A Mid-Career Faculty Agenda
A Review of Four Decades of Research and Practice

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© Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2021
L. W. Perna (ed.), Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research,
Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research 36,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-44007-7_10
Abstract

Described as the “bridge between faculty generations” (Baldwin and Chang, *Liberal Education*, 92(4), 28–35, 2006), mid-career faculty members play an important role in colleges and universities. Mid-career faculty members serve as mentors to early career colleagues and occupy critical leadership roles, formal and informal, on their respective campuses (Baker et al. *Developing faculty in liberal arts colleges: Aligning individual needs and organizational goals*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2017a, 2018). Yet, mid-career faculty members often assume these roles with little to no support to be successful in these roles and often to the detriment of their own career advancement (Baker, Lunsford, Pifer; Ward and Wolf-Wendel, *Academic motherhood: How faculty manage work and family*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012). Despite the importance of mid-career faculty to a thriving academy, there is an opportunity for those tasked with faculty development responsibilities to better understand the experiences of their mid-career faculties, particularly women and other underrepresented academics, and to provide appropriate and adequate career-stage-specific supports. An important question arises: how can colleges and universities better support their mid-career faculty? This chapter presents a meta-synthesis of four decades of research and practice focused on mid-career faculty and offers an agenda moving forward to better serve this faculty population.

Keywords

Mid-career faculty · Faculty development · Meta-synthesis

The professoriate has been a focus of research and practice since the inception of higher education (Welch 2005). Organizations including the American Association of University Professors and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, as well as initiatives such as ADVANCE, funded by the National Science Foundation, seek to shape American higher education by supporting diverse faculty members employed in
US colleges and universities. Yet, realities of higher education create challenges for those individuals currently in and seeking to gain entry into the academy. Traditional conceptions of the professoriate are changing; scholars urge higher education stakeholders to develop a faculty model that accounts for individual and institutional outcomes, with a particular focus on professional support and advancement for all faculty (Kezar and Maxey 2016; Szybinski and Jordan 2010). Studying and understanding the faculty experience through a career-stage lens are necessary.

The professoriate typically encompasses four stages, beginning with the graduate education experience through full professorship rank (Austin 2010; Austin and McDaniels 2006). Much research and practice have focused on graduate education and socialization into the academy (Austin and McDaniels 2006; Weidman et al. 2001), in addition to early career experiences of faculty members (Tierney and Rhoads 1993). Yet, much less attention, both in terms of research and practice, has been dedicated to understanding and supporting faculty in the middle years of their careers. Identified as the largest faculty population in higher education (Caffarella et al. 1989; Grant-Vallone and Ensher 2017), mid-career faculty members have been characterized as the “bridge” between faculty generations (Baldwin and Chang 2006), and they occupy critical formal and informal leadership roles in higher education (Baker et al. 2019a). However, this population also self-identifies as stuck, dissatisfied, and directionless (Baker et al. 2017a; Petter et al. 2018). In the words of Rice (1986), “To revitalize our institutions and individuals within them, we must utilize the talents of this large group of faculty [midlife] in new and imaginative ways” (p. 20).

This chapter presents a meta-synthesis of mid-career faculty stage research and practice over the course of the last four decades. Our writing is guided by three goals: (a) to shed light on how the study and practice of the mid-career faculty stage has evolved, (b) to summarize knowledge gleaned about the mid-career stage, and (c) to advance a mid-career faculty stage research and practice agenda.

**Methods**

This chapter incorporates findings and subsequent themes from a literature review spanning 40 years of research and practice focused on the mid-career stage and faculty experience. We employed a meta-synthesis approach to support our review, a technique first introduced by Bair and Haworth (1999, 2004) and later described by Saldaña (2015). A meta-synthesis is a technique that supports the integration of findings from both quantitative and qualitative studies. As Bair and Haworth explained, “It is integrative and expansionist, in that it compares and analyzes many studies together in a constructivist way, allowing interpretive themes to emerge from the synthesis” (Bair and Haworth 1999, p. 3).

We included theoretical, conceptual, empirical, and practical works, as well as conference presentations and other unpublished works within the higher education, business, and medical fields. To support our efforts, we searched academic databases including EBSCO, JSTOR, PROQUEST, and Google Scholar. We used keyword searches such as “mid-career faculty,” “mid-career faculty experience,” “mid-career
faculty development,” “associate professor,” and “advancement to full” and filtered search results by decade (e.g., 1980–1989). Our efforts resulted in the inclusion of 125 works.

We relied on inductive and integrative approaches to support the literature review and identification of subsequent themes on a decade-by-decade basis (Creswell and Creswell 2017). We created article summaries, each compiling, reading, and summarizing the studies independently. Prepared article summaries included the following details: author(s), title, date of publication, research question(s), theoretical/conceptual framework used, methodological approach (quantitative, qualitative), study participant details, main findings, future directions, and direct quotations.

Upon completion of the article summaries, we identified commonalities and preliminary themes. During weekly meetings, we discussed and refined preliminary themes based on the extant literature. We iterated between the articles and corresponding article summaries to code each based on the primary theme represented.

At the onset of our review efforts, we sought to only include studies with mid-career faculty participants and with 40 percent or more of the research focus on mid-career faculty and their related experiences. However, given the paucity of research that focused on mid-career faculty in the 1980s and 1990s, we had to broaden our literature review parameters. As such, we included works that focused on the overall faculty experience to incorporate important contextual and industry influences in which the needs of mid-career faculty were noted.

Present Day Professoriate

Grounding in the broad professoriate is necessary to help situate the mid-career faculty themes presented and future directions offered throughout the remainder of this chapter.

The Academy at a Glance: Full-Time Faculty Demographics

Over the past 40 years, the face of the professoriate has evolved in terms of gender, race and ethnicity, and faculty rank (Espinosa et al. 2019). However, diversity among faculty ranks does not mirror the diversity of students enrolled in US postsecondary institutions (Espinosa et al. 2019; Heilig et al. 2019). As of fall 2017, 1.5 million faculty members were employed across degree-granting postsecondary institutions; 53 percent of those faculty members were full-time (McFarland et al. 2019); a 1 percent decrease from 2016 figures reported by U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2017). Of those full-time faculty members, 22 percent were at the assistant professor rank, 19 percent at the associate rank, and 22 percent at the rank of full professor. The remaining full-time faculty members, those occupying the title of instructor, lecturer, and “other faculty,” represented 37 percent of full-time faculty.
Additionally, men represented 54 percent of full-time faculty, and women represented 46 percent. Women represented 24 percent of assistant professors, whereas men represented 19 percent. At the associate professor rank, women accounted for 19 percent, and men accounted for 20 percent. Finally, women accounted for 16 percent of full professors, whereas men accounted for 28 percent. While women occupied the majority of assistant professor positions, they lagged behind men as they moved through more senior faculty ranks.

Despite efforts to increase diversity, the academy is still predominantly white at 71 percent for full-time faculty. As of 2016, 10 percent of full-time faculty were Asian, 5 percent were Black, 5 percent were Hispanic, and less than 1 percent were Pacific Islander and Indian/Alaska Native (Digest of Education Statistics, 2016). Greater disparities exist when examining the intersectionality of sex, race/ethnicity, and academic rank. Sixty-seven percent of women assistant professors were white, 10 percent were Asian, 8 percent were Black, and 5 percent were Hispanic. Less than 1 percent of women assistant professors were Pacific Islander or Indian/Alaska Native. Seventy four percent of women associate professors were white, 10 percent were Asian, 7 percent were Black, 5 percent were Hispanic, and less than 1 percent were Pacific Islander or Indian/Alaska Native. Eighty-one percent of women full professors were white; 8 percent were Asian, 5 percent were Black, 4 percent were Hispanic, and less than 1 percent were Pacific Islander or Indian/Alaska Native.

While these figures do not specifically parse out “mid-career,” they do help provide a greater understanding of the mid-career stage and the diverse individuals who occupy it. Many mid-career faculty members are at the associate rank, in institutions in which a tenure system is present; however mid-career faculty are also full professors. And although the academy is more diverse than it was even a decade ago, a focus on intersectionality of gender and race, as evidenced through the data discussed in this section, highlight opportunities to foster greater diversity and inclusion across all stages of the professoriate, particularly mid-career and beyond, which is a theme we introduce in our overview of research and practice about mid-career faculty beginning in the 2000s. What we learn from the statistics presented here is that while mid-career faculty share the same career stage, they are nevertheless a diverse group of faculty with a range of defining features and professional and personal experiences and needs.

As we allude to, the mid-career stage can and does span faculty ranks, associate and full professorship, which creates challenges for how to define mid-career and how best to support faculty members who find themselves situated in this career stage. In the following section, we highlight the definitional challenges and associated implications of a lack of clear definition of mid-career in the professoriate.

**Challenges: Defining Mid-Career**

Scholars and practitioners alike have sought to better characterize and define the mid-career stage, using descriptions such as “mid-career malaise” (Karpiak 1996) and “disengaged” (Hart 2016) juxtaposed with “hopeful” and earnestly seeking to
re-envision and recraft the next phase of their careers (Baker et al. 2015; Grant-Vallone and Ensher 2017). One contributing factor to these diverging characterizations of mid-career faculty is the lack of a formal definition of the mid-career stage (Grant-Vallone and Ensher 2017). The absence of clearly defined markers or milestones that indicate a beginning and an end of this career stage creates challenges for mid-career faculty and for those individuals who seek to study and support mid-career faculty.

While tenure decision and retirement define early and late-career stages, a lack of visible hallmarks or boundaries define mid-career (Baldwin et al. 2005). Baldwin and Chang (2006) similarly noted the challenges with the mid-career stage, describing it as the “long, ill-defined phase after their probationary years and before retirement emerges on the professional horizon” (p. 28). Austin (2010) contributed to this conversation by characterizing that the mid-career stage begins when faculty have been awarded tenure after the probationary period, which is typically a 7-year timeframe where a tenure system is present.

Others have recognized how needs and opportunities change for mid-career faculty members within this long, ill-defined stage of their careers. Mathews (2014), through the efforts at the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE), classified associate-level, mid-career faculty members as early career associates (i.e., faculty members zero to 5 years post-tenure), and late-career associates (six or more years post-tenure). This distinction recognizes that early career associates’ needs and experiences differ from those of their late-career associate peers. Baker et al. (2019b) relied on Mathews’ (2014) distinction at the associate professor rank to inform the development of their Academic Leadership Institute for mid-career faculty members employed across the 13 institutions in the Great Lakes Colleges Association. Their research and practice aligned with Mathews’ work (Mathews 2014) by revealing that the needs of early career associate professors differed in substantive ways from their associate professor peers who were at this rank for at least 5 years. However, institutions lag in both acknowledging this distinction and providing appropriate support to address these differences.

In Success After Tenure: Supporting Mid-Career Faculty, Baker et al. (2019c) featured research and practice about the mid-career faculty stage spanning institution types, domestically and abroad. While their edited volume targeted the associate professor rank specifically, they too acknowledged that faculty members may have earned the rank of full professor but are still situated firmly in the mid-career stage. The focus on associate and full professor rank, as encompassing mid-career, serves as a critical definitional feature of our chapter and guides our working conceptions of mid-career. We thus acknowledge that faculty members at the associate and full professor ranks still have a great deal of career runway ahead and seek to remain engaged in their careers.

**Mid-Career: Four Decades of Research and Practice**

Prior to the 1980s, limited research explicitly addressed the mid-career faculty stage; therefore we chose 1980 as a starting point for our review of research and practice focused on mid-career. The subsequent four decades of research uncovered the
nebulous and ill-defined nature of the mid-career stage that contributes to mid-career faculty feeling professionally stuck and dissatisfied (Baker et al. 2017a; Petter et al. 2018). Those feelings are fueled by a variety of professional and personal factors such as evolving work expectations placed on mid-career faculty once tenure and promotion are earned, the need to assume administrative and leadership positions with limited training to be effective in those roles, and a notable reduction in career-stage-specific supports that were once available to early career colleagues. Couple these professional challenges with personal challenges such as simultaneously managing childcare and caring for an ailing or elderly parent results in many mid-career faculty feeling overwhelmed searching for resources to help manage these realities effectively.

Throughout this meta-synthesis, we highlight key trends across the decades that only add fuel to the fire, further contributing to the vulnerable nature of the mid-career faculty stage. For example, a trend discussed in the 1980s and then sustained throughout subsequent decades is that mid-career faculty are burdened by the multifaceted nature of the career, as well as the tension created from balancing their teaching and research responsibilities. Literature in the 1990s begins to fully shed light on the general trend of diminished vitality that faculty experience in the mid-career stage. In the 2000s, scholars and practitioners started to highlight the gender differences between men and women faculty members by examining how they experienced the academy, highlighting their perceptions of barriers and available supports, and comparing their advancement trajectories on the path to the professoriate (Reybold and Alamia 2008). In the most recent decade, the literature points to the need for institutions to acknowledge the variety of pressing concerns facing mid-career faculty. Those concerns include increased reliance on contingent faculty members and lack of formal leadership development programs aimed at fostering the skills and competencies mid-career faculty need to manage and lead higher education institutions in the twenty-first century (Baker et al. 2019a; DeZure et al. 2014). In response, we saw a rise in research and practice in the 2010s that showcased institutional interventions and strategies aimed at supporting the diversifying professoriate. Although some trends remain a constant through recent history, other facets of academia affecting faculty in this career stage seem to emerge and then dissipate at the turn of the decade. Refer to Fig. 1 for a summary of the key themes by decade.

![Fig. 1 Mid-career faculty: summary of research and practice themes](image-url)
Conceptual and Theoretical Models in the Study of Mid-Career Faculty

Over the past four decades of mid-career faculty development research, theoretical models were woven into the fabric of scholars’ work as a means of thoughtfully discussing much of mid-career faculty member’s experiences in the academic career. Although many theories were addressed, three models remained particularly steadfast throughout all four decades.

Erik Erikson’s theoretical framework for development has been at the foundation of an expansive body of work. Erikson’s psychosocial development model presents eight stages spanning from infancy to older adulthood, each of which presents a dichotomous scale consisting of a positive or negative outcome to be achieved during the life stage, such as either intimacy or isolation during the young adulthood stage (Erikson 1950/1963). Pertinent for the current topic, positioned at mid-life is the dichotomy between generativity, with generativity relating to productivity and contributions to society, and stagnation being just the opposite (Rice 1986). This dichotomy readily translates to the mid-career faculty experience, as Baldwin and Blackburn (1981) described that full professors five or more years from retirement face a diminished enthusiasm for teaching and question the value of the academic career. They are at a career turning point and must decide whether to continue in the same profession or diversify. These faculty thus emblematize the struggles experienced during the mid-life stagnation versus generativity stage.

Also at the heart of understanding mid-career faculty needs is the conceptual model that outlines faculty career stages. Baldwin and Blackburn’s work (Baldwin and Blackburn 1981) offered necessary insight into the evolving needs of faculty as a function of career stage, which the authors outlined as (1) assistant professors in the first 3 years of full-time college teaching, (2) assistant professors with more than 3 years of college teaching experience, (3) associate professors, (4) full professors more than 5 years from retirement, and (5) full professors within 5 years of formal retirement. Such career stage differences include, but are not limited to, the finding that faculty in the first stage yearn to engage in scholarship, while more seasoned faculty in the mid-career stages seek to contribute professionally beyond the walls of their institution. Baldwin and Blackburn, in turn, suggested that “it should be possible to gain valuable information about college professors by studying them at successive ages and career stages” (p. 599). This theoretical understanding of career stages is thus positioned at the foundation of the current chapter, as we posit that it is critical to fully understand the nuanced needs of mid-career faculty in order to effectively provide the necessary developmental support needed at this career stage.

Lastly, Parkes (1971) identified what he referred to as the “assumptive world,” which is a set of assumptions established as a means of providing understanding and clarity during times of change (Rice 1986). In the heyday of higher education in the mid-1960s, a set of assumptions gained traction regarding the academic professional and what it means “to be fully professional academically” (Rice 1986, p. 14). The focus of this model is on academic professionals being devoted to their research and scholarly work, which included assumptions asserting that “research is the central
professional endeavor and the focus of academic life” (Rice 1986, p. 14) and “professional rewards and mobility accrue to those who persistently attenuate their specializations” (p.14). This model has been highly pertinent throughout the decades as many of the tensions that mid-career faculty experience that we discuss in the following sections derive from the one-dimensional, research-focused view of academics as posited by Parkes.

We begin our meta-analytic review in the 1980s. As part of each decade discussion, we briefly describe the main themes and sub-themes that emerged followed by a more in-depth discussion of relevant research and practice. We conclude each decade review with a summary of the main contributions and provide a methodological critique.

