

## 'Belle de Jour': On Science and Prostitution

[Rowan Hooper](#)

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Under the name ['Belle de Jour'](#), Brooke Magnanti wrote about her experiences as a prostitute for a London escort agency. Her blog became a bestselling book ([The Intimate Adventures of a London Call Girl](#)) and a [television series](#).

She has a Master's degree in Genetic Epidemiology and a PhD from the University of Sheffield's department of Forensic Pathology.

She currently works at the [Bristol Initiative for Research of Child Health](#) and told her agent: "if *New Scientist* asks for an interview, I'll do it".



We did ask.

[NS] In [one of your early papers](#), you established a possible link between thyroid cancer in women in Cumbria, in northwest England, and fallout from Chernobyl in Ukraine.

[BM] The trends in thyroid carcinomas in young women in northwest England show a consistent rise since the late 1980s. But our research also shows an increase in areas that didn't receive fallout from Chernobyl. So there may be multi-factorial causes at work.

[NS] You've also looked at [policy for the assessment of risks from organophosphates](#).

[BM] There are pesticides that have been banned from indoor use in the U.S. but are legal in the European Union which may cause developmental, emotional, and possibly autistic-spectrum disorders.

We're collating the evidence and consulting experts to put forward a case to policy-makers to implement a similar ban to the one in North America.

[NS] Your colleagues have reportedly been very supportive. But do you worry that the publicity around you being 'Belle de Jour' will hinder your career?

[BM] Yes. That was the main reason for my anonymity. If I had just wanted to be a writer, it probably would have been more profitable to come out sooner. But working in Science is important to me.

[NS] Science was so important to you, in fact, that you worked as an escort.

[BM] Let's be frank. Post-docs are not well paid. Being debt-free enabled me to continue to choose science jobs I love rather than changing career.

[NS] So for you, the benefits of not being in debt outweighed the dangers of prostitution?

[BM] The particular situation I was in was far less dangerous than streetwalking and paid sufficiently well that I didn't have to do it for very long. Also, I met fewer men than a streetwalker would in the same period. And again, that decreased the chances of a bad experience. I trusted my instincts and the agency was very good about vetting clients as well.

[NS] Should British PhD students be paid a proper wage as they are in other countries?

[BM] I'm in two minds about this. If paid a wage, they may also be expected to do more teaching which would result in the PhD taking far longer as it does in other countries.

I had offers of PhD places both here and in the U.S. and chose Sheffield because it would take half the time.

[NS] You are currently writing a novel. How does being a scientist inform your writing?

[BM] Science is my main career ambition. Writing up a project is an especially satisfying pursuit. Which probably puts me in a minority of scientists.

[NS] What do you say to the charge that you have glamorized prostitution?

[BM] Call girls existed long before I got into the game. And details of what that life is like were well established before I started writing about it. Implying that I single-handedly turned the business around is flattering but doesn't stand much scrutiny.

[NS] There are science-based arguments to be made for legalizing the sex trade. For example, it would reduce the spread of STIs such as HIV. Is this something you would support?

[BM] In the UK, prostitution itself is legal. But pimping, soliciting, and brothels are not. This results in a huge safety gap between call girls and streetwalkers.

Doesn't it make sense for women at all price points in the sex business to have the same protection I did? And in doing so, possibly gain the leverage over traffickers and clients they need to protect their personal and sexual health?

[NS] How were you able to conceal your identity as 'Belle de Jour' for so long?

[BM] My anonymity was maintained the old-fashioned way -- good old confusing paper trail. We set up a corporation with other people on the board. It wasn't Internet sleuthing that led to my outing. It was because I'd told someone I couldn't trust.

The papers didn't find me. Not because I'm a master of subterfuge but because they assumed I would be one of their own - not a small-time blogger.

## Readers Comments

### **1. By Neil Henderson on November 20, 2009 6:34 PM**

I'm deeply humbled by Brooke's openness, humanity, and her independent determination. I just think that a modern Britain should be more supportive of its students and give greater consideration to their hardships.

### **2. By Joker on November 20, 2009 6:52 PM**

I bet the PhD viva or "spoken part" was a treat for her examiners. Magna cum laude.

### **3. By Annoyed Tunbridge Wells on November 20, 2009 7:21 PM**

Excuse me. But a good-looking, intelligent (and probably cultured) woman like that could have any man (or woman) she wanted. She could have found herself a stockbroker or banker, then divorced and done well out of the arrangement. She could have even found herself an older research fellow/lecturer/professor/administrator.

She puts herself in a position of risk from violence and sexual diseases deliberately and *NS* is trying to portray her as some kind of victim and brave feminist role model?! The truth be known is that she has a sex addiction and a self-abasement fetish. Though many women in such positions have a drug habit or history of abuse as a mitigating point. I find it hard that she is regarded as having good character such that she was admitted to a forensics department or working with children with no background checks.

