

BRITISH SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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Registered Charity Number: 1080235

DRAFT Minutes

BSA Annual General Meeting

22 April 2006

Saturday, 22 April 2006
Auditorium, Harrogate International Centre

1. Preliminaries/Introduction to Formal Proceedings

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm with John Brewer, Chair of the BSA, in the chair. An agenda and a list of resolutions had been circulated to all members prior at the meeting. Ninety members were in attendance, together with four members of staff and several publisher's representatives. John Brewer welcomed everyone to the meeting, confirmed that a quorum was present and declared the meeting open.

The Chair asked those present to note an amendment on the agenda: that there would be a report on the Communications Committee, not on study groups.

2. Presentation of the BSA Philip Abrams Memorial Book Award

The Chair invited Susan Halford, co-chair of the BSA Publications Committee, to announce the winner of the BSA Philip Abrams 2006 prize for best new monograph in sociology.

Susan Halford reported that a large number of submissions was received - thirteen. It was a field that reflected the breath and the depth and the strength of contemporary sociology. She thanked her co-judges John Brewer, David Inglis and Geoff Payne.

Four titles were shortlisted for the prize, all of which impressed the judges

Angus Bancroft 'Roma and Gypsy-Travellers in Europe: Modernity, Race, Space and Exclusion' (Ashgate Publishing)

Adam Hedgecoe 'The Politics of Personalised Medicine: Pharmacogenetics in the Clinic' (Cambridge University Press)

Teela Sanders 'Sex Work: A Risky Business' (Willan Publishing)

Darin Weinberg 'Of Others Inside: Insanity, Addiction and Belonging in America' (Temple University Press)

The winner, for a highly original, timely and incredible accessible study of contemporary developments in pharmaco-genetics, was Adam Hedgecoe.

3. Minutes of the 2005 AGM

The Chair asked for any amendments to the minutes. There were none.

Resolution 1: That the minutes of the April 2005 AGM be adopted.

Proposed by: David Inglis

Seconded by: Geoff Payne

A vote was taken and the resolution was **unanimously approved**.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising.

5. 2005/06 Annual Review

The Chair drew attention to the Annual Review, copies of which had been circulated at the meeting, and included financial statements, reports on the activities of the various committees of the association and study groups, and various other matters.

Resolution 2: That the BSA Annual Review for 2005/06 be adopted.

Proposed by: David Mason

Seconded by: Chris Yuill

A vote was taken and the resolution was **unanimously approved**.

6. Treasurer's Report

Liam Murphy, BSA Treasurer, explained that his report would cover three things. First: a report of the trustees, part of the formal accounts for the BSA which we must register with the Charity Commission and Companies House, under the legal requirements on the BSA. Second, the appointment of auditors, which has to occur formally at the AGM. Finally, he would give an update on the current budget. The year-end of the BSA financial year is September 30th, so the Association was currently half way through the financial year. Any detailed questions regarding the accounts could be asked of the representative from our auditors Baker Tilly, who was present at the AGM.

The report of the Trustees for the financial year ending on September 30th 2005

For those not familiar with the BSA's financial structure, Liam said that it was worth noting there are two parts to the BSA. When most people say 'BSA' they are referring to the charitable organisation, but there is also a profitable trading arm – BSA Publications Limited. BSA Publications is responsible for *Sociology and Work*, *Employment and Society* and is a normal commercial business that seeks to make a profit to contribute to the charity. The Trustees' Report includes a narrative on issues which the Executive Committee has had to manage and their responsibility for financial management.

One of the issues always on the agenda is current and future **membership**. This usually turns over at about 20% each year: typically an increase in membership of one fifth and one fifth of the membership leaving, so the total tends to be stable. Over the last year some detailed analysis has been done, showing a slight decline in membership over the last few

years. In tandem with that, the average age of members is increasing, in line with the general social trend. As a response, the Association is now putting a greater focus on providing better services and support for retired members or members of the BSA who are approaching retirement. This will be a task for the EC over the next year with an impact on overall membership categories and on other BSA activities and priorities.