1980s: The Foundation for the Study of Mid-Career Faculty

A recurring theme woven into the literature on faculty in the 1980s was the necessity of expanding and redirecting career paths to increase faculty morale and job satisfaction (Baldwin et al. 1981). Mid-career faculty are particularly vulnerable to falling prey to the possibility of stagnation and frustration of feeling stuck as “faculty members can be full professors at the age of forty and have no place to go” (Rice and Austin 1988, p. 56). We highlight three main themes in this decade including tension between teaching and research, the intersection of institutional and individual considerations, and the multifaceted nature of the faculty career. The work during this decade began to shed light on the intricacies of the faculty career and the associated responsibilities of being a member of the academy. Most important, it was during the 1980s that the mid-career stage was recognized as an important career moment.

The first theme we highlight, tension between teaching and research, revealed that faculty were shouldering too many responsibilities, as “many faculty drift, at mid-career, into a routine of teaching classes, updating syllabi, serving on committees, and perhaps ‘keeping a hand’ in research” (Baldwin 1981, p. 95). Faculty felt stretched in engaging in their responsibilities, unfulfilled and unsupported in the process. As part of our discussion, we include an historical overview of the evolution of teaching and researching as core professional activities in the professoriate. We also present research that examined related contextual factors in determining what was valued versus rewarded in career advancement evaluations.

Intersection of institutional and individual considerations is the second theme we discuss. During the 1980s, scholars began to tease apart views of faculty development to provide greater understanding about the ways in which faculty developers and institutional leaders viewed their role in continued professional development of mid-career faculty (Belker 1985). As part of that discussion, we explore the notion of professional competence and the importance of continually fostering opportunities to expand and enhance skill sets.

Lastly, we introduce research that explored the multifaceted nature of the faculty career with a particular focus at the mid-career stage. The career stage model was
introduced as a framework that would guide research and practice on the faculty career and the professoriate for decades to come (Baldwin 1981; Baldwin and Blackburn 1981). As part of this theme, we delve into research by Rice (1986) in which he examined the working lives of faculty members and explored what it means to be an academic professional. This knowledge provided much needed grounding into the faculty career, particularly related to the context in which faculty do their work.

As a collective, authors in the 1980s took a largely informational approach to studying the mid-career faculty stage by conveying key ideas regarding faculty experiences and offering commentary on faculty development. Some work included more detailed case studies of different institutions and particular development programs (Baldwin 1981; Berheide 1986; Goldman 1982; Rice and Austin 1988). Additional methodology included literature reviews examining faculty development programs and faculty pursuing their academic careers (Belker 1985; Caffarella et al. 1989). In a limited number of cases, methodology utilized surveys administered to faculty (Palmer and Patton 1981).

**Tension Between Teaching and Research**

It is no secret the role overload faculty members experience as part of the academic profession (Berheide 1986; Sorcinelli 1985). Woven into the 1980s literature was an exploration of the tension faculty members experience when seeking to balance the roles of teacher and researcher. This tension prevailed as an omnipresent concern in the lives of faculty members and is the first theme we present in this decade.

**Historical Insights**

The polarized dichotomy between the roles of teacher and researcher ultimately pulls faculty in separate directions. Berheide (1986) described the antithetical nature of these roles, pointing to after World War II, when the image of faculty switched from that of a “teacher-scholar” to a “professional researcher” (Berheide 1986, p. 35). That shift was prompted by an increased desire for “more scientists and more research” (Tighe 2012, p. 14) and was fueled by research dollars funneling into institutions to support the expansion of research universities focused on graduate education and to prepare scientific leaders (Geiger 1993). The aforementioned assumptive world posits that “research is the central professional endeavor and the focus of the academic life” and emphasizes discipline specialization and advancement of knowledge (Rice 1984, p. 7).

The shift from teacher-scholar to professional researcher resulted in changes to the primary expected responsibilities of faculty. Publication production became the priority and “encouraged faculty members to focus less on teaching and more on research” (Berheide 1986, p. 35). However, despite the emphasis on research, faculty still had courses to teach. The time needed to be successful in both roles, coupled with the inadequate rewards for the time faculty spent on teaching and the other myriad responsibilities they had to manage, resulted in “resentment toward
institutional demands” (Sorcinelli 1985, p. 51). As stated in Berheide (1986), Zey-Ferrell reiterated the polarized dichotomy between teaching and other faculty roles as she astutely commented that time in the profession was a “zero-sum game... If you’re spending more time at something else, you’re spending less time teaching” (p. 35). The mid-career stage, and the evolving nature of this career (and life) period, only served to heighten these disconnects and resentments. The resentment was fueled by institutional contexts, particularly related to messaging about what institutional leaders said they valued in terms of faculty contribution in contrast to what was rewarded in relation to career advancement at mid-career.

**Contributing Contextual Factors: Value vs. Reward**

Adding to the tension and dissonance over faculty roles, particularly those of teaching and research, is that faculty values and institutional values have been largely misaligned. Upon analyzing trends from a series of case studies on ten colleges with high levels of satisfaction and morale, Rice and Austin (1988) found that cultivation of positive faculty morale resulted in congruence between faculty and institutional goals. However, the literature produced in the 1980s showed this alignment was wanting. Goldman (1982) reported that within faculty development programs, teaching improvement efforts had been a prominent initiative. However, in a survey-based study regarding faculty perceptions of developmental needs, faculty members ranked support for research as the primary need, while improved teaching skills ranked 15th. In contrast, administrators ranked improved teaching skills as the top need for faculty. Not only did this reiterate the lack of faculty-administrator alignment in perceptions of needs but also demonstrated a lack of consistency and alignment in how administrators upheld their reward and value system. Rewards in the form of salary and promotions are a function of research output, yet when it comes to skills in need of developing, teaching is what is prioritized among administration. This lack of alignment between institutional values and rewards, coupled with inconsistent resources for developing skills in the professional responsibilities that accrue rewards, exacerbated the tensions felt by faculty.

Implicit and explicit pressures about prioritization of professional roles and associated tasks imposed by institutional administrators compounded this dissonance experienced by faculty members, particularly at mid-career, about where to invest time and energies. Faculty members had to identify what was valued for promotion versus those activities that largely went unnoticed. A study conducted by Sorcinelli (1985) at Indiana University on factors of faculty satisfaction found that some faculty discontent stemmed from frustration in the disproportionate value the institution showed toward research over teaching (Sorcinelli 1985, p. 51). Faculty voiced the concern that “the university requires us to spend our time teaching undergraduates and then rewards research” (Sorcinelli 1985, p. 51). This institutional value system aroused particular frustration among those faculty who preferred the teaching and service aspects of the profession to the research side. Faculty participants in the study noted that devoting their time to research was at the expense of their classes and teaching evaluations, but given the institutional reward system, research gets rewarded with tenure, with little consequences for lackluster teaching.
Faculty who were most devoted to teaching and who received distinguished teaching awards reported being the “lower paid professors in the department,” thus further reiterating that teaching was not the priority from an institutional perspective (Sorcinelli 1985, p. 55). Similarly, Goldman (1982) found that medical school institutions were particularly guilty of basing salary and other rewards on publications and the reputation of the faculty member in lieu of good teaching. Although the effects of a reward system that disproportionately values research productivity penetrated all institutional types, including research universities, it was reported that the effects were especially felt in liberal arts colleges (Berheide 1986). At the time of the study, faculty participants at Indiana University suggested that to ameliorate the discontent, institutions ought to implement more inclusive evaluation and reward criteria based on teaching as well as research (Sorcinelli 1985, p. 58).

Additional research published in the 1980s shed light on the latent effects of value systems implemented in institutions. Upon analyzing the responses from interviews with 532 faculty, Schuster and Bowen (1985) found that quality of work environment and morale deteriorated, largely due to the shift toward personnel decisions being based on scholarly research output. However, not only did this business gambit implicitly demonstrate discrepancies in what was valued, but it also contributed to the decrease in quality of the work environment and diminished faculty attention to teaching (Schuster and Bowen 1985). Given that faculty play a critical role in providing education, Goldman suggested that rewards should incentivize behaviors that expand knowledge and teaching skills, such as grants for goal development, sabbaticals, and opportunities to take advantage of special interests (Goldman 1982, p. 864).

Rice (1986) discussed the extreme nature of the reward systems advocated by campus administrators and enacted by the faculty members who conducted reviews of their faculty peers and the resulting implications. For example, Mauksch’s 1980 study of tenure and promotion committee meetings (as cited in Rice 1986) revealed that faculty committee members shared that they did not cast decisions based on teaching during the promotion decision-making process purely because of the value other colleagues and administrators placed on nonteaching factors. This further reiterated the deep-rooted nature of the reward and value system as it pressured non-administration members to base decisions on complying with the value system imposed by the institution (Rice 1986, p. 17).

Suggestions on how to mitigate this tension have been included in the literature. The tension stems from the narrow definition of the profession, set forth by the academic professional model, which emphasized specialized knowledge generation through research (Rice 1984, 1986). Rice (1984, 1986) sought to push back against the “old” academic professional model in which research was the central professional endeavor, and quality in academe was facilitated through peer review. Further, he observed that, in this traditional academic model, the pursuit of knowledge and understanding of knowledge was rooted in disciplines as members of the academy were in pursuit of “cognitive truth” (Rice 1984, p. 7). Knowledge generation was strictly for the sake of knowledge itself, fueled by professional rewards and mobility rooted in disciplinary specializations. The definitional tenets of this academic
professional model suggested that anything outside the scope of this dimension and definition was peripheral to the profession and should not be valued as highly, much less rewarded. In order to overturn this commonly understood definition of what it meant to be an academic, Boyer, Rice, and others argued that higher education institutions should expand the notion of scholarship to include teaching, which in turn would place a greater value on teaching, thus helping to integrate attention to teaching more fully into institutional reward structures (Boyer 1990; Rice 1986).

The push to expand conceptualizations of the academic professional model was directly aligned with early understanding of the mid-career faculty stage and the associated tensions and challenges faced once promotion and tenure were earned. Mid-career faculty members grappled with where to place energies based on their passions while accounting for institutional realities of priorities guided by institutional reward systems (Baldwin and Blackburn 1981). Scholarship in the 1980s did not delve into this tension as deeply as scholars in subsequent decades, but the work of Baldwin and Blackburn (1981) and Baldwin et al. (1981) served as a pseudo call to action and model from which to build.

When we think about the primary roles of the faculty career, teaching and research are two prominent sides of the triumvirate that make up conceptions of the faculty career today (with the third side being outreach and service). The focus on teaching and research, and the associated tensions that evolved during the 1980s in relation to the study of the faculty career, provided critical insights into the evolution of the academic profession. Of particular import was the understanding gleaned about the tension between research and teaching, what that tension looked like, and how that tension was experienced by mid-career faculty members. Knowledge about the prioritization and relative rewards placed on teaching and research served to highlight the misalignment between the priorities of institutional leaders and the faculty members they sought to support. This misalignment between administrators, faculty, and the faculty development approaches employed was prominently featured in the 1980s.

**Intersection of Institutional and Individual Considerations**

A second theme that began to surface during the 1970s through the 1980s was the need to better align individual and institutional views and approaches to professional development. The work of Belker (1985) and others (see, e.g., Golembiewski 1978) called attention to this need specifically. As Furniss (1981) noted: “If at some point in their careers they [faculty] do not seem to show the ability and talent they had when they entered the profession, it is worth looking at the environment to see where it might be altered so as again to give them the chance to shine” (p. 38). In this section, we discuss research that sought to align individual and institutional considerations as essential for supporting faculty, particularly those who appear in greatest need due to unclear and evolving professional and personal roles and expectations – that is, those in mid-career. We highlight research that focused on the importance of professional competence and the need to continually invest in skill and knowledge development
to facilitate professional growth. Scholars during this period also examined views of faculty development, namely, who had primary responsibility for ensuring faculty had access to and the support needed to engage in continued learning. An important outcome of this work was the need to refocus the perspective on who has responsibility for faculty development and how faculty programming should be conceived to foster the type of continued learning needed in the academic profession and desired by mid-career faculty.

**Professional Competence**
Willis and Tosti-Vasey (1988) suggested that in order to perform one’s roles and responsibilities competently, mid-career faculty must “exhibit the knowledge base and skills considered to be professionally current or up-to-date in their disciplines” (p. 1). To support this assertion, they studied professional competence at mid-career as informed by a model with four primary variables: (a) personal characteristics (e.g., demographics, educational attainment, academic rank), (b) personality characteristics (e.g., achievement, dominance), (c) institutional characteristics (work environment factors), and (d) professional activities (e.g., participation in professional organizations, scholarly engagement). The authors posited direct and indirect effects on these model variables but focused specifically on direct effects on professional competence related to personal and institutional characteristics and professional activities.

As part of their research, they studied faculty members from 4-year, predominantly teaching institutions in English and Engineering disciplines. Their research findings revealed that most of the variables found to be associated with professional competence fell within the professional activities domain. Examples included being active in one’s field regionally and nationally through professional or disciplinary activities (e.g., annual meetings and conferences), as well as being engaged in scholarship and publishing. Despite these faculty members’ primary responsibility for teaching, being engaged in scholarship and publishing complemented teaching competence.

Willis’ and Tosti-Vasey’s (1988) research provided a roadmap for those individuals tasked with faculty development responsibilities, showing them the need for more targeted and individualized career stage support and programming to meet the needs of mid-career faculty members. Study findings revealed that faculty members vary in terms of individual differences related to professional competence. This variance indicates that a one-size-fits-all approach to supporting faculty is misguided. Rather, individual needs and motivations and institutional demands and characteristics need to be accounted for if the needs of mid-career faculty are to be met.

**Refocusing the Perspective**
Caffarella et al. (1989) engaged in a review of the literature on the largest faculty cohort – mid-career. They categorized research and practice on mid-career into two dominant perspectives: institutional and individual. The authors noted that the institutional perspective was most prominent in the literature during that time period
and was dominated by the stereotype that older is not better. In fact, there was a belief that having older faculty members resulted in increased costs, reduced administrative flexibility, and fewer opportunities to hire newly minted PhDs. The predominant focus was on the impact of aging faculty on their colleges and universities. Research questions that guided this line of inquiry focused on issues of stamina (e.g., can older faculty teach as many courses or students as they did when they younger?) and engagement in institutional activities (e.g., who will run the institution if older faculty are bored with committee work?).

The individual or personal perspective acknowledged midlife as a time of continued change and growth, one in which career and personal considerations intersected. Scholars who studied mid-career from the individual perspective during this period of time examined the influence of personal considerations on professional accomplishments (e.g., what is the impact of health or family responsibilities on a faculty member’s productivity?) and individual differences (e.g., are there gender or ethnic differences in career paths?). This line of research highlighted the need for midlife professors to engage in self-assessment and reflection as they examined past, present, and future career considerations.

Caffarella et al. (1989) argued that, rather than view mid-career as a negative period in time institutionally and individually, this career stage presents an opportunity for immense growth and evolution, one that benefited both the faculty members and the institutions that employed them. Mid-career faculty, they asserted, have immense potential during this career stage to contribute to their personal and professional communities. Caffarella and colleagues concluded their research by noting, “Perhaps the most important issue to explore is how faculty and administrators can create an institutional climate allowing the greatest use of mid-career colleagues and resources” (p. 408).

The work presented by Caffarella and her colleagues (1989) began to debunk myths about mid-career productivity. Specifically, their review of the literature served to highlight the varying, and at times misguided, views of the mid-career stage. An important takeaway from research during this decade was the valuable role mid-career faculty members play on their respective campuses. Scholars identified opportunities to support mid-career faculty by better aligning institutional and individual efforts as a means of achieving outcomes at both levels. In addition, this line of inquiry highlighted the various roles, responsibilities, and ways in which mid-career faculty engage in their careers and lives and the types of support that were present and needed. In the next section, we delve more deeply into research and practice from the 1980s that highlighted the multifaceted nature of the faculty career and the implications of that on the mid-career faculty stage and faculty development programming.

**Multifaceted Nature of the Faculty Career: A Professional Perspective**

Scholars during the late 1970s and 1980s drew attention to the multifaceted nature of the faculty career which is the third theme we present from this decade. As part of
this line of inquiry, three sub-themes emerged in the literature which we discuss in
the following section: the career stage model, an examination of the academic
professional, and specific institutional efforts to support mid-career faculty mem-
bers. Perhaps most important to current understanding about mid-career faculty
members was the introduction of the career stage model (Baldwin and Blackburn
1981) which offered knowledge about the ways in which faculty members experience
the different stages of their careers, associated characteristics, and professional
needs. Baldwin and Blackburn’s (1981) framework of faculty career stages was and
continues to serve as the foundation from which much research and practice about
the mid-career stage emanates.

Knowledge gleaned from the career stage model contributed to scholarship which
sought to better articulate what it meant to be an academic during the 1980s, thus
offering an image of the academic professional (Rice 1984). This line of inquiry
called on members of the academy, and those who support them, to re-examine the
nature and structure of the faculty career. The professoriate was at a turning point
during the 1980s, prompting the need for additional scholarship.

Lastly, while in its infancy during this decade, recognition of the importance of
supporting mid-career faculty members prompted the creation of institution-specific
programs geared toward this population of faculty members which we highlight as
part of our discussion. In addition, scholars began to explore what professional and
continuing education looked like in service to mid-career faculty members, noting
the benefits to their institutions. We first start our discussion with a more in-depth
look at the career stage model offered by Baldwin and Blackburn (1981).