Really *NS*! This has been in the tabloids all week and we expected better than the moral relativism degeneration zeitgeist that you've given in to.

### **4. By Tim on November 20, 2009 7:30 PM**

For a very brief period, people will associate "Belle de Jour" with this lame book and not the great Bunuel film.

### **5. By AFemaleSci on November 20, 2009 7:33 PM**

I take issue with some of the points being made here. I think Dr. Magnanti was simply solving 2 problems at once: (a) getting easy money and (b) indulging a sexual kink. Which is fine. But let's not pretend it's because her PhD made her broke.

There are lots of us (myself included) who found money difficult to come by during write-up and we didn't have to resort to prostitution. I find this disingenuous and, frankly, it feeds the ugly side of discrimination against women in Science. A side which I suspect she's going to see with a lot more frequency in her male colleagues now that she's come out.

It also feeds part of the ugliness of the sex trade because like it or not, Dr. Magnanti did glamorize it and she is essentially a middle-class dilettante. Prostitution is an ugly, ugly business for 99% of those involved. I would have more respect for her if she simply said being a call girl was a part of life that she was interested in exploring rather than pretend that it was just about money as a convenient screen.

**6. By Zephir on November 20, 2009 7:41 PM**

Why to support morally fringe persons, especially for Science? There is always possibility to earn money in worthier ways.

**7. By Jeremy on November 20, 2009 7:55 PM**

I'm a male with a Ph.D. And if I were a female, I would have strongly considered being a prostitute as a sideline to make going through academia financially stress-free. I've heard of undergraduates working at strippers at my undergrad university. Which was all the more shocking because it was during the height of the feminist era and it seemed that no women were interested in sex! I guess camouflage while doing the improbable is the best protector of one's privacy.

Brooke says that her Ph.D. program in the UK took half the time it would have in the U.S. because she didn't have to do any teaching. I find this a little hard to believe. True, many doctoral students in the US either do teaching or work as lab assistants. But they do this in exchange for tuition and a small salary. And it doesn't double the length of their program.

So Brits get out of high school at age 15 and get PhDs in half the time as in America. It makes me wonder about the quality of "educated" people over there. There is more scientific research done at our health science center in Houston than there probably is in the entire UK. I wonder if the quality of British education is one reason why.

**8. By Richard Smart on November 20, 2009 7:55 PM**

If only a man could earn as much money as a woman can from selling sex! But I'm not saying I would do that. And the record, I will never pay for sex either.

**9. By WarrenB on November 20, 2009 8:10 PM**

I wish I was a pretty young woman! As a nerdy balding man, I couldn't prostitute myself during my own post-graduate work. And now I'm saddled with debt!

**10. By Another sexy scientist on November 20, 2009 8:23 PM**

As a biochemist and a stripper, I was very pleasantly surprised to hear this story. :)

I must say that when I got into the industry, I was very surprised by the number of girls in the same position. It's obviously nowhere near the majority. But it is a sizeable minority. In the very small club I work in currently in a relatively rural area in the American Midwest, we have a veterinary medicine graduate, an oncology graduate, and 2 science undergrads.

**11. By Tom Keller on November 20, 2009 9:19 PM**

Yearly salary for a person running around a grassy field kicking a leather ball:

100.000+ pounds.

Yearly salary for a scientist trying to find a cure against illness that kills millions every year:

20,000 - 30,000 pounds ( if lucky)

Can anyone else see the fault? We need more scientists not more sports people. Perhaps we should try and make the politicians actually work for a living and start the debate by asking what kind of world we would like to live in tomorrow.

Dear Miss Magnanti,

I see you as a ray of light for modern women everywhere as you have certainly broken the stereotype of ladies being stupid/unlucky/destitute just because they work in the oldest service business in the World. Thank you very much.

I hope your career will be long and prosperous. And I hope you will never have to bend your head for the religious crowd trying to keep us all in the DarkAges.

**12. By Lavi on November 20, 2009 9:46 PM**

It is a great thing to have her example to quote when it comes to prejudices about call girls, about scientists, and how they live.

**13. By Punter on November 20, 2009 9:50 PM**

Wow! Before this article in another thread about Grigori Perelman, I believed doing the Hollywood eccentric genius bit and excepting prizes from people/establishments one detests would mark him out as a publicity whore. Find the price and he'll break is the attitude. But ...

Amazing! An actual publicity whore!!! And she thinks she'll get the respect from the community by splashing her sordid life over the tabloids and pulp book deals!!!

Apart from the cruel laughter, who would trust her professional judgment if she is so money oriented? One would also worry for the forces possibly manipulating her (big business?, organized crime? never far away in that world). And I noticed she did some forensic work. Shocking.

Not that long ago too, university staff were considered locum parentis. As an academic, who would trust her around young minds?

Also, what partner would want to be with her now? So free and easy (if the price is right), who would want to get into anything committal with her? She's told the whole world now.