As reported in *Network* and the Annual Review, the BSA has renegotiated our **contract with SAGE** in a way that has given the BSA greatly improved financial returns, including a back-dated settlement. The figures show what a tremendous boost this has been to the accounts for the year, due in large part to the contribution of Abby Day. Liam was glad to say that this had been recognised by the Executive Committee, but he wanted it noted further.

A recurring problem, noted in previous years, is that the BSA **Annual Conference** is a potential financial risk to the BSA. The EC has therefore made a number of moves to try to limit the potential liability. These include a much-increased emphasis on marketing the annual conference in new ways, and also a better conference 'offer' as the current event shows. Analysis of conference attendance shows that there is actually no 'RAE effect' on attendance: a much stronger indicator of attendance is the strength of the subject matter and a thematic programme. More work on both issues is planned.

The BSA turns over some £500,000 to £600,000 per year. We have **investments** totalling £300,000 which is invested in a range of ways in line with the recommendations of the investment company that acts as our ethical adviser. Last year the Treasurer had reported a significant gain because of interest rates and the pattern of investments. For 2004-2005 total investments had remained stable, but with a very small amount of growth and a less good performance in comparison to previous years.

Several years ago the BSA Executive developed a **risk register** of all the main threats facing the organisation and how they were to be tackled. Nearly all of those have been eliminated. Now, however, the Executive has become aware of a number of new threats, and has produced a detailed revised risk register. This is part of the Association's legal and charitable duties and will drive the programme for the Executive for the next couple of years. Among the key risks are the Association's relationship with the news media, the organisational changes that face the Association's head office and the staff, the management of our website and the conference, as reported above.

The charity recorded a **surplus** of nearly £40,000 last year. Those at the AGM last year would remember that we had set a deficit budget of minus £50,000 for the year. That the outcome has been so much better was primarily due to the re-negotiated SAGE contract referred to earlier. The trading arm (BSA Publications Ltd) was able to Gift Aid over £75,000 to the charity organisation, a further financial boost. Moving forward on a deficit budget was a large risk, but the Association had managed to come through it successfully.

Resolution 3: That the Audited Statement of Accounts for 2005 be adopted.

Proposed by: Tom Hall

Seconded by: John Scott

A vote was taken and the resolution was **unanimously approved**.

7. Appointment of Auditors

Resolution 4: That Baker Tilly be re-appointed as auditors.

Proposed by: Gayle Letherby

Seconded by: Tim Strangleman

A vote was taken and the resolution was **unanimously approved**.

Finally Liam gave an update on the **current budget**. First, a budget has been set that allows the Association to make a slight surplus of about £2,000 in the current financial year.

Services to members, that is the work in promoting sociology, facilitating study groups and so on, continues to make a deficit. This deficit is projected to be higher than last year - in the region of £80,000. Subscriptions run at a loss, but during the course of the year the Association is able to spend that money up front and recoup much of the deficit during the year. For example, we normally budget to make a surplus on the conferences, although this year conferences have a projected deficit of £15,000, primarily because a grant from the ESRC for the Postgraduate Summer School was not forthcoming. We are in discussion with the ESRC to try to make sure it is available in future years.

Unlike many learned societies, the BSA has a sizeable head office, based in Durham, with a number of staff. This enables us to run administration and facilities for other organisations and groups, for example Sociology HoDs, which we do on a non-surplus fee basis.

A number of other miscellaneous charges and investments come into the BSA accounts, including interest on our reserves. In addition, through the publications contract there is a SAGE development fund which contributes to BSA income. The Gift Aid from BSA Publications to the charity for the current financial year is expected to be £92,000.