**Career Stage Approach**

Highlighting a decrease in academic vacancies across colleges and universities,
Baldwin and Blackburn (1981) sought to answer the question, “How can colleges
and universities most effectively capitalize on the potential of their currently
employed, experienced faculty” (p. 598)? If limited vacancies were to characterize
the academy, Baldwin and Blackburn (1981) posited that campus leaders would
need to focus on supporting the faculty members working at their institutions in an
effort to retain top talent. To study this question, they surveyed a population of 106
male faculty members from 12 liberal arts colleges in the Midwest.

Through their research, Baldwin and Blackburn (1981) identified five distinct
career stages: (a) stage 1, assistant professors within the first 3 years of full-time
college teaching employment; (b) stage 2, assistant professors with 3-year-plus college
teaching experience; (c) stage 3, associate professors; (d) stage 4, full professors more
than 5 years from retirement; and (e) stage 5, full professors within 5 years from formal
retirement. Of particular importance to the focus of this chapter are faculty members in
stages three and four, who were more likely than their peers in other career stages to
consider a career change and to feel their career was at a “standstill” (p. 606). Faculty
members in these two career stages noted their desire to have access to additional
opportunities for professional growth well beyond achieving full professorship status.
Findings also revealed waning enthusiasm for teaching and research, causing mid-
career faculty members to question the value of the academic profession.
The career stage model informed research and practice during the 1980s and beyond that targeted mid-career faculty specifically. Baldwin and Blackburn (1981) noted, “Faculty described their career advancement as a series of new growth opportunities, role changes, new interests, and new responsibilities. This evidence stresses the need to maintain opportunities for ongoing career growth” (p. 611). The need for continued opportunities for growth and development was echoed by Clark and Corcoran (1989). Their literature review pulled together streams of research and practice that explored issues of faculty renewal and change. Their review also pointed to mid-career as a stage when faculty have been susceptible to plateauing and ask questions such as “is this all there is?” (p. 26). Contributions of their review include a greater understanding of the conditions that affect faculty vitality, a concept discussed more in the subsequent decades, the need to apply a longer, life-course perspective on the faculty career, and the importance of employing a greater diversity of strategies to improve career development opportunities, particularly at mid-career.

**Academic Professionalization**

Research by Baldwin and Blackburn (1981) established the foundation for the study of the faculty career, particularly through a career stage lens. Rice (1984) built on understanding of the faculty career and academic work by posing the question – “what does it mean to be professional academically”(p. 5)? Rice presented four diverse yet interrelated areas of research and practice that shed light on faculty careers: (a) being professional – meaning and practice, (b) research on organizational careers, (c) adult development theory, and (d) institutional policies and organizational development.

Rice argued that higher education scholars and practitioners would benefit from pursuing an interdisciplinary approach to understanding careers, drawing from other fields such as business and human resources. An important implication of that interdisciplinary approach, Rice suggested, would be an appreciation for differences among faculty. He noted, “Much is being discovered about what professionals do when they get ‘stuck’ in mid-career and the kinds of ‘opportunity structures’ required to sustain personal and career vitality” (p. 4).

Similar to the work of Baldwin and Blackburn (1981), Rice noted the importance of adult development theories to inform understanding of academic careers and the faculty experience. Such an approach to research and practice supports the knowledge that faculty members have different needs and experiences across career stages, thus requiring more tailored faculty development supports to navigate transitions successfully.

Rice (1984) also highlighted the need to create experiences for faculty that encouraged them to engage in a diversity of learning experiences throughout their careers, as a means of facilitating continued growth given the nature of the faculty career. Such a view lent itself to an assessment of institutional policies and practices. While organizational policies and practices can support faculty learning and growth, Rice (1984) argued that the majority of governing structures and institutional policies impede, and even dampen, faculty growth (given their inflexibility). For
example, when institutions hold to the myopic view of the faculty career as singularly research focused, they limit faculty members from being innovative in their search for sources of increased renewal, such as being involved in interdisciplinary studies (Rice 1984).

Rice observed the academic profession at a turning point in the 1980s, one requiring new ways of understanding and supporting faculty members across career stages and institution types. He argued that the current, one-dimensional view of the faculty career was not only antiquated but detrimental to harnessing the collective power and contributions of faculty members. He closed his writing by noting, “Ways must be found to release the incredible imagination, curiosity, creativity, and commitments of our colleagues – the most talented of a generation. Only then can we ensure that the generations ahead will be well-served” (p. 11). This statement served as a call to institutional leaders and faculty developers to invest in targeted mid-career faculty development offerings. We highlight efforts to answer this call in our discussion of institutional examples and professional education, the remaining sub-theme of this decade.

**Institutional Examples and Professional Education**

The work of Baldwin and Blackburn (1981) and Rice (1984) not only forged a strong foundation from which to understand and study the faculty career; their research also informed faculty development practice by drawing attention to the ways in which faculty programming could be organized to better support the multifaceted nature of the faculty career. In this section, we highlight research by Menges et al. (1988) who shared findings from Stanford University’s Program for Faculty Renewal, which focused on mid-career faculty, followed by an examination of professional education in the 1980s in meeting the needs of mid-career faculty members.

**Program for Faculty Renewal** Established in 1975 from the Lilly Endowment, and later by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in 1979, the purpose of the Program for Faculty Renewal at Stanford University was to support faculty members and to provide an “opportunity to revitalize scholarly commitments through contact, study, and discussion with colleagues from Stanford and other postsecondary institutions” (Menges et al. 1988, p. 292) that offered targeted supports for mid-career faculty members. Faculty from across all institution types participated, resulting in over 400 participants engaging in one or more components of the program from 1979 through 1984. Faculty participants were engaged in a variety of ways, spanning an in-residence 2-week summer workshop and a reunion. Surveys assessing the impact of the workshop and reunion suggested high satisfaction with the program.

**Professional Education** Belker (1985) posed a provocative question as the title of her manuscript, “The Education of Mid-Career Professors: Is it Continuing?” As part of her research, Belker described the evolution of professional education of mid-career faculty members, noting the shifting responsibility from the individual faculty member to one in which administrators should be engaged through joint collaboration. Belker noted, “There is a decline in the traditional means of sustaining
intellectual vitality, such as visiting professorships, attendance at professional meetings, sabbatical leaves, and funds for research” (p. 68). Belker suggested that vital faculty members contribute to their institutions in a multitude of ways at the programmatic, departmental, and community levels. Therefore, a more deliberate partnership between faculty and campus administrators could serve to strengthen professional education for faculty members at mid-career.

Through an extensive literature review and examination of existing faculty development programs, Belker’s efforts revealed four major themes. First, the majority of existing faculty development programs fell under the “traditional” model of faculty development, one in which the responsibility for said programming fell on the individual faculty member. The faculty member was left to decide the areas in which improvement was needed spanning professional, instructional, and personal levels, and the faculty member acted on that assessment accordingly. Second, the majority of faculty development programs targeted early career faculty colleagues. Belker noted, “Thus, it appears that most colleges and universities continue to view professional development as an individual concern for mid-career faculty” (p. 69). Third, institutional differences existed in terms of how professional development was viewed and enacted at the individual faculty level. Fourth, few faculty development efforts accounted for the institutional view as an important consideration to account for when developing and delivering faculty development programming.

Research during the 1980s revealed the majority of professional development efforts were situated squarely in the traditional approach, placing developmental responsibility on faculty members individually. However, a few colleges and universities were beginning to consider the needs of their mid-career faculty and began investing in more targeted ways to support their professional growth. The movement toward more deliberate efforts in supporting mid-career faculty informed research and practice during the 1990s.

**Summary of 1980s Literature**

Two fundamental contributions surfaced during the 1980s: The recognition that the mid-career stage was and is a unique and pivotal moment (Baldwin and Blackburn 1981) and an identification and understanding of the different elements that contribute to the academic career (Rice 1984). Associated literature on mid-career development was characterized by a focus on addressing the strain faculty members felt as a result of the tension between demands of teaching and research, further compounded by stilted institutional reward systems and a lack of dedicated institutional supports. Scholars in the 1980s replaced an individual approach with an institutional one, suggesting an intersection of institutional priorities and mid-career faculty members’ needs as a necessary approach to faculty development at this critical career stage. During the 1980s, scholars and practitioners set the charge for what research and practice at mid-career should look like moving forward.
Despite the contributions to the study of mid-career faculty in the 1980s, there are some limitations worth noting. First, there was limited empirical research conducted that included mid-career faculty members as the target population. For those studies that did fill this gap, little attention was paid to the nuances of gender and race and ethnicity. For example, the groundbreaking work of Baldwin and Blackburn (1981) focused exclusively on the experiences of men faculty, but this sole focus was representative of the professoriate at the time. Additionally, mid-career research did not focus on mid-career faculty members as individuals with lives and needs that span professional and personal considerations. Third, the administrator perspective was lacking in relation to the experiences and needs of mid-career faculty members, highlighting the need for more collaboration between faculty members and campus administrators. Greater attention needed to focus specifically on the connection between advances in faculty development as a field in relation to knowledge gleaned about faculty career stages, particularly at mid-career. Research and practice during the 1990s began to address these gaps, and we discuss such developments in the next section.

1990s: A Focus on the Individual Faculty Member

While the 1980s provided a critical foundation for understanding faculty career stages, the 1990s offered insight into the personal needs of faculty and how those needs ought to be met by the institution (Hubbard and Atkins 1995). Once again, we highlight three themes that emerged during this decade: intersection of individual and institution, the multifaceted nature of the faculty career, and tension between research and practice. While these themes are similar to what we presented in our review of research and practice from the 1980s, the ways in which these themes were conceived and studied differed from what was published in the prior decade.

Research and practice during the 1990s focused on the institution as a source of strain and a cause of mid-career faculty members feeling stuck and somewhat disillusioned. While Erikson’s psychosocial model of development laid much of the theoretical framework in the 1980s literature regarding faculty well-being and development (Erikson 1950/1963; Rice 1984), the notion of “vitality” was woven throughout the literature on faculty in the 1990s (Kalivoda et al. 1994; Wheeler 1997), specifically the ways in which institutions either hinder or support faculty vitality. Finkelstein (1996) described faculty vitality as being “concerned with motivation, engagement with work and work-related goals – albeit motivation is sustained over time” (p. 71). A key nuance of vitality, compared to generativity, is the added notion of initiative. Finkelstein explained, “vital faculty create opportunities for themselves or manage to find opportunity in their immediate environment where they feel competent” (Finkelstein 1996, p. 75). As part of this theme, we highlight available and needed institutional supports to facilitate faculty vitality, focusing specifically on the role of institutional and relational factors, the department chair, and professional organizations.
The study of mid-career faculty also evolved to provide greater understanding for the need to provide resources and support that promote well-being of the whole person – one who has both professional and personal responsibilities and contexts to navigate. The focus on well-being ties in with research and practice related to vitality, including the importance of tending to all the needs of mid-career faculty, not just professional considerations.

Lastly, the tension between teaching and research was still present in scholarship focused on mid-career faculty during the 1990s. In fact, this line of inquiry was expanded as compared to work in the 1980s, especially given the shift in focus on mid-career faculty members as individuals who need support to balance their professional and personal responsibilities effectively. The focus on the individual perspective surfaced challenges mid-career faculty members felt related to competing time commitments pertaining to their professional responsibilities, coupled with feelings of isolation, and lack of recognition for the myriad ways in which they contributed to their institutions. Our review of the 1990s takes an in-depth look at research and practice across these three themes, but we first begin with a discussion of research and practice that focused on the need to situate mid-career faculty research and practice at the intersection of individual and institutional considerations.

**Intersection of Individual and Institution**

While the 1980s highlighted the disconnect between the individual and the institution, the 1990s literature examined the alignment between faculty members and the institution they represented both in terms of research and practice. Researchers sought to better understand the mid-career faculty experience from the individual faculty member perspective (Karpiak 1996; Kelly 1991; Tucker 1990), as well as through institutional policies and infrastructure that had the potential to facilitate needed career advancement. Understanding faculty members as individuals and seeking to support their well-being in relation to their institutional contexts had the potential to contribute to their vitality, resulting in outcomes at the individual and institutional levels.

**The Institution as a Source of Strain**

Karpiak (1996, 1997) engaged in research to better understand how faculty members experienced the mid-career and midlife period in their academic and community work, accounting for personal and professional relationships, and their evolving sense of self. In both studies, she offered a counter narrative to the assumptions permeating the academy about the quality and engagement of more senior faculty colleagues, building on the “deadwood” misconception of mid-career faculty (Kelly 1990). Rather than view senior scholars as drains on institutional resources and less frequent contributors to institutional priorities and activities both in terms of quality and quantity, Karpiak (1996, 1997) posited that mid-career faculty were a valuable resource for institutions and peers. Her research relied on adult development theory.
and research on higher education environments to understand the intersection of individual and environmental (e.g., institutional) considerations.

Karpiak’s (1996) study provided insights into how mid-career faculty members evolved at this stage in their careers in relation to their discipline, research, teaching, and collegial relationships during midlife and career. As part of her research, she invited 120 associate professors from the humanities and social sciences to share their thoughts and experiences related to a guiding research question – “Why had a significant number of associate professors remained at that rank for so many years without further promotion” (p. 55)?

Mid-career faculty members used terms like underappreciated, unacknowledged, and unsupported to describe the administrator-faculty relationship on their respective campuses. Study participants also shared concerns related to the tenure and promotion process. Many faculty members in Karpiak’s (1996) study aspired to earn full professorship but expressed a lack of trust in the process due to unclear promotion criteria and limited opportunities for feedback on progress toward advancement. These same faculty members shared a desire to broaden their knowledge and to pursue work beyond the discipline.

Karpiak’s (1997) follow-up study was guided by three research questions that focused on gleaning knowledge about (1) how mid-career faculty members’ orientations to their scholarship, discipline, teaching, and relationships evolved at mid-career; (2) the types of changes and renewals mid-career faculty experienced during this stage of their career, and (3) the factors that supported or hindered their experiences. While her 1996 study focused on the individual faculty member, her follow-up study really sought to better understand the conditions of university professors in relation to institutional supports that either impact or impede the mid-career experience. Interviews with 20 associate professors (15 men, 5 women) in the Faculty of Arts brought to light four concepts relating to faculty members’ perceptions of their careers as they progress: (a) meaning (e.g., high interest and caring in regard to academic roles and responsibilities), (b) malaise (e.g., low interest and caring, stagnation), (c) marginality (e.g., belief that the university displays low interest and caring), and (d) mattering (e.g., others’ care and concern). She found that many mid-career faculty were highly invested in what they do and sought to find ways to be effective in teaching, and also in scholarship, but to a lesser extent. Despite finding high meaning in teaching, the associate professor participants also talked about feelings of malaise given the time and energy good teaching required. This malaise would then carry over to other core aspects of academic work. Relatedly, several mid-career faculty described feelings of marginality in which they felt disconnected from their disciplines, institutions, and colleagues. Fundamentally, the mid-career faculty in Karpiak’s (1997) study wanted to feel as though their contributions and work mattered to the university, and they were valued. Her research revealed the significance of mid-career faculty relationships and the institutional value placed on the myriad ways in which faculty contribute to the institutions in which they are employed.

Karpiak’s (1996, 1997) research findings provided greater insights into the mid-career faculty experience from an individual perspective as well as through an
institutional view lens. She discovered that mid-career faculty members identified professional and personal relationships as a life force, and they needed to believe their contributions to the institution, community, and departments mattered. Additionally, faculty felt a deep sense of responsibility to take care of the next generation of faculty members and also struggled with a promotion process that undervalued roles they deemed essential to the academy, such as teaching. Finally, the findings demonstrated women faculty were at an increased disadvantage when it comes to their professional esteem, such that women “must cope also with feeling unentitled and unaccepted” (Karpiak 1996, p. 60). Karpiak’s research provided a framework for and highlighted the importance of a conceptual framework that accounts for faculty and institutional characteristics as necessary to better supporting mid-career faculty and the institutions in which they are employed. In the next section, we present research and practice that delves more deeply into the institution as contributor to the mid-career faculty experience.

Institutional Supports

Part of the focus on individual faculty research in the 1990s included an examination of institutional factors, including key leadership positions on campus that had the potential to influence and support mid-career faculty members as they advanced in the academy (Caffarella and Zinn 1999; Creswell and Brown 1992; Robbins 1993). Scholars who engaged in this line of inquiry sought to inform institutional efforts targeted at mid-career. Regarding institutional supports, Kazlauskas and Maxwell (1991) made a key contribution in extending this literature into the context of community colleges. Keeping community and 2-year colleges at the forefront of the literature on faculty development was particularly critical given the increased lack of vitality experienced by mid-career faculty at these institutions, in part due to their “heavy class loads and increasingly diverse enrollments” (p. 82), while also they were “concerned about staying abreast of new developments in their specific disciplines” (Kazlauskas and Maxwell 1991, p. 84). No institution type is thus exempt from needing to provide their faculty body with the necessary resources and support to foster development. Research throughout the 1990s offered insight into the role that institutions as a whole, as well as individuals within the institution, can play in providing the vital professional development that mid-career faculty crave. We discuss this work in the following sections.

