Visualization (Marks and Encoding)

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PUBLISHED
October 7, 2024

Global Health Data

Introducing global health data

- We will be visualizing global health and population data for a number of countries, over the time period of 1955 to 2005.
- The data was collected by the Gapminder Foundation and shared in Hans Rosling's fantastic TED talk.
- If you haven't seen the talk, we encourage you to watch it first!
- Roadmap: load data and review first five rows

Load data

Let's first load the dataset from the vega-datasets collection into a Pandas data frame.

```
import altair as alt
from vega_datasets import data as vega_data
#alt.renderers.enable('png')
```

```
data = vega_data.gapminder()
```

```
data.shape
```

```
(682, 6)
```

`head()` + summary

```
data.head(5)
```

	year	country	cluster	pop	life_expect	fertility
0	1955	Afghanistan	0	7971931	43.88	7.42
1	1960	Afghanistan	0	8622466	45.03	7.38
2	1965	Afghanistan	0	9565147	46.13	7.35
3	1970	Afghanistan	0	10752971	47.08	7.40
4	1975	Afghanistan	0	12157386	47.55	7.54

For each `country` and `year` (in 5-year intervals), we have

- fertility in terms of the number of children per woman (`fertility`)
- life expectancy in years (`life_expect`)
- total population (`pop`)
- mysterious `cluster` – what might this represent? We'll try and solve this mystery as we visualize the data!

Data types

Data types: roadmap

Pandas data frames come with types. When loading data not from pandas, explicitly name:

- `'N'` indicates a *nominal* type (unordered, categorical data),
- `'O'` indicates an *ordinal* type (rank-ordered data),
- `'Q'` indicates a *quantitative* type (numerical data with meaningful magnitudes), and
- `'T'` indicates a *temporal* type (date/time data)

Nominal (N)

- *Nominal* data (also called *categorical* data) consist of category names.
- Ask *is value A the same or different than value B? (A = B)*, supporting statements like “A is equal to B” or “A is not equal to B”.
  - In the dataset above, the `country` field is `N`ominal.
- When visualizing nominal data we should readily be able to see if values are the same or different: position, color hue (blue, red, green), and shape can help.

Ordinal (O)

- *Ordinal* data consist of values that have a specific ordering.
- Ask: *does value A come before or after value B? (A < B)*, supporting statements like “A is less than B” or “A is greater than B”.
  - In the dataset above, we can treat the `year` field as `O`rdinal.
- When visualizing ordinal data, we should perceive a sense of rank-order. Position, size, or color value (brightness) might be appropriate.
  - Remark: color hue (which is not perceptually ordered) would be less appropriate.

Quantitative (Q)

- With *quantitative* data we can measure numerical differences among values. There are multiple sub-types of quantitative data:
  - With *interval* data ask: *what is the distance to value A from value B? (A - B)*, supporting statements such as “A is 12 units away from B”.
  - With *ratio* data can also ask:
    - *how many are there of value A?* supporting statements such as “how many babies per parent?”
    - *value A is what proportion of value B? (A / B)*, supporting statements such as “A is 10% of B” or “B is 7 times larger than A”.
  - In the dataset above, `year` is a quantitative interval field (depending on whose history of the world you prefer, there are many choices for the year “zero”), whereas `fertility` and `life_expect` are quantitative ratio fields (zero is meaningful for calculating proportions).
- Vega-Lite represents quantitative data, but does not make a distinction between interval and ratio types.
- Quantitative values can be visualized using position, size, or color value, among other channels.

Quantitative (Q) and zeros

- One way to check if you’re working with *ratio* and *interval* data: **does zero mean anything?**
- Textbook: “An axis with a zero baseline is essential for proportional comparisons of ratio values, but can be safely omitted for interval comparisons.”
- In the dataset above:
  - `year` is a quantitative interval field: depending on whose history of the world you prefer, there are many choices for the year “zero”
    - We’re either in year 2024 (Gregorian), 5784 (Hebrew), or 1445 (Islamic calendar)
  - `fertility` and `life_expect` are quantitative ratio fields: zero is meaningful for calculating proportions
- Discussion question – Why is it so important to include zeros for ratio data? Can you give an example where omitting zeros on the plot would lead the reader to misleading conclusions?

