

Gender Segregation in Culturally Feminized Work: Theory and Evidence of Boys' Capacity for Care

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Men's drastic underrepresentation in HEED occupations (health care, early education, and domestic roles) is a vastly underresearched gendered phenomenon. Using a narrative style literature review supported by a grounded theory analysis, we synthesize recent evidence on why gendered labor segregation persists in culturally feminized forms of work using an interdisciplinary approach that joins developmental psychology with the sociology of work and employment. We propose that four structural conditions facilitate the persistence of labor segregation in feminized fields: (a) the gender stereotyping and devaluation of feminized skills, (b) the unequal gender socialization of emotional and relational skills in childhood, (c) the racialized "glass escalator" phenomenon and hostile climate issues faced by men in HEED careers, and (d) disproportionate incentivizing of research on labor segregation in feminized professions. Using developmental, feminist research to support this four-pronged approach, we propose a revision to Elliott's theory of *caring masculinities* that may ultimately encourage more men and boys to sustain their interest in developing skills that are associated with femininity.

Public Significance Statement

This literature review examined why women greatly outnumber men in jobs that have been traditionally associated with femininity, such as teaching, early childhood education, and nursing. This phenomenon is poorly understood and widely understudied by scholars and other professionals. With increased research addressing the problems we identify in this review, it is possible to create the conditions for a future where more men and boys are unafraid to express their sensitive, nurturing, and emotionally astute traits, and view these capacities as worthy of exploring in a career.

Keywords: care, HEED, gender segregation, masculinity, boyhood

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The persistence of gendered labor segregation, defined as a gender imbalance within certain occupations, has been a pressing issue for scholars across disciplines for the last four decades (Blau et al., 2013; England et al., 1994; Reskin & Hartmann, 1986). Within the last 20 years, efforts to increase low numbers of women in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields have burgeoned within the United States. The National Science Foundation has allocated over 270 million dollars to promoting women's participation in STEM through its "ADVANCE" program (National Science Foundation, 2019). Yet, considerably less attention has been paid to, and remarkably fewer empirical investigations are devoted to understanding, the low numbers of men in careers that are historically occupied by women, often referred to as HEED occupations (health care, early education, and domestic roles) or culturally feminized forms of work (e.g., Harvey-Wingfield, 2009). The reasons to desegregate labor in

both STEM and HEED fields are vast. They include but are not limited to (a) eliminating wage and social capital inequality between genders (Blau & Kahn, 2017; England, 2010), (b) dismantling the pernicious notion that only women are capable of meeting society's needs for care work, and (c) allowing men and boys to exercise, rather than conceal, their interest in work that is culturally and historically associated with women. New theorizing and synthesizing of available knowledge across previously disaggregated disciplines is required to bring about these societal changes.

We first review the nature of gender segregation in HEED fields and provide evidence of gendered labor segregation in the United States workforce using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. We then detail the nature of the overlapping and interrelated forces working against desegregation in HEED fields. Specifically, we focus on four nonexhaustive conditions that give rise to this

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phenomenon: (a) the gender stereotyping and devaluation of feminized skills, (b) the unequal gender socialization of emotional and relational skills in childhood, (c) the racialized “glass escalator” phenomenon and hostile climate issues faced by men in HEED careers, and (d) disproportionate incentivizing of research on occupational segregation in feminized professions.

Our aims included (a) understanding the contributing factors of gendered labor segregation and (b) using previously excluded perspectives in understanding this phenomenon, namely developmental psychology. We do this through a synthesis of several bodies of literature and present a new theoretical framing of labor segregation supported through a narrative style literature review. To propose new directions for ending gender segregation in HEED, we argue that Elliott’s theory of *reworking* hegemonic masculinities into caring masculinities offers significant limitations in addressing labor segregation (Elliott, 2016). Specifically, Elliott argues that for men to resist dominant forms of masculinity, they should cultivate caring masculinities that embrace relationality, positive emotion, and interdependence. We find that the use of a developmental lens more accurately frames caring masculinities as a restoration, rather than a creation, of men and boys’ intrinsic capacities for care and relationships. Finally, we conclude the paper with evidence-based recommendations for stakeholders who play a role in addressing labor segregation from various vantage points, such as researchers, parents, and teachers.

Method

As scholars trained in developmental and social psychology, we were particularly interested in integrating developmental insights into the larger body of work on labor segregation, which is largely sociological in nature. This aim allowed us to review factors that contribute to labor segregation by examining multiple levels of influence and across many points in the lifespan—for example, contributors stretching from organizational culture to the family environment of early childhood. Because we reviewed work across a range of fields and methodologies, a meta-analysis or systematic review was not possible or ideal. Instead, we used a narrative style review, a method well-suited for providing a rich description of the field’s current state and integrating disparate insights into a coherent narrative (Baumeister & Leary, 1997). We did not find it useful to organize the literature by type or discipline (e.g., experimental, nonexperimental, psychology, sociology). Instead, after our structured investigation of the literature, we deduced four major themes or “conditions” of labor segregation that were emphasized across literatures but not yet integrated.

Because we aimed to aggregate insights across multiple fields, our search terms were broad. Beginning in January of 2020, we searched online databases for academic literature on labor segregation in psychology, sociology, education, gender studies, and organizational behavior written in English between the years 2000 and 2019. These parameters allowed us to identify 722 works of research that met our criteria of relevance, cross-disciplinary insight into the underlying causes of labor segregation, and methodological rigor. Using a grounded theory analysis (see Charmaz, 2002, 2014), the first author coded the literature based on the underlying contributors of labor segregation proposed in each study. We chose grounded theory analysis, rather than a theoretically unbounded thematic analysis (see Braun & Clark, 2006), because we were interested

in creating a unified theory of the causes of labor segregation by integrating developmental science into the existing body of research. Our coding scheme emerged from a careful read of the identified papers, where both authors identified the core concepts that were emerging across the literature. Next, the first author identified central codes for the data based on the initial reading for core concepts. Finally, the literature was rereviewed for major themes using the central codes. Major themes are described in this paper as “conditions” that give rise to labor segregation. Throughout the process of developing core concepts, central codes, and major themes, the first author consulted both the second author and her doctoral candidacy committee, two masculinity scholars, to receive feedback on the quality of her analysis.

Sources outside of our original search parameters were occasionally considered. First, the studies we identified often relied heavily upon, and cited, theory or research that was not captured by the search parameters but was relevant to understanding the larger ideological context that gives rise to labor segregation. For example, Connell’s (1987, 1996, 2005) theoretical contributions proved essential to framing the research described in the current review because they allowed an overall framework for us to understand literature across disciplines, namely the gender regime. Although we primarily considered research from the last 20 years, we also consulted older studies considered to be “classics,” or touchstones, within the current area of inquiry—an example of this is Anker’s (1998) *Gender and Jobs*. Finally, we also engaged with work that was suggested to us by the expert reviewers who critiqued this article in its earlier iterations.