Institutional and Relational Factors

Caffarella and Zinn (1999) examined continuing professional development, given that the process of learning does not cease once promotion and tenure are earned. As part of their research, they advanced a conceptual framework that highlighted four critical factors that enhance or impede faculty members’ professional development: (a) people and interpersonal relationships, (b) institutional structures, (c) personal considerations and commitments, and (d) intellectual and psychosocial commitments. Considerations across these four domains, according to Caffarella and Zinn, were central to professional development experiences.
Their conceptual framework in the 1990s acknowledged the importance of people and interpersonal relationships within and outside of the work environment, noting that the nature of these relationships, and associated interactions, greatly impacted personal and professional development. Institutional factors such as available resources (e.g., financial) and overlapping commitments could either advance or impede continuous learning and growth. Personal commitments, roles, and experiences outside of the academy influenced the levels at which faculty members can commit to and advance professional responsibilities. In addition, faculty members’ sense of self and their beliefs about competence could either lead to advancement or feelings of burnout. In sum, the conceptual framework advanced by Caffarella and Zinn (1999) drew attention to the varying, and sometimes conflicting, interconnected factors that contribute to faculty members’ lived experiences, thus acknowledging the complexity of the professoriate, particularly post-tenure. In the following sub-theme discussion, we highlight research and practice focused on the role of the department chair as an example of an important institutional support and as someone on campus who can, and should, contribute to the development of mid-career faculty members.

**Department Chair** Research by Creswell and Brown (1992), for example, examined the role department chairs play in the research productivity of faculty members. As part of their research, they examined faculty development practices of 200 chairpersons employed across a range of institution types, including research, doctoral-granting institutions, comprehensive colleges and universities, and liberal arts colleges. They developed a typology of seven roles assumed by department chairs with accompanying actions and behaviors ranging from advocate and mentor to collaborator and enabler. They found that the chairperson can, and should, take on a more formal faculty development role in support of departmental colleagues. Such a role could involve more focused one-on-one mentoring of their mid-career peers or leadership coaching for 1 day assuming the department chair position.

According to Creswell and Brown (1992), department chairs wanted their post-tenure colleagues to be departmental contributors who aspired to full professorship. However, the authors noted that department chairs in their study perceived post-tenure faculty members as “harder to change” (p. 55); thus, any engagement with this population of faculty members was perceived as success. Despite this perceived lack of engagement by department chairs with mid-career faculty members, Creswell and Brown (1992) believed department chairs could, and should, engage with mid-career faculty members to facilitate career re-examination, especially for those faculty colleagues who have hit a career plateau. The department chair is well positioned to understand the day-to-day realities and responsibilities of their mid-career departmental colleagues. Department chairs were often familiar with their institutional and disciplinary contributions and were particularly poised to understand the institutional and disciplinary supports available to help combat those challenges.

While this line of inquiry looked at persons and formal roles inside of the institution, specifically the department chair position, professional organizations also began to acknowledge the need to enhance faculty development supports
beyond early career as not only important to the faculty member but also to the students they support. Such a view acknowledged the importance of a variety of stakeholders asserting agency over the development of a critical population of faculty members at mid-career and recognizing the effect of these faculty members on student learning.

**Professional Organization** The Council for Undergraduate Research (CUR) is an example of a professional organization that saw an opportunity to engage and provide support for mid-career faculty members. The mission of CUR is to support and promote high-quality undergraduate student-faculty collaborative research and scholarship. It does so by hosting workshops and sharing other resources to facilitate student and faculty engagement in undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative activity. In 1999 and early 2000, CUR hosted a workshop titled, “The Vital Faculty: Issues after Tenure,” which brought together faculty and administrator teams from 20 institutions to address the lack of alignment between individual and institutional considerations (Mills and Malachowski 1999). Each team included an administrator with oversight responsibilities in undergraduate research or faculty development, which provided accountability and decision-making authority. Workshop sessions addressed faculty development topics such as the evolution of faculty careers, including increased administrative responsibilities after tenure is awarded; the role of the institution in encouraging and rewarding post-tenure faculty development; the role of the department chair in creating a supportive environment for continuing faculty development; and the use of post-tenure reviews, summative and formative.

What is particularly useful about CUR’s efforts to contribute to mid-career faculty development is that the model described here provides one example of how to deliberately facilitate collaboration among administrators, mid-career faculty members, and professional organizations to work toward a common aim. That aim is the career development of mid-career faculty members, which is a benefit to individual faculty members, their institutions, and the students they are tasked with developing.

In sum, the focus on the importance of collaboration between administrators and mid-career faculty members related to faculty development efforts provided much needed guidance about the importance of strategic partnerships in career development initiatives. While mid-career faculty members have and should assume agency for their career development, they cannot do so alone or without the resources and investment in career development programming offered through their institutions. This line of inquiry which started in the 1980s and was expanded in the 1990s illustrates the power of the intersection between individual and institutional considerations in service to mid-career faculty members’ career advancement and development.

**Multifaceted Nature of the Faculty Career: An Individual Perspective**

Scholars and practitioners during the 1980s drew attention to the evolving nature of the professoriate and the need to acknowledge and better understand career stage
challenges and opportunities (Rice 1986; Sorcinelli 1985). Adult development theory informed this research and highlighted the importance of all aspects of midlife and mid-career as important contributors to the faculty experience, thus requiring a new approach to career development. A significant outcome of situating faculty development research and practice at the intersection of individual and institutional considerations was a focus on faculty members’ well-being. Researchers continued this stream of research in the 1990s by focusing on the whole person, a pivotal switch in perspective that acknowledged the interplay between professional and personal considerations. In our discussion of the second theme from this decade, we highlight research that acknowledged and examined the importance of personal well-being as requisite to supporting mid-career faculty members’ career advancement and overall health.

**Well-Being of the Whole Person**

Mid-career research during the 1990s revealed the need to acknowledge faculty members as whole persons, including professional and personal environments, roles, and responsibilities (Hubbard and Atkins 1995; Tosti-Vasey and Willis 1991). Hubbard and Atkins (1995) sought to address “the larger issue of institutional, professional, and personal development as part of an interrelated and interacting, multi-faceted system” (p. 120). They linked physical and emotional well-being to work performance. Caffarella and Zinn (1999) corroborated the strong connection between personal life and professional vitality; they pointed out that unsupportive relationships, such as spouses at home failing to understand the demands of an academic career, served as barriers toward development. In contrast, when faculty felt supported at home, they were better able to engage in their professional work and find vitality in their careers.

Hubbard and Atkins’s (1995) research focused specifically on the need for an expanded definition of faculty development, one that accounted for career and life stage realities as influenced by personal and professional experiences. Hubbard and Atkins (1995) sought to highlight the importance of knowing the extent to which, if at all, career expectations have been met for mid-career faculty given the importance of that knowledge to campus leaders and faculty developers tasked with providing support to this population of faculty. Similar to Karpiak (1996, 1997) and others (Tosti-Vasey and Willis 1991), terms like stuck, burnout, isolation, and disillusionment characterized mid-career faculty members’ sentiments. Hubbard and Atkins (1995) highlighted the experiences of women faculty and their reported challenges related to university politics and policies, personal and family issues, disproportionate workloads, and overall feelings of self-doubt and self-worth. A key point of their work, as well as research by Tosti-Vasey and Willis (1991), stressed the interconnectedness of personal and professional aspects as salient to the lived experiences of faculty members. Furthermore, in order to affect student learning, institutional leaders and faculty developers needed to invest in faculty members’ learning, to support the whole person.

A focus on the whole person lent itself to an examination of work-life considerations. Lamber et al. (1993) conducted a qualitative study involving 33
mid-career faculty members from a research university. In an effort to have a representative sample, they sought to include a cross-section of faculty perspectives from the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Education, the School of Business, and the School of Law while also paying attention to time in rank and scholarly productivity. They engaged in conversations about the shifting nature of faculty roles at mid-career as well as sources of stress. Findings revealed several themes. First, the newfound freedom upon promotion and tenure allowed these faculty members to explore new forms of research. Along with that autonomy came greater responsibility for career decisions, albeit with fewer resources to support those decisions. Another concern expressed by study participants was lack of time after promotion and tenure to engage effectively in all the roles assumed and miscommunication by campus administrators about how rewards and incentives align with those varied roles. With lack of rewards and incentives came beliefs that talents and contributions had been unrecognized. Faculty participants recommended that definitions of faculty development need to be broadened to acknowledge a diversity of professional and personal needs that account for their concerns, well-being, and career development and advancement needs. This shift in the definition of faculty development was critical, given it accounted for faculty members’ beliefs about the benefits well-being has on faculty vitality. When institutions offered support for both work and family through institutional policies and programs, employee productivity and retention increased; tension was reduced (Tosti-Vasey and Willis 1991).

In closing, researchers during the 1990s continued to acknowledge the critical role mid-career faculty members can, and do, play on their respective campuses. However, in order for mid-career faculty members to contribute to their institutions, departments, and students, institutions must acknowledge and attend to their professional and personal needs, acknowledging that their lived experiences encompass so much more than just the ways in which they engage professionally. Treating mid-career faculty members as whole persons and supporting their well-being as they seek to advance and evolve in their careers were an important contribution of this decade.

**Tension Between Teaching and Research**

The third, and final, theme we highlight from this decade focuses on faculty tension in balancing both research and teaching roles. This tension did not dissipate at the turn of the decade but rather continued into the 1990s and took on a shape of its own. Not only was research still disproportionately valued in comparison to efforts in the classroom, but feelings of isolation doing scholarly work became an additional concern. Researchers who delved into this tension during the decade provided a more in-depth look into the challenges of competing time commitments, the feelings of isolation felt by faculty at mid-career, and the lack of recognition and institutional rewards. In the following section, we highlight research that addresses these sub-themes.
Challenges of Competing Time Commitments
During this decade, mid-career faculty members reported feelings of tension from balancing a vast number of responsibilities all within a finite 24-hour day. Austin and Pilat (1990) discussed the stress caused by dividing time between service and a discipline, as too much effort devoted to one aspect of the profession can stall the progress of another. Mid-career faculty found that the only way to “win” was to work long hours and dedicate lots of commitment to both. Caffarella and Zinn (1999) substantiated this source of tension as they reported that a prominent institutional barrier hindering professional development was the pressure to fulfill overlapping professional commitments and responsibilities within a finite amount of time. Faculty in the mid-career stage increasingly reported difficulty balancing numerous responsibilities as their roles and tasks diversified and became less clear after securing tenure (Lamber et al. 1993). Even within the domain of teaching, much of their responsibilities occurred outside of the classroom, such as directing theses, supervising internships, and overseeing teaching assistants. Lamber et al. (1993) identified the consequence of these commitments: “...faculty have less time to spend with each other, less time to provide the informal support needed to experiment with their teaching, and even to adequately reflect on and revise current instructional practice” (p. 25).

Another concern creeping into the literature in the 1990s was that higher education institutions increasingly valued some responsibilities more than others and concomitantly neglected to value the work that often brings faculty the most satisfaction. A few campuses conducted studies to examine the alignment of priorities between faculty and the administration (Edgerton 1993). Notably, in a study conducted at Syracuse, the vice chancellor surveyed faculty, department chairs, and deans to gauge opinions on the perceived balance between teaching and research. The consensus of the results was that, from the faculty perspective, the institution’s priorities were too concentrated on research. Another noteworthy finding of this study was that individual faculty members learned that they were not alone in their perceptions; their faculty peers also shared the perception that the institution more strongly valued research, resulting in a reexamination of Syracuse’s institutional agenda.

The focus on the balance between teaching and research was also on the forefront of discussion at other higher education institutions. For example, Stanford also put the balance of teaching and research under the spotlight, as the university’s president, “called on the Stanford faculty to recognize that teaching was ‘the first among our labors’ – and came down hard on the need for a recommitment to teaching” (Edgerton 1993, p. 13). He called for institutional changes such as “ending quantitative standards for measuring research productivity” and “broadening the definition of scholarship to include creative work beyond that reported in peer-reviewed journals” (Edgerton 1993, p. 13). These institutions served as trailblazers that set broadening the scope of scholarship and recalibrating incentives to value both teaching and research as an institutional agenda item.

Olsen (1992) studied the effects of disproportionate value systems in the academy by surveying 14 faculty members who left their institution for reasons other than
retirement. As we saw in the 1980s, the definition of scholarship was narrow and thus failed to include teaching. Failure to broaden the definition of scholarship, which was a recommendation suggested in the preceding decade, continued to have a vast array of consequences in the 1990s. As part of her research, Olsen interviewed faculty members who chose to leave their positions, as she sought to identify the factors that contributed to their decision. One prominent reason they provided was the lack of weight teaching held in tenure decisions and the misalignment between faculty’s investment in teaching and the institution’s emphasis on research. The resulting high faculty turnover rates then meant that these faculty left, taking their diverse sets of skills with them. Of more pressing concern to the institution was that the cost of turnover was equivalent to a faculty member’s annual salary, thus suggesting to the researchers, at least, the importance of realigning values to increase retention (Olsen 1992).

Isolation and Lack of Recognition

The literature continuing into the 1990s reaffirmed the emphasis institutions placed on research. However, what became clearer during this decade was that, despite this focus, some institutions and departments neglected to cultivate an environment to ensure faculty members found satisfaction in scholarly pursuits which, at times, can contribute to an isolating experience (Finkelstein 1996; Hubbard and Atkins 1995). Given that it is the collaborative, intellectually stimulating nature of the academic profession that sustains productivity throughout the career and promotes vitality, it is not surprising that faculty members who experienced a sense of isolation reported a sense of loneliness (Lamber et al. 1993). In fact, Olsen found that the most prominent reason faculty members left their positions was the lack of support and camaraderie they felt within their department (Olsen 1992). One faculty member who left explained, “I’m lonely intellectually” (Lamber et al. 1993, p. 23). Since institutions value scholarly activity, it consumes much of faculty members’ time yet the remoteness that can accompany scholarly pursuits also seems to sap much of faculty members’ satisfaction.

Another related concern was the lack of recognition faculty felt from others in their research endeavors. In a study conducted by Lamber et al. (1993), faculty reported a dearth of recognition and support from departmental colleagues and the institution as a whole, despite these faculty members being prolific scholars. One such faculty member expressed the concern that “the most stressful thing in my current work life is lack of recognition for what I have done. All these things I’ve done. Nobody has paid any attention to them” (p. 22). Similarly, faculty members also reported, “people are wonderful and friendly and at the same time the institutional culture is not congenial, not supportive of my brand of work” (Olsen 1992). This lack of recognition, coupled with the lack of colleague camaraderie, fueled the tension and stress faculty felt while performing the professional responsibility most valued by the institution.

The 1990s literature did offer strategies to mitigate the stress, both at the individual and institutional levels. One strategy suggested was that institutions should clarify their expectations and how faculty members should allocate their effort
among teaching, research, and service responsibilities (Austin and Pilat 1990). Other recommendations included ensuring that a department would have more than one faculty member in any particular field and encouraging communication between faculty pursuing similar focus areas of research. Also suggested was the need to increase departmental recognition for faculty members (Olsen 1992). Lastly, in regard to concerns faculty had toward salary, Olsen (1992) discussed fostering open conversation between administrators and faculty about the rationale behind an institutional reward structure, as well as increasing feedback for faculty at all stages of the career.

Summary of 1990s Literature

One of the pivotal contributions of mid-career research and practice from the 1990s was the recognition that faculty members are individuals whose experiences are influenced by their professional and personal roles and responsibilities. This realization further elevated the need to situate mid-career faculty development at the intersection of individual needs and institutional priorities, highlighting the dynamic relationship between these aspects of academic work (Weiland 1994). By situating mid-career faculty development at this intersection, faculty vitality could be reinforced, resulting in fulfilling, productive academic careers of benefit both to faculty members and the institutions in which they were employed. However, the tension associated with the demands of the profession identified during the 1980s still permeated the academy in the 1990s, particularly the tension between teaching and research, resulting in feelings of isolation and a lack of clear career direction.

Similar to the 1980s, methodology used in the 1990s included using development programs as a basis for reference and analysis as well as for more in-depth case studies (Hubbard and Atkins 1995). Compared to what was seen in the 1980s, the 1990s also shifted to include more qualitative-based data collection (Creswell and Brown 1992; Karpiak 1996). Despite methodological advancements from the previous decade, some limitations are worth noting.