When opened to the floor the following question was raised:

Lynn Jamieson asked about the debt owed by sociologypress to the BSA, not listed in the accounts. As an update Lynn Jamieson said that sociologypress had an arrangement with a small publisher, Cavendish Press, now taken over by Taylor & Francis who will not honour the arrangement. sociologypress currently owes the BSA **£4,500**. The request from the floor was that the BSA not require sociologypress to pay this debt and allow them to be a '**moribund** company' until a clear decision can be reached on the future of sociologypress. It was agreed that aside from the directors of sociologypress, the BSA is the only creditor. At a previous meeting the BSA Executive had decided the BSA would formally acknowledge that the BSA is a creditor, but will not seek to claim that debt because this could cause sociologypress to go into liquidation. This would allow the directors of sociologypress time to discuss its future. If the directors wish that sociologypress should become a moribund company, they must submit a proposal for it to be considered for an agenda item at next year's AGM.

8. Executive Committee Elections

Nominations for five vacancies on the Executive Committee had been sought; three had been received. Ratification by the Annual General Meeting was needed for the resolution that we accept the following three members on the Executive Committee:

Paul ALLENDER (Coventry University)

Abby DAY (Lancaster University)

Robert MEARS (Bath Spa University)

Resolution 5: That these candidates be confirmed as elected to serve as Trustees of the Association for a period of up to 3 years with effect from the Annual General Meeting.

Proposed by: David Morgan

Seconded by: David Mason

A vote was taken and the resolution was **unanimously approved**.

The BSA EC remains two nominations short: the Chair urged members seriously to consider standing.

9. Honorary Positions

a) *Honorary Vice Presidents*

The chair explained that past Presidents of the Association were contacted each year and invited to serve as Honorary Vice Presidents for the following year. The following former past Presidents had accepted the invitation to serve for the year 2006 as Honorary Vice Presidents:

Martin Albrow, Sara Arber, Michèle Barrett, Robert Burgess, Joan Busfield, David Morgan, Jennifer Platt, John Scott and John Westergaard.

b) *Honorary Members*

The BSA has over the last few years awarded honorary membership to those members of the association who have had fifty years of continuous membership. With great pleasure the Chair nominated Professor Ronnie Frankenberg as an honorary member from 2006. Ronnie has been a member of the association since January 1956. Beginning as a research assistant in the Department of Industrial Relations at University College Cardiff, he was one of the founders of medical anthropology and is currently Professor Emeritus in the School of Criminology, Education, Sociology and Social Work at the University of Keele.

Ratification for the award of Honorary membership for Ronnie Frankenberg.

Proposed by: Jennifer Platt

Seconded by: Bob Carter

and **unanimously approved**.

10. BSA Annual Conference 2007

Barbara Harrison, chair of the Conference and Events Committee, reported that at this time last year we had no conference proposal, conference team or venue for 2007, although it would have normally have come to the AGM. In order to move forward, the Committee and the BSA Executive Committee had reached a decision before the 2006 AGM, which members would be asked to ratify, in order to secure arrangements for next year's conference. A proposal from the University of East London with the theme 'Social Connections, Identities, Technologies and Relationships', and a conference team consisting of Judith Burnett, Sydney Jeffers, Graham Thomas and Barbara Harrison had been agreed. The venue had also been an issue because the BSA had had problems with previous bookings at York and then discovered we could not re-book Harrogate. UEL has a new

campus, which means it could now accommodate the requirements for hosting a BSA Conference and so the proposed venue for 2007 would be the University of East London.

Resolution 6: That the topic, organising team and venue for the 2007 Annual Conference be ratified.

Proposed by: Iain Wilkinson

Seconded by: Alan Aldridge

A vote was taken and the resolution was **unanimously approved**.

11. BSA Annual Conference 2008 Proposal

Barbara Harrison, chair of the Events Committee, reported that the Association had received a conference proposal for 2008 from a team at Warwick consisting of Hannah Bradby, Bob Carter, Nickie Charles and Christina Hughes, with the theme of 'Culture and Nature: Binaries and Boundaries'. Nickie Charles spoke to the proposal on behalf of the 2008 team.

Speakers from the floor queried the title, wondering if it might not be seen as inclusive and thus not encourage attendance. The proposed 2008 team said that they would gladly receive any suggestions for the title and conference content.

Resolution 7: That the proposal for the 2008 Annual Conference theme and team be adopted.