Such a strange, strange person. I can't imagine if she kept it quiet that there would have been a problem (unless it was with the chief of funding agencies, chief of police, the VC etc). Just who in the academic community could afford high-class hookers, I can't imagine she'd be bumping into them in the corridor? THERE ARE BLACKMAIL AND HARASSMENT LAWS with severe criminal penalties.

As an academic, I know of many rumors about students. It is simply "don't ask; don't tell". Most couldn't be substantiated.

She could have gotten on with her life. One is left wondering why? What \*is\* her game? It seems people will do anything to be famous these days.

**14. By Greg on November 20, 2009 10:01 PM**

It is disgraceful that people working in such important endeavors for the future of a society are valued so little and paid so little that they have to consider this to get by. It shows that the

priorities in this society are skewed. Football players who contribute nothing to the long-term well-being of a society in many instances get paid inordinate salaries for what they do. Yet people who save lives in the healthcare system and scientists who are ultimately responsible for the creation of new technology generating wealth and comfort for everyone get paid a pittance.

It makes one think that that the advancement of human civilization through technology has been a fortuitous accident or an incredible and arduous achievement by a few extraordinary individuals since it is clear that society as a whole has never appreciated the value of what they are doing. Maybe as a whole, the human race is not so "evolved" after all.

**15. By Paula on November 20, 2009 10:27 PM**

There are many other, more appropriate ways of supplementing income than selling one's body to strangers. How about imparting your amassed knowledge to younger students? Run an after-school science club to recruit the children of today's pushy parents? Go to special needs schools and bring your knowledge to more worthy customers?

On a personal level, one wonders what effect this behavior would have on any future relationships she may attempt to form.

**16. By Eve on November 20, 2009 10:54 PM**

Thanks for the *NS* interview. All too often, PhD students and post-docs are pimped and not primed. Your words speak volumes!

**17. By Farweasel on November 20, 2009 11:15 PM**

I vaguely recall years back that there was an outcry about student nurses being so poorly paid quite a number were working as strippers in Soho on their days off.

The Establishment soon solved that 'problem'. No, they didn't increase their pay. Their professional body let it be known they were at risk of being struck off for unprofessional conduct. lawless logic and highly cost efficient at a micro level.

Shame there's so few 'home grown' nurses about these days ,of course.

**18. By joe on November 20, 2009 11:23 PM**

to "greg":

Yes, scientists are the serfs of the Information Age spending their labor for the creation of knowledge that is used to profit the corporations and governments that control it.

For those that believe in the good they are doing, enough money to get by is all that they are really needing. The rest go and study Law.

**19. By david Bailey on November 20, 2009 11:51 PM**

Humbling, open, honest, accepting of personal error and direct. Absolutely everything that I expect from a quality scientist. Bravo!

**20. By Bill on November 21, 2009 12:09 AM**

Surely there must have been great scientists who used call girls. So I see no reason why there cannot be great scientists who were call girls. That being said, it is not a given that it will work swimmingly in this case. Dr. Magnanti as her pseudonym "Belle" has called worldwide attention to her previous career and to her colorful attitudes towards men.

I wish the men who pass through her professional life the best of luck navigating her documented experience in manipulation and her acknowledged willingness to do so even within the confines of her profession if it will get her foot in the door. Likewise, I wish Dr. Magnanti the best of luck in building healthy professional relationships with men despite the inevitable (if not always obvious) distrust and intimidation some of them will no doubt feel on working with -- as she herself puts it -- "the most famous prostitute in the World".

It is a brave thing that Dr. Magnanti does, a self-described expert in compartmentalization now attempting to re-integrate two personas. She faces a terrible dilemma. "Belle" built a celebrated identity of breezy self-confidence based on her ability to avoid feeling anything inconvenient at the wrong time. Even now, "Belle" advises others interested in the trade that if it occurs to them to ask how it feels, they are not cut out for it.

If Dr. Magnanti erases the walls within herself, if she takes the wrecking ball to Belle's defenses, what damage will that do to Belle's success? On the other hand, if Dr. Magnanti props up Belle even when it means maintaining separate identities, what damage will that do to her ability to be at peace with herself and her world going forward?

As a whole person, Dr. Magnanti has so much to offer the World. As separate identities, I fear each of them will sabotage the other. Let us wish her the strength to be whole.

**21. By Jack Ring on November 21, 2009 12:10 AM**

Given the therapeutic value of laughter in particular and enjoyment in general perhaps football players have far greater contribution the health of 30,000 blokes for 2 hours than does 30 strokes for a few minutes or a science experiment that doesn't prove fallibility of a theory. Science is a technique -- not a god.

**22. By Julie on November 21, 2009 1:31 AM**

I think Science is gaining momentum, becoming more prominent in everyday society. Science has never been marketed which is why Science journals are less popular than fashion magazines. I think sex and sexiness have a universal appeal and perhaps Brooke Magnanti helped Science by making it more visible.