We use Croft et al.’s (2015) term “HEED” throughout the paper. They argue that a unified acronym for culturally feminized fields is an imperfect albeit useful tool for galvanizing public attention and research funds, similar to what has been done in STEM fields. Their creation of the term HEED stands for health care, elementary education, and the domestic sphere, and attempts to capture the majority of feminized occupations under a single term. Throughout the paper we use the terms “feminized work,” “feminized fields,” and “HEED fields” interchangeably to refer to types of work where women are overrepresented compared to men and the skills and abilities required for such work are broadly associated with women and femininity. This flexible definition, although flawed in its lack of specificity, allowed us to work across disciplines, as “HEED” is common in the psychological literature and “feminized fields” is common in the sociological literature.

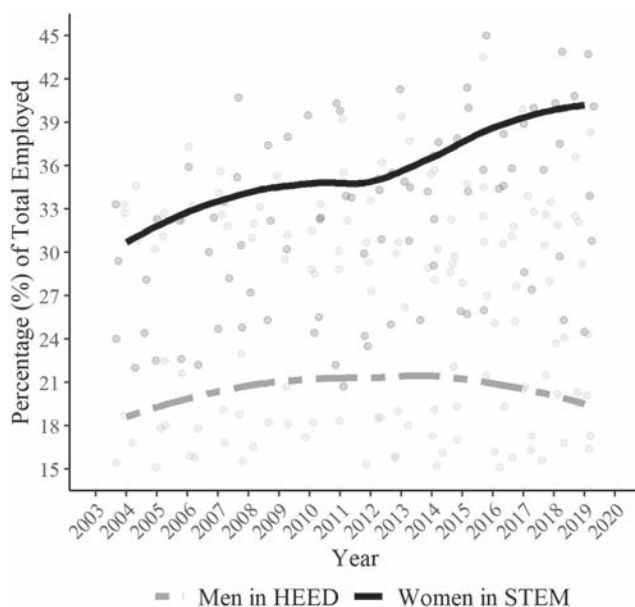
Status of Gendered Labor Segregation

Gender egalitarianism appears to be rising around the globe, evidenced by declining beliefs in gender traditionalism (with some exceptions, see Scarborough et al., 2019), the gradual desegregation of almost all college majors in the United States beyond STEM and HEED fields (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013; England, 2010), and the general rise in women’s workforce participation and earnings (World Economic Forum, 2018). Despite these gains, the number of women entering STEM fields in the last 20 years has not been matched by men entering HEED fields (Croft et al., 2015; England, 2010), as culturally feminized fields have seen little to no rise in the percentage of male employees in recent years (Blau et al., 2013; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

Recent figures suggest that men's participation in HEED careers has decreased or remained relatively stable from 1993 to 2019 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Representing the first acronym letter in HEED, health care support occupations in the United States are feminized overall: 13.1% of professionals are men. Within specific domains of health care support, nursing (11.7% men), social workers (18.1%), occupational therapists (12%), and dental assistants (5.1%) represent some particularly segregated areas. Elementary and early childhood education is more starkly segregated, with preschool and kindergarten teachers having only 1.3% men and special education teachers at 13.3%. For domestic roles, 6.6% of childcare workers and 11% of household cleaners are men (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Some estimates suggest that desegregating jobs would require nearly 50% of individuals to "switch" into a differently gendered occupation, and that much of this movement would require men transitioning to HEED and other feminized fields rather than women transitioning from HEED to STEM (Hegewisch et al., 2010). See Figure 1 for a graphical summary of how gender segregation in HEED and STEM careers has changed over time in the United States.

Figure 1

Percentage of Men Employed in HEED Occupations and Women Employed in STEM Occupations From 2004 to 2019

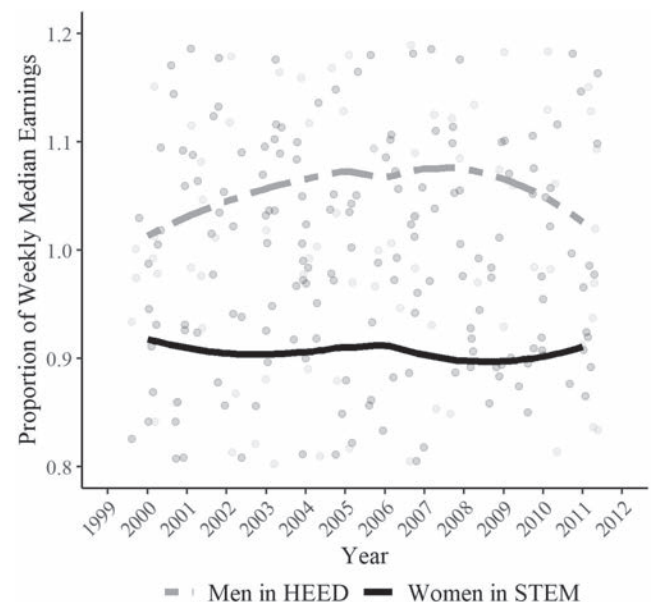


Note. Each smoothed line represents the percentage of men in health care, early education, and domestic roles (HEED) and women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) across a 15-year period. Similarly, individual data points represent the percentage of men and women in each occupation at a given year. All data was obtained from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. Out of the 559 unique occupations in the BLS Current Population Survey, 39 occupations were coded as HEED (representative occupations include: nurses, social workers, and elementary school teachers). Twenty-eight occupations were coded as STEM (representative occupations include: chemists, physicians, and engineers). Remaining occupations were omitted from this analysis. See [Supplemental Information](#) for a full list of occupations and their coding designation as HEED or STEM.

The segregation of work into stereotypically male or female categories (sometimes termed "horizontal" segregation) also occurs alongside men's greater likelihood of occupying higher paying jobs and experiencing greater upward mobility within them (often termed "vertical" segregation; Greene et al., 2002; Williams, 1995). When men are working within feminized fields, particularly White cis-gendered men, they are promoted into more masculinized, higher-paying forms of work more often than women. Williams (1992) has referred to this pattern as the "glass escalator" effect, best illustrated in the example of White men in nursing who are quickly promoted to leadership roles in hospital administration. The tendency for men to earn more and possess higher-level positions than women—even when they are in the same fields—is a globally well-documented phenomenon, which we illustrate graphically in Figure 2. Without

Figure 2

Proportion of Weekly Median Earnings Across Men in HEED and Women in STEM From 2000 to 2011



Note. Each line represents a smoothed average of the proportion of weekly median earnings a given gender earns in a culturally atypical occupation earns per week and each data point indicates the proportion of weekly median earnings for a given occupation, on a given year. A proportion of 1.0 would indicate perfect parity among men and women; however, values below 1.0 suggest earning less per week than the other gender, with values above 1.0 suggest earning more per week than the other gender. From 2000 to 2011, men in health care, early education, and domestic roles (HEED) occupations earn approximately 5.4% more than women in HEED occupations, whereas women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) earn 9.5% less than men in STEM occupations. Data was obtained from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. Of the 83 unique occupations with median earnings data available in the BLS Current Population Survey, 28 occupations were coded as HEED (representative occupations include: nurses, social workers, and elementary school teachers). Thirty-nine occupations were coded as STEM (representative occupations include: chemists, physicians, and engineers). Remaining occupations were omitted from this analysis. See [Supplemental Information](#) for a full list of occupations and their coding designation as HEED or STEM.

greater movement of men into feminized work (i.e., horizontal *desegregation*), vertical segregation is positioned to persist. England (2010) describes the link between horizontal and vertical segregation as the primary reason that gender *desegregation* efforts are “uneven and stalled.” To understand why *desegregation* efforts remain stagnant, we begin with a discussion of how gender is structured in society and why this gives rise to horizontal and vertical segregation.

