectly speaking to the nature of the calling to teach, Firestone and Pennell (1993) defined commitment as a "psychological bond or identification of the individual with an object that takes on a special meaning and importance" (p. 491). These authors note that the objects of commitment for teachers may vary, although they intertwine and are not mutually exclusive: "teachers may be committed to teaching, their school, or their students, and ... their patterns of behavior vary depending upon which commitments are stressed" (ibid).

Commitment, Firestone and Pennell (1993) argue, is influenced by many factors, including autonomy and responsibility:

> Commitment comes when one experiences responsibility for the outcomes of one's work. If what is done depends primarily on the boss's orders, impersonal controls over work, or the efforts of others, results are not attributed to one's own efforts. In these situations...accountability rests with others. Experiencing responsibility for success is highly motivating and conducive to continuing successful practices... Autonomy allows teachers to attribute success to themselves. (pp. 497-98)

Above all else teachers are strongly committed to their students, regardless of the type of school within which they work, and females are most committed (Park, 2005).

The Study

Participants

Given our research aim, we sought a pool of participants that would include significant variability but also contain a large number of teachers likely strongly called to teach and highly committed to teaching. Based on conclusions of Smith and Rowley (2005) that "participation in [professional development] activities signals teachers' level of commitment to their school and profession" (p. 130), plans were made to gather data from inservice teachers enrolled in literacy programs at two universities, one in Utah, a private, religious, institution, and the other in Nevada, an urban, state university.

Data Gathering

Data were gathered in two phases. Phase one involved administering a survey to 113 inservice teachers in Utah, of whom six did not complete the entire survey and were eliminated from the study (n=107), and 41 inservice teachers in Nevada, 38 of whom completed the entire survey (total: n=145). The Utah teachers ranged in age from 24 to 66 and from one to 31 years of teaching experience. At the time, the Utah teachers were all participating in advanced literacy training (i.e., state reading endorsement courses). The Nevada teachers ranged in age from 23 to 46 and from one to 18 years of teaching experience. These teachers were pursuing a literacy masters degree.

Phase two of data gathering began after we analyzed the survey results from phase one. Phase two involved interviewing a sample of those teachers who completed the survey using a protocol developed explicitly to gain a deeper understanding of the teachers' sense of being called to teach, sources of hopefulness, and their levels of commitment to teaching. Interviews were part of the original study design but given the surprising survey results their importance grew substantially.

The Hope Survey—Phase 1

The survey instrument was composed of the Hope Scale (Snyder, et al., 1991) plus an additional set of demographic questions and items that sought to get at the teachers' sense of being called to teach (i.e., "indicate how closely the following statements characterize your feelings about teaching: 'I know that teaching is what I am supposed to do in life. I was destined to become a teacher; it was meant to be. Teaching is my duty and calling.'" And "Being a teacher is who I am."). Hence, phase one was concerned with determining teachers' level of hope and sense of calling. In addition, survey data were analyzed to examine the relationship between teachers' sense of calling and their hopefulness and whether or not there were differences in hope and calling based on particular teacher characteristics (i.e., years of teaching, grade level taught, and family connections to teaching).

Analyses were conducted using data from 145 surveys (107 Utah teachers

and 38 Nevada teachers). Descriptive data (means and standard deviations, SDs) were calculated to examine the teachers' levels of hope. A series of MANOVAs (multivariate analysis of variance) were then conducted for each group (Utah and Nevada) to determine whether or not years of teaching experience (0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-20 years, 21+ years), family connections to the teaching profession (immediate family who are teachers, extended family who are teachers, no other family who are teachers), and grade level taught (elementary versus secondary) had an impact on teachers' scores on the Trait and State Hope Scales (pathway, agency, and total score).

Teacher responses to both the Trait and State Hope Scales indicated high levels of hope. For the Utah teachers, the mean total score on the Trait Scale (maximum=64) was 54.89 (SD=5.74); for Nevada teachers it was also 54.89 (SD=4.52). Similarly, agency and pathway scores on the Trait Scale were overwhelmingly high for both groups. See Table 1 for Means and SDs on the Trait Scale. Results were similar for the State Scale. The mean total score (maximum=48) for Utah teachers on the State Scale was 40.87 (SD=4.65) and 40.71 (SD=4.13) for Nevada teachers. Mean scores for Agency and Pathway scores on the State Scale were also high for both groups. See Table 2 for Means and SDs on the State Scale.

Based on our previous study (Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2011), we expected that the teachers would report high levels of hope. However, we also were interested in exploring differences in levels of hope based on years of teaching experience, family connections to the teaching profession, and grade level taught.

