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‘Mere Amateurs’? Elementary Teachers and the Making of Scientific Authority in the British Child Study Movement

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Abstract
This article offers new perspectives on the relationship between elementary teaching, scientific expertise and the professionalization of the human sciences. Previous scholarship has demonstrated the ready existence of ‘amateur’ science societies in the nineteenth century where cross-class exchanges were common. While most scholars contend that science had largely professionalized by the early twentieth century, this article complicates that narrative by examining the role of lower-middle-class elementary teachers in the British child study movement, particularly focusing on London. Recent scholarship has demonstrated the role played by professional organizations for lower-middle-class men in the early twentieth century. This research adds to that picture by investigating the importance of scientific associational culture and support through child study organizations for teachers. The article argues that London ‘child study’ was shaped into a collaborative space with opportunities for professional development by its lower-middle-class teachers. The article centres the intersecting roles of class, gender and profession in shaping access to scientific expertise and considers how this was navigated by teachers of both genders. I argue that teachers used the child study movement to create ‘portable expertise’ – status that could be moved over professional boundaries between the educational and scientific spheres. These strategies for crafting expertise and mutual support were met with ambivalence and sometimes resistance from elite medical actors within the child study community, culminating in conflicts over the authority to produce and make use of scientific knowledge about children.

In the evening of 5 October 1897, the London branch of the British Child Study Association (BCSA), a society for child development research, met for the first time. Eighty-five members were present when ‘[t]he Chair was taken by, & an interesting address given by the President, H. Holman Esqre [sic] at 8 p.m.’[1] Henry Holman (1859–1919) and his audience were gathered at 81 Harley Street, a private residence owned by Reginald Langdon-Down (1866–1955). The refreshments had been organized by the latter’s wife, Jane Jarvie Langdon-Down (1864–1917). The Langdon-Downs were a wealthy family of physicians who ran a hospital for children with developmental disorders.[2] A number of other physicians were in attendance,

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[1] The Wellcome Collection (TWC), PSY/BPS/3/3/2: ‘British Child Study Association London Branch’, 5 October 1897, p. 1.

[2] James Ogden and Mathew Thomson, ‘Down, John Langdon Haydon Langdon (1828–1896), physician and expert in mental science’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/37650⟩ [last accessed 1 June 2024].

including Fletcher Beach (1845–1929), the son of a chemist, whose interests also centred on the 'feeble-minded'.[3] Henry Holman, however, was not a man who had started his life in the middle class. His father, Walter Holman, who had recently died in 1895, had worked as a bricklayer, miller's loader and, in his old age, a gardener. Henry Holman had been one of at least ten siblings and studied as a pupil teacher, before moving to London to enrol in further teacher training at Battersea Training College.[4] Holman's career in teaching took off, and he became master of an elementary and then a secondary school.[5] At 29, Holman went to study at Cambridge and graduated in 1890.[6] Upon graduating, he accepted a post as lecturer at the University College of Wales in Aberystwyth, where he progressed to become Professor of Education. He then left university work to return to become an Inspector of Schools.[7]

As Holman addressed the audience, he might have spotted in the crowd the faces of Mary E. Crees (1844–1936), a carpenter's daughter, and Kate Stevens (1854–1933), raised by a single mother, grandmother and two railway labourer uncles.[8] The diverse social origins of the members of the BCSA made for an organization where classed boundaries could be made to blur. Despite his modest origins, Holman held the centre of attention and authority at the meeting, and there was no obvious opposition to the presence and activity of the lower middle class, which he, Crees and Stevens represented in the society. Such opposition would appear but was never strong enough to stop lower-middle-class members from achieving positions of authority within the London association.

Child study provided an accessible space attractive to socially upward mobile teachers. This article focuses on lower-middle-class elementary teachers in schools for the working and lower middle class and their pursuit and mobilization of scientific status through child study. By working class and lower middle class, I mean households reliant on the income from manual labour and lower-salaried white-collar work such as clerking and teaching, respectively. I argue that these teachers used child study as a space to cultivate collaborative and educational cultures of mutual improvement. They further used their role within child study research to claim scientific authority, which bolstered their professional credentials and in turn helped secure their claims of educational expertise. In exploring these strategies for creating and mobilizing expertise, I focus on the London child study community, where lower-middle-class membership was especially concentrated. Teachers active in the branch both created and took advantage of opportunities for further social mobility. This created tensions, which surfaced in several conflicts. As such, child study provided an important venue for fostering, mobilizing and experimenting with the boundaries of scientific, professional and personal identity.

[3] 'Obituary: Fletcher Beach, MB FRCP', *British Medical Journal*, 2 (7 September 1929), p. 479; '1851 England census', The National Archives (TNA), HO 107/1861, p. 9, entry for Thomas Beach, Dorset (Bridport), via <https://www.ancestry.com/⟩ [last accessed 17 August 2025].

[4] '1861 England Census', TNA, RG 9/583, fo. 17, GSU 542666, p. 6; entry for the Holman family, Sussex (Hurstpierpoint), last accessed 17 August 2025 via <https://www.ancestry.com/⟩; '1871 England census', TNA, RG 10/1063, fo. 23, GSU 827490, p. 13; entry for the Holman family, Sussex (Hurstpierpoint), last accessed 17 August 2025 via <Ancestry.com>; '1881 England census', TNA, RG 11/1064, fo. 9, GSU 1341251, n.p.; entry for the Holman family, Sussex (Hurstpierpoint), via <https://www.ancestry.com/⟩; T. G. T. [Thomas George Tibbey], 'H. Holman, M.A.', *Child-Study*, 12/2 (1919), p. 17 [all websites last accessed 17 August 2025].

[5] T. G. T., 'H. Holman, M.A.', p. 17.

[6] John Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses from 1752 to 1900*, pt. 2, vol. III (Cambridge, 1947), p. 504, accessed via ACAD: A Cambridge Alumni Database via <venn.lib.cam.ac.uk>.

[7] T. G. T., 'H. Holman, M.A', p. 17.

[8] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/2, minutes, 5 October 1897, p. 1; '1861 England census', TNA, RG 9/2504, fo. 55, GSU 542981, p. 32, entry for the Frost and Stevens family, Derbyshire (St. Werburgh), last accessed 17 August 2025 via <https://www.ancestry.com/⟩; '1851 England census', TNA, HO 107/2011, p. 18, entry for Crees family, Staffordshire (Tutbury).

The history of the BCSA was, from the outset, tied closely to education and the teaching profession. In the summer of 1893, a group of women teachers arrived in New York on the ship *The Adriatic*. The passenger list included eleven women teachers, eight of whom were making their way to the Chicago World's Fair.[9] Mary Louch (1854–1947), who was in charge of the teacher training department of Cheltenham Ladies' College, initially kept to the teacher training exhibits.[10] Towards the end of the conference, she attended a presentation by psychologist G. Stanley Hall, whose subject matter – child study – interested her and two of the other teachers in particular.[11] The next year, Louch and the two other teachers, Margaret Clapperton and Mary Crees, decided to form a child study society in Britain.[12] Under Louch's editorship, the association started publishing a periodical, *The Paidologist*, in 1899. Child study research – on topics ranging from drawing to heredity – was primarily carried out in schools and homes through observation. Findings were discussed at regular meetings of the numerous local branches of the national society or published in the society journal.[13] In 1907, after merging with the London-based Childhood Society, the BCSA changed its name to The Child Study Society (CSS). The periodical now became known as *Child Study*.