Condition 1: The Stereotyping and Devaluing of Feminized Work

Individuals do not select their occupations randomly. Connell’s theory of a hierarchical and binary *gender order* may be a particularly useful starting point for understanding how forms of labor are occupied, compensated, and valued differently based on gender. Connell proposes that a series of practices—referred to collectively as a *gender regime*—create, maintain, and perpetually reify a predictable *gender order* within society. The gender order is patriarchal in nature, meaning that society is organized in a way that sustains men’s greater levels of capital, power, and status. Connell separates the practices that maintain patriarchy into three axes, or domains, where the gender order is continually reconstituted. The primary axis of concern for the current paper is the *sexual division of labor*, or the patriarchal organization of men and women into different forms of work within and outside of the home. The sexual division of labor is reinforced through the practices of the gender regime, and the cumulative effect of such practices being replicated over time and across individuals results in the maintenance of the overall gender order (Connell, 1987, 1995).

The gender order and the resulting sexual division of labor requires not only systemic inputs, such as poor wage standards for culturally feminized forms of work, but also ideological support from individuals. Sociologists have referred to this as the “gendering of work” (e.g., Brynin & Perales, 2016)—or the stereotyping of occupations as inherently and naturally masculine or feminine (e.g., Brynin & Perales, 2016; White & White, 2006). For example, adults with strong gendered work beliefs report that cleaning is a woman’s job, whereas flying a plane is a man’s job (Ridgeway, 2011). England argues that the gendering of work originates from the naturalization of the gender order, or the notion that men and women have innate differences in skills and capacities that arise from biology (England, 2010). Early sociologists, for example, suggested that successful societies required each gender to take up their “natural” occupational role, with men and boys occupying “instrumental” roles, those requiring independence, leadership, and competition, and women occupying “expressive” roles, those requiring emotional sensitivity and care for others (Parsons, 1954). Such norms are critical reinforcers of the gender order and are also individual symptoms of living within it (Pearse & Connell, 2016).

Beliefs about the natural origins of women and men’s work are also apparent in individuals’ self-perceptions, not just their beliefs about social groups at large. The gendering of work is enacted when men and women view themselves as having only the traits consistent with gendered work—but *not* gender-atypical work—and seek out careers that are congruent with these internalized stereotypes (Diekmann et al., 2017). For example, a man who is socialized to view himself as industrious, dominant, and competitive may be

drawn to a field disproportionately occupied by men—such as finance—rather than careers that are culturally feminized, like fashion or customer relations. The construction of gender-typical work identities, such as a financier in this example, are often rewarded and praised by those in the individual’s immediate context. When individuals do not select gender-typical careers, they may face what theorists have referred to as “gender role strain,” or distress and concern that arises from failing to live up to society’s gender expectations (Levant & Pollack, 2003; Thompson & Pleck, 2005). As a result, people are externally motivated to view their internal talents and interests as those which do not produce gender role strain.

Connell (1996) refers to pervading expectations for men to adopt stereotypical traits as hegemonic masculinity, or the culturally dominant ideology of the aspirational man as an independent, courageous, dominant, stoic provider. Although this archetype is typically unattainable for the vast majority of men, hegemonic masculinity serves as a guiding ideal that many men and boys endorse or aspire to (Chu et al., 2005; Mahalik et al., 2003). Men’s endorsements of hegemonic masculinity map onto to their occupational interests: those who see themselves as highly masculine are unlikely to explore interests in feminized fields (e.g., Allen & Smith, 2011). Although women’s perceptions of themselves have become more agentic in recent years as they have transitioned to previously male-dominated fields, men’s self-perceptions of the traits associated with HEED roles, particularly traits of communality and nurturance, remain unchanged according to the most recent data (Twenge et al., 2012).

Occupations are also differentiated by a gendered notion of status, meaning that different value is assigned to different forms to work depending on if the labor is culturally associated with masculinity or femininity (Bourdieu, 1986; Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013). While labor segregation is often discussed as a wage inequality problem, wages are one manifestation of perceived value. Value refers to both the reward systems in place, such as actual earnings (see Figure 2), and the social importance that individuals ascribe to the skills and capacities required to work in a specific field (England, 2010). The gendered valuation of various forms of work stems largely from the gender order’s patriarchal and hierarchical structure, where masculinity and femininity are positioned as fundamentally opposed categories with masculinity having superiority over femininity (Connell, 1987, 2002, 2005; Gilligan, 1982; Risman, 2004; Schippers, 2007). Thus, lower status is typically assigned to feminized work.

In regard to financial valuation, HEED professionals make markedly less on average than those in STEM careers, but men in HEED earn slightly more than women. The opposite is the case for women in STEM, who tend to earn less than men in their field. In the United States, for example, teachers are among the lowest paid workers when adjusting for the time and intensity of training requirements (Allegretto & Mishel, 2016). Unfortunately, HEED professions as a whole are viewed as less valuable and less worthy of compensation than masculinized forms of work. For example, Block et al. (2019) found that members of the general public are more supportive of *desegregating* male-dominated fields than female-dominated fields. Even among those who recognize the need for occupational *desegregation*, individuals were more likely to support taking social action when it concerned the underrepresentation of women than the underrepresentation of men. In keeping with the stereotype of STEM work as gendered as male and regarded as

high status, respondents indicated that desegregating feminized fields is less deserving of public attention and organizing than the gender desegregation of masculinized fields.

Across industrialized nations, the most segregated occupations are those that most closely align with traits that are stereotyped as “natural” to each gender (Schippers, 2007; West & Zimmerman, 1987). The most women-dominated occupations in the United States are nurses and early childhood teachers, occupations that rely on caring for others in communal settings (Anker, 1998; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Such jobs are the most likely to carry strong associations with women and femininity, as well as a *negative* association with masculinity; for example, elementary school teaching is typically rated as the most “unmasculine” career due to its congruence with stereotypic femininity (Allen & Smith, 2011). As we describe in Condition 3, deterring men from HEED professions on the basis of its perceived incongruence with masculinity, or promoting them to masculinized forms of work once they arrive, is a well-documented practice of the gender regime (Carrington, 2002; Moss-Racusin & Johnson, 2016). Although the stereotyping and devaluation of feminized skills is one broad expression of Connell’s gender order, the remaining conditions that we describe, although unique in *how* they contribute to labor segregation, stem from this ideological root.