Years of Experience. As indicated, data from the inservice teacher surveys were divided into four groups for analysis. Of the 107 Utah teachers who completed the surveys, 38 reported having taught 0-5 years; 22 reported 6-10 years; 32 reported

Table 1
Means and SD for the Trait Scale

	Agency max score =32	Pathway max score =32	Total max score =64
Utah	27.80 (2.83)	27.08 (3.42)	54.89 (5.74)
Nevada	27.84 (2.51)	27.05 (2.94)	54.89 (4.52)

Table 2
Means and SD for the State Scale

	Agency max score =24	Pathway max score =24	Total max score =48
Utah	20.49 (2.56)	20.38 (2.45)	40.87 (4.65)
Nevada	20.45 (2.21)	20.26 (2.39)	40.71 (4.13)

11-20 years; and 15 reported 21+ years of experience. Of the 38 Nevada teachers, 27 reported having taught 0-5 years; five reported 6-10 years; five reported 11-20 years; and none reported 21+ years of experience. There was one Nevada teacher who did not report years of teaching experience. The analysis revealed that there was no main effect for years of experience for either group on the Trait Scale—Utah (Wilks' $\wedge$=.918, F (6, 172)=1.25, p=.284) and Nevada (Wilks' $\wedge$=.914, F (6, 46)=.352, p=.905) or on the State Scale—Utah (Wilks' $\wedge$=.944, F (6, 172)=.845, p=.537) and Nevada (Wilks' $\wedge$=.945, F (6, 46)=.219, p=.969).

Family Connections to Teaching. Survey data were divided into three groups (a) immediate family, (b) extended family, (c) no family. Of the 107 teachers from Utah who completed the surveys, 73 reported having immediate family in the teaching profession, nine reported having extended family in the profession, and 25 reported having no family members in the teaching profession. Of the 38 teachers from Nevada who completed the surveys, 13 reported having immediate family members in the teaching profession, seven reported having extended family members in the profession, and 18 reported having no family members in the teaching profession. Analysis revealed no main effect for either group Trait Scale—Utah (Wilks' $\wedge$=.972, F (4, 172)=.619, p=.650) or Nevada (Wilks' $\wedge$=.803, F (4, 46)=1.33, p = .272) and no main effect for the Utah teachers on the State Scale—Utah (Wilks' $\wedge$=.957, F (4, 172)= 962, p=.430). There was, however, a main effect for the teachers in Nevada (Wilks' $\wedge$=.667, F (4, 46)=2.59, p=.050).

Grade Level Taught. Finally, data were divided based on grade level taught (elementary v. secondary). Of the 107 Utah teachers, 66 were elementary teachers and 41 were secondary teachers. Of the 38 Nevada teachers, 27 were elementary and 11 were secondary teachers. Teachers' level of hope did not differ based on grade level taught. There were no differences on the Trait Scale—Utah (Wilks' $\wedge$=.990, F (2, 86)=.440, p=.645) and Nevada (Wilks' $\wedge$=.963, F (2, 23)=.442, p=.648) or the State Scale—Utah (Wilks' $\wedge$=.985, F (2, 86)=.648, p=.526) and Nevada (Wilks' $\wedge$=.869, F (2, 23)=1.73, p=.199).

Hope and Teacher Well-Being

Post hoc analyses were conducted to examine the impact of teachers' well-being on hope. Teacher well-being was measured using three of the distractor items in the Hope Scale ("I usually find myself worrying about something." "I feel tired most of the time." "I worry about my health.") because of their relevance to reports of worker response to high stress occupations, such as teaching. Comparisons of level of hope between those teachers who rated themselves a seven or eight (Mostly true or Definitely true) on all three of the distractor items (*tired and worried group*) and those teachers who rated themselves at a one or two (Mostly False or Definitely False) on those same items (*NOT tired or worried group*). Teachers who rated themselves between three and six (Somewhat or Slightly false and Slightly or Somewhat true) on these items were not included in this analysis. Only teachers from Utah were

included in this analysis because the numbers were larger than the Nevada group (Utah—14 tired and worried, nine NOT tired and worried; Nevada—four tired and worried and two NOT tired and worried). Interestingly, and somewhat surprisingly, there were no differences on either of the hope scales—Trait (Wilks' $\wedge$=.999, F (2,20)=.009, p=.991) and State (Wilks' $\wedge$=.950, F (2,20)=.528, p=.598) for these two groups (tired and worried *and* NOT tired or worried). In fact, it seems that regardless of whether or not teachers report being tired and worried, they appear to have relatively high levels of hope as measured by the Hope Scale.