British child study aimed to produce not only scientific knowledge, but specifically scientific knowledge which would be useful to the educational sector:

> The Object of the Association is to interest parents, teachers, and others in the systematic observation of children and young people with a view to gaining greater insight into child-nature and securing more sympathetic and scientific methods of training the young.[14]

This interest in new science-based methods for teaching and learning was prompted by multiple recent historical changes. School-based education was becoming increasingly popular for middle-class girls, increasingly replacing previous cultures of governess-led education in the home. Directly linked to increasing numbers of middle-class girls as pupils, increasing numbers of middle-class women pursued careers in the teaching profession. Teaching provided a socially acceptable and accessible way for intellectually ambitious middle-class women to pursue education and career advancement. It also provided financial stability and eased the strain on middle-class families by reducing the needs of providing for unmarried daughters.[15]

Second, schooling was increasingly a public and national matter in the late nineteenth century. Mass-schooling had its roots in religious initiatives tracing back

[9] 'New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820–1957', entry for 'The Adriatic', 15 July 1893, via <https://www.ancestry.com/⟩ [last accessed 18 August 2025]; Isabel Hay (ed.), 'Chronicle', *The Cheltenham Ladies' College Magazine* 27/Spring (1893), p. 145; Mary Louch, 'Three Weeks' Holiday in America', *The Cheltenham Ladies' College Magazine*, 28/Autumn (1893), pp. 254–62.

[10] Louch, 'Three Weeks' Holiday in America', pp. 254–62, esp. pp. 257–8.

[11] Kate Stevens, 'Child Study in Great Britain', *The Pedagogical Seminary*, 13/2 (1906), p. 245; Kevin J. Brehony, 'Transforming theories of childhood and early childhood education child study and the empirical assault on Froebelian rationalism', *Paedagogica Historica*, 45/4–5 (2009), pp. 585–604, at pp. 593–4; Sally Shuttleworth, 'Inventing a discipline: autobiography and the science of child study in the 1890s', *Comparative Critical Studies*, 2/2 (2005), pp. 143–63, at pp. 146–7.

[12] Isabel Hay (ed.), 'Chronicle', *The Cheltenham Ladies' College Magazine*, 30 (1894), p. 312; Stevens, 'Child Study in Great Britain', pp. 245–9; 'History of the B. C. S. A.', *The Paidologist*, 1/1 (1899), p. 69; Mary Louch, 'Obituary [for Margaret Clapperton]', *The Paidologist*, 4/2 (1902), p. 105.

[13] Shuttleworth, 'Inventing a discipline', pp. 147–8.

[14] 'British Child Study Association Mins. 1898–1907', TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, page starting 'Rules made as follows', *c*. 1898.

[15] Gillian Sutherland, *In Search of the New Woman: Middle-Class Women and Work in Britain 1870–1914* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 18–23.

to the turn of the nineteenth century but expanded in the mid-nineteenth century.[16] Much like middle-class women provided recruits for the growing numbers of teachers in middle-class girls' schools, most elementary school teachers came from working or lower-middle-class homes.[17]

Child study was largely sustained by a community of teachers, parents and medical professionals. Most historians who have explored British child study have underscored the tensions within the movement between 'experts' and 'amateurs' but, I argue, have been too eager to categorize the teacher component of the child study movement as merely 'rank and file' members, as Adrian Wooldridge has put it.[18] 'Amateur' was a term used in attempts to exclude teachers from child study expertise and is an insufficient reflection of the complicated and contested professional and scientific expertise held and crafted by teachers active in child study, as I will demonstrate.

Elementary teaching and the lower middle class

From 1846, promising children were first trained as pupil teachers in elementary schools for five years upon themselves graduating at thirteen; those who did well then continued on to further training to become certified teachers, while others stayed on as assistants of unqualified teachers.[19] The 1870 Education Act and 1880 Elementary Education Act made the education of working-class children first mandatory to provide in all parts of England and Wales in 1870, and then mandatory to attend for pupils in 1880, further cementing the need for trained elementary teachers.[20] Mass education continued to be expanded through several reforms, notably in 1902 and 1918, culminating in the 1944 Education Act, which made secondary schooling mandatory and free for all British children.[21] Wendy Robinson has referred to pupil teacher training as a 'closed system of schooling and training from within the elementary, and predominantly working-class world within which it existed'.[22] Dina Copelman has demonstrated that almost half of pupil teachers in London – the adolescents in schooling for a future as elementary teachers – came from working-class backgrounds, and a further c. 30%–40% from lower-middle-class backgrounds.[23]

Christopher Bischof has further argued that there was demand for pupil teachers who 'understood the milieu of the elementary school', which made children from working- and lower-middle-class homes more desirable in the role than middle-class apprentices.[24] Through teaching training, young men and women who had themselves grown up in working-class homes where their parents performed manual

[16] Wendy Robinson, *Pupil Teachers and Their Professional Training in Pupil-Teacher Centres in England and Wales, 1870–1914* (Lewiston, 2003), p. 19; Christopher Bischof, *Teaching Britain: Elementary Teachers and the State of the Everyday, 1846–1906* (Oxford, 2019), p. 25.
[17] Bischof, *Teaching Britain*, p. 50.
[18] Adrian Wooldridge, *Measuring the Mind: Education and Psychology in England c.1860–c.1990* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 37; Brehony, 'Transforming theories', pp. 594–5; Shuttleworth, 'Inventing a discipline', pp. 146–8. For other key works on child study, see also Roisin Laing, 'Victorian autobiography, child study, and the origins of child psychology', in Bernard Lightman and Bennett Zon (eds), *Victorian Culture and the Origin of Disciplines* (New York, 2019), pp. 188–210; and Sally Shuttleworth, *The Mind of the Child: Child Development in Literature, Science, and Medicine 1840–1900* (Oxford, 2010).
[19] Robinson, *Pupil Teachers*, p. 21; Wendy Robinson, 'In search of a "plain tale": rediscovering the champions of the pupil-teacher centres 1900–10', *History of Education*, 28/1 (1999), pp. 53–71, at p. 55; Bischof, *Teaching Britain*, p. 49.
[20] Bischof, *Teaching Britain*, pp. 41–2.
[21] Roy Lowe, 'Education, 1900–1939', in Chris Wrigley (ed.), *A Companion to Early Twentieth-Century Britain* (Hoboken, NJ, 2003), pp. 424–9.
[22] Robinson, *Pupil Teachers*, p. 21.
[23] Dina Copelman, *London's Women Teachers: Gender, Class and Feminism, 1870–1930* (Abingdon, 1996), pp. 31–4.
[24] Bischof, *Teaching Britain*, p. 52.

labour emerged into a professional role, akin to that of clerks and other low-level administrative professions.

The stratum of early-twentieth-century professional workers is known as the 'lower-middle-class' and is normally defined to include professions that did not require manual labour, skilled or otherwise, but which still inferred decidedly lower status and lower pay than traditional middle-class professions. Geoffrey Crossick has defined the lower middle class as expanding beyond 'the classic petty bourgeoisie' in the late nineteenth century, to include also 'the new white collar salaried occupations, most notably clerks but also manager, commercial travellers, schoolteachers, and certain shop assistants'.[25] For the purposes of this article, I use Crossick's definition, defining working-class households as those reliant on the income from manual labour, skilled or unskilled and lower-middle-class households as those where income came from clerical work, elementary teaching, shopkeeping or similar lower-income white-collar jobs.