The scientific method is a brave choice because it demands a systematic way of thinking. It is humanity's best hope for eliminating bias and ultimately bringing us closer to truth. I will let Science speak for itself and if the scientist is sexy, well that never hurt anyone.

**23. By john stevenson on November 21, 2009 3:03 AM**

I congratulate Brooke on her openness, courage, and determination to succeed against the odds. But it concerns me that there are many other students struggling to complete their studies against the same odds who will not choose the same course.

I think that everyone nowadays understands the importance of Science and we should do more to help not only future scientists but all who participate in the search for knowledge. Good luck, Brooke. And I hope that in time you are recognized for what you have achieved and not for what you have done

**24. By bill on November 21, 2009 3:07 AM**

I've never met a prostitute. And I've never met someone with a doctorate in forensic pathology. Prior to reading this, given the choice I'd have been coy as to which I'd choose. Now it's clear: the doctorate would win hands down!

She comes across as what she in fact is: an intelligent, accomplished woman. Thanks for asking her.

**25. By Rick Burlow on November 21, 2009 3:51 AM**

Interesting article. However, I find its tone veering toward titillation rather than information.

I'm sure that Brooke Magnanti isn't the first person to pay for her education through escort services or prostitution. So she worked as an escort. So what? It has nothing to do with her capacity as an epidemiologist or as a forensic pathologist.

Stick to Science and not tabloid trash, please.

**26. By Bill on November 21, 2009 5:26 AM**

This seems like the interview was not really well thought out. Isn't the more interesting aspect of the psychology of her circumstance? It is relatively rare that analytical science types would involve themselves in prostitution according to studies.

Better questions to ask would be things like:

What kind of psychological barriers did you need to overcome to engage in this activity?

How does your background family experiences, life at school, etc. influence your choice of engaging in this activity?

How would you characterize your clients from a psychological perspective? What kind of insights have you gained from the nature of male sexuality or even your own?

Questions like those would have been a bit more informative. The nature of high-class escorting must be quite different from other forms of sexual services.

It is also interesting to note that Levitt and Dubner of Superfreakonomics have also recently discussed the economic nature of escorting only a few weeks ago.

**27. By DocM on November 21, 2009 6:03 AM**

"Titillating" as it may be, it's true.

During my time in the medical profession in the U.S., I knew many nursing, lab, and other technological students who paid their way through school as either strippers or call girls. So it's not just a UK phenomenon.

Bottom line is that a lack of scholarships for critical skills sometimes leads people to make tough choices.

**23. By Peter on November 21, 2009 8:58 AM**

One can imagine that a call-girl-in-academia might even be a more interesting supplier.

Should such expenses then not be tax-exempt for the punters as they are a direct contribution to alleviate government spending?

**24. By Stephen on November 21, 2009 10:14 AM**

I think that Brooke Magnanti deserves all the support she can get ( not that she seems to need a lot). She's stronger than most of us will ever be.

As for those who would judge her, do we really need to listen?

**25. By Julie on November 21, 2009 10:16 AM**

I wonder if the cancer rates in the northeast of England may not be linked more to the proximity of Sellafield? The Welsh hills also received a thorough drenching of radioactive rain at the time of the Chernobyl explosion. Do their inhabitants show a similar trend?

**26. By Valerie on November 21, 2009 11:38 AM**

I think there is an aspect here that Ms. Magnanti is playing down. Her desire to be rich (fair enough -- people can pursue what goals they will) and to wear Victoria Beckham dresses.

Prostitution (such a lucrative industry) as a result of economic necessity and distorted attitudes to sex is a long debate. Whatever happened to the Utopian dream of free love? Let's ask the lady fruit bat.

**27. By Janssen on November 21, 2009 12:36 PM**

I think Dr Magnanti is in danger of becoming the new "thinking man's totty". Perhaps she could take over on "Countdown" since Carol Vorderman has left. Seriously though, let's hope her experiences encourage people to take up Science as a career and help remove the public perception that all scientists are boring duffers.

**28. By Robert Scarth on November 21, 2009 1:20 PM**

reL "Football players who contribute nothing to the long-term well-being of a society in many instances get paid inordinate salaries for what they do. Yet people who save lives in the healthcare system and scientists who are ultimately responsible for the creation of new technology generating wealth and comfort for everyone get paid a pittance."

Supercilious nonsense! Footballers bring pleasure to hundreds of thousands of people every week. That is not a trivial achievement and it deserves to be rewarded. Additionally, the money paid to footballers is paid entirely voluntarily. All government-funded science is paid for with money which is taken from law-abiding people under the threat of violence.

**29. By Nick on November 21, 2009 3:55 PM**

She certainly does give a good name to prostitution. Not only is she attractive but she is also smart. So smart that no one can seriously claim she was exploited and trafficked by the men.

Lately it has become fashionable for governments to jail customers of prostitutes. And her coming out like this certainly puts to shame such injustice.

Sex between consenting adults is their business and not anyone else's. And the only ethically acceptable government interference in such relationships is making sure that the consent is real and there is no coercion.