Calling

Additional analyses were conducted to examine teachers' sense of calling (descriptive statistics) and whether or not there was a correlation (Pearson's r) between teachers' level of hope and sense of calling. Data were also analyzed to determine whether or not those teachers who reported they were religious—a characteristic that emerges in resiliency studies and that historically has been associated with a sense of calling (Mattingly, 1975) (i.e., yes, I am religious, or I am somewhat religious)—differed in their sense of calling when compared to teachers who reported that they were not religious (i.e., I am not religious).

Overwhelmingly, both groups of inservice teachers (Utah and Nevada) in our sample reported they felt "called" to teach. The mean rating (maximum=16) was 13.79 (SD=2.07) for Utah teachers and 14.05 (SD=1.58) for Nevada teachers. In order to determine the relationship between calling and hope, correlations (Pearson's r) between the teachers' sense of calling and their scores on the subtests of the two Hope Scales were established. However, there only appears to be a small positive relationship between calling and hope, Utah teachers Trait Scale r=.368, p=.000 and Utah teachers State Scale r=.399, p=.000; Nevada teachers Trait Scale r=.221, p=.138 and Nevada teachers State Scale r=.314, p=.055 suggesting that there is not a significant relationship between calling and hope for either group of teachers.

In addition to the relationship between calling and hope we were also interested in teachers' sense of calling based on whether or not they reported being religious (i.e., yes, I am religious, or I am somewhat religious vs. I am not religious). Since so few of the Utah teachers reported they were not religious, analysis was conducted only on the Nevada teacher sample (27 religious, 11 not religious). Results suggest that those who reported being religious have a slightly higher sense of calling when compared to those who reported that they were not religious (F (1,36)=10.17 p=.003).

Interview Data—Phase 2

Given the surprising findings from phase one—no significant relationships between the teachers' sense of calling and measured hopefulness, and no differences among groups (i.e., years of experience, grade level taught, and family connections to teaching)—we found ourselves more heavily reliant on the interview data than

expected. Only Utah teachers were interviewed (names and contact information for the Nevada teachers were not made available). Interviews were conducted by a team of graduate students who also participated in developing the protocol and were coached on effective interviewing practices. The interview protocol was developed with graduate student involvement and against the backdrop of our not having found a significant relationship between hope measured by the Hope Scale and teacher reported sense of calling in the survey data. Given Hansen's (1995) conclusions and Day et al's (2005) argument, we had expected there would be a relationship and we wanted to understand what was going on and why. In developing the interview protocol, we drew on research on hope conducted by Snyder and his colleagues and on teacher calling conducted by Serow (1994) and his colleagues (Serow, Eaker, & Forrest, 1994) and, to gain deeper insight into teacher commitment, items were developed that were informed by research on teacher commitment (Day & Gu, 2007) and commitment narratives (McAdams, Diamond, et St. Aubin, & Mansfield, 1997).

For interviewing, half the Utah teacher sample was contacted by the interviewers, first by email, and then by follow-up and sometimes multiple phone calls. Eventually, 32 teachers were interviewed and of these 31 interviews were transcribable. Teachers gave permission to have their interviews recorded with the understanding that their identities would be kept confidential. The interview protocol is included as Appendix B. To check the teachers' claims of being committed to teaching and to gain a better sense of differences in motivation among the teachers, a separate email survey was conducted asking for reasons why they enrolled in the professional development program (Utah teachers only). Sixty-four percent reported enrolling to become more skillful teachers and more knowledgeable about literacy teaching and learning; 25% indicated one or another aim having to do with career advancement or increased pay; and 12% gave a mix of the first two categories: "I wanted to be a better teacher [and] to qualify for professional development hours and a pay increase."

As noted, when developing the interview protocol we drew upon a range of research seeking to illuminate aspects of teachers' hopefulness, sense of calling, and commitment to teaching. The research of McAdams et al. (1997) proved especially provocative. McAdams and his colleagues explored differences in the life stories of 40 highly generative adults, 22 of whom were teachers, and 30 less generative adults. Generativity refers to an adult's concern for and commitment to the well-being of the next generation and involves seeking a positive legacy that will endure. In a strong sense, then, generativity is an expression of a mature version of the service ethic Serow identified with a sense of calling in his studies noted previously. McAdams and his colleagues also discuss generativity and calling. Their analysis revealed the presence among the highly generative adults of what the authors characterize as a "story of commitment," which captures identity in narrative form. Five elements of such stories were identified: (a) an early family

advantage or blessing; (b) unusual sensitivity to others' suffering at an early age; (c) a stable guiding and clear personal ideology; (d) a tendency to transform nega-tive "scenes into good outcomes" (p. 678); and (e) goal setting to benefit society. Reviewing their findings, the authors conclude that:

> . . . a commitment story would appear to be a highly effective life-narrative form for supporting an adult's generative efforts—an efficacious match up of identity (the commitment story) and behavior (generativity). The adult who works hard to guide and foster the next generation may make sense of his or her strong commitment in terms of a story that suggests that he or she has been "called," or summoned, to do good things for others...and bolstered by a clear and convincing ideology that remains steadfast over time. (p. 688)

That McAdams and his colleagues make a direct connection of commitment to calling is highly suggestive. A similar connection was made by Day, Elliot, and Kington (2005), who quoted one of their informants as saying, "Commitment is part of you" (p. 570).