The perceived upward strivings of this 'new' lower middle class were mocked as inflated by middle-class writers in satire periodicals such as *Punch*.[26] However, there is much to suggest that the lower middle class retained strong ties to working-class culture. Michelle Johansen's exploration of the Society of Public Librarians (1895–1930) has shown how professional lower-middle-class men formed and engaged in mutual improvement societies reminiscent of those typical of the working class, maintaining ties to working-class culture while focusing on librarian skills and the 'transformative potential of learning'.[27] Within the teaching profession, there was already a history of teachers organizing for professional advancement and education by the end of the nineteenth century; the College of Preceptors, founded in 1846, sought to issue certificates of proficiency to worthy teachers in order to heighten the status of the profession.[28]

The child study movement drew on the growing need to provide an increasingly comprehensive educational policy and the anxieties surrounding it to explain why their scientific endeavour was so crucial. It was part of a broader move towards child-centred education, represented most forcefully by the kindergarten movement and Froebelianism, which was gaining tenuous traction in British education.[29] The kindergarten movement and child study were both allies and rivals in providing new models for education; as Kevin Brehony has argued, child study 'confronted' the more theoretically based Froebelianism as an 'empirically based educational movement'.[30] Indeed, British proponents argued that child study methods provided an evidence-based and scientific foundation on which to base educational policy and practice – 'more sympathetic and scientific methods of training the young'.[31] Child study, in contrast to organizations such as the College of Preceptors, stretched its endeavour beyond the educational, into scientific inquiry. But that child study linked to and

[25] Geoffrey Crossick, 'The emergence of the lower middle class in Britain', in Geoffrey Crossick (ed.) *The Lower Middle Class in Britain, 1870–1914* (London, 1977), p. 12.
[26] A. James Hammerton, 'Pooterism or partnership? Marriage and masculine identity in the lower middle class', *Journal of British Studies*, 38/3 (1999), pp. 291–321, at pp. 291–4.
[27] Michelle Johansen, '"Good feeling and brotherliness": leisure, the suburbs and the society of public librarians in London (1895–1930)', *London Journal*, 39/3 (2014), pp. 249–64, at pp. 259–60.
[28] Richard Aldrich, *School and Society in Victorian Britain: Joseph Payne and the New World of Education* (Abingdon, 2012), pp. 96, 100–2.
[29] Jane Read, 'Free play with Froebel: use and abuse of progressive pedagogy in London's infant schools, 1870–c.1904', *Paedagogica Historica*, 42/3 (2006), pp. 299–323, at pp. 304–7; Kristen D. Nawrotzki, '"Like sending coals to Newcastle:" Impressions from and of the Anglo-American kindergarten movements', *Paedagogica Historica*, 43/2 (2007), pp. 223–33, at pp. 224–6.
[30] Brehony, 'Transforming theories', p. 592; Nawrotzki, '"Like sending coals to Newcastle"', p. 229.
[31] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, page starting 'Rules made as follows', *c*. 1898.

ought to inform teaching practice was uncontroversial. Members of the movement realized the potential of this interconnection by claiming access to a dual identity as both educators and scientists.

Precarious status and scientific professionalization

It is critical here to appreciate the ways in which these 'new' groups of teachers – those working in private girls' schools and those working in elementary schools – were 'precarious', borrowing Heidi Egginton's and Zoe Thomas's term. Egginton and Thomas, and the contributors to their edited volume *Precarious Professionals*, use gender as the primary foil to 'illuminate how professional recognition could be claimed, adapted and denied by historical subjects at different moments'. Marginality, Egginton and Thomas claim, must itself be understood and centred in narratives of the crafting and mobilization of professional expertise.[32] For the present article, this appreciation of marginality is crucial in my treatment of teachers as quasi-professionals in relation to child study, unable to sit neatly in either of the categories of scientific amateur or scientific professional.

Against the backdrop of the suffrage movement and eventual female enfranchisement, Lyndsey Jenkins has argued that early-twentieth-century work in the educational sector was construed as an intrinsically reforming practice, attractive to politically radical and progressive women.[33] While the First World War and subsequent Sex Disqualifications (Removals) Act of 1919 increased female access to professional work, marriage bars still excluded many women from employment.[34] As Krista Cowman and Louise Jackson have argued, 'occupations associated with a predominantly female labour force in the first half of the twentieth century', including teaching, 'failed to attain the prestige of medicine and law and, thus, were unable to break away from an association with the petite bourgeoisie'.[35]

Child study was attractive to both girls' teachers and elementary teachers of both genders because it provided access to another contested, but increasingly high-status category – scientist. Science was, however, also a contentious category here. For the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, most scientific inquiry in Britain was an unpaid 'amateur' endeavour. Scientific inquiry was private and associated with the upper classes.[36] Scientific practice increasingly took on the characteristics of a masculine ideal, the performance of which could enable class mobility.[37] This gendering of science was intrinsically part of its professionalization; with a masculinized scientific archetype on the rise, women and lower-class scientific amateurs were explicitly excluded.[38] Heather Ellis has underlined how this boundary-practice rested on professional anxieties about the fragility of legitimacy and prestige.[39] In attempting to actively construct male professional identity as the norm,

[32] Heidi Egginton and Zoe Thomas, 'Introduction', in Heidi Egginton and Zoe Thomas (eds), *Precarious Professionals: Gender, Identities and Social Change in Modern Britain* (London, 2021), pp. 1–40, at pp. 2–3.
[33] Lyndsey Jenkins, *Sisters and Sisterhood: The Kenney Family, Class, and Suffrage, 1890–1965* (Oxford, 2021), p. 205.
[34] Adrian Bingham, '"An Era of Domesticity"? Histories of women and gender in interwar Britain', *Cultural and Social History*, 1/2, pp. 225–33, at p. 227; Krista Cowman and Louise A. Jackson, 'Middle-class women and professional identity', *Women's History Review*, 14/2 (2005), pp. 165–80, at p. 171.
[35] Cowman and Jackson, 'Middle-class women and professional identity', p. 172.
[36] Paul White, 'The man of science', in Bernard Lightman (ed.), *A Companion to the History of Science* (Chichester, 2016), pp. 199–200.
[37] Paul White, *Thomas Huxley: Making the Man of Science* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 33.
[38] Erika L. Milam and Robert A. Nye, 'An introduction to scientific masculinities', *Osiris*, 30/1 (2015), pp. 1–14, at p. 9; White, 'The man of science', p. 203. See also Alexandra Rutherford, 'Maintaining masculinity in mid-twentieth-century American psychology: Edwin Boring, scientific eminence, and the "Woman Problem"', *Osiris*, 30/1 (2015), pp. 250–71, particularly pp. 252, 263, 269.
[39] Heather Ellis, *Masculinity and Science in Britain, 1831–1918* (London, 2017), esp. pp. 2–3, 6.

scientists became increasingly concerned that non-professional practitioners would taint the status of the 'real' scientists. Hence, the word 'amateur' became a way to berate those science practitioners deemed less worthy of the occupation.[40]

In Britain, research, more broadly defined, was already seeing a gradual professionalization within university settings during the first half of the nineteenth century in attempts to tie universities more closely to the growing professional world in an industrializing country. This professionalization intensified after 1850, modelled on German universities.[41] The natural sciences in England increasingly professionalized during the 1850s and 60s, a development pushed by the circle surrounding T. H. Huxley, intending to remove religious influence from science.[42] Scientific skill was by the 1890s solidifying into the ability to carry out original primary research.[43]

This professionalization went against a long tradition of science within working-class and lower-middle-class culture. Matthew Wale's and Bernard Lightman's work on amateur entomologists and astronomers has provided crucial insights into the self-fashioning of scientific organizations beyond the professional and the importance of the print medium.[44] Anne Secord has demonstrated how 'amateur' science had roots in trade union activity, through which artisanal workers regulated their trade, but also exchanged knowledge. Similarly, so-called mutual improvement societies provided spaces for working-class peer-to-peer education.[45] Jonathan Rose has shown how these societies organized meetings involving presentations and discussion and often maintained their own libraries.[46] Nineteenth-century mutual improvement societies typically also issued proceedings, summarizing the contents of meetings and collecting these proceedings, once circulated, in the society library.[47] The societies, '[t]hough committed to knowledge for its own sake', paved the way for the upward social mobility of their members.[48] I argue that similar structures of support and peer-education existed within child study.