While there were greater efforts to represent experiences of mid-career faculty beyond research universities, the study and practice of mid-career faculty were predominantly situated in this institutional setting. The lack of institutional diversity and representation resulted in a near myopic view of mid-career faculty experiences. In addition, consideration for factors such as race and ethnicity was still wanting. However, scholars began to acknowledge the presence of gender differences in terms of experiences and needs in the academy, thus articulating the importance of applying a gender lens to the study and practice of mid-career faculty moving forward. Scholarship and practice during the 2000s began to incorporate a gender lens; additionally attention to institutional diversity found its way into the literature in the 2000s.
2000s: The Role of Context to the Mid-Career Faculty Experience

During the 2000s, as an extension of research initiated in the 1990s, researchers began to highlight and account for the role of context as a critical factor that influenced the experiences of mid-career faculty (O’Meara 2004; O’Meara et al. 2003). Three main themes emerged related to the study and practice of mid-career faculty that we present in this section: the multifaceted nature of the faculty career and the associated definitional challenges, a rise in strategies and interventions to better support mid-career faculty, and research and practice that focused on the experiences of women in the academy.

Scholars highlighted the importance of the “middle years” professionally and personally as faculty members traversed their evolving roles and responsibilities (Baker-Fletcher et al. 2005; Baldwin et al. 2005; Trotman and Brown 2005). As Baldwin et al. (2005) noted in discussing their study, “The need to study faculty in the middle years intentionally and systematically is the ultimate conclusion of this exploratory investigation” (p. 117). Due to a lack of clearly defined boundaries, these “middle years” can span decades which causes challenges for mid-career faculty members as they traverse the ebbs and flows of professional and personal roles and responsibilities. Faculty developers tasked with supporting mid-career faculty must also contend with this challenge when working to develop appropriate career stage supports. In response, scholars during this decade sought to offer some definitional direction about the mid-career stage (Austin 2010).

The 2000s also brought an emergence of scholarship and practice that highlighted strategies and interventions geared toward mid-career faculty that were led by specific institutional and professional associations. This line of inquiry both featured actual programming and evaluation and assessment of that programming which served as models for others seeking to better support their mid-career faculty. The professoriate evolved with the changing environmental conditions in higher education during the 2000s, as reliance on contingent faculty increased and student bodies and faculty became more diverse (Baker-Fletcher et al. 2005; Baldwin et al. 2008; Feldman and Turnley 2001). These changes required mid-career faculty to engage in and assume vital leadership roles on their respective campuses, requiring them to expand their existing skills and competencies. Similar to the evolving nature of the academic career seen in the previous decade, faculty vitality continued to be a pervasive idea discussed through the 2000s, and the strategies and interventions noted sought to support faculty vitality and career advancement.

Lastly, this decade introduced a stream of research, practice, and national efforts focused on women in the academy. Toward the end of the 1990s, scholars began to note the differences men and women academics experienced as members of the academy (Kelly 1991). However, greater intentionality accompanied scholarly efforts during the 2000s to identify and understand the institutional and personal conditions women faculty experienced and the associated challenges and needed resources to support women’s career advancement. We begin our decade review
discussing research focused on the multifaceted nature of the faculty career by delving more deeply into the definitional challenges examined.

The Multifaceted Nature of the Faculty Career: Definitional Challenges

Research and practice throughout the 2000s emphasized a holistic approach to all aspects of the faculty career. In addition, the lack of a formal definition of the mid-career stage became more pronounced during this decade. For example, Baldwin et al. (2005, 2008) highlighted the challenges with studying mid-career, given the few visible hallmarks demarcating the beginning and end of this stage. They further emphasized the importance of career reexamination and revision as critical to supporting faculty members situated in mid-career. As part of their research, Baldwin et al. (2005) sought to better understand the unique experiences of mid-career faculty in comparison with their colleagues in other (early and late) career stages. Further, they sought to provide greater clarity on a mid-career definition, one that helped distinguish professors in their middle years.

Mid-Career Stage Criteria

Baldwin et al. (2005) embarked on an exploratory study to examine an “overlooked but very important component of the academic profession: faculty in the middle years” (p. 97). Their research was guided by both chronological age and experience to help better define the middle years of work and defined mid-career as faculty 40–59 years of age and with 12–20 years of higher education teaching experience. Using data from the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF), their research sought to answer the question, “Do midlife and mid-career differentiate among faculty in meaningful ways” (p. 101).

Through their research, Baldwin and colleagues identified two categories of mid-career: early midlife (40–49) and late midlife (50–59). The research study, which resulted in this mid-career classification system, provided critical insights into the varying needs, challenges, and expectations of mid-career faculty, noting that those in early midlife experienced the academy quite differently from their late midlife colleagues. These differences meant that faculty in different stages of mid-career need varying kinds of support. Throughout this decade, scholars relied on the interplay of age and work experiences to help demarcate mid-career. Given the length of the mid-career stage, scholars began to highlight differences in terms of needs and challenges between those new to the mid-career stage and those deeply entrenched in it.

Scholars who focused on a holistic approach to studying mid-career during the 2000s also acknowledged faculty members’ roles and responsibilities within and outside of the academy that influenced their experiences. Perhaps Baldwin et al. (2005) said it best: “At present, there is no comparable empirical basis for policies and programs to support faculty in the middle of their academic career. Basically, the largest and most important component of the academic profession has been ignored both by scholars and policymakers” (p. 97).
Relying on age and years of teaching scholarship, scholars during the 2000s revealed that time devoted to teaching was greater among late midlife faculty colleagues, while administrative responsibilities were greater at early midlife (Baker-Fletcher et al. 2005; Baldwin et al. 2005). Overall, midlife was the most productive stage of the faculty career, when productivity was defined as publications and other creative work produced. However, mid-career faculty were also the most dissatisfied, largely as a result of work expectations, which resulted in reduced time for advising students, keeping updated in their field, and managing family responsibilities (Baldwin et al. 2005). Such dissatisfaction caused mid-career faculty members to find satisfaction outside their institutions through their professional associations or in consulting opportunities, in order to engage in activities and other professional development that supported career examination and re-envisioning efforts.

The lack of intentionality evident in higher education related to the middle years of faculty life, noted by Baldwin et al. (2005) was echoed by Baker-Fletcher et al. (2005) in their study of mid-career faculty. The authors posed a series of questions about the mid-career stage, and the accompanying responsibilities, to mid-career faculty participants attending a teaching-focused workshop. Session attendees described the mid-career stage as an underestimated focal point for development as a teacher beyond the classroom. Time devoted to teaching increases for late mid-career faculty members (Baldwin et al. 2005), and roles and responsibilities expand at this career stage (Morris 2004). Research by Baker-Fletcher et al. (2005) highlighted the tension that existed between teaching and research at mid-career; successful teaching includes other activities such as writing, committee leadership, and mentoring. Couple these evolving roles with the need to manage personal responsibilities (e.g., parental roles) and mounting frustrations abound. As stated by Baker-Fletcher et al. (2005), “Exploring the multifaceted aspects of teaching at mid-career suggests that both the biggest challenge and the biggest opportunity lie in our [mid-career faculty members’] negotiation of the intensive multiple claims on our time” (p. 10).

Perhaps more importantly, scholars and practitioners studying mid-career during this decade highlighted the importance of context, knowing the lived experiences of mid-career faculty were influenced directly by the institutional settings in which they were employed (Baker-Fletcher et al. 2005; Baldwin et al. 2008). Institutional context added yet another layer to understanding the complexity of the mid-career faculty stage. As Baldwin et al. (2008) explained, “Higher education institutions must look at their mid-career faculty in context in order to understand them fully and serve their professional development needs effectively” (p. 55). Taking into account institutional context and the needs of mid-career faculty contributes to the development of “meaningful faculty development programs” (Kang and Miller 2000, p. 7) as a preventative measure to helping mid-career faculty avoid becoming stuck professionally. Establishment and implementation of goals are a significant element of development during the mid-career stage in an institutional setting. Meaningful goals were a particular “renewal need” put forth by Strage et al. (2008) as they discussed mid-career faculty vitality. Baldwin and Chang (2006) added that
structured goals in the mid-career phase were crucial in order to “chart a clear path forward without the structure and specific targets the goals of tenure and promotion provided earlier in their careers” (p. 28).

To conclude, scholars and practitioners began to address the lack of definition which plagued the mid-career stage during the 2000s. The lack of definition or clearly delineated milestones creates challenges for mid-career faculty, and the individuals tasked with supporting them. However, the work of Baldwin and others provided much-needed guidance about differences that exist among faculty in the middle years which informed institutional and professional association strategies and interventions which we discuss in more detail in the following section.

**Strategies and Interventions: Supporting Mid-Career Faculty**

Throughout the 2000s, scholars offered a discussion on different institutional programs and strategies that aimed to sustain faculty vitality. A focus on strategies and interventions is the second theme we discuss from this decade. For instance, Baldwin and Chang (2006) put forth a conceptual model for faculty development that included various elements determined to be important for faculty growth, such as career reflection and planning. Scholars in this decade also sought to challenge the entrenched practice of post-tenure review and then offered an alternative approach for post-tenure appraisals that is more conducive for faculty growth and well-being (Walker 2002). In the context of strategies and interventions, mentoring as a mid-career faculty development strategy was also a highly discussed topic in literature on mid-career faculty during the 2000s (Huston and Weaver 2008). With the importance of faculty vitality established in previous sections, in the subsequent sections, we more thoroughly discuss institution-wide strategies and interventions.

**Elements and Benefits of Institutional Strategies**

In the previous decade, researchers shed light on the role of the institution in fostering faculty well-being and vitality. Researchers in the 2000s further contributed to this research through conducting qualitative studies examining elements of institutional programs important for promoting faculty vitality, as well as outcomes when such strategies are implemented. In one such study, Strage et al. (2008) illuminated the strong interdependent nature of faculty and institutional vitality through in-depth interviews conducted with self-identified thriving mid-career faculty members. Upon analyzing the faculty participants’ interview responses, Strage and colleagues identified three main themes, all of which point to the “positive impact ‘facilitative environments’ can have on engaging, sustaining, and nurturing a thriving faculty” (Strage et al. 2008, p. 73). One of the three themes focused on “the importance of culture and climate established by institutional leaders” in engendering faculty vitality. Specifically, these institutions fostered mid-career faculty well-being and vitality by (a) encouraging mid-career faculty to demonstrate initiative in assuming new roles (i.e., mentors); (b) invigorating administrators to support mid-career faculty; (c) giving faculty freedom to explore interests; and (d) maintaining accountability. Strage et al. (2008) also found mid-career faculty vitality improved
when faculty were able to play to their strengths, such as outlined in Baldwin and Chang’s (2006) proposed model for mid-career faculty development. These findings have great implications in the realm of higher education as they point to the importance of institutional leaders’ intentionality in the programs and strategies in which they invest to support faculty development and well-being.

In addition to faculty benefitting from institutionally provided support, Romano et al. (2004) asserted that institutional programs prove advantageous for the institution as well, as faculty members still have many years of contributing to the institution ahead of them: “There is evidence that many individuals at mid-career experience low morale, feel disengaged, and isolated, it is imperative that the institution not leave the professional vitality of these experienced faculty to chance” (Romano et al., p. 25).

Upon conducting a systematic, web-based investigation as a means to examine mid-career development programs, Baldwin and Chang (2006) identified categories of development initiatives implemented at different institutions, all of which they found to fall short of addressing mid-career faculty needs in a comprehensive manner. With a comprehensive program left wanting, the scholars integrated the common themes of the various initiatives – career reflection and assessment, career planning, and career action/implementation – into a cohesive model for mid-career development. At the foundation of this model were the ingredients needed for mid-career faculty to reap the benefits of development: (a) collegial support (i.e., mentoring, networking, and collaborating); (b) resources (i.e., information, time, funding, and space); and (c) reinforcement (i.e., recognition and rewards). These elements coupled with a strong foundation serve as the scaffold for mid-career faculty development and growth, which can have a positive return on investment for not only the faculty experiencing the development but also the institution that benefits from faculty members’ well-being, productivity, and commitment to the institution.

**Post-Tenure Review**

Another advantageous form of intervention relates to methods of post-tenure review, an institutional policy connected to faculty vitality and morale (Plater 2001). Drawing from qualitative and quantitative research on faculty well-being and vitality, Walker (2002) posited that many forms of post-tenure review were ineffective, as low performance at the post-tenure level was more likely due to a lack of vitality and morale than it was a characteristic of the faculty member. Accordingly, Walker (2002) argued a meager formative assessment should be replaced by a post-tenure review model embedded into a faculty development program and must be dedicated to improving the social and physical conditions of faculty members’ work and thus their vitality. With a goal of promoting mid-career faculty in mind, effective post-tenure reviews is one institutional policy that can benefit faculty as they develop in their careers; thus, in the next section, we discuss the merits of mentoring as one possible post-tenure review model.

**Mentoring**

Mentoring is a career and personal development tool that results in outcomes at the individual and organizational levels (Darwin and Palmer 2009). This strategy benefits not only the mentee but also the mentor, a role often filled by a mid-career
faculty member. Mentors have reported reaping such benefits from mentoring programs as (a) intellectual stimulation and improved managerial skills, (b) opportunities to reflect on their own teaching, (c) satisfaction from relaying knowledge, (d) opportunities for rejuvenation and enhancing productivity, and (e) increased professional networks (Miller et al. 2008). Also, given the career and life stages of mid-career faculty members and the importance of generativity and vitality, “mid-career faculty need opportunities to redefine and enlarge the scope of their professional careers” (Huston and Weaver 2008), and mentoring opportunities could help them move toward that goal. Golper and Feldman (2008) asserted that mentoring, both in the form of being mentored and providing mentorship, throughout one’s career was imperative, as “mid-level faculty members face the challenge of continuing to develop themselves in their own careers, addressing their evolving set of challenges. Among them is how to provide good mentorship. As faculty members move into mid-career, “seeking mentoring about providing mentoring can be very useful” (p. 1872).

In addition to mid-career faculty benefiting from serving as mentors, they also benefit from being mentored, such as in the context of developing research proposals, redirecting research, and identifying new streams of research. Baldwin and Chang (2006) highlighted Macalester College’s co-mentoring program in teaching and scholarship, which partnered faculty at different career stages with the belief that senior faculty mentors benefit from the new perspectives of their junior colleagues.

Programs for Faculty Renewal and Development

Scholars contributing to the discussion on strategies and interventions for mid-career faculty also suggested the benefits of reflecting on one’s professional life as a source of renewal. Baldwin and Chang (2006) identified career planning, development, and renewal initiatives as a means of encouraging faculty to “reflect on their professional lives, identify new professional goals, acquire new goals, skills, and develop concrete career plans” (p. 30). Part of these initiatives also includes helping faculty be exposed to opportunities for career development. For example, at Kansas State University, a program was implemented “to increase satisfaction and success ‘by redesigning their current position or developing a new job role in cooperation with their department heads’” (Baldwin and Chang 2006, p. 30), which enabled faculty to assume more leadership as a means for growth and development in their careers. In addition, Macalester College offered leadership seminars to faculty to learn about challenges facing higher education and in turn to “cultivate the skills needed to move into key leadership roles on campus” (Baldwin and Chang 2006, p. 30). Both of these programmatic initiatives serve a purpose of providing mid-career faculty the necessary means for experiencing growth and renewal.

Institutions play a key role in implementing programs and initiatives to foster this much-needed vitality and provide career development resources (Sorcinelli et al. 2006). The 2000s mid-career faculty literature offered strategies and interventions to improve and sustain faculty vitality and satisfaction. Mentoring programs were one such intervention found to be effective, not only for the mentee but also the mentor. Providing the space and taking the time to reflect on their careers has also been an
intervention method reported to be effective for mid-career faculty renewal and development. The facilitation of a reflection process enables faculty to identify career goals as a means of moving forward and developing in their careers. While all mid-career faculty benefit from such strategies, women have been found to be particularly vulnerable to increased hardships and barriers in academia and would benefit especially from institutional initiatives to increase mid-career satisfaction. We discuss the additional barriers and hardships that women face in the following section.

**Women Faculty in the Academy**

Our third, and final, theme discussed in this decade focuses on women faculty and their experiences in the academy. Scholars and practitioners interested in the mid-career faculty experience began to acknowledge gender differences in the academy during the 1990s (Karpiak 1996; Tosti-Vasey and Willis 1991). Researchers suggested that men and women experienced the academy differently and also identified the need for policies and programs that recognized the needs of all faculty, but particularly women, related to work-life considerations (Tosti-Vasey and Willis 1991). However, it was not until the 2000s that scholars and practitioners, as well as funding agencies, began to focus energies, and financial resources, toward better understanding women’s experiences in the academy.

A major initiative to support gender equity in the professoriate began in 2001. The National Science Foundation’s ADVANCE initiative aims to increase the participation and advancement of women in STEM fields. Funding has enabled institutional transformation through the development of innovative organizational change strategies, supported the adaptation and implementation of gender equity organizational change strategies, and facilitated partnerships involving two or more nonprofit academic institutions or STEM organizations (NSF, ADVANCE brochure). The work of Laursen and Rocque (2009) featured findings and lessons learned about faculty development and institutional change from an ADVANCE project at the University of Colorado Boulder. While their research was framed by gender issues, they sought to highlight a broad range of faculty concerns that spanned both professional and personal aspects of mid-career faculty members’ lives.