Based on this research, and while admittedly speculative, it would appear that there is a strong although not causal relationship between possessing a strong sense of calling and commitment and generativity, and, again, while speculative, between generativity and commitment and hope. This latter connection is evident in Shorey et al.'s (2002) discussion of the qualities of high-hope people: "high-hope persons are able to consider the perspectives of other people, and they realize that their successes are in large part reflective of the time and attention that other people (caregivers and mentors) have given to teach them to think hopefully" (p. 526). Accordingly and recognizing the high hope scores and large percentage of the surveyed teachers who reported themselves strongly called to teaching, as we designed the interview protocol we included among the items questions that we thought would reveal in a short interview whether or not a commitment narrative was present. The interviewed teachers were asked, "When you were young were you unusually sensitive to the suffering and trials of others?" Additionally, questions were asked relating to the teacher's central goals: "Why do you teach?" "What is the most important goal you seek through teaching?" And, relatedly: "When you look toward the future, what do you hope will be your legacy as a teacher?" And questions were asked about sources of discouragement and how they responded to discouragement in teaching, thus getting at problem solving: "Have you ever felt discouraged when teaching? If so, what was the source of your discouragement and how did you respond?" "Have you ever doubted the wisdom of becoming a teacher? If 'yes' what was the source of your doubt? If not, why not?" To further explore the teachers' values and sense of commitment to teaching, they were asked: "Do you think of yourself as a highly committed teacher? If so, how does your commitment express itself?" "Is teaching your life's work? If not, what is your life's work and where does teaching fit into your priorities?" Finally, the teachers were asked what are the best (and worst) parts of being a teacher and best (and

worst) parts of teaching. When answering these last four questions the teachers had difficulty maintaining the separation between how they experienced teaching (the question of *being* a teacher) from the work of teaching itself, so their answers tended to blend.

Interview transcripts were analyzed by the two authors in multiple ways. Responses to each question were grouped and frequency counts were made. An effort was made to locate commonalities across respondents. For example, it was here that differences in teaching assignment emerged as important, with special education teachers standing out from their regular education colleagues. Since only four of the 31 teachers were male, no meaningful gender patterns emerged. The specific components of the commitment narratives were identified and an effort made to assess the strength of commitment in relationship to the teachers' claims of being committed to teaching. Lastly, the transcripts were analyzed to locate "absences," topics that could have been addressed but were not or were largely absent in the data set. Put differently, if an issue or concern was not mentioned in an interview but was expected and could easily have been mentioned, this absence was assumed to be an indication of their perception and values. Kvale (1996) makes the point this way: "In analyzing an interview, what is not said may be just as important as what is said" (p. 278). This method of locating absences in analysis is very commonly used in journalism where journalists are taught to attend to what is "being said, and not being said" (Dilley, 2000, p. 134). In the discussion that follows, selected connections will be made across the survey and interview findings. This seems appropriate since the interview protocols were designed, in part, to response to and enhance the survey results.

Interview Results

Supporting the claim of being highly committed to teaching, across the interviews there was strong evidence of the commitment narrative elements. Nineteen of the 31 teachers described themselves as "unusually sensitive to the suffering and trials of others." Only six said they were not unusually sensitive—the remaining teachers described themselves as being sensitive in varying degrees: "I would say yes, but not unusually, but yes I am sensitive to the trials of others." Examples given of unusual sensitivity varied. The sense of the group was nicely conveyed by one of these teachers: "I remember walking home from school one day when I was little and all of the kids [were teasing] this little boy. I...stood up for him and told them to stop it." While discouragement was reportedly experienced by virtually all of the teachers, for 12 of them these feelings never reach the level of doubting the wisdom of becoming a teacher. Additionally, across the interviews there was consistent and strong evidence of the presence of a guiding ideology of service, of the expectation of positive outcomes of teacher action, and, finally, of goal setting to benefit society.