As professional scientists were seeking scientific exclusivity, editors of popular scientific publications across London were pushing for working-class men and women to start their own scientific investigations.[49] In entomology societies in the 1850s, Matthew Wale has shown, working-class practitioners (studying insects in their leisure time) and wealthy gentlemen found themselves in conversation on scientific questions,

[40] Katherine Pandora, 'Amateurs', in Bernard Lightman (ed.), *A Companion to the History of Science* (Chichester, 2016), pp. 185–6.

[41] Sheldon Rothblatt, *The Revolution of the Dons* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 249–50; Cyrus C. M. Mody, 'The professional scientist', in Bernard Lightman (ed.), *A Companion to the History of Science* (Hoboken, NJ, 2016), pp. 211–12.

[42] Bernard Lightman, 'Popularizers, participation and the transformations of nineteenth-century publishing: from the 1860s to the 1880s', *Notes and Records: The Royal Society Journal of the History of Science*, 70/4 (2016), pp. 343–59, at p. 345.

[43] Melinda Baldwin, *Making Nature: The History of a Scientific Journal* (Chicago, 2015), p. 75.

[44] Matthew Wale, 'Editing entomology: natural-history periodicals and the shaping of scientific communities in nineteenth-century Britain', *British Journal for the History of Science*, 52/3 (2019), pp. 405–23; Bernard Lightman, 'Late Victorian astronomical society journals: creating scientific communities on paper', in Gowan Dawson, Bernard Lightman, Sally Shuttleworth and Jonathan R. Topham (eds) *Science Periodicals in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago, IL, 2020), pp. 274–308.

[45] Anne Secord, 'Science in the pub: artisan botanists in early nineteenth-century Lancashire', *History of Science*, 32/3 (1994), pp. 269–315, particularly p. 274; Michael I. Watson, 'Mutual improvement societies in nineteenth-century Lancashire, *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 21/2 (1989), pp. 8–17, at 10–11.

[46] Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, 3rd ed. (New Haven, CT, 2021), pp. 58, 61.

[47] Kirstie Blair, Michael Sanders and Lauren Weiss, 'Literary bonds: mutual improvement society manuscript magazines and Victorian periodical culture', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 54/23 (2021), pp. 463–86, at p. 466.

[48] Rose, *The Intellectual Life*, p. 61.

[49] Susan Sheet-Pyenson, 'Popular science periodicals in Paris and London: the emergence of a low scientific culture, 1820–1875', *Annals of Science*, 42/6 (1986), pp. 549–72, at pp. 553–4.

enabled in their cross-class exchange by the print medium.[50] This type of collaboration was quickly becoming contentious. By 1860, Susan Sheets-Pyenson has claimed, the popular scientific press was increasingly encouraging workers to become passive consumers.[51]

Despite such trends in the wider scientific field, child study, with its close ties to education and its need for teachers as data-gatherers, represents a stark contrast. Child study provided a space where teachers were able to create 'portable expertise', scientific authority which could be mobilized in a professional setting. At the same time, professional expertise from the educational field to some extent carried over into the child study setting – elementary teachers were considered critical members of the community and concessions were made to keep them involved.

Teacher inclusivity in child study

Teaching was often the route into the BCSA for its non-elite members. The lower-middle-class London members were usually teachers or had started their careers in the teaching profession; such was the case for Holman before he progressed to the role of school inspector, Crees and Stevens, who both became headmistresses, and Thomas George Tibbey (1870–1934), teacher and later headteacher, the son of a printer's machinist and, later, engine fitter, who became one of BCSA London's most active members from 1899.[52] The majority of members were also teachers, as Adrian Wooldridge has shown.[53] Wooldridge, however, overlooks the way teachers and ex-teachers were not predominantly passive amateurs but present and integral to the BCSA's London branch at every level, and actively worked to keep the association inclusive of junior teachers and teachers-in-training.

From its inception, the London branch was aware of and operated on the assumption that membership in the BCSA across the country was heavily teacher-based. When the branch was concerned about the lack of a formal constitution governing the relationship between the branches and the national BCSA in 1898, the consensus was the following:

> The best way seemed to be for Mr Holman to consult with Miss Clapperton as to a scheme to be laid before a General Meeting of all the branches to be summoned in London during the Summer meeting of Teachers.[54]

The most convenient way to talk to members of the other branches was, in short, to make sure a general meeting aligned with the teaching conference that members were already likely to attend. When during the following year, 1899, there was discussion of raising the membership fee for the benefit of the BCSA's magazine, this was eventually voted down explicitly in order to keep the membership fee affordable for teachers.[55] This resistance to excluding teacher members on economic grounds might suggest two things: first, that teacher members made up such a large part of the association that their loss would result in a net loss for the society financially; second, that the society was invested, for reasons unrelated to money, in its teacher members. Both are likely to have played a part. As the BCSA aimed to 'interest parents, teachers, and

[50] Matthew Wale, '"The sympathy of a crowd": imagining scientific communities in mid-nineteenth-century entomology periodicals', in Dawson et al., *Science Periodicals in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, pp. 222–4.
[51] Sheet-Pyenson, 'Popular science periodicals', p. 555; see also White, *Thomas Huxley*, pp. 72, 149.
[52] '1881 England census', TNA, entry for the Tibbey family, esp. Charles Tibbey, Camberwell (St. George); '1891 England census', TNA, entry for the Tibbey family, esp. Charles Tibbey, Lambeth (Brixton).
[53] Wooldridge, *Measuring the Mind*, p. 37.
[54] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/2, 14 January 1898, p. 22
[55] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/2, 13 October 1899, p. 75.

others' in child study, losing a large part of its teacher component would have rendered the society weak in terms of numbers and reach – the point of child study research was often explicitly to improve teaching methods.[56] While more senior teachers, who had advanced to headteacher positions, might still have been able to afford the fee, the society also needed to interest younger teachers in order to secure its future and the reach of its scientific findings. There was also a strong sense of an attempt to create space and opportunity for other lower-middle-class professionals to learn and improve, reminiscent of the mutual improvement culture in many nineteenth-century working-class societies.

When the committee in charge of organizing the annual BCSA conference met in April 1912, the committee decided that while members would be charged for attendance, complimentary tickets should be sent to teacher training colleges.[57] The committee received communications from training colleges whose students would like to attend.[58] Such attempts to include teachers demonstrate the active willingness to make society events accessible and suggest that child study was seen as a professional development opportunity for teachers.

Building a library

Some of the most arduous work undertaken in the London branch over the first two decades of the twentieth century was within the library committee, which organized the procurement of child study books and periodicals, making them available for loan. There is a long history of predominantly working-class mutual improvement activity through the organization of libraries.[59] Library building was, however, also a core element in most elite and middle-class nineteenth century associations, such as the staunchly bourgeois Athenaeum.[60] It was commonplace for society proceedings to describe library acquisitions by the 1830s.[61] Often, these libraries were collected through exchange networks where the societies' own periodicals were swapped for those of other societies.[62] It was not unusual for non- or semi-professional scientific societies to establish libraries, particularly where exchange lists could be established.[63] In this section, I argue that the establishment of the BCSA library was primarily pushed for and orchestrated by the lower-middle-class component of society. Further, I argue that the BCSA library served both to create opportunities of professional development for teacher members and to signal the scientific status of the society.

