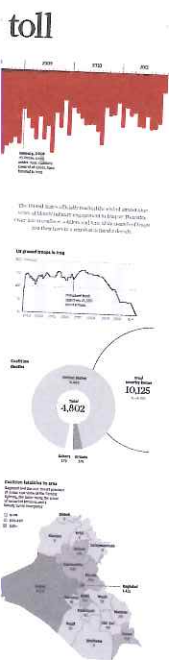


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The key point here is that there was no intention to mislead. Although the approach to inverting the y-axis may not be entirely conventional, it was technically legitimate. Creatively speaking, the effect of dribbling blood was an understandably tempting metaphor to pursue. Indeed, the graphic attempts to emulate a notable infographic from several years ago showing the death toll during the Iraq conflict (Figure 1.11). In the case of the Florida graphic, on reflection maybe the data was just too 'smooth' to convey the same dribbling effect achieved in the Iraq piece. However, being inspired and influenced by successful techniques demonstrated by others is to be encouraged. It is one way of developing our skills.

Unfortunately, given the emotive nature of the subject matter – gun deaths – this analysis would always attract a passionate reaction regardless of its form. In this case the lack of trust expressed by some was an unintended consequence of a single, innocent design: by reverting the y-axis to an upward direction, as shown in the reworked version in Figure 1.12, you can see how a single subjective design choice can have a huge influence on people's perception.

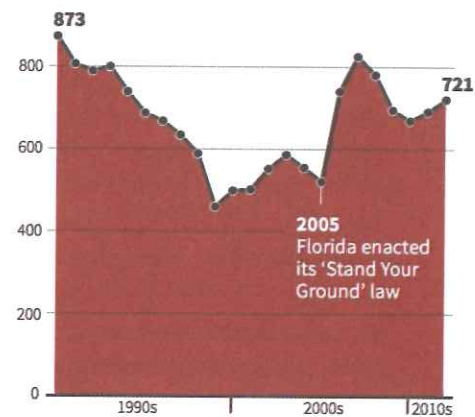
The creator of the Florida chart will have made hundreds of perfectly sound visualisations and will make hundreds more, and none of them will ever carry the intent of being anything other than truthful. However, you can see how vulnerable perceived trust is when disputes about motives can so quickly surface as a result of the design choice made. This is especially the case within the pressured environment of a newsroom where you have only a single opportunity to publish a work to a huge and widespread audience. Contrast this setting with a graphic published within an organisation that can be withdrawn and reissued far more easily.

Trust Applies Throughout the Process

Trustworthiness is a pursuit that should guide all your decisions, not just the design ones. As you will see in the next chapter, the visualisation design workflow involves a process with many decision junctions – many paths down which you could pursue different legitimate options. Obviously, design is the most visible result of your decision making, but you need to create and demonstrate complete integrity in the choices made across the entire workflow process. Here is an overview of some of the key matters where trust must be at the forefront of your concern.

Gun deaths in Florida

Number of murders committed using firearms



Source: Florida Department of Law Enforcement

Figure 1.12 Reworking of 'Gun Deaths in Florida'

'My main goal is to represent information accurately and in proper context. This spans from data reporting and number crunching to designing human-centered, intuitive and clear visualizations. This is my sole approach, although it is always evolving.' Kennedy Elliott, Graphics Editor, *The Washington Post*