Condition 2: The Socialization of Emotional and Relational Skills

Practices that sustain the gender order are extensive and are enacted by a wide array of individuals and systems. Thus, developmental feminist scholars underscore the need to look not just at adulthood, where labor segregation is firmly pronounced, but also into childhood, where skills that are relevant to HEED positions are first learned (e.g., Chu, 2014; Lawson et al., 2015). Connell’s theory of the gender order fits well within developmental psychologists’ ecological systems models, or theories that explain how human behavior is produced through dynamic, bidirectional interactions that take place between various components of the ecological system and the individual. By dynamic, this means that interactions between individuals and their social contexts are continually “constituted and reconstituted,” meaning that socialization is not a process with a fixed outcome, but rather an open and shifting one (Davies, 1989). Sources of influence on an individual can include genetics, the family context, peers, teachers, schools, and stretch to larger social structures and institutions like governance and widely held cultural ideologies (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Widely held cultural beliefs are transmitted to children through a range of socialization agents including people, institutions, and other elements of the child’s environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; García Coll et al., 1996; Rogers & Way, 2021). Through gender socialization, Connell’s gender regime is instantiated early and sets the stage for both boys and girls to be susceptible to, reproduce, or resist the gender regime outside of the immediate context of their homes and families.

As children learn skills that are stereotypically associated with feminized work (e.g., perspective taking, empathy, verbal communication) or masculinized work (e.g., gross motor skills, spatial intelligence, numerical concepts, working memory), they also develop an early sense of career interests and the stereotypes that correspond with various jobs (see Condition 1 for which stereotypes

correspond to specific jobs). For example, in the hallmark “draw a scientist” study, Chambers (1983) found that only 0.6% of 7–8-year-old children depicted scientists as women, a percentage that has grown to 23% in recent replication studies. During early childhood, however, children draw equal numbers of men and women as scientists, beckoning the question of when and where children learn to enact occupational stereotypes (Miller et al., 2018; Chambers, 1983).

The developmental literature makes clear the importance of gender socialization in influencing occupational interest. There are three key patterns of research that support this point and we describe each in more depth below. First, both boys and girls display a full range of social and emotional competencies early in their development, of which there are no significant differences suggesting an innate predisposition toward certain forms of labor later in their development (e.g., Nagy, 2008; Chu, 2014). Second, many boys learn to conceal or deny emotional and relational skills in order to accommodate to norms of masculinity—however, parents, peers, and schools can be vital socializers of accommodation *or* resistance to these norms (e.g., Chu, 2014; Connell, 1996; Way et al., 2014). And third, boys who are encouraged to retain their feminized skills are more likely to select a career in a HEED field as adults (Lawson et al., 2015).

At the beginning of life, developmentally typical infants are biologically prepared to jointly engage with their caregivers, communicate expressively, and are exquisitely sensitive to disruptions in their relationships regardless of sex (Nagy, 2008; Tronick et al., 1978). Infants show joint interest in attending to objects with others, and in communicating conversationally with their caretakers through coos and other vocalizations. In Tronick et al.’s (1978) field-shaping “still face experiment” where mothers engage with their baby normally followed by a period of refusing to engage with them, male infants were visibly upset by the apparent loss in connection with their caretaker. They were more likely than female infants to react in ways that could reestablish the connection between the mother and the baby, such as crying or making joyful faces to reengage the adult. Although male infants persisted in their attempts to reestablish connection, they often took longer to do so than female infants, a finding that researchers posit as either biological or socialized (Weinberg et al., 1999). Some researchers have insisted that female infants are more “hardwired” for connection than boys by drawing upon a singular, flawed study on babies’ gendered preferences for toys with faces or colorful mobiles (Connellan et al., 2000). These results have been refuted empirically (see Eliot, 2010), although there are sustained differences in other infant behaviors such as grip strength or skull circumference. Still, researchers conducting large syntheses of sex difference research have concluded that there is no rigorous evidence supporting greater biological preparedness for social relationships in female infants (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Eliot, 2010).

All infants begin life with a motivation to be relational (Nagy, 2008; Tronick et al., 1978), but whether they are equally engaged in that motivation, however, involves gender socialization (Eliot, 2010; Fausto-Sterling et al., 2012). During early childhood, scholars have documented an unequal gender socialization of emotional and relational capacities. In particular, traits that are associated with women and feminized work like empathy, communality, openness, vulnerability, sensitivity, and care for others is more often emphasized within the gender socialization of girls than boys (e.g., Fivush

et al., 2000; Chaplin & Aldao, 2013). Because gender stereotyped skills such as emotional sensitivity are discouraged and penalized among boys—that is, “boys don’t cry,” “suck it up”—many begin to hide these traits in an effort to avoid social sanctioning (Chu, 2014; Chu & Gilligan, 2019), and this is particularly evident within the school context.

Schools, particularly teacher and peer relationships within this context, were the grounds of the initial fieldwork that led to the theorization of hegemonic masculinity, as boys’ gender socialization experiences in school are often rife with pressures to hide “softer” emotions like care, empathy, and tenderness (Connell, 1996; Chu, 2014; Reichert et al., 2012). In their work on how masculinity is actively constructed in the school context, both Connell (1996) and Davies (1989) suggests that schools are among the first contexts in which boys are initiated into a patriarchal gender regime—that is, a formal, institutional environment where boys are deeply and regularly embedded. This school-specific gender regime allows ample opportunities to learn about how gender operates in the social world. For example, children become attuned to the ways that peers police one another’s choices in activities that may be deemed as “girly,” the consistent separation of boys and girls into separate uniform or dress norms, lining up students according to gender, and the carrying out of classroom tasks by different genders (Connell, 1996; Davies, 1989). Children are exquisitely perceptive of such schooling practices (Chu, 2014), which may facilitate the idea that boys and girls have fundamentally different interests and skills.

Connell’s construct of the gender regime plays out within the developmental data on boys’ development in school contexts. Boys are less likely to receive support in developing and exercising their relational and emotional skills than girls in school—for example, King’s (2020) study of teachers’ interactions with toddlers showed that they were more likely to use minimizing or dismissive language with boys when dealing with students’ emotions. Ahn and Stifter’s (2006) work also echoes King’s findings. They found that preschool teachers are more likely to respond to boys’ expressions of negative emotions with indifference or an effort to express oneself “constructively” than they were with girls. Interestingly, boys express slightly more negative emotions than girls during early childhood (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013), a finding which may be shaped by boys’ and girls’ perceptiveness of display rules for appropriate emotions (Eliot, 2010). The lack of support or recognition of boys’ emotions is often a response to internalized stereotypes about boys’ lack of emotional astuteness, a stereotype that is often unequally applied to Black boys (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). In King’s (2020) research, teacher gender was unspecified, whereas Ahn and Stifter’s (2006) sample consisted of women teachers except for one man. Given that most teachers in boys’ early schooling environments are women, it should be noted that teachers of all genders can socialize values of the gender regime, specifically hegemonic masculinity. As hooks (2004) stresses in her writing on the socialization of boyhood, “A patriarchal thinker need not be male . . . women can be as wedded to patriarchal thinking and action as men” (p. 23).