Michelle Johansen has noted that lower-middle-class men, who through auto-didactic endeavours had elevated their own position, often were keen to support others to make similar journeys.[64] Within the child study community in London, there is no better example of such commitment than the work of Thomas Tibbey, who came to

[56] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, c. 1898, page starting 'Rules made as follows'.
[57] 'Child Study Society London committee minutes 1907–1924', TWC, PSY/BPS/3/5/2, 16 April 1912, pp. 75–6.
[58] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/5/2, 1 May 1912, p. 78.
[59] Secord, 'Science in the Pub', pp. 278–9; John C. Crawford, 'Mutual improvement and library activity: overviewing the evidence', *Library and Information History*, 32/1–2 (2016), pp. 34–45, at pp. 39–41.
[60] William C. Lubenow, *Only Connect: Learned Societies in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Woodbridge, 2015), p. 125.
[61] Alex Csiszar, 'Proceedings and the public: how a commercial genre transformed science', in Dawson et al., *Science Periodicals in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, p. 114.
[62] Aileen Fyfe, 'Journals and periodicals', in Bernard Lightman (ed.) *A Companion to the History of Science* (Chichester, 2016), p. 464.
[63] Lightman, 'Late Victorian astronomical society journals', pp. 298–9; Joachim Liebschner, *Foundations of Progressive Education: The History of the National Froebel Society* (Cambridge, 1991) p. 66, as quoted in Nawrotzki 'Like sending coals to Newcastle', p. 229.
[64] Michelle Johansen, '"The supposed paradise of pen and ink": Self-education and social mobility in the London public library (1880–1930)', *Cultural and Social History*, 16/1 (2019), pp. 47–65, at p. 49.

be the driving force behind the attempt to make child study books and journals widely available through the CSS library.

The first mention of the library came in 1900, in relation to the establishment of an exchange list for the society journal *The Paidologist*, creating 'the nucleus of a library'.[65] In 1904, at a national meeting, there was discussion of the Library being housed at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), and that the librarian should be asked to catalogue the books.[66] This came to pass, and the following year, the BCSA council decided to institute a Library Committee, consisting of Fletcher Beach, Stevens and Tibbey, to liaise with the LSE librarian on library matters.[67] From the next meeting, Tibbey was the one providing the report; this did not change for many years, and that he was de facto in charge of the committee from the start is more than likely.[68] Tibbey's 1906 report read that, although there was still a deal of work to be done to get the library into 'working order', 'hope [was] not yet dead'. The first point to be addressed was the lack of a reliable catalogue.[69]

In 1908, Tibbey noted progress for the library: 'In no previous year has there been a more notable increase of books in the library, or a more promising outlook.'[70] Since the catalogue had been published the previous summer, members had started borrowing books. So far, only eleven people had done so, but, as Tibbey noted, this was still 'a very large percentage increase on the total of all previous years'.[71] Still, there was work yet to be done: 'We need to bring home to members generally the value of the library and encourage them the good habit of using it – for libraries grow by use.'[72]

In 1909, a full catalogue of the library was published in *Child-Study*, the magazine that succeeded *The Paidologist* as the BCSA became the CSS in 1907. The catalogue's publication was accompanied by an explanation of how to access the books in an attempt to increase use and visibility. The article explained that the books of the society were to be found in the Clare Market Library of the newly formed LSE.[73] The LSE Library was a natural choice for the CSS, not only because of the reformist ambitions shared by both the CSS and the LSE but because there was also ample personal connection between the two: J. H. Muirhead, the BSCA president in 1904–05, was the brother-in-law of Graham Wallas, one of the LSE's founders.[74]

Books from the library could be obtained by visiting the library or ordering by post, the 1909 article explained.[75] The catalogue, which then followed, was an impressive, closely printed 14 pages, encompassing books and periodicals by men and women from a diverse geographical spread.[76] Books on education were exceedingly common, along with those on 'feeblemindedness', including a range of recently published titles on religious teaching, physical education and school management.[77] The catalogue

[65] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 'Second Council Meeting', n.d. [signed as correct 4 May 1900], p. 20.
[66] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 13 May 1904, p. 50.
[67] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 12 May 1905, p. 58.
[68] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 11 May 1906, p. 68.
[69] Ibid., n.p.
[70] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 24 April 1908, n.p.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] 'Catalogue of the library of the Child-Study Society', *Child-Study*, 2/1 (1909), p. 15.
[74] 'British Child-Study Association Conference 1904', *The Paidologist*, 6/2 (1904), p. 117; C. G. Robertson and Peter P. Nicholson, 'Muirhead, John Henry (1855–1940), philosopher', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, January 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35145> [last accessed 16 January 2026]; Martin J. Wiener, 'Wallas, Graham (1858–1932), political psychologist and educationist', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, January 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/36706> [last accessed 16 January 2026].
[75] 'Catalogue of the library of the Child-Study Society', *Child-Study*, 2/1 (1909), p. 15.
[76] Ibid., pp. 15–28.
[77] Ibid., pp. 16–17.

included a wealth of books directly addressing teachers, suggesting the library's importance as a space not only of scientific but also professional development.

The case of the child study library demonstrates Tibbey's and the London society's overall attempts to construct a culture of professional mutual improvement, by which teachers could access the means to improve their own knowledge of children and teaching methods. As his friend P. B. Ballard noted, Tibbey 'ever championed the right of the teacher to advance the knowledge of his own calling by every means in his power.'[78] In marked difference to both The Society of Public Librarians, and earlier as well as contemporary teacher organizations such as the College of Preceptors, child study was quasi-professional rather than entirely professional. It had a strong relation to teaching but was not an organization devoted mainly or only to the professional development of teachers. Still, the library committee spent significant portions of time collecting material for self-improvement and making it available to other members, in a manner reminiscent of upwardly mobile professional organizations, as well as arranging for members more widely to contribute themselves to the creation and dissemination of knowledge about children, encouraging members to give papers at meetings and submit material to the journal.

Members welcomed this work. At the end of 1912, the volumes borrowed from the library reached a record 101.[79] The steady growth of library activity and the use of the books and periodicals there suggests an uptake of the available resources for self-improvement corresponding to the growing work undertaken to provide them. The attempts to engage the larger, lower-middle-class membership stretched beyond encouraging them to consume material, into asking them to carry out and present research themselves. These attempts to create a culture of mutual support and learning-by-doing within the London society were also met with suspicion, particularly from professional scientists. In the next section, I explore some of the conflicts that erupted between teachers and professional scientists over child study authority.

Defending non-elite participation

The BSCA did not just encourage its members to consume research and material. Quite the opposite. Members were actively encouraged, and told it was necessary, to contribute their own thoughts and findings for the benefit of others. As editor for *The Paidologist*, Holman 'urge[d] upon each and every reader to do her or his utmost to contribute to the contents […] of *The Paidologist*.'[80] Holman's writing clearly communicated how it was only through mutual engagement that society could fulfil its purpose. Imploring members to contribute to journals with the reminder that it was a 'requirement' was a regular feature of nineteenth-century non-professional science.[81] Some of the reticence to contribute from members in the context of child study might have been related to the ongoing debates on professionalization. Holman's collaborative vision was not shared by all. Many years later, Ballard summarized the often-dismissive attitude of professional physicians and psychologists, which was prevalent at the time:

[78] P. B. Ballard, *Thomas George Tibbey: A Lecture in His Memory* (London, 1936), p. 14.
[79] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 16 November 1912, n.p.
[80] H. Holman, 'Editorial', *The Paidologist*, 2/2 (1900), p. 64.
[81] Lightman has noted the pressure on members to contribute to amateur astronomy publications in 'Late Victorian astronomical society journals', p. 299.

> The teacher's right to administer scientific tests was in the early days strongly contested. [—] Certain medical men claimed that the medical profession alone was capable of this work […]. Both doctor and psychologist said to the teacher: 'Hands off.'[82]

Scientific exclusion was found in this way not only along gendered lines (which was also common) but also along professional and class boundaries. While Ballard was talking mainly about specific 'scientific' IQ tests, the same pattern was found in debates on the general ability of teachers and other 'amateurs' to carry out any kind of scientific inquiry. In the case of BCSA London, this dispute can be traced to the repeated conflicts.