Of the sources of discouragement, and consistent with the wider literature, negative work conditions were most often mentioned. Six of 31 teachers worked in special education, and most of these teachers expressed frustration with the demands of paperwork required by law. Long work hours and occasional difficulty with student misbehavior were also mentioned, but infrequently. A third of the teachers reported being discouraged at times by their own limitations in understanding or ability—they did not locate their difficulties in students. Facing discouragement the teachers reported a range of coping mechanisms, mostly problem solving, a result consistent with the findings of Chang (2003) and Peterson and Byron (2008) noted previously. As one teacher remarked: "I take my teaching very, very, personally so if a day goes by where I don't feel like a student got out of the day what I wanted... it does make me discouraged. What I do [is] a tremendous amount of additional research, [trying to figure out] what I can do to make this student be successful."

Across the interviews and consistent with the surveys, there was a very strong sense of teacher agency and pathways—that these teachers can resolve the problems they face *when teaching*. There was another category of problems, however, that they were less sanguine about, and over which they have little influence. Three teachers mentioned the politics surrounding teaching as very upsetting. For these teachers, negative media reports and hurtful comments by legislators and unhelpful legislation were seen as the worst parts of teaching. We were surprised that only three teachers mentioned these issues, and to this and to other absences we will turn shortly. Reflecting high levels of commitment to teaching, two-thirds of the teachers reported that when they get discouraged their response is to work harder, speak with other educators for useful suggestions, try new ideas, and revise their practice. Facing such moments, they said they needed to "buck up," "buckle down," "deal with it," "keep trying," and "recommit." Perhaps these actions are the sources of the reported tiredness in the survey data. Regardless, they are strong indications of teacher agency and of commitment.

When asked to describe how others see them as teachers, the respondents consistently spoke of personal qualities, not of skills or personal attainments, but of the sort of people others take them to be. The qualities most often mentioned included being caring and nurturing, patient, positive, fun and sometimes funny, empathetic, creative, energetic, hardworking, dedicated, organized–particularly mentioned by the special education teachers—and sometimes strict. We believe these qualities define for these teachers what makes an exceptional teacher, perhaps representing an idealized conception of self-as-teacher and describing the character of the calling to teach.

All but one of the teachers interviewed reported being highly committed to teaching, and this teacher said she was "committed," just not "highly." These teachers reported working long hours, always thinking about teaching and "never giving up," always seeking ways to improve their practice. Since each of the interviewed teachers was participating in an inservice literacy program, it is not surprising that

participation in inservice and other forms of professional education were consistently mentioned as proof of commitment. Some of the teachers gave as proof of commitment specific efforts made to help struggling students, offering special tutoring sessions, for example, and volunteering to take additional responsibilities within the school. Most reported that teaching was their life's work, but not all–work came after family and sometimes religious commitments. But, as two of the teachers said, these distinctions were not fully meaningful—family, religious service, and teaching went together, reflecting a strong service ethic and a spirit of generativity. As one highly committed and called interviewee remarked, "How I teach is exactly how I live. It's not anything different."

The nature of the ethic of care and the ideology of service these teachers have embraced was clearly evident in their goals for teaching. When speaking of their most important goals, virtually every teacher focused sharply on students, whether speaking of meeting their "needs," building "self-esteem," facilitating "learning" and "achievement," helping them reach "their potential," or to become effective citizens. These teachers' remarks indicate how caring for students was not just a matter of emotionally connecting with them, but represented "an intellectual activity, which result[s] in enhanced learning opportunities for their students. The links between care, improved practice and reflection are central to the understanding of conceptions of commitment" (Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005, p. 574). Only three of the teachers mentioned goals that focused on themselves, and even these represent service values: needing to become more patient, getting to better know the strengths and weaknesses of each of her students, and being the "best teacher" she can be. Relatedly, when the teachers spoke of the best and worst parts of being a teacher and of teaching, the value of caring and nurturing the young and of service were universally and strongly present.

Of the 31 interviewed teachers, 12 mentioned the demanding workload was the worst part of teaching. This concern, however, had two poles, not being able to consistently balance various life demands, most especially those arising from family and work responsibilities and, importantly, not having time or energy sufficient to do all that they would like to do for their students. The best parts of teaching and being a teacher arose from interaction with students—student relationships—and seeing them learn and grow: Those "Light bulb moments," the "Ah hahs!," the "Light in their eyes." "I just like kids," one teacher said, "Hanging out with teenagers." Another remarked: "I love helping students." Only six of the teachers mentioned that students are sources of the worst aspects of teaching—and for these teachers, like the others, students were also the sources of the best parts of teaching, the central focus of these teachers and the main reason for becoming and being a teacher.

