

"When making a decision of minor importance, I have always found it advantageous to consider all the pros and cons. In vital matters, however, such as the choice of a mate or a profession, the decision should come from the unconscious, from somewhere within ourselves."

Sigmund Freud



Career Development Decisions: rationality and the unconscious

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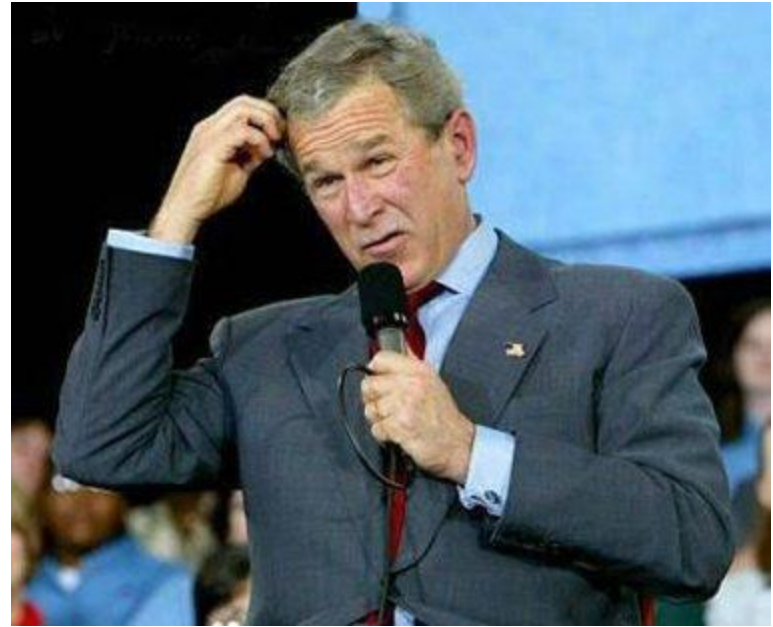
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Why are career decisions so hard?

- So many options
- So many criteria
- Imperfect information
- Uncertain outcomes
- Identity



Decision making processes

Conscious rationality

Gut instinct

Which is better for career decisions?



What's the best decision you've ever made?

How did you make it?

Was it a good decision *because* of the decision making process?



Rational Decision Theory

- Problem definition / identification of goals
- Generation of options
- Rigorous evaluation of options
- Choice based on utility



Expected Utility

	Nurse	Advertising	Police	Plumber	Author
Autonomy	5	6	7	9	9
Helping people	9	2	7	7	3
Interesting	6	7	5	3	9
Fun	4	8	6	2	1
Total	24	23	25	21	22

But...

You would need a very big bit of paper

The relative weightings are usually complex

There is rarely comparable information

Flawed assumptions in rational decision making

- More options are better (Iyengar and Lepper 2000)
- Consideration of all the options leads to better decisions (Iyengar et al. 2006)
- Other people's involvement leads to worse decisions (Blustein 2010)



And it's just not how we make decisions

'no evidence of any kind of rational decision making process at all'

Greenbank and Hepworth
2008

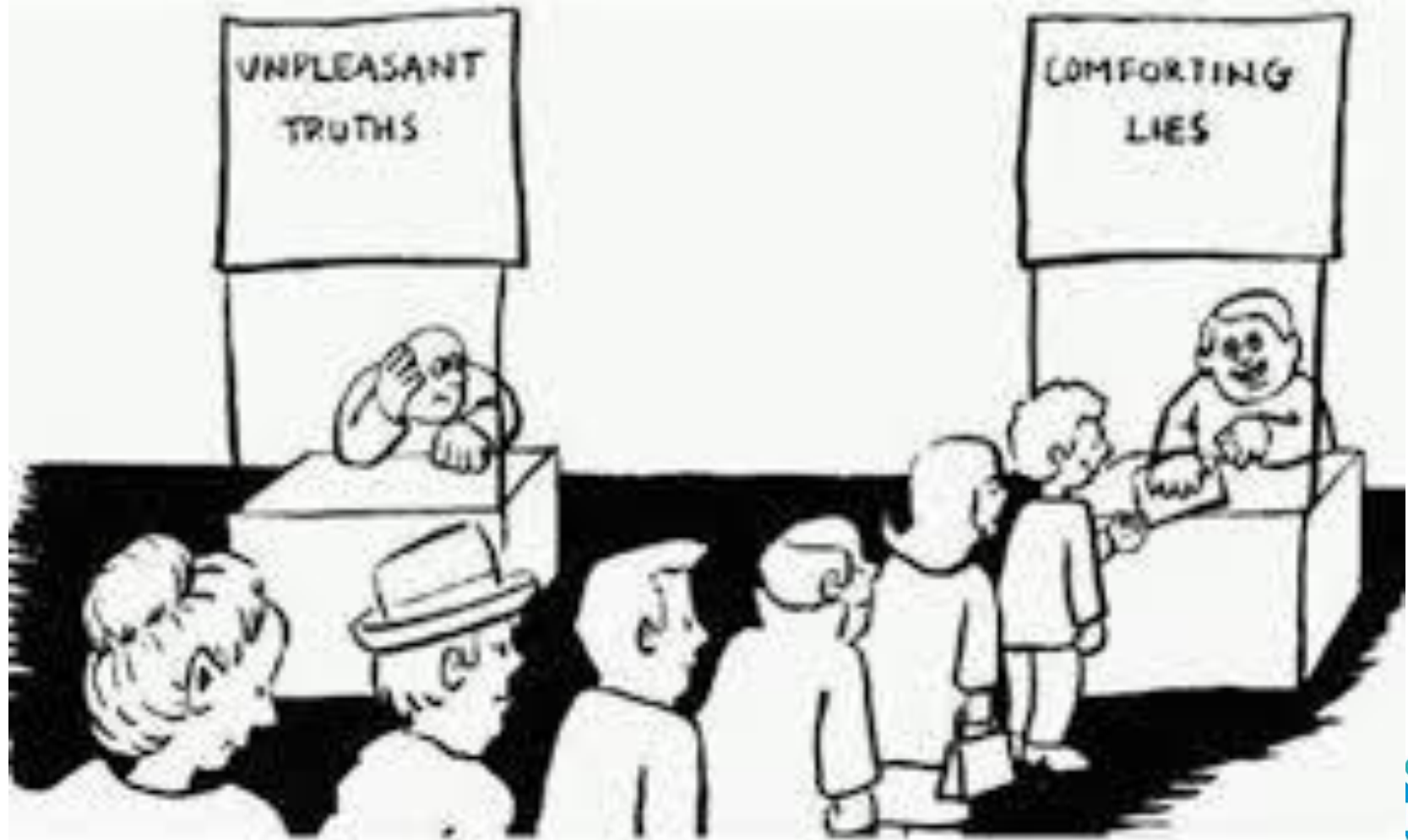


Gut instinct

- Automatic, unconscious
- Able to process enormous amounts of data instantaneously
- Allows you to be more creative and lateral
- Reliable when there's too much information and there is no definitive right answer



Instincts are susceptible to bias



Instincts are susceptible to biases

- Small sample sizes
- Messages delivered with confidence
- ‘Hot’ information is trusted more than ‘cold’
- Recent and out-of-the-ordinary information
- Priming, framing and anchoring
- Loss aversion – especially for women
- Default and herding



How do we make good career decisions?

- Singh and Greenhaus (2004) found that the best person-job fit came from those who had used a combination of instinct and conscious logic



How can we use this information to help researchers to make better decisions?

Raising awareness of the gut messages?

Asking about people?

Encouraging people to combine fast and slow thinking?

Discussions around previous decision making strategies?



References and Further Reading

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