In the first issue of the BCSA journal, *The Paidologist*, Stanley Hall, the American psychologist who had inspired the society's inception, discussed the participation of teachers and parents in the movement. While at one point, perhaps, it had been necessary to 'enlist the active support and co-operation of parents and teachers', Hall cautioned against continuing to do so: '[their] premature generalizations and utterly uncritical methods have done much to prejudice the cause.'[83] Hall further expanded his argument about how the time for teachers in child study had come and gone:

> While it has been the great privilege of teachers to co-operate in this psycho-genetic movement, if it may be so called, and while their contributions have often had real and great value, it far transcends the ken of the pedagogue.[84]

Such scepticism of teacher participation was also present in Britain. On 24 June 1902, Reginald and Jane Langdon-Down hosted the yearly General Meeting of the BCSA at the Normansfield Hospital where they now lived and worked, where James Crichton-Browne (1840–1938) delivered an address to the 750 guests.[85] The son of an 'alienist', Crichton-Browne followed in his father's footsteps and started work in a lunacy asylum having graduated as a physician. He stayed in this line of work and became part of the emerging professional scientific establishment. In 1883, he was elected Fellow of the Royal Society, and in 1886, he was knighted.[86] The script for the talk, which was published, revealed Crichton-Browne's disdain towards the 'doting mother and officious nurse' who might find 'mere curiosities about the child' worthy of publication.[87] As Evelleen Richards has noted, the exclusion of women could be mobilized as a tool for professionalizing scientific societies and constructing a stronger, implicitly gendered, scientific identity.[88] But it was not only women who ought to stay out of child study according to Crichton-Browne, who declared that:

> Child-Study is not a domestic pastime, but a serious undertaking and a complicated affair, and I do not believe it can be profitably carried much further by the mere amateur.[89]

Crichton-Browne was, here, constructing a narrow sense of who was a professional in child study, ostensibly mainly medical doctors and psychiatrists such as himself, whereas professional teaching authority ought not to extend into the scientific sphere.

Tibbey published a retort to Crichton-Browne's conference talk and article. Introducing himself as an 'amateur whose tenderest susceptibilities have been

[82] Ballard, *Thomas George Tibbey*, p. 14.
[83] Stanley Hall, 'Introductory Words', *The Paidologist*, 1/1 (1899), p. 7.
[84] Ibid., p. 8.
[85] T. G. T., '[Branch reports:] London', *The Paidologist*, 4/3 (1902), pp. 192–3.
[86] Michael Neve, 'Browne, Sir James Crichton- (1840–1938), physician and psychiatrist', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, September 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32122) [last accessed 21 May 2024].
[87] Sir James Crichton-Browne, 'Address at the Child-Study conference', *The Paidologist*, 4/3 (1902), p. 134.
[88] Evelleen Richards, 'Redrawing the boundaries: Darwinian science and Victorian women intellectuals', in Bernard Lightman (ed.), *Victorian Science in Context* (Chicago, IL, 1997), p. 128.
[89] Crichton-Browne, 'Address at the Child-Study conference', p. 134.

roughly handled', Tibbey articulated the 'latent false antithesis between amateur and professional' in child study.[90] In child study, dismissing teachers as untrained amateurs in observing children was especially jarring but also easy to undermine. Since the amateurs of child study were the people engaged with teaching or raising children in everyday life, excluding them from the scientific endeavour would render child study a pointless science, Tibbey argued:

> For in Child-Study, certainly, if the amateur and interested lose faith and hope, the specialist, outside the care of defectives, may become a voice crying in the wilderness.[91]

Tibbey's article constituted an open challenge to the construction of child study expertise as inaccessible to teachers. Tibbey's article and Holman's attempts at soliciting participation demonstrate their commitment to creating space for inclusive scientific inquiry. Teachers were not to merely stick to their profession; they were to improve the knowledge of themselves and their peers through investigation.

Mobilizing scientific authority

The professional development opportunities offered by child study could also be mobilized in individual cases to create authority and portable expertise. The life and career of Kate Stevens amply illustrate this. Stevens was born in 1854 in Derby to George and Emma Stevens. After George Stevens died or abandoned the family, Emma Stevens took her young daughters to the home of their grandmother.[92] Kate Stevens started attending school before she was six, and at 16, she was training to become a teacher.[93] By 1891, Stevens was Head Teacher of a London Board School.[94] So far, none of this was unusual.[95]

By 1897, Stevens had joined the BCSA's London branch and become its secretary. In that role, she took particular interest in international collaboration and wrote to the American child study periodical *The Pedagogical Seminary*.[96] Her contact with American child study, and her position as secretary, made her the natural correspondent when Stanley Hall reached out to extend his congratulations on the 'rare wisdom and good sense' of British child study.[97] Having initially argued that child study was beyond 'the ken of the pedagogue', Hall now admitted he had been 'mistaken' and showered praise on Stevens and the BCSA in a letter addressed to her specifically rather than the association at large. He was particularly impressed with the way in which the BCSA had managed to charm the scientific establishment: 'From this distance', Hall wrote, 'it seems to me that you have won the hearty goodwill of all men of science'.[98]

[90] T. G. Tibbey, 'The amateur and child-study', *The Paidologist*, 4/3 (1902), pp. 144–5.
[91] Ibid.
[92] '1861 England census', TNA, entry for the Frost and Stevens family; 'Church of England Births and Baptisms', entry for Catharine Rebekka Stevens, Derbyshire (Derby), 10 October 1854, via <https://www.ancestry.com/⟩ [accessed 17 August 2025].
[93] '1861 England census', TNA, entry for the Frost and Stevens family; '1871 England census', TNA, RG10/4814, fo. 64, GSU 847360, p. 48, entry for the Stevens family (Kate and Emma), Derbyshire (Filey), via <https://www.ancestry.com/⟩ [accessed 17 August 2025].
[94] '1891 England census', TNA, RG 12/142, no GSU, p. 33, entry for the Stevens family (Kate and Emma), London (Islington), via <https://www.ancestry.com/⟩ [accessed 17 August 2025].
[95] Copelman, *London's Women Teachers*, pp. 31–4.
[96] Kate Stevens, 'Child study in Great Britain', *The Pedagogical Seminary*, 13/2 (1906), pp. 245–9; Kate Stevens, 'Education among the Mohammedans in the Middle Ages', *The Pedagogical Seminary*, 11/3 (1904), pp. 249–63.
[97] Letter from G. Stanley Hall to Kate Stevens, quoted in its entirety in 'Some letters from America', *The Paidologist*, 6/2 (1904), p. 98.
[98] Letter from Hall to Stevens in 'Some letters from America', p. 98–9. For Hall's earlier critique, see Stanley Hall, 'Introductory Words', *The Paidologist*, 1/1 (1899), p. 8.

In 1906, Stevens went for an extended visit to the United States where she was invited to give a paper to the National Education Association.[99] In 1911, she was 'giving addresses at San Francisco and Chatauqua [sic]'.[100] Her visits were noted in American publications, where she was, in a 1906 issue of the feminist *Women's Journal*, described as the greatest current authority on British education: 'Probably no one in England […] knows British educational affairs better than she does'.[101] For a single woman from a working-class background, Stevens was seen as possessing an unusual level of professional expertise. Achieving this type of reputation was only possible for her thanks to the strategic building and deployment of professional-scientific prestige.

Abroad, Stevens's position within the BCSA afforded her an authority that she cultivated, growing her own reputation as an educational expert within the increasingly well-respected British child study movement. Stevens gained initial access to child study through her role as board school headmistress. She used this access to seize administrative opportunities within the society, which in turn led her to international scientific opportunities. In the slippages of international travel, and in the less keenly class-aware America, Stevens found herself becoming an eminent British expert.