Parents also shape boys’ emotional and relational development. Mothers and fathers are more likely to talk about emotions with daughters than sons (Fivush et al., 2000), and typically encourage the expression of more tender emotions with girls rather than boys (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013). Boys also receive more positive and negative feedback than girls for playing with toys that are seen as

gender appropriate or inappropriate, with boys being more likely to face backlash for holding a baby doll than girls are for holding a toy truck (Eliot, 2010; Lytton & Romney, 1991). Sons with mothers who endorse more traditional gender attitudes are more likely to pursue careers in male-dominated fields than mothers with more progressive gender attitudes (Lawson et al., 2015). This evidence supports the importance of the family context in shaping boys’ occupational interest, making it unsurprising that O’Connor (2015) finds that men who receive encouragement in pursuing their interest in nursing, especially from family members, describe this support as foundational to their occupational choice.

Outside of the gender socialization boys receive from adults, gender socialization experienced within peer environments may be one of the most influential contributors to boys’ occupational interests. Through rewarding and punishing other boys in their first peer groups, many boys learn that caring is associated with girls, and all things “girly” are considered undesirable—a belief that boys typically do not express before entering the school context (Chu, 2014; Chu & Gilligan, 2019; Reigeluth & Addis, 2016). In an ethnographic study of boys’ social and emotional development during the prekindergarten to kindergarten transition, Chu describes this period of change in her 4- and 5-year-old participants, stating, “Whereas these boys had demonstrated a remarkable ability to be articulate, direct, authentic, and attentive, they began to appear inarticulate, indirect, inauthentic, and inattentive.” (p. 8). Her participants had learned that attending to the thoughts and feelings of others was no longer accepted, especially by their school peers, and began to actively mask expressions of care and tenderness (Chu, 2014). Such evidence across developmental periods does not imply that boys accept these ideas passively and universally, as many boys resist their gender socialization (Way et al., 2014; Way, 2011). Boys’ resistance to hegemonic masculinity can be embodied in countless forms at different developmental stages—examples include partaking in activities in childhood that are culturally associated with girls, such as dress up or pretend play with baby dolls, or maintaining an emotionally close, interdependent same gender friendship during adolescence.

Although Chu demonstrates boys’ policing of other boys’ expressions of masculinity in preschool, Reigeluth and Addis (2016) show that it persists and intensifies during adolescence. These findings are consistent with other developmental evidence showing a resurgence of pressure for boys to conceal their interests in caring for others in adolescence (Way, 2011). During early adolescence, when gender stereotype learning typically reintensifies for the second time outside of early childhood (Hill & Lynch, 1983), Way (2011) finds that boys struggle against the expectation to avoid not only what is deemed socially “girly,” but also any behavior possibly seen as “gay.” This struggle is most prominently manifested in how boys express feelings of care and affection for their same gender friends across time. In Way’s (2011) studies, boys found it increasingly difficult to maintain close friendships as they learned masculine norms of emotional stoicism and hyperindependence. In particular, it became difficult for her participants to express care verbally. Puerto Rican and Dominican-American boys felt more comfortable transgressing masculine norms by explicitly showing their desire for closeness and tenderness with their friends, whereas Chinese American boys were the least likely to resist masculine norms out of concerns of being perceived as “girly” or “gay.” There are competing perspectives on the intersection of

race, ethnicity, and masculinity, however. While Way (2011) finds that Latino boys are more likely to resist masculine norms, other researchers have found that boys of color, specifically Brown and Black boys, may face intensified pressure to adhere to them. Major and Billson's (1992) "cool pose theory" suggests that some boys of color may double down on gender norms as a way of coping with racial subjugation, and this theory has received recent empirical support from Unnever and Chouhy (2021). Indeed, masculinities are widely varied, and boys' ability to safely resist masculine norms is dependent on their cultures and contexts, a phenomenon that is later reflected in how men of different races in HEED careers are treated (see Condition 3).

Although there is cultural variation in boys' adherence to masculine norms, they are often socialized to conceal the qualities that sociologists have identified as foundational to feminized work, such as empathy, care, and nurturance (Anker, 1998; Charles & Grusky, 2004). Encouragingly, however, boys' resistance to norms of masculinity has been robustly associated with higher social and emotional well-being, as well as with selecting careers in HEED fields (American Psychological Association, 2018; Lease, 2003; McDowell, 2015; Rogers et al., 2017). Yet, many boys are initiated into a culture—by peers, media, family, and other socializers in their environments—in which showing care is seen as incongruent with boys' career prospects, despite that boys show the capacity for such skills throughout their early development.

Condition 3: Workforce Climates Within Heed Professions

Despite gender socialization in boyhood and sustained beliefs about the gendered value of labor, some men choose careers in HEED fields despite being outnumbered in their workplaces. In what may be partially due to their outnumbered status, men's presence in feminized fields is often given atypical attention and treatment in ways that are both positive and negative. Men experience racialized and gendered backlash, and sometimes praise, when working in HEED fields or telling others about their plans to do so. In terms of praise and advantages, men in HEED professions often receive greater compensation (see Figure 2) and faster promotions than women, particularly if they are White—this phenomenon has been termed the "glass escalator effect" by Williams (1992, 1995, 2013). Because men's work is more likely to be seen as valuable in comparison to women's work, coworkers and superiors are more likely to assist men who are already privileged in terms of race, class, sexuality into positions requiring more leadership, responsibility, and higher wages (i.e., more masculinized work).

Although there are advantages of being a man, particularly a White man, in a feminized field, Harvey-Wingfield (2009) points out several disadvantages experienced by men of color in her research with Black men nurses. Men of color are more likely than White men to work in feminized fields and are also more likely to face racially driven "glass barriers" to their advancement (Dill & Hodges, 2020; Harvey-Wingfield, 2009; Woodhams et al., 2015). Men of color's larger representation in HEED is determined by a range of factors, some of which include (a) systematic exclusion from careers where White people are overrepresented (see Harvey Wingfield & Chavez, 2020; Harvey Wingfield & Alston, 2014), (b) the faster promotion of White men in HEED roles into more masculinized positions (see Harvey-Wingfield, 2009; Williams,

2013), and (c) an embracing of alternative masculinities brought about through men's responses to other forms of marginalization, namely racism and classism (Harvey Wingfield, 2010). For example, some men of color have been shown to develop and embrace an identity of a "caring self" in stereotypically feminized fields. In order to combat racist hostility, these men put greater emphasis on the feminized skills required to be successful in their jobs when compared to White men (Lamont, 2000). Rather than distancing themselves from femininity, Black and Brown men nurses spoke openly about their enjoyment of the caring and nurturing aspects of their jobs. Taking pride in capacities traditionally viewed as feminine provided not only fulfillment in their work and greater satisfaction among patients, but also served as a form of protection against racially driven hostility (Harvey-Wingfield, 2009). These varying expressions of masculinity within the work context reflects the developmental literature from Way (2011), who found that boys of color, with the exclusion of Asian boys, were more likely to resist "traditional" components of masculinity such as toughness (but see our discussion of "cool pose theory" for a conflicting account). Indeed, Black and Latino men have greater representation in HEED careers, whereas White and Asian men are disproportionately represented within STEM fields (Woodhams et al., 2015).