Analyzing the data from a different perspective, from what was *not said* or was *missing* but expected in the teachers' remarks rather than what was present, proved revealing. As noted, with the exception of three teachers working in a district facing massive layoffs, there was very little mention of the politics of teaching;

there was very little discussion of subject matter except indirectly, as an object of student learning; there was some, but not a great deal, of talk about collaboration and interaction with other teachers, and there was no indication that these teachers looked to place blame on students or their parents for their occasional feelings of discouragement. Clearly, these teachers took personal responsibility for their own work and actions and were very serious about their work as teachers and about improving professionally, outcomes consistent with high Trait and State Hope Scale scores, and of being highly committed and called to teaching. An additional word about blame: There was some expression of discouragement in the interviews arising from Federal and State education policies that were thought to interfere with good teaching. Also, eight of the 31 interviewed teachers mentioned lack of respect and feeling unappreciated by the public, media, and legislature, as the worst part of teaching, an issue of growing concern worldwide (see Dinham & Scott, 2000). But, these feelings were not sufficient to undermine these teachers' commitment to teaching or their sense of themselves as called to teach although they were experienced as hurtful.

Discussion

We found no statistical relationship between measures of teacher hopefulness and calling and no statistical differences arising from group differences (i.e., years of experience, grade level taught, and family connections to teaching). As noted in the interview data, commitment narrative elements were much in evidence among these high hope and called teachers. These teachers reported being strongly committed to teaching and identifying deeply with the work of teaching. Above all else, these teachers were focused on the well-being of their students. Like Serow (1994), we found strong evidence of a lively and profound service ethic that reached out beyond just teaching—teaching, mothering, nurturing, and caring for others were part of a wider service ethic, a way of making a meaningful life. The personal ideological elements of McAdams and his colleagues (1997) commitment narrative as well as the teachers' high levels of reported religiosity also speak to this finding, that service gives life meaning. There was very little talk in the interviews about being called to subject-area teaching, an outcome perhaps to be expected since comparatively few of the teachers surveyed or interviewed were secondary teachers. Student growth and development and the sheer pleasure of being with young people dominated the interview data while the survey data indicated possession by the teachers of very strong feelings of agency.

While it is evident that hope, a sense of calling to teach, and teacher commitment are connected, unfortunately our data allow us to say rather little about the nature or direction of this linkage. We believe that among the sources of difficulty some of the more serious reside in the Hope Scales. As a measure of adult hopefulness and of teacher hopefulness in particular the cognitive emphasis of the scales

seems to miss aspects of hope that are particularly salient for teaching and for teachers. Here the work of Lazarus (1999), briefly mentioned above, is especially on point. Rather than reduce hope to the cognitive element of "will" and "ways," Lazarus argues that hope is primarily an emotion, an "affective blend" (p. 655), a "mixture of emotions including fear, anxiety and happiness, each anticipating possible outcomes and all wrapped to one or another degree in a quiet but determined confidence that enables action and encourages persistence" (Bullough, 2011, p.18). Hope, Lazarus (1999) argues, involves an appraisal of a situation and is about "our well-being and the well-being of those about whom we care" (p. 658). On this view, hope cannot be equated fully to successful agency nor to positive expectations, as Lazarus writes:

> I consider this erroneous because we can hope even when we are helpless to affect the outcome. Self-efficacy, or a sense of competence and control, facilitates hope, and it certainly aids in mobilizing problem-focused coping actions, but it is not essential to hope. (p. 674)

It is, we believe, this broader conception of hope, as an emotion and as a virtue, that best captures what is at stake in teaching and with our "hopeful" teachers. Teaching, after all, is very unlike the work done by sales associates, mortgage brokers and corporate executives studied by Peterson and Byron (2008). To be effective, teachers must remain engaged with young people even when they prove to be highly limited in various ways, intellectually, perhaps physically, and resistant to learning. As such, it appears the Hope Scales miss much, but as Lazarus suggests, not all of what counts as the hopefulness of teaching. We find ourselves wondering: Is it even possible to operationalize a measurable definition of hope useful for speaking sensitively to the work of teachers?

As noted, the teacher interviews indicate strong connections among hopefulness, understood both narrowly, as in the Hope Scales, or more broadly as suggested by Lazarus, sense of teacher calling, and teacher commitment. Returning to the research of Serow (1994) and Serow et al., (1994), we suspect that what unites these three concepts is possession of a deep and abiding service ethic, each concept speaking to a related but in some ways different aspect of what follows from living a life focused on furthering the well-being of others. For such persons, as Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985) state, "work constitutes a practical ideal of activity and character that makes a person's work morally inseparable from his or her life" (p. 66). On this view, it is not surprising that 22 of the 40 generative adults McAdams and his colleagues (1997) identified were teachers. This is not to say that all teachers are captured by a service ethic, but many, perhaps most, are, and these teachers report themselves as being hopeful, called to teach, and highly committed to teaching. As such, despite strong evidence of deteriorating work conditions, such people likely stay in teaching, continue to engage in professional development, and work diligently to improve. One wonders, however, if their com-

mitment is sustainable as the work of teaching changes under the pressures of ever more hostile and aggressive accountability measures (Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Zeichner, 2010).