At home, Stevens also refined her outward appearance of personal and professional expertise as a teacher in a decisive, and unusual, manner. From 1900, Stevens started to be recorded in the society minutes as '(Miss) Kate Stevens', even though she would still be referred to as 'Miss Kate Stevens' sans parentheses in official papers.[102] After a few unexplained occurrences, the following note was added to explain the trend: '(Miss) Kate Stevens (better [unintelligible] as Tr)'.[103] Presumably, the unintelligible word is 'addressed', 'called' or 'known'. The use of Tr, most likely a shortening of 'Teacher' in the same style as 'Dr' shortens 'Doctor', was a clear attempt to demonstrate and highlight the professional authority of teaching. By 1891, there were only 25 women registered as medical doctors in Britain, but numbers were growing fast, and by the outbreak of the First World War, there were about 1000.[104] These women enjoyed a higher professional authority than almost any other working women.[105] Stevens' attempt to swap the gendered 'Miss' for the professional 'Teacher' was an experimental practice, centring her identity around profession rather than gender. It was also likely modelled directly on the way medical women could obtain new levels of authority through the acquisition of new professional titles.

It is likely that it was Stevens herself taking the notes that seemingly played with and negotiated her own identity, based on handwriting and the fact that the two secretaries at the time were Stevens and Jane Langdon-Down.[106] When the writer of meeting notes shifted in October 1902, presumably to Langdon-Down, Stevens was again referred to as 'Miss Kate Stevens', sans parentheses.[107] Stevens's strategies for substituting the gendered 'Miss' for the professionalized 'Tr.' represent a series of actions subversive of the gender hegemony of the time and showcase a will to

[99] T. G. T., 'Editorial', *The Paidologist*, 8/1 (1906), p. 1.
[100] 'Greetings to American associations', *Child-Study*, 4/2 (1911), p. 70.
[101] 'Concerning women', *Woman's Journal*, 37/26 (30 June 1906), p. 101.
[102] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/2, 2 February, 10 April and 25 May 1900, and undated pamphlet 1899–1900, pp. 80, 84–5, 87.
[103] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/2, 1900, exact date unclear, p. 93.
[104] Carol Dyhouse, 'Driving ambitions: women in pursuit of a medical education, 1890–1939', *Women's History Review*, 7/3 (1998), pp. 321–43, at p. 321.
[105] Ibid., p. 322.
[106] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/2, 11 October 1901, pp. 111–12.
[107] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/2, 3 October 1902, pp. 121–23, first entry with new handwriting, 10 October 1902, p. 130, mention of 'Miss Kate Stevens'.

be known by her profession first and gender second. Furthermore, Stevens's actions underscore how child study provided a space in which she could emphasize and extend her professional status as a teacher as something worthy of its own title, much like medical expertise was seen to be.

Within the society, Stevens was appreciated and recognized by other members, even of elite backgrounds. Writing to Stevens in 1907, Reginald Langdon-Down ended his letter:

I cannot close without saying how keenly I should have joined in the vote of thanks which I am sure must have been tendered to you for extremely arduous and able work for the London Branch. You have made the Branch what it is today.[108]

In crediting Stevens with fundamentally shaping the London society, Langdon-Down was demonstrating how successful Stevens had been in carving out a space for herself also within the society. Stevens's associational career within child study demonstrates how child study and the associational culture surrounding it could be mobilized to claim professional status through, but also beyond, the scientific. Stevens utilized the shifting contexts she found herself in to experiment with the boundaries of her own identity as a professional teacher, educational scientist and woman. Capitalizing on the expert identity she could access in spaces where her class was less apparent, Stevens pushed the limits of professional mobility and kept on experimenting with the limits between gender and profession in her personal identity. Centring her history allows for consideration of the importance of not only professional authority, but also context, in female, lower-middle-class identity negotiations in the early twentieth century.

Authority and conflict in *Child-Study*

Work, authority and credit were not always straightforward within the child study community. This final section explores the impact of open conflict over classed lines, which tested the authority and positions of the lower-middle-class contingent of the society. From 1910, Holman was officially the sole editor of *Child-Study*.[109] In 1914, Tibbey took over from E. White Wallis as chairman of the journal committee.[110] By this point, Tibbey had chaired various child study committees too, on top of the Library committee, such as the 1912 conference committee, and both he and Holman had become central parts of the London society.[111] By all appearances, they were comfortable in their positions and operated with a significant degree of freedom. However, within a few years, they would be in the centre of a conflict that caused deep fractures within the society.

The outbreak of the First World War presented significant difficulties for the upkeep of child study activity. The report of 1917 noted that the year had 'been trying for all forms of publication and *Child-Study* has suffered in common with other journals'. In regard to the library, Tibbey noted only ten users.[112] Despite these mounting difficulties, Tibbey and Holman retained their status and position within the society, until an incident towards the end of 1916, when an issue of *Child-Study* was recalled and destroyed due to the presence of an article by Dr and Mrs Eder – presumably David and Edith Eder, a British psychoanalyst who had previously been

[108] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/2, letter to Kate Stevens from Reginald Langdon Down, 6 June 1907, found between pp. 197–8.
[109] See frontmatter of *Child-Study*, 3/1 (1910) and all following issues of *Child-Study* until 1916.
[110] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 7 March 1914, n.p.
[111] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 4 May 1912, n.p.
[112] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 'Report of the journal & library committee presented to the council Jan 3rd 1918', n.p.

the editor of the journal *School Hygiene* and his wife.[113] The presence of the article was blamed on the editor, Henry Holman, who subsequently resigned.[114]

The minutes of the meeting of the executive council in the afternoon of 15 November 1916 explained how Durrie Mulford, upon reading a paragraph in the Eder article, which he saw as offensive to Crichton-Browne, contacted Tibbey to ask that the publication be stopped.[115] Durrie Mulford would have called for the recall of the issue sometime in the first week of November. The problem with the article was never explicitly noted into the minutes. Eder was a Fabian and a vocal Zionist, but there were numerous Fabians in the society, and there is no obvious indication that the objections to the Eder article were antisemitic in nature. Antisemitism might, however, have played a part in the apparent disregard for the impact the withdrawal of the article had on the Eders; David Eder wrote to protest the damage done to his and his wife's reputations.[116] Yet, seemingly, the main objection was linked to the material in the article itself.

The article, which was later published in a revised version, was mainly an exploration of sibling jealousy and its manifestations in dreams, based on the Eder couple's children, written by Edith Eder and edited by her husband.[117] The article based its analytical thrust on psychoanalysis, and the Oedipal complex saw frequent mention.[118] Crichton-Browne was a long-time enemy of all things Freudian, which he regarded as dangerous to the individual and society both.[119] Holman had a history of emphasizing the importance of sex education and sexual hygiene, commenting in 1911 that these were 'grave issues which demand serious attention'.[120] While conflicts within the society certainly related to gender and class explicitly, they were also tied to disagreements on theoretical principles for child study. As the conflict over the Eder article unfolded, it nonetheless fractured the society along class lines, laying bare the undercurrents of class conflicts and loyalties.