**30. By Righteous Man on November 21, 2009 4:43 PM**

Sadly typical of the depravity that feminism is reducing Society to. There's no need for any woman to behave like this. There are plenty of decent men they could get married to and combine their resources to buy their own homes. Many men already have their own homes anyway. But women say "there must be something wrong with him coz "he's still single".

And then women are prostituting themselves or having group sex in porno videos while other women are going on about their feminist right and "men only think about sex". And then other females leave school with no qualification and breed with hooligans and live off benefits coz it's their right while ignoring decent young men coz they're too nice. Shame on Feminism! The sooner global warming kills the World the better!

**31. By Tiffany on November 21, 2009 6:26 PM**

When I was a student (in the U.S.), I paid for all of my university education by working as a secretary. Which can be pretty degrading work, maybe even more so. I would never have had the courage to do what she did. But honestly, I was probably treated with more contempt and scorn than she was (and tolerated creepier and more verbally abusive male bosses than she did) and she was probably paid MUCH more than I was.

Good for you, Brooke! I hope you're laughing all the way to the bank!

**32. By Ashley on November 21, 2009 7:41 PM**

I wholeheartedly agree with Janssen's comment about breaking the stereotype of scientists being "boring duffers". I myself work in Entomology. But my colleagues are far from boring!!!

I've been a big fan of Dr. Magnanti's blog and books for some time. I always thought she was an amazing person. But the fact that she is a scientist just makes her even more awesome. To be so brilliant and dedicated to research and still be so down-to-earth, that's just awesome in my book :)

**33. By Kate on November 21, 2009 8:08 PM**

I agree with 'Bill' that there are more important questions that should be asked (whether here or elsewhere).

As a woman, I know I could not engage in prostitution however desperate I became. For many women, sex is still too intimate an act to allow such a course.

The danger of 'Belle de Jour' is not so much that it glamorizes but that it normalizes prostitution. Where will this lead? With the clamor of so-called libertarian voices that "it's only a job" or "prostitution will always be with us" plus the sensible arguments that legalization would provide more protection for prostitutes, how soon before we get jobs in brothels advertised in job centers? How soon before women have their benefits stopped if they don't take them up? How soon before every university campus has a brothel so that impoverished students can finance their studies?

Prostitution is the use by a man of a woman as a 'thing' and not a human being. No matter that he is paying her, this act is damaging to the status of women as a whole. In most cases and by most accounts, prostitution is a sordid business. Women who claim that it's no big deal and didn't affect them mentally allow men who use prostitutes to continue deluding themselves that their victims either enjoy it or view it with as much detachment as they do.

Don't even get me started on Billie Piper!

**34. By Malcolm Miller on November 21, 2009 9:22 PM**

I think that Dr Magnanti has done the World a great service. A friend recently told me she had been a prostitute in our licensed brothels where women are well-protected. I was able to affirm that I thought that prostitution is an honorable profession. I already knew that university students used it to pay their way. Nothing new in this, but Brooke has given us an excellent picture in her books of a woman with a lot of autonomy choosing her own way. And that gives a liberating message to many women.

**35. By Kinglizard on November 21, 2009 10:16 PM**

As a Biological Anthropologist (retired), I can relate to the expense of education as well as the biology of emotions. Brooke demonstrates a very ancient and common aspect of social behavior.

Evolution provides an assortment of biological "tools" to all social animals. Higher primates -- especially Human females -- have used their enhanced secondary sexual characteristics to gain security for themselves and their offspring since Prehistoric times. We still see many examples of these instinctive behaviors every day in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Brooke's intellect may be superior to many women who work in the "sexual service" industry. But my research and experience lead me to the inescapable conclusion that primate Females

instinctively use sex to manipulate the social environment to their advantage. And probably always will.

**36. By Mel on November 22, 2009 12:01 AM**

Dr Meganti is not "the thinking man's totty". She is the "not thinking terribly hard man's totty". Janssen's comment is an insult to Carol Vorderman. Carol Vorderman is not a whore.

Science is on one side a beautiful distillation of human cognitive experience and on the other a refuge for those who find it difficult to engage emotionally with the World.

Science is completely amoral and cannot inform morality. Giving us both men on the Moon and the Holocaust using guys who worked for the same regime! There is nothing awesome about whoring yourself. If Dr. Meganti is to be praised for anything, it is that she has kept the monstrous side of herself for her (erstwhile) private life and kept it out of her science. Not all scientists have been so diligent.

**37. By stoffer on November 22, 2009 1:04 AM**

I have one advice for people from the UK who want to do science and be appreciated (also financially) for that. Come to Scandinavia. UK after Ms M. Thatcher is being consumed and crippled by the same disease as USA 0- the blind Tailaban-style neoliberalism.

Fostering science and research is in the business of Society but not necessarily in the business of the private sector. Most of groundbreaking scientific discoveries which changed and improved our lives were funded by the government. Even the Internet was a government project. Private industry would never agree for open standards of the Internet. They do not want them now either. Proprietary protocols, DRM, and like a obvious consequence of that.