Conclusion

For this study we sought very hopeful, called, and highly committed teachers, the sort of teachers who are most likely to make a positive difference in the lives and learning of young people. Mostly, the teachers in this study seem to be faring rather well in teaching even as there are hints in the data of a strong individualism and a large minority of those interviewed report struggling to manage the growing workload of teaching. No doubt, a different population of teachers, say, a group of teachers contemplating leaving the profession, would produce different outcomes and point toward different issues and concerns including levels of commitment, sense of identification with teaching, and feelings about their ability to succeed as teachers. On our view, these and other teachers' hopefulness and their deep commitment to teaching are precious resources, sadly too often taken for granted by parents and policy makers alike. There is danger in neglect. As Peterson (2006) suggests in his discussion of optimism, such qualities may diminish over time.

> Constant striving for control over events without the resources to achieve it can take a toll on the individual who faces an objective limit to what can be attained regardless of how hard she works. If optimism is to survive as a social virtue, then the world must have a causal texture that allows this stance to provide valued rewards. If not, people will channel their efforts into unattainable goals and become exhausted, ill, demoralized. Or people may rechannel their inherit optimism into attainable but undesirable goals. (p. 127)

When writing of the development of expertise, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) argued: there is a "heroic element in expertise...which is not an explanation of why people put effort into the process of expertise, but rather an acknowledgment that the other explanations do not quite do the whole job" (p. 102). There is something heroic about the teachers we studied, people who, as Serow (1994) suggested, do their jobs well, willingly sacrifice and give their all to their students. However, there are limits to "bucking up," "buckling down," "recommitting," and "dealing with it," as strategies for improving teaching and improving schooling. It strikes us that it is bad public policy to design programs and institutions, like schools, that require heroic efforts simply to keep running. As Coles (1993) suggested, service can be exhausting, even for those most centered on a service ethic. In a focus on elevating the quality of teaching, it must not be forgotten that even our best teachers need support as well as challenge (Bullough & Baughman, 1997).

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Appendix A

Survey

Members of the Department of Teacher Education at BYU are studying teacher hope and happiness. Our aim is to better understand what teachers find motivating about teaching and how schools might be more supportive of teacher well being. We very much appreciate your participation. Please note that your identification will be kept STRICTLY confidential.

Three sections follow, the first asks for background information, the second and third are identical but ask you to respond from two different perspectives to a number of items. Thank you for your assistance.

I: Background Information
Birthday: Month _____; Day _____; and Year _____

The number of years you have taught: _____. If you are a secondary teacher, what subject(s) are you teaching this coming year: _____.

Degrees (please circle): BA/BS, Masters, Masters plus

Are there other members of your family who are or were teachers? (please circle all that apply): Father; Mother; Grandparents; Aunts/Uncles; Siblings; Spouse; Children; Other _____

At what age did you know you wanted to become a teacher? (Check the appropriate item) Before 3rd grade ____; Between 4th and 6th grade ____; Junior High ____; High School ____; College ____; After college ____; Still not certain I'm meant to be a teacher ____.

What is the student population of your school? _____

Characterize your school (please circle all that apply): Urban; Suburban; Rural; Wealthy; Middle-class; Poor; High Achieving; Low Achieving Other: _____

Characterize your school faculty (please circle all that apply): Tired; Energetic; Committed; Disengaged; Hard working; Lazy; Professional; Teaching is just a job; Mostly friendly; Keep to themselves; Highly supportive of one another; Somewhat supportive; Mostly unsupportive; Other: _____

Do you consider yourself to be a religious person? (please circle) Yes, No, Somewhat

To what degree is your school building administration supportive of your professional goals? (please circle only one response): (1) highly supportive, (2) somewhat supportive, (3) neither supportive nor unsupportive, (4) somewhat unsupportive, (5) highly unsupportive

How satisfying is teaching? (Please circle) Highly satisfying; Somewhat satisfying; Somewhat dissatisfying; Very dissatisfying

Use the following scale for the next two items: 1. Definitely false. 2. Mostly false. 3. Somewhat false. 4. Slightly false. 5. Slightly true. 6. Somewhat true. 7. Mostly true. 8. Definitely true.

A. Using the scale above, indicate how closely the following statements characterize your feelings about teaching? "I know that teaching is what I am supposed to do in life. I was destined to become a teacher; it was meant to be. Teaching is my duty and calling." _____

B. Being a teacher is who I am" _____

II: General Self-Assessment

Part 1: Read each item carefully. Please select the number that best describes YOU and put that number in the blank provided. Use the following scale: 1. Definite false. 2. Mostly false. 3. Somewhat false. 4. Slightly false. 5. Slightly true. 6. Somewhat true. 7. Mostly true. 8. Definitely true.