Temporal (T)

- *Temporal* values measure time points or intervals. This type is a special case of quantitative values (timestamps) with rich semantics and conventions (i.e., the Gregorian calendar).
- Example temporal values include date strings such as `“2019-01-04”` and `“Jan 04 2019”`, as well as standardized date-times such as the ISO date-time format: `“2019-01-04T17:50:35.643Z”`.
- There are no temporal values in our global development dataset above, as the `year` field is simply encoded as an integer.

Discussion question I

What are examples of variables that are

- `N`ominal
- `O`rdinal
- `Q`uantitative

Let’s try to come up with at least three examples of each. For each example, state the comparison in a sentence.

Discussion question II

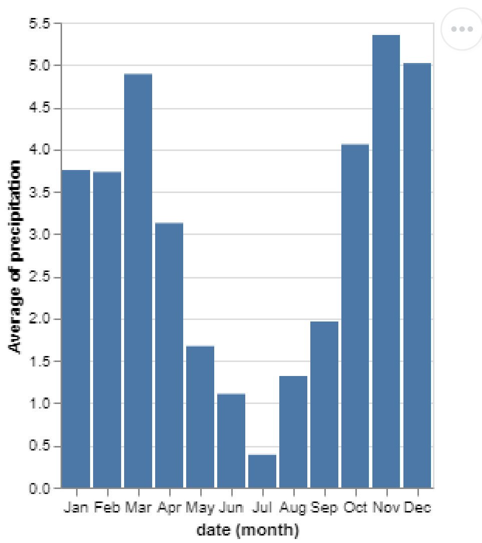
Suppose we have a dataset of ages (10 years old, 20 years old, 10 years old, 30 years old). What would it mean for these data to be

- `N`ominal
- `O`rdinal
- `Q`uantitative

What comparisons are feasible with each data type?

Revisit plot from beginning of prior lecture

```
seattle = vega_data.seattle_weather()
alt.Chart(seattle).mark_bar().encode(
    x = 'month(date):O',
    y = 'average(precipitation):Q'
)
```



In-class exercises

What happens when...

- Make `precipitation` ordinal

- Revert. then make `date` temporal. There's a consequential but subtle change relative to the original plot. What is it?

data types: summary

A single data series can have multiple meanings depending on data type

- `'N'` indicates a *nominal* type (unordered, categorical data),
- `'O'` indicates an *ordinal* type (rank-ordered data),
- `'Q'` indicates a *quantitative* type (numerical data with meaningful magnitudes), and
- `'T'` indicates a *temporal* type (date/time data)