**38. By vishwa on November 22, 2009 6:26 AM**

A real ordeal in fact. But I'm really amazed that she kept her mental integrity for so long working as .... Great, reall..Great and inspiring!!!!

**39. By Stan Hayward on November 22, 2009 8:16 AM**

I wonder what the comments would be if Dr Magnanti had said she had taken her other job as part of a scientific study? The only pity is that her subject is not psychology, as then she might throw some light on why anyone in this day and age even raises an eyebrow at her confessions.

**40. By Jo on November 22, 2009 9:24 AM**

Interesting question about Ph.D. opportunities in other places where people are paid a real salary. In Science in Britain, it's not the lack of a salary that is the issue. The stipend that goes with most Ph.D. places is more than enough to live a comfortable (if modest) lifestyle. The real issue comes after the three years are up. Many people still have a good 6 months or so to go until the thesis is finished, handed in, examined and corrected. 6 months with little or -- often -- no financial support whatsoever. Often this is not made clear at the outset of the doctoral studies unless you are lucky and have 4 years' funding and are told you will be paid to write up.

It does seem sad that after we've struggled for years in getting an education with all the long hours, there isn't the income to help set you up in the next step. Particularly as it seems that most jobs won't take you until after the whole process is finished. I have a huge amount of respect for Brooke in getting herself out of a hole in an imaginative way. Not to mention in awe of her writing skills. I don't think it is something I could do. But I can see why she did.

**41. By Aisha on November 22, 2009 10:04 AM**

Kate and Bill paid homage to the elephant in the room. The fact that sex for most women (heck, I'll even extend the notion to men) is both an emotional and personal experience. The fact that Brooke (regardless of obtaining a PhD - many of us have been reluctant to leave Academia long enough to pocket one of those) chose to engage in selling her body for money probably comes from something inherent in her past circumstance and experience.

There was a recent interview with her estranged father who had separated from her mother soon after her first sojourn into university. He took a downward spiral where he engaged in drugs and prostitutes for 10 years. Brooke was thus introduced to this and it was probably a very difficult thing for her. And it ended up destroying a relationship she had cherished with a man she had looked up to. It doesn't sound at all glamorous. Only unfortunate.

**41. By Wai Wong on November 22, 2009 11:45 AM**

In response to Greg's comment, Robert Scarth said "Supercilious nonsense! Footballers bring pleasure... The money paid to footballers is paid entirely voluntarily. All Government-funded science is paid for with money which is taken from law-abiding people under the threat of violence."

If only consumers are rational! The truth is that most people pay \$\$\$ for instant gratification (like sex) rather than for their own good (like education). Surely we haven't evolved to be rational decision makers yet as seen in problems like obesity, addiction, and credit card debts. That is why we need policy makers to coerce us to do the right things.

**42. By Proleetness on November 22, 2009 3:12 PM**

The mental illness epidemic that is Economy. 'Nuff said.

**43. By dichorionic on November 22, 2009 6:51 PM**

Intelligent argument is demeaned by hyperbole as in 'Kate's comments. Stopping benefits and university brothels reveal more about prejudices than understanding prostitution. As a gynecologist, I came across a number of escort girls and streetwalkers. The escort girls I met enjoyed their work, were confident and autonomous, and had a clear business plan.

"Prostitution is the use by a man of a woman as a 'thing' " may be true of a cheap transaction (a commercial exchange) in a car. But it was not true at the higher end where the business is about fantasy and entertainment and where friendly relationships develop in a way not dissimilar to what may arise with your accountant or sports coach. I enjoyed my time in cancer research. But it was very dry and I escaped into sport and voluntary work for a bit of excitement and put up with the poor finances.

**44. By Yewtree on November 22, 2009 7:48 PM**

I think prostitution should be properly regulated (but no-one should ever be pressured into taking a job as a prostitute). We need to end the exploitative and dangerous side of prostitution - streetwalking, the links with drug addiction, pimping, etc.

It's not just men paying for sex with women. There are plenty of women who would pay for sex with men as long as it was safe to do so. And I imagine the same applies to same-sex arrangements as well. This happens in other countries where they don't have such ridiculous double standards.

Let's get over the ridiculous idea that men are beasts with insatiable sexual appetites and women are frigid so men must pay women to do it. It just happens that we all have urges and sometimes paying to satisfy them would be the simplest solution.

Best wishes to Ms Magnanti for a successful scientific career. I hope that this revelation will make no difference to her career. After all, Science is meant to be rational and sensible, right? And based on empirical evidence like how good you are at your job. Not on what you did to get by as a student.

Oh yes ... and let's fund PhDs properly, too.