Taking a faculty development perspective, Laursen and Rocque (2009) studied the Leadership Education for Advancement and Promotion (LEAP) effort which was part of the 2002–2008 ADVANCE project at the University of Colorado, Boulder. While evaluating the LEAP program, they interviewed 44 tenure track faculty across career stages and departments who participated in LEAP offerings. Laursen and Rocque collected insights about the skills and knowledge faculty participants sought, intended career directions, career challenges, and the extent to which institutional structures and policies supported or hindered faculty work. Data analysis led to the identification of three tiers of faculty needs: individual needs specific to career stage, organizational needs across career stages, and systemic needs. From an individual perspective, mid-career faculty noted their desire (and need) to develop
leadership and managerial skills that would enable them to lead departments and committees effectively and foster collaborations, a skill set that was new (and lacking) based on how professional roles and expectations evolve once members of the academy find themselves situated at mid-career. Faculty members also noted the need for career planning support as they looked ahead to full professorship and considered career changes along the way. Despite earning promotion and tenure, the unknown and evolving expectations of the mid-career stage left many mid-career faculty members in need of greater individual supports.

Organizationally, Laursen’s and Rocque’s (2009) research highlighted the central role department chairs have in supporting mid-career faculty members. Department chairs can, and do, set the tone in terms of overall effectiveness, fairness, and communication skills among and between departmental colleagues. However, lack of institutional strategies to support department chairs in fostering these skills contributed to poor communication, disagreements, and overall challenging departmental and institutional environments. Women faculty were especially hindered by such environments. Additionally, Laursen and Rocque (2009) identified relationships and connection to one’s peers as contributing factors to professional and personal satisfaction and productivity, particularly for women.

Study participants in Laursen and Rocque’s (2009) research also discussed the need for more flexible faculty reward systems. Associated challenges included a lack of clear and consistent communication related to criteria and standards for tenure; disproportionate weighting of teaching, research, and service; disparities and differing norms across departments and faculty members on evaluating committees; and the negative side of effects of existing reward structures that discourage collaboration, collegiality, and risk-taking. Their research also highlighted the importance of work-life balance as a systemic issue that institutions need to address. As Laursen and Rocque noted, both men and women cited work-life balance issues. However, gender differences were evident: “Men expressed concerns about the faculty rewards structure nearly twice as much as women, while women discussed work/life balance 60 percent more often than men. Women also raised issues of diversity more often” (p. 25).

The longitudinal, qualitative research by Reybold and Alamia (2008) explored mid-career women faculty experiences, specifically their academic transitions and the associated impact on faculty identity development and transformation. Their research focused on the dynamic nature of the faculty journey by acknowledging the role of academic transitions in faculty identity development. An examination of academic transitions is important because these transitions signify opportunities for professional growth and challenges to career advancement, both of which influence professional identity development. Knowledge about academic transitions is particularly salient for mid-career faculty members as they seek to navigate this long ill-defined stage of the faculty career. Reybold and Alamia shed light on the experiential dimensions of these academic transitions by highlighting the dynamic journey that characterizes the mid-career stage.

Study findings from Reybold and Alamia (2008) revealed two main themes: provisional faculty identity and transition response. While on the path to the professoriate, mid-career women faculty members’ initial sense of self as a faculty
member developed as a result of doctoral study and early career faculty socialization. For most of the participants in the study, they acknowledged the temporary, or provisional, nature of that initial faculty identity, describing the developmental nature of it. Mid-career women faculty participants sought to stabilize their professional identity in response to career events, referred to as a transition response, such as promotion and tenure, or in balancing faculty roles and responsibilities across teaching, research, and service. Participants related to academic transitional events in three ways: professional equilibrium (e.g., a focus on balance and stability), professional advancement (e.g., a focus on career trajectory and advancement), and professional integration (e.g., career steadiness and maturity). Given the longitudinal nature of the study, patterns emerged revealing “the developmental and transformational character of faculty careers as well as the juxtaposition of faculty identity and transition response” (p. 120). Research findings identified critical development and identity transitions that accompany the mid-career stage. Knowledge about these transitions helps mid-career faculty members to assume personal agency to manage these transitions as well as informs the work of faculty developers tasked with supporting mid-career faculty members.

Research by Sorcinelli and Yun (2007) focused on the evolving model of mentoring support. In particular, they urged members of the academy to move beyond the traditional one-on-one mentoring approach. Instead, Sorcinelli and Yun suggested that in order to support academic work, faculty members need to foster a network of multiple mentors with varying and complementary skills to support one’s professional and personal growth and development. Sorcinelli and Yun urged that such a model was of particular import for women and faculty of color.

Their article provided a summary of research and practice in the 2000s focused on mentoring, particularly “multiple mentoring models.” As part of their review of literature and practice, Sorcinelli and Yun (2007) noted, “The literature indicates that researchers and practitioners are still struggling to determine which mentoring models and practices best support these groups” (p. 61). Their review affirmed that diverse populations want and benefit from mentorship, and there is a need to create a diverse network of mentors in order to address the varying experiences of women and faculty of color in the academy.

An important contribution from their work was the acknowledgement that all faculty members are in need of and would benefit from multiple mentors. Faculty members’ needs evolve, particularly at mid-career, in relation to their roles as teachers, as scholars, and as contributors to their local and surrounding communities. Given this diversity of engagement across professional roles, one mentor alone is not equipped nor is able to provide the needed developmental support. In order to fulfill professional and personal needs, faculty members should seek the support of multiple mentors. While Sorcinelli and Yun acknowledged the importance of multiple mentors for men and women, fostering a mentoring network is especially helpful for women who are often handling a wide array of personal and professional responsibilities around which perspective of multiple mentors could be really helpful.

Compared to previous decades, the 2000s focused more on understanding the experiences and needs of mid-career faculty women in higher education, resulting in
the emergence of research and practice aimed at supporting this population of faculty. Programs such as ADVANCE aimed to address and provide support for the challenges and disparities women faculty face in STEM fields. The issues identified by Laursen and Rocque (2009), for instance, were just one example of the effect the ADVANCE program had on the experiences of women in the academy and the importance of institutional transformation as a contributing factor to those experiences. Efforts by researchers and practitioners affiliated with ADVANCE programs have elevated knowledge about mid-career women faculty members’ needs in the academy (for others, see Bell et al. 2005; Johnson et al. 2009). Specifically, Laursen and Rocque’s (2009) research highlighted the importance of strategies at the individual, organizational, and systemic levels. In brief, their research revealed that “...remedying underrepresentation requires interlinked strategies to provide the opportunities, resources, and environments that enable talented women to succeed – both individual support and institutional transformation, in short” (p. 20).

Summary of 2000s Literature

Two key contributions emerged from research and practice about the mid-career experience during the 2000s: accounting for and studying the role of context are critically important to understanding the mid-career faculty experience, and institutional policies and practices contribute to the challenges women faculty members experience in the academy. Understanding related to these two contributions fueled the rise of national initiatives, such as ADVANCE, that have addressed gender issues within various disciplinary contexts of the multifaceted faculty career. An emphasis on context has supported calls for an increased focus on faculty well-being both within and outside of the academic career. Additionally, scholars discussed strategies and interventions to promote faculty development and vitality at the mid-career stage: “For institutions to succeed, in fulfilling their multiple missions, faculty members must be supported in all the roles they are asked to fulfill” (Sorcinelli et al. 2006, p. 167).

Scholarship during the 2000s was driven by more empirically based methodology in order to glean disciplinary and institutional contextual understanding of mid-career faculty experiences.

Data collection occurred in the form of interviews, survey-based data, and systematic web searches to examine extant strategies for faculty development (Baldwin and Chang 2006; Baldwin et al. 2005, 2008; Ellertson 2004). In addition, practice featured targeted mid-career faculty program components along with evaluative assessments. The increased attention paid to the experiences of mid-career women faculty was a much-needed next step in research and practice. Still lacking, however, was greater institutional and disciplinary diversity given the importance of context to the mid-career experience. Finally, not much scholarship explored the experiences of other faculty populations taking into account race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Efforts to address this paucity began to emerge in the 2010s.
2010s: Barriers, Vulnerable Faculty, and Interventions

Literature in the 2010s discussed the evolving roles of faculty and the increased types of support needed as the lines between personal and professional lives blurred (Canale et al. 2013; Hermanowicz 2012). Three dominant themes emerged that guide our discussion in the following sections: barriers to advancement that faculty sometimes encountered on the path to full professorship, vulnerable faculty populations, and a line of inquiry that explored interventions for faculty support.

The most prominent barriers to advancement that were featured in research and practice during the 2010s included a lack of clarity both in terms of promotion criteria to advance to full professorship and the processes that institutions followed regarding advancement decisions. This lack of clarity resulted in many mid-career faculty members feeling trepidation about aspirations for their advancement to full professor status, causing them to question their decision to pursue this career milestone (Baker et al. 2017a). Women and faculty of color were disproportionately affected by this lack of clarity (Croom 2017; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2012). Additionally, a lack of career-stage resources to support teaching development and disciplinary supports were wanting (Ross 2015).

Scholars that explored barriers to advancement elevated the experiences of women and faculty of color. In particular, during the 2000s, researchers began to focus on the experiences of women in the academy in more targeted ways (Laursen and Rocque 2009; Reybold and Alamia 2008), and that line of inquiry continued during the 2010s. Additionally, this research began to provide an accounting of the barriers and challenges faced by faculty of color at mid-career as they sought to advance in the academy. Knowledge gleaned provided critical insights to campus leaders as colleges and universities worked to addresses issues of equity and inclusion.

Although barriers to advancement and vulnerable populations areas of study were largely a continuation of the previous decades’ work, a key nuance of research and practice emerged in the 2010s, which was a focus on tangible interventions to better support mid-career faculty, particularly women and faculty of color. Programmatic details included more focus on specific goals, outcomes, and involvement of critical stakeholder groups in targeted programming who provided much needed guidance to mid-career faculty and faculty development programming. We begin our review of the 2010s literature on mid-career faculty by highlighting research and practice focused on the barriers to advancement.

Barriers to Advancement

As can be seen through the themes depicted throughout the 2010s, various sources of pressure contributed to decreases in vitality among mid-career faculty. These challenges included a lack of clarity regarding promotion criteria resulting in many mid-career faculty members perceiving a lack of direction and limited resources such as career-stage-specific development opportunities (Bunch et al. 2011;
Campion et al. (2016; Petter et al. 2018). Scholars and practitioners in this decade focused on how these sources of tension served as barriers for advancement in mid-career faculty members’ professional experiences. Although the faculty development literature in the 2010s still highlighted the same stressors for mid-career faculty that were discussed at the end of the twentieth century, the literature in the 2010s emphasized actionable strategies, interventions, and recommendations for institutions to help mid-career faculty members overcome the barriers inherent to this career stage. In a subsequent section, we discuss these suggested strategies.

**Lack of Clarity**
The lack of clarity mid-career faculty faced as they sought advancement in their careers was one of the prominent challenges cited throughout this decade (Bunch et al. 2011). Since the mid-career stage has been characterized by feeling directionless (Petter et al. 2018), the unclear criteria for promotion along the pathway to full professorship (perhaps equal to or more than the lack of clarity characterizing the path to tenure) further exacerbated these feelings, making it arduous to advance in one’s career (Petter et al. 2018). To illustrate the magnitude of the challenge, Gardner and Blackstone (2013) conducted a qualitative study of mid-career faculty who applied for full professorship. Study results revealed that “seven of 10 faculty members repeatedly spoke to the lack of clarity around the expectations for promotion to full professor” (p. 418). Participants further discussed the disproportionate role certain responsibilities played in their concerns about uncertain criteria, such as teaching and service perceived as holding no clout in the decision-making process for promotion. Through interviews with faculty participants, Gardner and Blackstone (2013) found that when departments did offer criterion for promotion, they used very elusive language regarding what was expected, rather than using quantifiable objectives that clarified what was needed by and expected of associate professors to advance to the next rank. Faculty members in the study also reported little feedback after their applications to full professorship were denied, thus contributing to the barriers these faculty members faced in their career advancement pursuits (Gardner and Blackstone 2013).

**Lack of Resources**
Research and practice during this decade also highlighted a lack of resources (including time, career-stage-specific faculty development offerings, and financial resources) to support career development; this lack of resources contributed to barriers toward advancement for mid-career faculty (Petter et al. 2018). Exacerbating the effects of the already limited resources was the added challenge of increased competition for finite resources, thus “making success more elusive and momentum more difficult to sustain” (Bickel 2016, p. 1602) during a time when motivation was already fading (Petter et al. 2018; Campion et al. 2016; West 2012). Although limited financial resources were certainly a source of strain, of greater reported concern for mid-career faculty were time pressures and the paucity of mentoring support (Austin and Sorcinelli 2013; Petter et al. 2018). Upon accomplishing the feat of tenure, mid-career faculty often assumed they would “have it figured out” (Petter
et al. 2018, p. 565) and would not require mentorship to advance professionally. However, Bunch and colleagues’ survey research showed 71 percent of participants reported that it would have been helpful to have a mentor as a resource on the path for promotion, while fewer than 12 percent of men and 12 percent of women actually had such a mentor (Bunch et al. 2011). Mentorship plays an advantageous role to mid-career faculty, given their need for maintaining focus during a time characterized by ambiguity and obligations (Petter et al. 2018; Welch et al. 2019).

Scholars during the 2010s applied Baldwin and Chang’s Mid-Career Faculty Development Model (2006) as a lens with which to examine their own institutional and scholarly efforts. As noted earlier, Baldwin and Chang’s model incorporated three core areas that contribute to faculty development processes: career reflection and assessment, career planning including short and long-term goals, and career action and implementation. In addition, their model outlined essential elements that facilitate mid-career faculty development processes such as collegial support (e.g., mentoring), resources (e.g., information, time, funding), and reinforcement (e.g., rewards, recognition). This model served as a framework from which scholars and practitioners could evaluate existing mid-career faculty development efforts on their respective campuses to inform the development of actions to improve faculty development processes for mid-career faculty members (Pastore 2013; Pastore et al. 2019; Welch et al. 2019). The result was heightened awareness of various important resources for supporting mid-career faculty development, particularly time in the form of sabbaticals and course releases to allow for more time to be directed toward research.

The increased burden of responsibilities faculty shoulder after obtaining tenure compounds the pressure faculty feel as they strive to accomplish goals and fulfill roles with limited amounts of time. As part of her review of faculty career stages, Austin (2010) astutely reported, “a common challenge for faculty at mid-career is the expectation from colleagues that they will assume more leadership, administrative, and service-duties” (p. 372). Given the little weight institutional service plays in bolstering a faculty member’s application for promotion, these added expectations were of great concern and ultimately served as a barrier on the path to advancing toward full professorship (Bunch et al. 2011). As is the case with service roles, hours spent on teaching was also inversely related to productivity research output, thus making hours spent on teaching a hindrance for mid-career faculty on their quest to full professorship (Welch et al. 2019).

The consequences of having limited time coupled with increasing responsibilities extend to mid-career faculty members’ personal lives, as they reported challenges in maintaining a work-life balance (Petter et al. 2018). In the 2010s, we saw a shift in the literature that sought to better understand and determine where mid-career faculty members spent their time outside of the academy, specifically how mid-career faculty members struggled to fit in routine obligations outside academia, such as caring for a family or even sleeping (Petter et al. 2018). Although a majority of mid-career faculty members shared this stress, women and other underrepresented faculty populations were found to be particularly vulnerable to the hardships of balancing competing demands inside and outside of academia (Philipsen 2010).
Literature in the 2010s illustrated the exciting ways in which intervention for these barriers helped mid-career faculty to advance in their research and practice. Two critical types of interventions surfaced, including targeted interventions being employed to help mid-career faculty navigate their way to full professorship on a path ridden with barriers, as well as increased efforts to better attend to the needs of vulnerable faculty populations.

**Vulnerable Faculty Populations**

Throughout the 2000s, scholars began to highlight the experiences of non-majority faculty, specifically women. This research focus continued during the 2010s and delved deeper into the experiences of women and other underrepresented individuals in the academy which is the second theme we present from this decade. This area of research shed light on the chilly environment women experienced, which was exacerbated due to biased policies and practices that hindered advancement and retention (Gardner and Blackstone 2013; Hart 2016). An important contribution from this scholarship was a focus on the intersectionality of multiple roles and identities coupled with career stage challenges, specifically mid-career. Such work helped us, for example, understand the challenges of faculty life and motherhood (Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2012) and life as a Black womyn professor (Croom 2017; Croom and Patton 2011). These qualitative investigations provided rich narratives from mid-career women faculty participants as they shared insights into the barriers impeding their advancement in the academy and the challenges faced while juggling multiple roles within and outside of the academy. The focus on intersectionality of career stage, gender, race, and ethnicity highlighted the need for continued action to reform policies and practices to support all faculty members.

During the 2010s, researchers began to examine the multiple roles and identities women occupy while on the path to the professoriate as well as in the role itself upon promotion. Ward and Wolf-Wendel’s groundbreaking study and subsequent publications (2004; 2012, 2016) explored how career responsibilities and concerns evolved along the career trajectory. They employed human development and feminist theory to help make sense of and share the stories of women academics.

Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012, 2016) expanded on the notion of “ideal worker norms” in the academy (Gappa et al. 2007; Whyte 1956; Williams 1999). An ideal worker is someone who earns employment immediately upon completion of post-secondary studies with the ability to work 40 to 50 hours of work per week, more if needed, to advance along the career ladder. The ideal worker can stay late at work to meet last-minute deadlines and is not beholden to child care provider hours or nonwork responsibilities. When situated in the context of the academy, an ideal worker is someone who moves directly from their doctoral studies into a tenure track faculty position with a focused commitment to their academic responsibilities during the probationary years (Gappa et al. 2007). This ideal worker stays at the office or lab late, travels to conferences and other speaking engagements with ease, and can engage in off-site scholarly endeavors with regularity. Important to this conception
of the ideal worker is having a supportive spouse at home who manages the childcare and home responsibilities fully. The ideal worker, in sum, is someone who shows a near full dedication to the job and defines their life around their job. This conception of the ideal worker traditionally puts women academics at a disadvantage because it does not accurately characterize their professional and personal responsibilities.

When studying the experiences of women in the academy, Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) found that for women to overcome this notion of ideal worker norms, they had to approach work as if they do not have children which created stress due to an inability to live up to this ideal. The stress was particularly salient for women academics in early career. Through their research, Ward and Wolf-Wendel revealed that despite the stresses and tensions that exist for those serving as both academics and parents, women academics in the mid-career stage took on a more relaxed approach and mindset toward work and family compared to those in early career because the mid-career women in their study began to push back on this notion of ideal worker norms. Study findings revealed that mid-career women were aware of ideal worker norms but did not feel weighed down by them. The mid-career stage for women was, however, a time for career revelations and decisions about the next step for their careers in academia which could include advancement to full professorship or the pursuit of formal leadership positions. However, the mid-career women in their study expressed apprehension about these career pursuits due to the sometimes perceived (and real) political aspects of such processes that were disadvantageous toward women in the academy.

Research by Ward and Wolf-Wendel paved the way for future scholars, practitioners, and women in the academy by providing better understanding into the experiences of academic motherhood. Through their work, Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2015) shed light on the importance of examining the intersectionality of multiple roles and identities that women assume in academia such as professional woman, partner, and parent. More specifically, these scholars situated their findings in the specific contexts in which women academics find themselves engaged professionally including academic departments and institutions. The emphasis and inclusion of context highlight the importance of studying the experiences of women academics in the disciplinary fields, departments, and institutions in which they are employed (Wolf-Wendel and Ward 2015). As Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) noted, “...the experience of women faculty who combine work and faculty is likely to vary according to their work context” (p 110). Their research recognized and acknowledged the role that disciplinary and institutional cultures play in shaping how men and women faculty engage in their work. Disciplinary differences such as preferred methodologies and how collaborative (or not) academic work is in a given field all drives the ways in which people engage in their disciplines. Then, and at present, the majority of research that explores the experiences of women faculty at mid-career is situated in research institutions (notable exceptions include research by Baker et al. 2017a; Crawford 2012; Terosky and Gonzales 2016).

One of the many important contributions of research by Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) was their inclusion and examination of mid-career academic women from a
diversity of institution types spanning research universities, comprehensive/regional campuses, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges. Their focus on institution types beyond research universities was an exception to the general body of scholarship about women academics. When examining the intersection of gender and career stage, Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) revealed, “The choices women make about where to work are, in part, constrained by perceptions about particular environments and how they fit with being a mother” (p. 148).

Scholars Bunch et al. (2011), Hart (2016), Philipsen (2010), and Roberson (2014) studied the role of institution type and discipline on the intersectionality between gender and faculty status. For example, Hart (2016) sought to better understand the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields at mid-career. She applied Acker’s (1990) conceptual framework on gender substructures to explore how gender inequities persist in organizations. Acker’s review of the literature and subsequent theory building was groundbreaking at the time given she sought to move beyond the near sole focus of organizations and organizational theory as male dominated. Her work on organizations accounted for women and gender as critical considerations in how organizational units such as departments and positions are culturally constructed. Specifically, her framework pointed to gendered organizational substructures including organizational values (e.g., socially constructed values), interactions among organizational members (e.g., viewing teaching and service as more feminine), and gendered schemas about what it means to be a working man or woman professional in an organizational context (e.g., ideal worker is unencumbered by family responsibilities).

Through Hart’s (2016) qualitative investigation, she identified institutional practices that either hindered or facilitated women’s careers. Specifically, women participants perceived their promotion and tenure requirements to differ from their male peers, noting such requirements were stricter for women. The women associate professors in Hart’s (2016) study felt their scholarly records were called into question, “despite a strong sense that men colleagues with similar records (in publication numbers and grant dollars) were not” (p. 619). Further, Hart’s (2016) research revealed pathways to leadership have been more nebulous for women given ambiguous and sometimes conflicting messages. Ideal worker norms were at play, as evidenced by the expectations institutions were setting that rested on their assumption that workers could devote unlimited numbers of hours to their academic and institutional work. This, in turn, highlights the need for institutions to break away from exclusionary practices, create more transparency surrounding advancement and leadership opportunities, and broaden the definition of leadership.

Croom (2017) sought to “unpack” (p. 557) racism and sexism in the experiences of Black womyn professors (“womyn” is a spelling, rooted in feminist perspectives, that is chosen by some authors). Through her qualitative research, she examined the processes Black womyn faculty endure as they seek promotion to full professorship given the lack of womyn and faculty of color represented beyond the associate professor rank or in institutional administrative positions. Employing a critical race feminism framework, Croom (2017) highlighted the dominant narratives of full
professorship, namely, the status and influence that accompanies that rank. Further, her research revealed the challenges her study participants experienced as they worked toward fulfilling their career aspirations of tenure and full professorship, such as the skepticism and discouragement Black womyn face from their colleagues in response to their interest in pursuing this career advancement. The participants in Croom’s (2017) study shared stories about the racialized and gendered micro-aggressions they experienced with regularity: “…racism and sexism manifested in the participants’ promotion processes in the contradictions and disparities between an observed dominant narrative about the full professorship and their actual promotion and career experiences” (Croom 2017, p. 575). Her work acknowledged the presence of sexism and racism in promotion practices and the need to make concerted efforts to remove barriers that impede the advancement of Black womyn and other faculty of color.

Others have also acknowledged the need to provide dedicated programs and practices to support mid-career women and underrepresented minorities in the academy (Munro-Stasiuk et al. 2019). Roberson (2014), for example, presented outcomes associated with a mentoring program to support mid-career faculty at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Through an ADVANCE grant, the program includes a common development plan to support associate professors with self-assessments and goal-setting processes, one-on-one career and peer mentoring, and progress tracking to evaluate and seek feedback. In other work, Laursen and Austin (2014) developed the StratEGIC (Strategies for Effecting Gender Equity and Institutional Change) Toolkit. Their research examined approximately 25 universities, and their associated organizational change strategies implemented through ADVANCE, which aimed at creating more diversity and inclusion through mentoring support and career stage considerations.

Continuing a focus on programs and institutional support, Bickel (2016) highlighted mid-career needs in academic medicine and offered action steps to manage associated career transitions and challenges: “Many women and minorities also experience an extra layer of challenge that remains invisible to many majority men; for instance, being held to higher standards of ‘likeability’ or for performing community service while often being paid less” (p. 1602). Bickel (2016) emphasized setting time aside for engaging in introspection and gleaning feedback from “trusted, qualified individuals” (p. 1603), which can thus serve to foster professional growth and close professional gaps, such as incongruences between the intention and impact of professionals’ behaviors. She also encouraged engagement in appreciative inquiry, an introspective approach that invites individuals “to think about instances when they really engaged, which prompts exploration of values and commitments” (p. 1603). Bickel suggests that one means for engaging in appreciative inquiry is by reflecting on what is and is not working well. In addition, she outlined action steps to “[translate] preferences into a workable career plan” (p. 1603) to be useful to all faculty members at mid-career, including both men and women, as well as to those in different institutional settings. However, Bickel (2016) also noted such individual and organizational efforts are critically important to meeting the specific needs of women and other underrepresented faculty.
The dedicated efforts of scholars and practitioners to bring a greater awareness to the experiences and needs of women and other underrepresented faculty populations contributed greatly to the study of mid-career faculty during this decade (Croom 2017; Hart 2016; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2012). However, while dedicated programs to support mid-career faculty were on the rise during this decade, those efforts still failed to mirror the quantity of programs and national initiatives aimed at and available to early career faculty members. In the following section, we discuss several interventions that were featured in research and practice during the 2010s.

**Interventions for Faculty Support**

The third, and final theme from our review of literature from 2010s, focuses on interventions for faculty support. To combat the detrimental effect of stressors on mid-career faculty, institutions began implementing much-needed faculty development strategies like mentoring and coaching. In the 2010s, there was widespread implementation of different mentoring programs at institutions across the United States, with some mentoring programs targeted specifically to women and faculty of color, who have increased vulnerability for barriers in the field (Bass et al. 2019; Munro-Stasiuk et al. 2019; Rees and Shaw 2014; Roberson 2014). Reports during the 2010s highlighted the positive effects of mentoring, such as an alleviation of stress from high workloads, which results in an increase in job satisfaction (Munro-Stasiuk et al. 2019; Welch et al. 2019).

As advocated by Baldwin and Chang’s Mid-Career Faculty Development Model (Baldwin and Chang 2006) and subsequent validation, goal setting has been a critical aspect of career development (Pastore 2013) and was a key element embedded into the mentoring strategies (Munro-Stasiuk et al. 2019). For example, mid-career mentoring and coaching programs at Kent State University established goals to help faculty evaluate “their progress toward their career goals,” “recognize barriers to achieving those goals,” and “identify strategies to achieve their vision and goals” (Munro-Stasiuk et al. 2019, p. 533). In a different mentoring program that was structured into peer communities, group members created goals ranging from ideal to necessary and faculty members met weekly to discuss goal progress (Rees and Shaw 2014). Members analyzed the feedback about the effectiveness of the mentor group and reported that goal setting allowed them to track progress as well as foster accountability from colleagues with them in the program (Rees and Shaw 2014).

The literature explained that mentoring addressed other faculty development needs included in Baldwin and Chang’s Mid-Career Faculty Development Model (Baldwin and Chang 2006), such as increased collegial support in the form of connections with other faculty members. In the group mentoring model (Rees and Shaw 2014), participating faculty reported that mentoring helped ameliorate the feelings of isolation plaguing faculty during the mid-career stage. Not only did this particular mentoring model serve to foster social connection to fill that void among faculty, but it also served to bridge departments together to allow for increased
connections between disciplines; reportedly, faculty had lacked opportunities to combat such professional isolation (Lamber et al. 1993; Olsen 1992).

The literature in this decade established mentoring as a critical career and psychosocial support (Rees and Shaw 2014), with faculty across the academy reporting its benefits (Munro-Stasiuk et al. 2019). While the literature throughout this decade highlighted several interventions including workshops and sponsorship, mentoring at mid-career was the most prolific and pervasive source of support emphasized (Kruse and Albo 2018; Petter et al. 2018; Sherick 2018; Strage and Merdinger 2015; Welch et al. 2019).

Summary of 2010s Literature

Literature in the 2010s highlighted the challenges and barriers mid-career faculty face as they seek advancement. This decade brought a shift in the nature of the scholarly outputs, as there was an emphasis on concrete strategies for fostering development that were not a focus of work in previous decades. In particular, the scholarship highlighted our most vulnerable faculty populations, women and underrepresented groups, who fall victim to biased policies, such as promotion processes that are reported to be more nebulous and stricter for women than for their male counterparts. The mid-career faculty literature throughout the 2010s also discussed new strategies and initiatives targeted toward facilitating development for mid-career faculty as well as the positive outcomes of such initiatives.

Similar to the 2000s, methodology included in the 2010s focused on qualitative survey and interview-based research aimed at gleaning insight into the experiences of the individuals of interest: mid-career faculty. While the methodology is similar, the scholarship has arguably produced new ideas and practical suggestions in this decade that go beyond the theoretical perspectives offered in previous decades. Specifically, scholarship in the 2010s offered tangible, practical implications and recommendations based on the research, such as in the form of strategies and institutional programs. While the discussion of programs in the mid-career faculty development research conducted throughout the 2010s is insightful in suggesting ways to support faculty, quantitative evidence of the benefits of such programs is still needed. Continued research on institutional support for mid-career faculty ought to focus on the empirical, quantitative benefits of the programs to further corroborate their overall effectiveness.

Mid-Career Faculty: A Research and Practice Agenda Moving Forward

In her article, From Associate to Full, Keisha Blain (2020) perhaps summed it up best, “Many fewer resources are available that offer clarity on the path toward becoming a full professor. . . That poses a distinct challenge for all midcareer scholars, but especially for black and Latinx scholars” (para 1, 2). During the
2010s, edited volumes and special issues of scholarly journals were dedicated to mid-career research and practice (Baker, Lunsford, Neisler, Pifer, & Terosky, 2019; Kurtz and Proctor 2011). Through these volumes and the overall research stream, scholars and practitioners began to emphasize critical areas that ensured a committed, vital, and satisfied population of mid-career faculty by highlighting institutional, foundation, and government-funded initiatives that would benefit them and their institutions. Areas of focus included leadership development, the scholarship of teaching and learning, acknowledgement of and tips to manage increased service expectations, and how to manage and foster a scholarly agenda at mid-career.

As we look ahead to the next phase of research and practice on mid-career faculty, the implications from scholarship that emerged during the 2010s must be discussed, given the intentional efforts of scholars and practitioners to identify the spaces in which faculty scholarly learning can and does occur (Baker et al. 2017b). We begin this section with a review of the implications for research and practice stemming from our 2010s theme discussion. After this discussion, we identify four needs that we offer as a call to action as scholars, practitioners, and faculty developers look ahead to what is needed to move the field forward while recognizing a diversifying professoriate. The four needs we highlight are (1) implement a national database of postsecondary faculty and instructional staff, (2) examine intersectional issues, (3) support nontenure track faculty at the mid-career stage, and (4) advance useful methodological approaches for the study of mid-career faculty. To guide our discussion of implications and needs, we rely on a question posed early in the 2010s by Austin and Sorcinelli (2013): “With higher education institutions and the faculty within them facing new challenges and opportunities, what is the future of faculty development?” (p. 85).

**Intentionality Across Contexts and Relationships**

To better understand the needs and experiences of mid-career faculty members, scholars were much more intentional about incorporating and accounting for the role of context and culture, such as institution type and mission as well as interpersonal and community relationships during the 2010s, to support their examination of factors contributing to the challenges facing mid-career faculty (Baker et al. 2015; Guglielmo et al. 2011; Terosky and Gonzales 2016). By being intentional about examining the influence of and connections across contexts and relationships in regard to the careers and challenges experienced by mid-career faculty, researchers revealed a critical ingredient for faculty vitality, which is the interconnectedness of student and faculty learning (Baker et al. 2017b). Scholars urged future research and practice to focus on the interconnectedness of contexts and relationships, such as those between faculty and their students in the classroom (DeFelippo and Giles 2015). An implication of this line of inquiry was that faculty engagement in high-impact practices serve as a vehicle for enhancing faculty vitality and achieving institutional aims such as student learning. This finding highlighted the need for institutional leaders to invest in faculty development programming that would
facilitate and support faculty as they seek to incorporate high-impact practices in their classrooms and as part of their scholarly efforts.

**Leadership Development**

Research and practice during the 2010s also highlighted the need for more deliberate leadership development support for faculty members, particularly at the mid-career stage (Baker et al. 2019a; DeZure et al. 2014; Mathews 2018). For example, department chairs were identified as key supporters for mid-career faculty, and the department chair position was identified as an entry point for advanced leadership opportunities in the academy. The leadership and skill development that can, and should, accompany this role is critical to the professional growth for current and future department chairs and as a stepping stone to future leadership positions within the academy. However, study findings revealed the department chair position becomes the ultimate leadership aspiration for many mid-career faculty due to a lack of deliberate and position appropriate supports to develop department chairs effectively that permeate the academy (Baker et al. 2019). A lack of appropriate support at the department chair position appears to reduce interest in mid-career faculty aspiring to other leadership positions (Baker et al. 2019c). As DeZure et al. (2014) urged, “Encouraging promising faculty to move into leadership roles is not only essential for the future health of higher education – it can also open up productive new career paths” (p. 12). Campus administrators need to encourage and recruit a diversity of faculty members to leadership positions while also providing the necessary supports to help those faculty members be successful. Scholars and practitioners alike noted this critical next step as an area of need in faculty development at mid-career as we enter the 2020s and beyond.