Proposed by: Stevie Jackson

Seconded by: Lynn Jamieson

A vote was taken and the resolution was **unanimously approved**.

The 2008 venue has yet to be confirmed. Harrogate and Warwick are possible venues. Members were asked to leave the decision of the venue to the Conference/Events Committee and the BSA Executive. There was no objection to this.

Speakers from the floor also queried the timing of the conference: many members would prefer it not be held at a weekend. The Chair made the point that some universities are teaching in the week of the BSA conference and that the BSA experimented with holding the conference at a weekend to avoid teaching time. Delegates are 40 down from last year. The professional conference organisers will send out an evaluation form to all delegates for feedback on this conference. The 2007 will be held on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

A call for a 2009 team would be distributed this summer. Barbara urged colleagues to consider putting forward a proposal to organise 2009.

12. Publications Initiatives

The Chair reinforced what is said in the Annual Review regarding some of the publication initiatives the Executive has introduced to try to better serve the needs of members.

Susan Halford, co-chair of the Publications Committee spoke of the activities of BSA Publications, the trading side of the BSA. A lot of time in the past year had been taken up re-negotiating the contract with SAGE; we had heard already from the Treasurer that this improved the financial situation of the Association significantly. The process has resulted in

improved understanding and communication between the Publications Committee and SAGE. *Sociology*, *Work Employment and Society* and *Sociological Research Online* continue to attract ever-increasing rates of submission. In recent times both *WES* and *Sociology* have moved over to online submission using ManuscriptCentral. Recognition was given to the work of Tim Strangleman as previous chair of the Publications Committee. Thanks were also given to the editors, past and present, of both journals who have worked extremely hard to make the transition from the paper-based system to the online system. Looking forward, 2007 would see the launch of the BSA's new journal *Cultural Sociology*. This coincides with two important anniversaries, the 40th anniversary of *Sociology* and the 21st anniversary of *Work, Employment and Society*.

Alongside the existing portfolio of publications and activities the BSA is constantly considering the potential for new initiatives – although this has to be tempered with the resources we have to pursue those initiatives, both in terms of finance and staff. Recent suggestions include a BSA yearbook and a review-based sociological journal. Members were encouraged to contact Susan and/or her co-chair David Inglis if they had an interest in publications and had ideas for future initiatives.

13. Communications Committee

Meryl Aldridge, chair of Communications Committee reported that this committee was set up during the year to co-ordinate BSA communications policy. This means having a coherent strategy in a number of areas including: the use of the **website**, which has become more and more important; **media relations** in terms of promoting the association and keeping track of the expertise that the association has to offer - and also, if necessary, having the capacity to deal with bad publicity; and internal **communications with members**. *Network*, in particular, is valued and has been flourishing recently. Fuller details could be found in the Annual Review.

14. Any other Business

The Chair reported that 370 delegates had attended the 2006 BSA Annual Conference. All delegates would be sent an evaluation form so that we can continue to improve the service we offer members via the conference.

John Brewer then took the opportunity to thank everyone who had contributed to the organisation of this year's conference: the Essex team Pam Cox, Eamonn Carrabine, Paul Iganski, Maggy Lee and Nigel South (and their institution, the University of Essex for allowing them to devote time to the conference). He also gave a special word of thanks to the staff at the Durham Office – Deborah Brown, Joyce Campbell, Nicola Gibson, Libby Marks, Gillian Mason and Judith Mudd. Thanks were also due to everyone who had contributed to the BSA's work throughout an exciting year marked by a considerable expansion in the range of activities in which the BSA is involved.

There was no further business and the formal business of the meeting closed at 7.10pm.

This year the BSA and the British Society of Criminology have cemented the intellectual links between sociology and criminology. With great pleasure Professor Tim Newburn (Professor of Criminology and Social Policy at the LSE and Director of the Mannheim Centre for the Study of Criminology and Criminal Justice) was invited to close the AGM, with a talk on 'Sociology/Criminology: investigating the common ground'.