Men's engagement in culturally feminized forms of work does not necessarily mean that they resist hegemonic masculinity or embrace caring identities in full. In O'Connor's (2015) investigation of how male nurses understand and perform masculinity at work, participants sought to distance themselves from the way that society typically characterizes nurses. In their interviews, men downplayed the archetype of the nurse as a selfless, sweet, angelic nurturer, and actively avoided the idea that their work was a type of natural "calling." Msiza (2020) finds that similar acts of distancing or justifying are common among male teachers. Practices of rationalizing their career choice by assuring their interviewer that they were heterosexual or manly were common. Warin (2006) also documents this pattern of distancing from femininity through an in depth case study of a male nursery teacher. Although the participant attempted to resist traditional masculinity by standing firm in his choice to work in a nursery, it was often done in a way that relied on hegemonically masculine values of being a pioneer or hero for having chosen the field, fearlessly defending the profession as a "moral crusader." Such themes of paving the way for other brave men also occurred in Msiza's research, where one participant states

I see myself as a pioneer and a leader in this foundation phase and it's a new thing, which is not familiar with men and in most cases it is regarded as a female job . . . because some of my colleagues they are being called little bit 'gayish' sometimes they say we are not men enough.

In lab-based experimental studies, participants rate men's teaching applications as "more likely to be gay" and therefore "posing a greater safety threat" to children than women with otherwise identical applications (Moss-Racusin & Johnson, 2016, p. 379). Men describing their teaching experiences with young children routinely report homophobic harassment, particularly the stereotype that their occupational choice implies homosexual and pedophilic behaviors (Carrington, 2002; Mills et al., 2004). Other researchers have highlighted men's experiences of general forms of discouragement for choosing or planning to choose a feminized career

(Weaver-Hightower, 2011), which stem from stereotypes of HEED work as low status and feminine (Rudman et al., 2013). Fears of homophobic or misogynistic harassment are not unjustified, although the means through which men cope with it may reify hegemonic masculinity rather than dismantle it (Skelton, 2002; Mills et al., 2004).

Brown (2009) has stressed that a preoccupation with “how hard it is to be a man” in feminized fields turns scholars’ focus away from addressing the systemic advantages that men face in terms of wages and promotions. He stresses that focusing on the social and emotional conditions involved in men’s career decisions is moot and almost laughable: “the masters of the universe, poor things, are crying inside” (p. 124). Ignoring the socioemotional landscape of men’s experiences in being deterred from HEED fields, and focusing purely on structural interventions instead, lacks an intersectional awareness of the multiple systems of oppression and subjugation that act upon both women and men. In addition, focusing exclusively on eliminating the structural advantages of men who have already taken up HEED work addresses only a narrow sliver of contributors to labor segregation on the whole. As developmental scholars have stressed, complicated social problems require the integration of knowledge from multiple levels of the ecological system (Rogers & Way, 2021). Guided by this framework, men’s peer environments and workplace cultures are valid entry points for structural intervention along with promotion reform, wage equity, and equal access to parental leave. This can certainly be done without embracing “poor me” sympathies for men.

Condition 4: Research Incentives Within the Academy

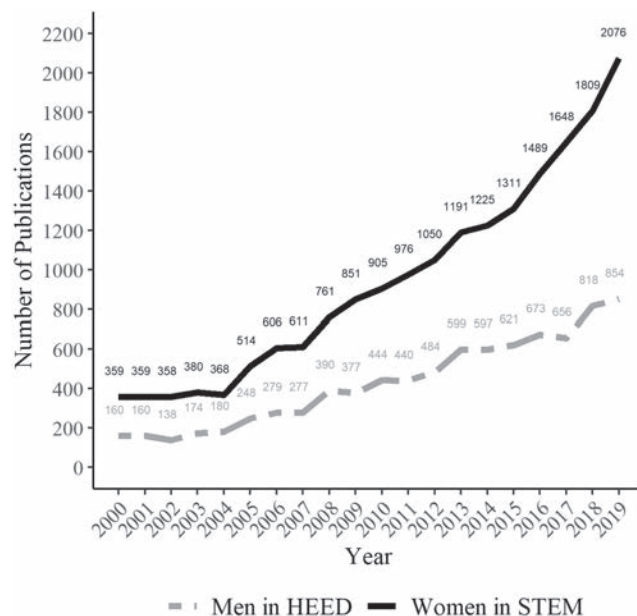
The academy is also subject to the cultural devaluation of feminized work, and the stalled effort to desegregate feminized fields is particularly evident in the degree to which men’s absence in HEED has been studied and intervened upon by academics. The movement to end gendered labor segregation has been disproportionately focused on STEM occupations, although this is slowly beginning to change. We show the stark difference between the number of peer-reviewed publications devoted to understanding gender segregation in STEM in comparison to HEED in Figure 3. Although the number of publications in both areas appears to be on the rise, the difference in rates is substantial.

Differences between HEED and STEM are prevalent in disproportionate funding incentives within the academy. In the last 20 years, women’s advancement in STEM fields has been a major area of focus for social scientists and major funders. One of the most prominent grant funding agencies is the National Science Foundation’s ADVANCE program, which has devoted over \$270 million dollars to the important effort of addressing STEM workplace climates, recruitment strategies, and other systemic barriers blocking women’s participation and advancement within these particular masculinized fields. The ADVANCE program also offers grants up to \$1 million dollars for nonprofit organizations working on specific projects to encourage more women and girls to pursue STEM careers.

At this time, commensurate efforts to address men’s absence from feminized fields do not yet exist. However, smaller government-funded initiatives to attract more men into teaching roles, nursing, and caring roles are somewhat of an exception, although these are fewer in number and have generally been abandoned (e.g., Warin,

Figure 3

Number of Publications Focusing on Men in HEED and Women in STEM From 2000 to 2019



Note. Data was sourced from Web of Science (<http://apps.webofknowledge.com/>) by tabulating the number of citations for a given year, for a given search query. Relevant publications were identified via a series of queries based on keywords as commonly used in the literature. Searches for Men in health care, early education, and domestic roles (HEED) and Women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) were queried separately but constructed such that they differed only in their topic focus (all other search parameters were constructed identically). Further, we constrained our queries to include only works from Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), Arts & Humanities Citation Index, Book Citation Index–Science (BKCI-S), Book Citation Index–Social Sciences & Humanities (BKCI-SSH), and the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) that were published in English. See the [Supplemental Information](#) for a full list of unabridged search terms and Boolean operators.

2006). Several of these programs ran during the early 2000s, such as Ireland’s Men as Teachers and Educators (MATE) initiative. Such programs were primarily motivated by the hope to “defeminize schools” in order to assuage panic over boys’ lack of traditionally masculine role models (Martino, 2015; Martino & Kehler, 2006). Researchers have called upon funding organizations and governments to finance research on improving labor segregation without justifying such investigations with what Lingard and Douglas (1999) and Martino and Kehler (2006) refer to as “recuperative masculinity politics.” Funding must also be extended to fields beyond teaching, where the majority of HEED transformation work has been concentrated thus far (McGrath & Van Bergen 2017).