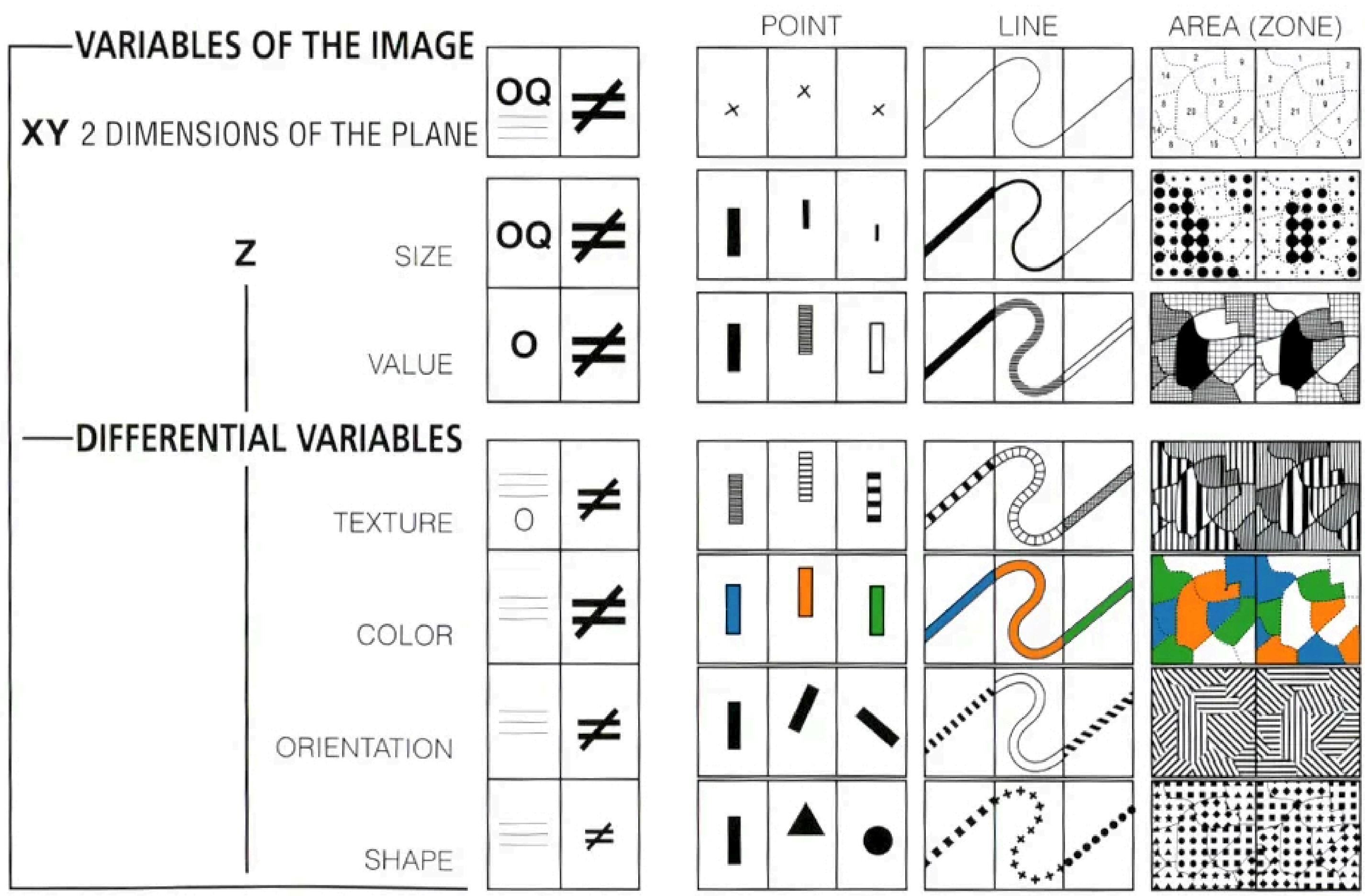
Explicitly specify the data type so that Altair/Vega know how to interpret it. If you don't specify a data type (as was the case in Lecture 1), Vega will guess. This can lead to undesired results!

Visual encoding

Visual encoding roadmap

- Seven types of visual encoding
- More on color

Seven ways of visual encoding in one image



Visual encoding

Source: Jacques Bertin in Semiology of Graphics (1967), via [source]()

Free advice: don't try to use all seven ways of encoding information in a single plot. It will inevitably be overload.

More depth on color

Language note: by `color`, we mean both brightness (which Bertin calls “value”) and hue (which Bertin calls “color”)

Why choose color deliberately?

- Using any software’s default color palette is kind of like using comic sans font on a resume
- Choosing the “right” colors will make it easier for you to convey meaning

Color palettes and their use cases

Toggle back and forth to the schemes page:

step 1 Am I working with `N`ominal, unordered data or with ordered data (either `O`rdinal or `Q`uantitative)?

If `N`ominal, unordered data, use categorical palettes. Otherwise, proceed.

step 2

Palette type	Use case
Sequential Single-Hue	
Sequential Multi-Hue	Use for higher contrast, but harder to judge quantitative proximity
Diverging	Use if there is a midpoint (e.g. voting for `redblue`)
Cyclical	Use if circular (e.g. time of day, month)

More advice on color choices

- Use colorbrewer2.org to choose your color palettes. Click through to site. Options include subsetting to colors that are
  - colorblind safe
  - black and white printer (aka photocopy) safe
- Harmonization
  - *Within reports* You rarely produce a single plot in isolation. You usually produce several plots as part of a memo, a website, etc. Use consistent colors across plots.
  - *Across reports* Many organizations have official palettes and plot templates. Good to ask if you are working for a big org if they have one.