_____ 1. I can think of many ways to get out of a jam.

_____ 2. I energetically pursue my goals.

_____ 3. I feel tired most of the time.

_____ 4. There are lots of ways around any problem.

_____ 5. I am easily downed in an argument.

_____ 6. I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are important to me.

_____ 7. I worry about my health.

_____ 8. Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.

_____ 9. My past experiences have prepared me well for my future.

_____10. I've been pretty successful in life.
_____11. I usually find myself worrying about something.
_____12. I meet the goals that I set for myself.

Part 2: Read each of the following items carefully. Using the scale shown below (IT'S THE SAME SCALE YOU'VE BEEN USING), please select the number that best describes *how you think about yourself right now* and put that number in the blank before each sentence. Please take a few moments to focus on yourself and what is going on in *your life at this moment*. Once you have this "here and now" set, go ahead and score each item. Scale: 1. Definitely false. 2. Mostly false. 3. Somewhat false. 4. Slightly false. 5. Slightly true. 6. Somewhat true. 7. Mostly true. 8. Definitely true.

_____ 1. If I should find myself in a jam, I could think of many ways to get out of it.
_____ 2. At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my goals.
_____ 3. There are lots of ways around any problem that I am facing now.
_____ 4. Right now, I see myself as being pretty successful.
_____ 5. I can think of many ways to reach my current goals.
_____ 6. At this time, I am meeting the goals that I have set for myself.

III: Self-Assessment from the Perspective of Teaching

The items in this section repeat those of the preceding section. This time PLEASE RESPOND TO AND MARK EACH ITEM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF YOUR WORK AS A TEACHER. The scale is the same as before (1. Definitely false; 2. Mostly false; 3. Somewhat false; 4. Slightly false; 5. Slightly true; 6. Somewhat true; 7. Mostly true; 8. Definitely true)

_____ 1. I can think of many ways to get out of a jam.
_____ 2. I energetically pursue my goals.
_____ 3. I feel tired most of the time.
_____ 4. There are lots of ways around any problem.
_____ 5. I am easily downed in an argument.
_____ 6. I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are important to me.
_____ 7. I worry about my health.
_____ 8. Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.
_____ 9. My past experiences have prepared me well for my future.
_____10. I've been pretty successful in life.
_____11. I usually find myself worrying about something.
_____12. I meet the goals that I set for myself.

Read each of the following items carefully. Using the same scale you've been using, please select the number that best describes HOW YOU THINK ABOUT YOURSELF AS A TEACHER RIGHT NOW and put that number in the blank before each sentence. Please take a few moments to focus on yourself and what is going on in *your professional life at this moment.* Once you have this "here and now" set, go ahead and score each item.

_____ 1. If I should find myself in a jam, I could think of many ways to get out of it.
_____ 2. At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my goals.
_____ 3. There are lots of ways around any problem that I am facing now.
_____ 4. Right now, I see myself as being pretty successful.

_____ 5. I can think of many ways to reach my current goals.

_____ 6. At this time, I am meeting the goals that I have set for myself.

THANK YOU!

Note: Because the State Hope Scale has been shown to have terrific variability (see Vilaythong, Arnau, Rosen, & Mascaro, 2003, p. 83), the questionnaire was expanded to include repetition of both subscales through the perspective of teaching. The stem read: "Please respond to and mark each item from the perspective of your work as a teacher" and "please select the number that best describes how you think about yourself as a teacher right now and put that number in the blank before each sentence."

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

When you were young, were you unusually sensitive to the suffering and trials of others?

Have you ever doubted the wisdom of becoming a teacher? Yes/no. If yes, what was the source of your doubt (reason for doubting); if no, why not?

Why do you teach?

Have you ever felt really discouraged when teaching? If so, what was the source of your hopelessness and how did you respond?

When others describe you, what sort of teacher do they say you are? Is this how you see yourself as a teacher? Are you misunderstood?

When you look toward the future, what do you hope will be your legacy as a teacher? (What is it you hope you are accomplishing as a teacher?)

Do you think of yourself as a highly committed teacher? If so, how does your commitment express itself (What is it you do that demonstrates your commitment to teaching?)

Is teaching your life's work? If, not, what is your life's work and where does teaching fit in to your priorities?

For you, what is the most important goal you seek to achieve through teaching? What helps you achieve this goal? What stops or gets in the way of you achieving this goal?

What is the best part of being a teacher?

What is the worst part of being a teacher?

What is the best part of teaching?

What is the worst part of teaching?