Although nationally funded initiatives to improve gender segregation in HEED are rare within the academy and nonprofit industry, this does suggest that academics themselves are resistant to studying segregation in feminized work. Of course, many scholars have argued for researchers to investigate the causes and solutions to HEED disparities (see England, 2010; McGrath & Van Bergen,

2017). However, the extensive availability of funding and other initiatives for STEM transformation has poorly incentivized academics to take a holistic approach to gender segregation in work. Specifically, disproportionate incentives to study or intervene upon the systemic barriers that preclude men from pursuing interests in HEED fields (federal and agency grants, special issues in journals, women in STEM conferences) is a reflection of how feminized work is valued, from which the academy is not immune. Because of disproportionate incentives, the sprawling network of women's STEM initiatives rarely contends with England's (2010) assertion that desegregation of *both* areas is required to reach gender parity in *either* area. In order to reflect the prioritization of desegregating both areas, scholars and funders will need to increase their focus on men's absence in HEED roles without relying on problematic narratives of creating a more masculinized workforce, and view transformation in HEED as a vital component of STEM transformation.

Restoring Versus Reforming Caring Masculinities

Although this paper is the first to aggregate these literatures in one place, we are not the first to propose potential solutions to the larger problem of occupational gender segregation. As Keddie and Mills (2007) stress, the charge to integrate more men into HEED fields should not be led from the place of treating boys and men as a disadvantaged group who are in need of saving, or being positioning them "as an equity group requiring affirmative action and special treatment" (p. 206). The evidence we have reviewed shows quite the opposite: the lower valuation and compensation of culturally feminized work gives certain men a structural advantage rather than disadvantage, particularly for those already positioned at the top of the gender, racial, and class hierarchy. The effort to desegregate feminized work is not an effort to increase men's social capital or bolster the value of care-oriented labor by simply increasing the proportion of men—that is, an "add men and stir" approach. Instead, the aim is to challenge the association between gender and the inherent value of work and instantiate a new gender order in which care is everyone's responsibility. But how do we create a culture where men's capacities for HEED work will be recognized as valid and valuable?

One of the most widely discussed solutions to gendered labor segregation in the field of teaching has been to appeal to men from a "masculine" angle. This has included offering large signing bonuses and urging men to consider boys' needs for traditionally masculine role models (e.g., the MATE program). In essence, this tactic appeals to men's stereotypic "nature" as masculine providers. While these lines of thinking have been widely critiqued as working within the existing gender order (e.g., Martino, 2015), a commonly propositioned alternative is encouraging men to form "caring masculinities" (Elliott, 2016). According to her groundbreaking paper, Elliott argues that men's understanding of masculinity can be "reworked" to foster "the rejection of domination and the integration of values derived from the realm of care such as positive emotion, interdependence, and relationality" (p. 252). Caring masculinities has become a widely cited concept within the psychology of men and masculinities and is positioned to continue positively shaping the field (e.g., Kluczyńska, 2017; Puerta, 2020). As Scambor et al. (2019) stress, "supporting caring masculinities in paid care work may open the floor to critical reflections of gender

norms, challenging the model that considers women as natural carers and practices of traditional masculinities" (p. 66). The developmental angle that we advance through this paper brings a constructive challenge to Elliott's work, however.

Using the evidence reviewed, we agree with Elliott's core argument that the nurturing of caring masculinities is a primary solution to the problem of gender inequity. In particular, promoting a broad range of skills in boys and men can be transformative in combating two of the four major contributors that we identify as barriers to reaching gender equity in jobs: the unequal gender socialization of emotional and relational skills in childhood and the overall gendering and devaluation of feminized work. However, she positions caring masculinities as a way to change men (i.e., "men's care can effectively change gender" (p. 255), rather than to allow men to nurture capacities that they already possess, even if such capacities often go untapped or are concealed. She states "it does not matter, then, if men do not 'care about' (have nurturing attitudes and emotions) to begin. By 'caring for' (doing care work), nurturing attitudes and emotions can develop in men" (p. 255). Scambor et al.'s (2019) also endorse the cause of reforming men for the better: "We refer to caring masculinities as a guideline model that should be used to support men's caring activities (mainly, but not restricted to, professions) and a change among men toward greater gender equality (not restricted to the labor market)."

The developmental evidence we have reviewed shows that men and boys are not disinterested in or incapable of care. Rather, boys' desire to show care is typically discouraged to the point of concealment and then remains concealed and unexercised during adulthood. This is precisely why the language of the caring masculinities literature, which focuses on "change" or "reform" may be better framed as a restoration. According to the research of Chu (2014), Tronick et al. (1978), and Way (2011), boys from across class and race backgrounds show nurturing capacities regularly from infancy through adolescence. However, as Way (2011) details, boys are actively discouraged from showing or valuing such skills. Thus, it is not engaging in feminized work that makes emotional and relational skills appear or develop—although engaging in any skill will certainly refine that particular skill over time. Instead, it is boys' already present and active interest in these types of work that will continue to nurture what boys show that they possess. Boys' caring masculinities should be positioned firmly as a restoration rather than an intervention aimed at developing skills that were not previously there. This distinction is important and becomes visible only through the contribution of a developmental lens. Positioning the effort to nurture caring masculinities as restoring (rather than creating) caring masculinities is more in line with the available evidence on boys' intrinsic relational skills (e.g., Nagy, 2008; Tronick et al., 1978). Finally, emphasizing caring masculinities as nurturing *what already exists within boys* may be valuable shift in pedagogy for teachers and practitioners who are in closest proximity to boys as they are forming their aspirations.

Future Directions

There are several areas that researchers might focus on to better understand and improve the asymmetry of men's representation in HEED that pertain to the specific social-developmental framework of the current review. The developmental literature we review makes the case that men are not simply disinterested in HEED

professions, instead, components of their gender socialization circumscribe men's already present (but often concealed) interests in nurturing others in their professional and personal lives. Similar to the effort to shift individuals' perceptions of STEM careers as "men's" occupations, researchers, grant funders, governments, and nonprofit organizations will need to focus on reframing HEED jobs as highly valued and indispensable social roles in which men are capable of contributing. Such interventions may be especially beneficial for universities and businesses struggling to integrate men into their majors or workplaces. However, attempting to integrate men through campaigns that focus on the value of traditional masculinity in HEED professions actively work within the gender order by reinforcing, rather than working against, the underlying ideological structure that gives rise to labor segregation. As Skelton (2002) stresses, the aim is not to "remasculinize," domains that have been deemed feminine, nor to frame men who enter HEED fields as heroic, brave, masculine pioneers (Msiza, 2020; Warin, 2006). The U.K.'s *Men in The Early Years* campaign provides a good example of recruitment efforts that do not appeal to hegemonic masculinity (The Fatherhood Institute, 2017), and the nonprofit Promundo's *MenCare* effort offers another positive example within the context of men's general caregiving for their families.