**Support to Help Mid-Career Faculty Manage the Evolving Nature of Higher Education**

During the 2010s, scholars and practitioners highlighted the changing university environment and various contexts in which the educational experience was realized (see, e.g., Mansbach and Austin 2018; Tangney and Flay-Petty 2019). One important change to educational delivery was greater reliance on online education and technology-based pedagogies. Scholars offered insights into the experiences of faculty at mid and late career stages in online learning environments and outlined the subsequent implications of their experiences for faculty development needs (Mansbach and Austin 2018). Their findings reveal both positive and negative aspects of teaching online, ranging from the convenience and flexibility that accompanies such an environment to the pressures of being responsive and engaged in an online setting with students given those expectations differ compared to those expected in a more typical face-to-face context. Such changes to educational contexts require faculty members to evolve as teachers and scholars and thus stress the inclusion of
learning communities and communities of practice in faculty development. The focus on learning communities and peer support, which were often part of peer-to-peer learning and professional development, was a central message in much of the research during the 2010s. Developing learning communities became almost a pseudo call to action (Mansbach and Austin 2018; Tangney and Flay-Petty 2019).

During the time of writing this final chapter, we are deeply entrenched in the COVID-19 pandemic. As a faculty member and a graduating senior about to embark on her doctoral studies, we are impacted as learners and educators in differing ways. The rapid move to online educational delivery occurring across the globe is unprecedented, making the short- and long-term consequences of this shift in educational delivery unclear. What is clear, however, is that faculty members need support to manage their professional and personal responsibilities (Baker 2020). The present situation underscores the importance of preparing faculty to be adept at a diversity of pedagogical tools and mediums to fulfill professional roles. But faculty members also need personal supports as they homeschool their children, provide long-distance care for elderly relatives and neighbors, and find new ways to establish boundaries between work and home, since, with faculty working at home, the traditional boundaries of place and space are now nonexistent. Mid-career faculty, given their institutional positions, disciplinary and institutional knowledge and experiences, and remaining career runways are particularly poised to help their institutions and colleagues weather these challenges and advance their institutions in innovative ways.

Mid-Career Faculty: A Call to Action in 2020 and Beyond

Mid-career faculty are crucial contributors to their institutions. They serve in formal and informal leadership roles, mentor early career colleagues, and add value to the functioning of their institutions. The themes presented throughout this chapter shed light on the evolution of mid-career faculty research and practice and a diversifying professoriate. While strides to elevate attention and associated supports in service of mid-career faculty have been made over the past four decades, challenges and obstacles still persist that require awareness, and unparalleled demands are rising. As we reflect on the themes and future directions for research and practice presented throughout this meta-synthesis, we set forth a call to action for the 2020s and beyond in the final section. We organize this discussion around key research questions about mid-career faculty in an ever-evolving academy.

Need 1: Implement a National Database of Postsecondary Faculty and Instructional Staff

The studies, programs, and practices reviewed and featured throughout the chapter provide insights into faculty experiences on individual campuses and among consortia of institutions. Relying on figures from the National Center for Education
Statistics (NCES), we gained clarity about the number of faculty employed in US higher education including characteristics such as rank, gender, and race/ethnicity, as well as full-time and part-time status. What we are missing, however, is a modern-day national profile of postsecondary faculty and instructional staff, which includes information about their professional backgrounds, responsibilities, workloads, compensation (including salary and benefits), job status, and overall job attitudes. In this section, we discuss two organizations focused on the study of the faculty experience: the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California in Los Angeles. We conclude by discussing the importance and status of the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF).

COACHE The Harvard Graduate School of Education program COACHE has been engaged in research about the faculty experience since 2003. First conceived as the “Study of New Scholars,” founding members sought to examine why fewer women and faculty of color were obtaining tenure. By 2008, COACHE delivered its first diagnostic reports on faculty development and diversity. The work of COACHE team members is supported through what they characterize as a research-practice partnership facilitated through a network of peer institutions that seek improvements to faculty recruitment, development, and retention (COACHE web site; Mathews and Benson 2019). At present, more than 300 colleges, universities, and state systems are engaged with COACHE through the research-practice partnership.

The primary research tool at COACHE is the Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey which was developed in collaboration with faculty, senior academic leaders, and relevant literature. Institutional reports can be customized and used to benchmark academic workplace results internally and nationally. Additionally, institutions can engage in comparisons with self-selected peer institutions and COACHE’s pool of national results. Themes addressed on the survey include Nature of Work, Research; Nature of Work, Teaching; Nature of Work, Service; Resources and Support; Interdisciplinary Work; Collaboration, and Mentoring; Tenure and Promotion; Institutional Leadership; Shared Governance; Department Engagement, Quality, and Collegiality; Appreciation and Recognition; and Retention and Negotiation (COACHE web site). The survey can also incorporate optional survey items, referred to as modules, directed toward full-time nontenure track and clinical faculty to learn more about their on-campus experiences and needs.

Scholars and practitioners have published extensively using COACHE’s institutional-level data, covering topics such as work-family and work-life balance for women and faculty of color (Lisnic et al. 2019; Szélényi and Denson 2019), the influence of institutional and academic environments on satisfaction and well-being (Larson et al. 2019; Webber 2019), and faculty leadership (Mathews 2018; Norman 2019). Relevant to this chapter, scholars recently studied the process through which mid-career faculty advance toward promotion to full professorship, with attention to issues of equity in the advancement process along the academic pipeline (Kulp et al. 2019). Using cross-institutional data, Kulp et al. (2019) explored how clear faculty
members were about the likelihood of being promoted to full professor. In addition, the authors also examined faculty members’ background characteristics, institutional characteristics, and satisfaction with various aspects of academic work as related to their perceptions of clarity around promotion expectations and processes. COACHE data have been instrumental in providing researchers with understanding of the faculty experience across the wide range of institutions that partner with COACHE.

**HERI** Similar to COACHE, HERI focuses at the institutional level, which allows team members to provide tools and resources to institutional partners, train other institutional researchers to use the data for assessment purposes, and support and facilitate scholarly efforts in higher education with the goal of promoting institutional excellence (HERI website). HERI’s mission has been to “inform educational policy and promote institutional improvement through an increased understanding of higher education and its impact on college students” (HERI website). Team members of HERI have partnered with colleges and universities with the goal of producing and disseminating research. HERI is most known for administering the Cooperative Institutional Research Program surveys, the most comprehensive source of information on college students.

In 1989, HERI began administering their Faculty Survey to provide a comprehensive, research-based picture of key aspects of the faculty experience (HERI website). Participating institutions administered the HERI Faculty Survey, which included questions in areas such as pedagogical practices; faculty goals and expectations for students; teaching, research, and service activities; sources of stress and satisfaction (professional and personal); and the connection between learning in the classroom and practices in the local and global community. Optional modules could be incorporated including campus climate, STEM, mentoring, and spirituality. Survey items also collected feedback from part-time faculty and those who engage with graduate students. Since administering the HERI Faculty Survey, 1100 2- and 4-year institutions have partnered with HERI to “connect faculty practices, values, and priorities to institutional success and drive improvement efforts” (HERI website).

Several publications and reports using HERI Faculty Survey data have been made available. Those publications shed light on full-time undergraduate faculty from participating institutions. Research areas address issues of engagement in teaching, research, and professional development activities along with issues related to job satisfaction and stress. HERI data have greatly informed research and practice about faculty in US higher education.

**NSOPF** Starting in the late 1980s, the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF) was created as a direct response to calls for a national data set that profiled postsecondary faculty and instructional staff. As noted on the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) website, “Faculty are the pivotal resource around which the process and outcomes of postsecondary education revolve. . . For these reasons, it is essential to understand who they are; what they do; and whether, how, and why
they are changing.” At present, NSOPF, which consisted of both an institutional questionnaire and surveys of individual faculty, has been the most comprehensive national study of postsecondary faculty undertaken.

The last accessible year on the NCES website for the NSOPF was 2004. The institution questionnaire collected data about faculty counts; hires and departures; promotion and tenure details and policies; and retirement and other benefits. The faculty questionnaire was more expansive, including demographic and socio-demographic characteristics; employment history and status; workload and time allocation across research, teaching, and service; compensation and benefits (including consultation fees and other forms of income); job attitudes and overall satisfaction; career advancement and associated plans; and student achievement. (https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/nsopf).

As recently as 2014, the American Educational Research Association, along with an array of individual researchers, began calling attention to the need for a revitalization of the NSOPF and urging the National Science Foundation, NCES, and other funders to find ways to reinstitute this survey. Such efforts have not yet reached fruition. We argue the need for a comprehensive, longitudinal data collection plan to help benchmark and monitor changes over time for postsecondary faculty and instructional staff. Given the rapid pace at which the academy is changing in terms of student and faculty demographics, faculty status and rank, educational delivery methods in general and as influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, and funding and resource allocation, we need a present-day perspective on faculty members in postsecondary education. Such a perspective would aid researchers, inform institutional decision-making, help leaders to identify and foster critical research-practice partnerships with a variety of key stakeholder groups within and outside of the academy, and inform the next phase of research and practice about faculty members. Without such a national effort, we lose a broader understanding of the faculty experience and the ways in which we can better support them.

Need 2: Examine Intersectional Issues

We applaud the research and practice initiated during the 2010s that explored issues of intersectionality, specifically studies that sought to unpack the experiences of women and faculty of color as professors in the academy (Croom 2017; Hart 2016). Such work reveals the challenging environments, microaggressions, and outright racism and genderism that non-majority faculty populations experience that hinder their career advancement and overall well-being. Such understanding (and associated corrective actions) is paramount to ensuring an inclusive academy (Stewart and Valian 2018). With that in mind, our second identified need is continued research and practice efforts that employ an intersectionality lens and approach. Such knowledge will be in service to campus leaders, and other members of the academic community, as they seek to achieve their goal of diversifying their faculties. Our aim is to
highlight research and practice that is leading the way on this front that both serves as
a guide and informs such attempts moving forward.

Research by Armstrong and Jovanovic (2015, 2017) is one such example of the important work being conducted in this space that employs intersectionality as a framework. Their research contributed to current theoretical models and research on advancing underrepresented minority women in STEM fields and how to frame current discussions and actions concerning intersectional approaches applied to institutional transformation initiatives. In particular, the use of an intersectional lens has the potential to “expand an organization’s paradigm for conceptualizing institutional change” (Armstrong and Jovanovic 2015, p. 149). Through research focused on NSF ADVANCE Institutional Transformation grants, their findings revealed a lack of advancement for underrepresented minority women in STEM. Further, the authors argued that the additive approach employed by many institutional transformation efforts does not meet the needs of underrepresented minority women in STEM but rather results in a “blurring effect” in which the “particular concerns and systemically structured obstacles particular to URM women are obscured by the already considerable barriers generically faced by women from dominant groups…” (Armstrong and Jovanovic 2017, p. 226). The authors urged those in the field to employ an intersectional framework at multiple points throughout the career cycle, such as the recruitment of underrepresented STEM women. They also believed intersectional efforts should be aimed at all faculties to address institutional culture and climate issues.

Laursen and Austin (in press) offer concrete strategies to support the improvement of institutional environments for academic women also situated in STEM fields. One of the many noteworthy contributions of their work includes an examination of how the featured strategies can be adapted (and adopted) in different work environments:

“Thus, while gender equity in STEM fields is at the core of the research we carried out, we offer lessons that we believe are very portable to other disciplines and that offer adaptable models for improving equity for other groups of faculty whose needs are less well studied but whose lack of visibility and voice is also evident and harmful in the academy.” (Laursen and Austin in press)

Rooted in research on NSF Institutional Transformation initiatives, Laursen and Austin describe a dozen strategies for organizational change. The strategies are characterized as institutional responses and organized within four different aspects of gender inequity: biased evaluation processes, unwelcoming work climates, employment structures that do not accommodate personal lives, and inequitable opportunities for advancement. The strategies presented are employed by various institutions. This knowledge serves as a foundation for systemic change initiatives for a diversity of institutional contexts.

This focus on intersectionality serves as an important foundation for research and practice at mid-career, one that acknowledges the varied identities, roles, and responsibilities that mid-career faculty members embrace and that contribute to
their lived experiences. Research by Chambers and Freeman (2020) provides an example of the next, and needed, wave of this line of inquiry that employs intersectionality as a guiding framework. Their qualitative study of seven young Black faculties on their path to full professorship explored the role of age, race, and career stage during their career advancement journey. These realities situated within institutional and disciplinary environments are fundamental to understand by those who want to support mid-career faculty and their professional and personal pursuits in the academy.

**Need 3: Support Nontenure Track Faculty at Mid-Career Stage**

An intersectionality framework also informs our third identified need: more research and practice about and in support of nontenure track faculty at mid-career. Reliance on part-time faculty is on the rise across all institution types in US higher education. According to Kezar (2014), part-time professors or adjuncts now make up over 49 percent of the faculty on university campuses and 70 percent of community college faculties. These individuals span all career stages. In our review of mid-career literature, we were only able to find one study that examined the impact of career stage on adjunct faculty (Feldman and Turnley 2001).

Nearly 20 years ago, Feldman and Turnley (2001) sought to examine the role that career stage plays in determining how adjunct faculty react to their jobs. Guided by the assumption that motivations for accepting adjunct positions vary across the life cycle, the authors studied the ways in which employees in different stages of their careers responded to nontenure track positions. For the purposes of this chapter, we highlight the findings and implications noted at mid-career.

Their findings revealed that “career stage did have a significant impact on the dependent variables” (Feldman and Turnley 2001, p. 9), resulting in positive and negative implications at mid-career. On the positive side, adjunct positions provided mid-career professionals with opportunities to be, perhaps, more creative and autonomous in their jobs than if they were in traditional tenure stream positions. However, adjunct positions resulted in widespread carryover of professional responsibilities into personal time, which created challenges related to planning for the future, responding to career demands of a partner or spouse, and overall disruptions due to the lack of a consistent schedule. Additionally, adjunct faculty at mid-career tended to be less satisfied compared to their early and late career colleagues.

Scholars and practitioners need to focus research and practice energies on adjunct faculty using a career stage lens to guide that work. Very little is known about the experiences of adjunct faculty at mid-career, and if current higher education trends are any indication, the use of adjunct faculty does not appear to be slowing down. Lack of research and practice efforts directed to this population of faculty will continue to be underserved, which has implications at the individual, departmental, and institutional levels.
Need 4: Methodological Approaches

The methodological approaches employed to study the experiences of mid-career faculty have evolved over the past four decades. However, we see a need to further expand upon those methodologies and the contexts in which mid-career faculty members are employed. At present, the majority of research and practice focused on this population of faculty members is still situated in research universities. While this scholarship provides a useful framework and foundation from which to build, this near myopic institutional focus fails to acknowledge the importance of institutional context to the study of the faculty career and associated experiences. Not only do we need more research and practice situated in comprehensive and regional universities, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges, we also need to better understand mid-career faculty experiences in Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU’s), and tribal colleges and universities. Mission, institutional values, student demographics, and funding structures impact faculty. Therefore, accounting for those contextual nuances is important to advancing mid-career faculty research and practice.

We also need to engage in scholarship and practice that accounts for disciplinary differences. A significant line of inquiry has focused on faculty experiences, particularly for women and faculty of color, in STEM fields. But we also need to understand the ways in which discipline contributes to mid-career faculty development in other fields. Much less is known about the experiences of mid-career faculty members in the fine and applied arts and humanities, for example. In addition, a focus on mid-career faculty experiences in professional fields such as nursing, business, and law would be useful. Therefore, we urge scholars and practitioners to consider expanding the disciplinary focus in which research and practice for mid-career faculty are situated.

Lastly, there is a need for more research that focuses on specific faculty populations. We applaud the efforts of scholars over the past 15 years to account for and understand the experiences of women and, more recently, faculty of color. However, we need to continue this line of inquiry and also include LGBTQ faculty and Native American Faculty, for example. We believe the intersectionality lens noted under need two, discussed above, will support such inquiry. The absence of such efforts, we fear, will result in higher education institutions continuing to be challenged when seeking to diversify their faculties, both in terms of attracting and retaining diverse faculty populations.

Concluding Thoughts

Mid-career faculty are the backbone of colleges and universities. They have a significant amount of career runway remaining and a wealth of institutional knowledge that can be used to benefit their peers and the institutions in which they are employed. We applaud research and practice efforts to date, yet we need to gain a better understanding of the needs of mid-career faculty and the ways in which they
are expected and need to engage in the academy. Changing student demographics and increased reliance on contingent faculty, for example, place a great deal of pressure on mid-career faculty to shoulder the associated responsibilities for student advising and faculty governance as institutional leaders seek to create a more diverse and inclusive environment. Colleges and universities need to invest in their mid-career faculty to fulfill expected roles and responsibilities. Over the course of the past four decades of mid-career faculty literature, topics discussed by scholars have evolved, but one concept has remained steadfast throughout: the utmost importance of faculty development. Forty years of scholarly contributions on the professoriate point to mid-career faculty development as a means of cultivating vitality, fruitfulness, and overall well-being. As we confront the unknown higher education landscape during these unprecedented times, we know history informs the future and, thus, serves as encouragement to spend subsequent decades investing in institutional structures of faculty development, including mentorship and intervention strategies.

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