On 14 November, the CSS's Journal Committee convened, and Holman, as editor, pushed to still move forward with the publication. Tibbey, as chairman of the committee, moved against, and Holman handed in his resignation.[121] The two men had by that point worked together for more than a decade. Tibbey refused to accept the resignation, but the council, meeting the next day, did and determined that Durrie Mulford should destroy all copies of the November issue.[122]

At the following meeting on 3 January 1917, the council regretted Holman's resignation over 'a difference of opinion'.[123] Although Tibbey had been the one to recall the November issue, it was on his authority that the new, combined November–December issue appeared. In it appeared the very same article that had prompted the previous issue to be recalled and all copies to be destroyed: 'The Conflicts in the Unconscious of the Child', albeit abridged.[124] Crichton-Browne was, by all accounts,

[113] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 15 November 1916, n.p.
[114] Ibid., and also the entry for 3 January 1917, n.p. See also 'Notices and news', *Child-Study* 9/7&8 (1916), p. 108.
[115] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 15 November 1916, n.p.
[116] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 13 February 1917, Letter from David Eder to the secretary of the Child Study Society [Durrie Mulford] dated 17 November 1916, copied into the minutes, n.p. '[M]uch gossip detrimental to my wife and myself is circulating', Eder wrote.
[117] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 15 November 1916, n.p; Dr. and Edith Eder, 'The conflicts in the unconscious of the child', *Child-Study* 9/7&8 (1916), pp. 105–8.
[118] Eder and Eder, 'The conflicts in the unconscious of the child', particularly pp. 107–8.
[119] Neve, 'Browne, Sir James Crichton'.
[120] H. H. [Henry Holman], 'The Pedagogical Seminary', *Child-Study*, 3/3 (1911), p. 120.
[121] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 15 November 1916, n.p.
[122] Ibid.
[123] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 3 January 1917, n.p.
[124] Eder and Eder, 'The conflicts in the unconscious of the child', pp. 105–8.

outraged by Tibbey's publication of the article, which triggered an Executive Council meeting on 13 February 1917 to discuss the matter. In attendance were only John Cockburn, as chair, Crichton-Browne, Tibbey and Durrie Mulford, as secretary. Crichton-Browne reported how he had 'protested against the article being included in the journal', with Tibbey retorting that the council had entrusted the journal committee with the decision as what to publish. Cockburn, keen to move on from the matter, told the two feuding parties that there must have been a misunderstanding.[125] Crichton-Browne, would, however, only agree to close the matter if Tibbey apologized to him. The minutes record the following resolution:

> That the Chairman of the Journal Committee regrets that the abridged article on 'The Conflicts in the unconscious of the Child' was included in the Nov-Dec issue of Child Study without the authority of the Executive Council.[126]

The minutes then move on to other business, but it was not the end of the story. Two years later, towards the end of 1920, Tibbey went back over the minutes. Next to the ostensibly passed resolution outlining his apology, two crosses and a 'See below' were added. Below, Tibbey explained that he had never been sorry that he had included the article: 'A resolution in above terms was drafted but not accepted – it was modified into an expression of regret that the publication of the article should have given offence to Sir James Crichton Browne and this was passed.' Tibbey's note also featured the explanation that '[t]hese minutes were not produced at the next & final meeting of the Executive Com. on Sept 26.1918'.[127]

The fact that the re-publication saw no marked anger from Cockburn or other society members, apart from Crichton-Browne, suggests that Tibbey's real offence here was ignoring 'the authority of the Executive Council' and Crichton-Browne himself. Tibbey would have been aware of Crichton-Browne's feelings on the matter of the republication, at least if credit is given to Crichton-Browne's assertion that he had 'protested' Tibbey's decision. The publication must be regarded as a deliberate slighting of Crichton-Browne, a move to reassert the authority of the journal committee over the executive council, and an attempt to appease and protect Holman and the Eders. By circulating the abridged article, Tibbey was demonstrating that the article, at least in its edited form, did not cause outrage. Circulating it would have protected the Eders and Holman from the implication that the article was fundamentally offensive and settled the rumours as to the contents of the article. The financial troubles of the society, as well as propriety, made a second recall highly unlikely, especially where the ostensible initial problem had been cut from the article. These circumstances were unlikely to have escaped Tibbey, and the republishing of the Eder article must be seen as a calculated move to protect Holman's reputation as well as restate the authority of the journal committee.

The wounds incurred from this conflict, however, ran deep and were not easily healed. Holman returned the letter from the council expressing regret at his resignation and thanks for his services without comment.[128] In response, the society elected Holman vice-president of the association.[129] In 1919, Holman, terminally ill in a nursing home in Worthing, accepted his newly elected position as vice president, but never took any more part in society activities, and died later the same year.[130]

[125] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 13 February 1917, n.p.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid., comment added 12 October or 10 December 1920.
[128] TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 3 January 1918, n.p.
[129] Ibid.
[130] T. G. T., 'H. Holman, M.A.', p. 17; TWC, PSY/BPS/3/3/1, 3 January 1919, n.p.

Conclusion

Teachers were critical to child study both as the perceived implementors of more practical child study insights and as researchers and data-gatherers. Child study activity included the creation of further education opportunities for teachers, through the library and through meetings. It also included opportunities for teachers themselves to take up positions within the society, through which opportunities for negotiating status, identity and expertise arose. In successful cases, teachers like Kate Stevens could be seen not only as successful teachers but as experts on educational theory. Teachers, by appropriating scientific identity, crafted a type of portable expertise that carried back over into the educational world. This insight is crucial as it unsettles the established view of science as fully professionalized by the late nineteenth century and illuminates the ambivalence and complicated nature of the interplay between scientific expertise and professional authority from related fields.

This article has discussed the associational culture and inner workings of the British child study community in the first decades of the twentieth century, focusing particularly on London. The London child study community consisted of a large proportion of lower-middle-class teachers or people who had started their careers in the teaching profession. Many of them had grown up in working-class homes. These lower-middle-class members worked hard to shape child study into a space that was supportive of the teaching profession and that provided opportunities for teachers to engage in professional development through the availability of books, periodicals and lectures on child study. Teachers were actively involved, and care was taken not to limit inclusivity by economic constraints. Members were actively encouraged to participate themselves in child study. Some members also actively mobilized the blurred class boundaries of child study to further the perceptions of their own professional expertise. Professional teaching work and quasi-professional child study work were sometimes constructed as pivotal to the identity of the child study practitioner in attempts to centre identity around profession rather than gender or class.

I have argued that lower-middle-class London teachers within child study promoted a co-operative associational model. The conflicts that erupted within the society regarding expertise and the participation of amateurs must therefore be seen not only as a conflict between professionals and amateurs but also between two traditions of associational culture: middle-class scientific societies and mutual improvement societies with a long history in the working class. The firm anchoring which child study had in the teaching profession complicates these conflicts further. The rejection of amateurs within child study, and the pushback against this, was also a conflict between two professional groups with rival claims to expertise about children.

Attempts to exclude teachers and construct a stark hierarchy between professionals and amateurs within child study were ostensibly related to attempts to elevate the professional status of the medical professionals within the movement, proving them true professional scientists. Such insistence on medical expertise is related to an attempt to elevate the status of child study and its practitioners through a narrowly professionalized model. As such, it was also clearly related to whom these boundaries could keep out. Child study involved very few 'true amateurs' – people with no professional ties to the objects of their research – such as those in the entomology and astronomy organizations who have been so fruitfully explored by Wale and Lightman. Child study involved very few 'true experts' – people employed purely for the research of this specific area. Rather, child study was dependent on the cooperation and interest of people on the margins of educational research with educational expertise. While

on the margins of clear-cut status, teachers as quasi-professionals in child study were crucial to the movement.

In this sense, child study provides a markedly different case study than most previous work on amateur science; practitioners were generally either professional scientists, doctors or teachers. The insistence on policing the boundary between teachers and physicians in child study was certainly related to the differing levels of status associated with the professions but also related to the diverse gender and class make-up of the teaching profession. Yet, attempts at exclusion were neither universal nor universally successful. This ambivalence was critical for how this community functioned and is an underappreciated aspect of scientific collaboration in this period.

The lower status of elementary teachers, compared to medical doctors and professional scientists, was precisely why teachers were so keen to involve themselves in child study. For some teachers in the early twentieth century, child study functioned as a gateway to expertise: It was a science within which teachers could gain or at least claim access to scientist status with relative ease. This scientific expertise was *portable*; once claimed, it could be mobilized to create wider educational expertise and allow lower-middle-class teachers entry into a level of status closer to, though not quite the same, that of physicians, professional researchers and public-school teachers. As child study scientists, teachers were less constrained by the lower-middle-class status of their profession.