We join Chu (2014) and Way (2011) in arguing that boys are not in need of feminized skills—these *already present* qualities should be nurtured. This perspective echoes what other scholars have found regarding the importance of the social context in the development and sustaining of the motivation to pursue gender atypical career interests (Lawson et al., 2015; Robnett & Leaper, 2013). During early childhood especially, interventions should be targeted at changing gender socialization agents rather than changing boys. This should involve providing more support for boys' early social and emotional development by allowing them nonjudgmental exploration of a range of toys in their play, and engaging their emotions rather than dismissing them. Researchers can assist in providing teachers and parents with information about how to recognize and challenge false messages about boys' limited emotional capacities, as well as how to intervene within peer cultures that foster policing masculinities that fall outside of typically acceptable bounds (e.g., Chu, 2014). Peers have the potential to support behaviors that are commonly viewed as gender atypical, and researchers should work to understand how to facilitate more support and less victimization of boys' who show nontraditional occupational interests. There is also a growing body of work on pedagogical tools for teachers seeking to nurture alternative masculinities in boys, and we encourage readers to consult the work of Keddie and Bartel (2020) for potential strategies that could be applied to occupational interest. These cascading positive influences from across boys' early development contexts can encourage caring masculinities early in development and circumvent the need to "restore" these capacities later on.

Our review also suggests that role modeling, under certain conditions, can be beneficial in encouraging boys to engage fully with their capacity for care. Similar to efforts encouraging more girls to play with toys that nurture early STEM skills (e.g., GoldieBlox, Girls Who Code), the desegregation of HEED fields could be furthered by partnerships between researchers and industry professionals. Such partnerships can facilitate the creation of toys and television programs that recognize boys' capacities for

tenderness and care without essentializing them (i.e., making baby doll toy sets in "masculine" colors). Researchers studying STEM occupations have shown that role modeling can, when done correctly, be a critical tool for encouraging the development of girls' science and math skills (e.g., Shin et al., 2016), and there is growing evidence that role modeling can be a critical tool in addressing HEED inequality if implemented at scale (e.g., O'Connor, 2015; Evans & Blye, 2003). For example, television programming with more men in nursing and teaching roles may reinforce the notion that such choices are normal rather than exceptional—but certain pitfalls should be avoided. For example, role modeling for the sake of giving boys traditionally masculine role models has been shown to be both problematic and ineffective, as it reifies rather than interrogates hegemonic masculinity (Martino, 2015).

In the hopeful, eventual future where there are greater numbers of men in HEED fields, men would simply be more visible and represented among what boys see as potential career paths. This would, in theory, incentivize more boys to explore their interests in such careers. However, just as "add women and stir" approaches to equity and inclusion efforts have been criticized (e.g., Stephenson et al., 2022), "add men and stir" approaches should be met with similar caution. Some researchers stress that children require race and gender matched role models to imagine themselves in a given field—quite famously, Zirkel (2002) found that children whose race and gender identities "matched" those of their role models tended to have better overall academic performance than those with "nonmatched" role models. Identity matched role modeling for boys in the context of HEED has not been tested, but we suspect that the availability of role models in real life, rather than simply toys and media programming, would have positive effects on boys' intentions to pursue care-oriented work. While the snowball logic of increased representation (i.e., more men will lead to more men) should be taken seriously, numbers or proportions of men in HEED does not necessarily equate to gender progress. Men's long-term, antipatriarchal, and feminist engagement in HEED work should be the goal, not simply getting men "in the front door" (Brody et al., 2020).

Our paper provides a variety of interesting possibilities for additional empirical investigation. To continue advancing developmental research on labor segregation, the field would benefit from longitudinal studies that simply document on how occupational interest develops over time and when gender ideologies most strongly circumscribe children's interests. We also look forward to more literature within the domain of intervention assessment, particularly the effects of campaigns that assist boys and men in restoring their capacities for care in relationships (but see WiseGuyz for one notable, evidence-based exception, Exner-Cortens et al., 2021; Hurlock, 2016). In a continuation of Zirkel's (2002) research on the positive effects of gender and race matched role models for children, future researchers should examine the effects of gender and race matched role modeling on boys' interest in pursuing careers in HEED.

Another clear direction for future research is to refine current understandings of masculinized and feminized occupations outside of the STEM and HEED categorizations—distinctions among other gendered occupations remain poorly understood (e.g., fishing, forestry, baking, etc.). Scholars should also seek to understand how these finer-grained occupational distinctions interact with intersectional class-gender status differences. For example, construction work is highly gendered as male, but generally regarded as

lower status—it may be fruitful to understand the implications of individuals' perceptions of these various occupations. Moreover, our review only presented a preliminary examination of the state of this literature today with respect to number of publications (in Figure 3). Future directions might include a more exhaustive systematic review of factors like citation count or journal impact factors in order to capture the visibility or status of STEM and HEED research.

Conclusion

There has been marked progress in representation, social perception, and the actual experiences of girls and women in stereotypically male occupations, although we have far to go in this multidisciplinary effort. Much of this progress is due to the ongoing STEM equality movement combating the cultures and stereotypes that have long enabled the exclusion of women, and even more so women of color, in these domains. As researchers document this progress and strategize for the future, we must recognize men's underrepresentation in culturally feminized fields as one of the most pressing issues in the movement for gender equity as a whole.

The forces working against desegregation in HEED fields are powerful and interrelated. We identify four of them in this paper: (a) the gender stereotyping and devaluation of feminized skills, (b) the unequal gender socialization of emotional and relational skills in childhood, (c) the racialized “glass escalator” phenomenon and hostile climates issues faced by men in HEED careers, and (d) disproportionate incentivizing of research on occupational segregation in feminized professions. We show that the gendering and devaluation of feminized work is embedded within boys' social contexts and argue that these ideologies circumscribe their occupational interests beginning in childhood. The notion that occupations involving care and emotional sensitivity are incongruent with traditional masculinity continues to manifest into adulthood, evidenced by the raced and gendered treatment of men who already work in HEED occupations (e.g., Harvey Wingfield, 2010).

Men's integration into HEED has profound implications at the individual and structural level. Absent of an immediate overhaul in how HEED work is financially compensated, labor desegregation is poised to profoundly reduce the gender wage gap (England, 2010; Hegewisch et al., 2010). In terms of individual benefits, men who engage in roles that have been feminized, particularly caring roles, have been shown to experience greater psychological well-being, physical health, and involvement in their communities (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Promundo, 2012). In addition to the benefits of rejecting dominant forms of masculinity through their caring work, men's greater integration into HEED fields will address critical labor shortages in the United States—both nonprofit and governmental agencies have repeatedly expressed concern about labor shortages in feminized occupations, particularly teaching and nursing (García & Weiss, 2019; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, National Center for Health Workforce Analysis, 2017). Finally, gender transformation efforts in STEM have emphasized how women's and people of color's integration into these fields is positioned to advance innovation through the cultivation of previously excluded perspectives and talents. Similarly, men's greater participation in HEED professions could offer new insights and opportunities for the advancement of these fields (Croft et al., 2015).

The privileged status of masculinity over femininity, which perpetuates the gender stereotyping of work and devaluing of work traditionally occupied by women, is enshrined through the naturalizing of the gender order. To move forward, scholars and their professional partners outside of the academy must focus on disrupting typical patterns of gender socialization that position boys' concealment of their emotional and relational capacities as normal and natural. The outlined recommendations for future research directions in this paper are positioned to galvanize this pursuit at both the individual and structural level, from boyhood to adulthood. With time and increased research support, it is possible to create the conditions necessary for a future where more men and boys are unafraid to express their sensitive, nurturing, and emotionally astute traits, and view these capacities as worthy of exploring in a career.

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