**45. By Gail on November 22, 2009 7:55 PM**

Let's face it - her undergrad degree was from a mediocre school in Florida. No American grad school of any worth would be knocking down her door. What amazes me is that you can get a PhD in England in 3 years. Absurd!! Not worth the sheepskin it is printed on. Dr. Magnanti used what she had to get ahead. Good on her. Who cares, really? One prostitutes oneself to any job they have whether it be academia, medicine, law, or marriage

**46. By anna on November 22, 2009 11:09 PM**

It is not true that an increase in PhD wages leads to an increase in teaching and a longer time for the PhD to be completed. My husband is doing a PhD in Denmark. He is paid the same as if he was in a first-time graduate job (enough for us to live in a nice flat in a good area of Copenhagen and have a nice, if not jetset, lifestyle on just his wage); is entitled to the same benefits such as 30 days holiday a year and paid paternity leave; and it will only take 3 years.

And sorry, Gail, but a PhD does not need to take 6 years. The research done in a 6-year American PhD is not greater in any meaning of the word in America. And the 6 years is often down to the universities wishing to employ researchers at a very low wage.

I would also like to point out that if people were not prepared to sell their bodies, a lot of science research would grind to a halt as there would be no human subjects. Funny that it is wrong to be paid for sex to complete a PhD for yourself but okay to be paid to be a subject in an experiment for someone else's research.

**47. By Alex on November 22, 2009 11:35 PM**

I got my undergrad from even more mediocre school in the Ukraine. I worked hard for a few years and now I am a Ph.D. in one of the Ivy League universities. The truth is that the girl just wanted to get more money and do less work. Period.

**48. By BritChick USA on November 23, 2009 1:16 AM**

Whether women will pay men for sex or not, the truth is that we rarely have to.

I can tell you from experience that if you are a female in need of some no-strings fun (and I have been often), an online ad will bring 50 genuine replies in an hour. And a little careful email sifting sorts out the morons, fantasists, fibbers, and losers from the nice guys. And then a face-to-face 'interview' does the rest. But men tell me that when they advertise on line like I do, all they get is replies from hookers!

So I can get a choice of nice men (mostly married I'm sorry to say and being ignored at home - just like me) with no money changing hands at all. In fact, I even split the cost of a hotel room as I want to get my money's worth just like he does. It's a mutual exchange, not a service.

Strange, I'm a scientist too. Perhaps we are better at emotional detachment, yet imaginative enough to know there is fun to be had out there? And the Internet is a wonderful thing.

**49. By Ace on November 23, 2009 4:31 AM**

> "Let's be frank. Postdocs are not well paid. Being debt-free enabled me to continue to choose science jobs I love rather than changing career."

That's so true. I totally changed my line of research. So much so that I am doing something rather far removed from my PhD because I had to find a postdoc that would take me.

to Gail: Most PhDs in UK are funded only for 3 years but most take 4-to-5 years to complete. Unlike the U.S. system where a PhD course is essentially a taught Master and a research PhD rolled into one whereas most UK PhD candidates are suppose to have already graduated from a MSc from somewhere. The difference is like Set Menu (MSc and PhD in one uni) vs A La Carte (MSc and PhD in two unis).

**50. By Anon. on November 23, 2009 7:05 AM**

Tiffany writes: "When I was a student (in the U.S.), I paid for all of my university education by working as a secretary, which can be pretty degrading work..."

Ditto. I temped my way through graduate school working as a legal secretary and in finance in New York and Boston. I never met with degrading treatment from a client. But I used to wonder if it ever occurred to the women who ran my high-class agencies to regard themselves in the light of pimps. It certainly occurred to me.

All the things crucial to being a top-of-the-line temp (without which one's crack qualifications counted for nothing) smacked of prostitution. One must dress properly and attractively for the client with costume differing according to the professional sector. One must have impeccable grooming, tasteful make-up, and understated-but-good jewelry.

And one must know how to please. Yes, one's client but also one's pimp. At the agency hiring interview, there's only one shot to see that the all-important box ("front desk") is ticked off by the interviewer. To achieve this, one must project the right balance of competence, attractiveness, serenity, and brains.

My agencies, like Belle's, vetted their clients carefully so I was well-treated and highly appreciated. I performed so well that in short order I was sent out to first-time clients, expected to represent the agency in such wise as to clinch the account. Not that my premiere talent ever earned me a raise. The agency took its 50 percent and that was it.

Finally, there was the element of one's essential disposability. I never kidded myself that if the agency were forced to choose between having my back and maintaining an account, I would be the winner. And if not disposal now then disposal later. For it was clear from observing the pool that one would age out of the profession on reaching the day of looking like somebody's idea of 35, maybe just a little tired around the eyes or the corners of the mouth...

Until that day, however, the women who hire and the women who are hired out meet in a comic minuet of sisterly solidarity. See how perfectly our interests mesh -- the 'sellers' and the 'sold'!

**51. By Richard Wagner on November 23, 2009 7:13 AM**

This is clear evidence that no matter the level of education, women are still morally vacuous.

**52. By Tom on November 23, 2009 10:08 AM**

I'm more intrigued that thyroid cancer in Cumbria is linked to Chernobyl and yet there is another source on the doorstep. I remember at the time being baffled how those damned Commies had the technology to make their fallout look like a plume from Sellafield that those in Sellafield hoped would be masked by the Ruski pollution.

**53. By Katya on November 23, 2009 3:07 PM**

To Richard Wagner:

Who is morally vacuous? Who is PAYING to have sex with women? MEN!!

**54. By BritChickUSA on November 23, 2009 4:42 PM**

If British education is so bad, Gail, and American education so much better, why are so many H1B visas going to foreigners of which many are Brits? Sorry, I'm a Brit working in Science in USA. We have Brits, Chinese, South Americans, Europeans... more foreigners than Americans. I've put 2 kids through high school here in USA and it takes 2 years of undergraduate college to get up to the standard of British A levels. Which is why Americans take 4 years for a first degree. The high school exit exam is a farce in most states -- equivalent of about what a 14 year old would be doing at a decent European high school.

People do Masters then go on to a PhD here whereas in the UK it's usually a straight degree / PhD path. I was offered one just like that. I did a Master instead which was considered more appropriate for actually getting an industry job. (Never wanted to be an academic; couldn't face the lack of money.)

To Richard Wagner: women who like sex and are upfront, aggressive, and open about it are morally vacuous? And the men who do are just what... blokes? Oh dear...do get over yourself!

Great stuff Brooke. You have upset people by showing that bright women are sexy. May men just hate that still I'm afraid. Many (but not all) still like their sexy women dumb. A bright sexy woman is a challenging thing!

**55. By IvanS on November 23, 2009 5:04 PM**

Oh dear! Intelligent mature woman makes a personal choice about her life and way to earn living ... That will never do will it? Obviously she must be a publicity seeker or a gender traitor or something.

Good luck to her! And the moralists and axe grinders can get lost!

**56. By Michael Marshall on November 23, 2009 5:27 PM**

to Katya:

I'm thinking that the comment by "Richard Wagner" might be a joke on the 19<sup>th</sup> century German composer of that name who is known for having held rather sexist views. See for instance his portrayal of the morally vacuous Rhine Maidens in the Ring Cycle.

Either that or it's a coincidence!

**57. By MGS on November 23, 2009 8:01 PM**

As a Yank, I'm not sure if this is an American vs. British bias or simply my own. However, I see what she did as solely her own business and not really that interesting. More fascinated by these responses here.

Sexual kink ... Really? Moral degenerate? These are fairly outlandish claims against someone who we don't know personally. I think it interesting that so many persons would invest the emotional energy against a stranger who, after all, has made personal choices that are at worst less egregiously wrong than 99% of what we read in the news.

**58. By KB on November 23, 2009 10:06 PM**

I think that what Dr. Magnanti did will forever cause her to be less credible in a lot of people's minds. No matter how educated and articulate she is, at the end of the day she is a common whore.

Many of us have accumulated significant debt in the pursuit of higher education but never once considered selling our souls. She justifies her actions by claiming that it was convenient. Well, where does that argument end? We could all make a lot of money selling drugs or robbing banks. But thankfully we are not all of the mindset that the ends justifies the means.

I can't tell you how many strippers I've met through my work in law enforcement who all claim that they are going to be brain surgeons and Nobel Peace Prize winners. Whatever.

**59. By Sean\_VN on November 24, 2009 3:06 AM**

It is true that you don't get paid for doing science. However, if you write a stupid song that gets on the top 40 list you will be well looked after for the rest of your life. The human species is doomed. Bring on the robots!

**60. By paul Skinner on November 24, 2009 9:10 AM**

What of the rat that blew the whistle on this lady? She/he is in the gutter. Not the lady that defended herself rather than run and hide. BE HAPPY

**61. By S.Hayward on November 24, 2009 10:18 AM**

Thank goodness Dr Magnanti didn't plagiarize the works of other scientists; present false research results to get funding; steal technical equipment (a common problem in research labs), or act as a government advisor at the same time as promoting conflicting interests for commercial companies. Those would really ruin her reputation.

Of course, she may well have chosen an honest profession to earn money. Here are a few suggestions:

Second-hand car salesperson

Estate agent

Politician

University lecturer getting consultancy fees for students work and use of college facilities

Banker

Lawyer

Paparazzi photographer

Jobs to avoid are:

Social worker if you are a paedophile

Security expert if you are a convicted criminal

Or any job that involves government confidential data handling if you are totally incompetent.

It is not that these jobs are bad. But the media tend to look at them when nothing much else is happening.

Of course, if you really want to make money, then set up a pornography website. It is the fastest growing industry and gets the most traffic of any subject. Also, according to stats most are set up by women.

True, they are frowned upon by unattractive women and men who wish to take a high moral stand (no pun) outwardly if not in reality. But such people are generally not aware of what is going on in the virtual world that we are increasingly living in.