Visual encoding: summary

- Bertin proposes seven different ways to encode visual information. His chart is a handy reference to what visual elements can encode different types of information.
- Color is one of the easiest ways to convey meaning. Choose your palette based on whether you want to convey unordered or ordered data, whether you have a midpoint, and whether your ordered series is cyclical

Encoding channels

Encoding channels: roadmap

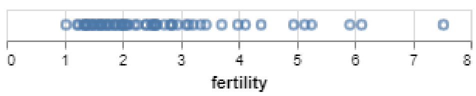
We now are going to learn how to implement Bertin’s vision in Altair.

- `x`
- `y`
- `size`

- color
- opacity
- column
- row

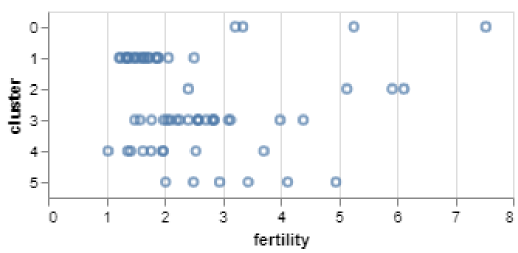
X

```
data2000 = data.loc[data['year'] == 2000] #one year is more manageable
alt.Chart(data2000).mark_point().encode(
    alt.X('fertility:Q')
)
```



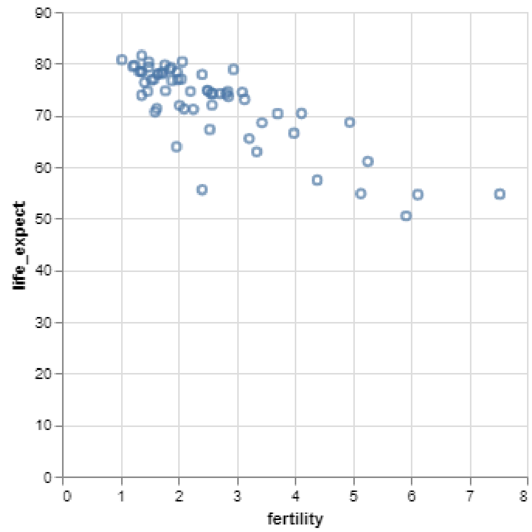
Y

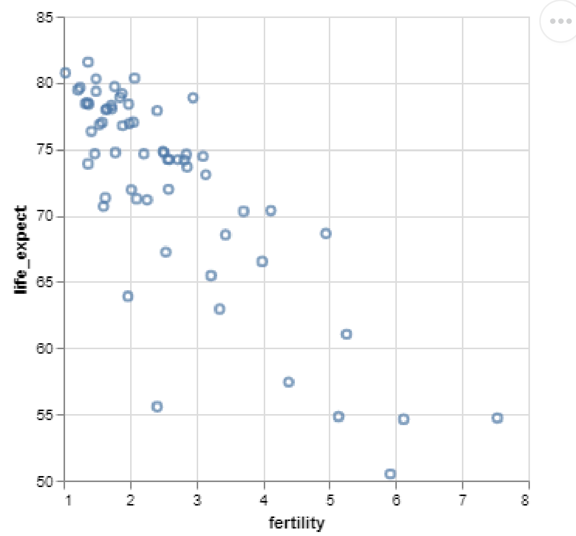
```
alt.Chart(data2000).mark_point().encode(
    alt.X('fertility:Q'),
    alt.Y('cluster:O')
)
```



Do not require zero on axis range

```
zero_included = alt.Chart(data2000).mark_point().encode(
    alt.X('fertility:Q'),
    alt.Y('life_expect:Q')
)
zero_excluded = alt.Chart(data2000).mark_point().encode(
    alt.X('fertility:Q', scale=alt.Scale(zero=False)),
    alt.Y('life_expect:Q', scale=alt.Scale(zero=False))
)
zero_included | zero_excluded
```

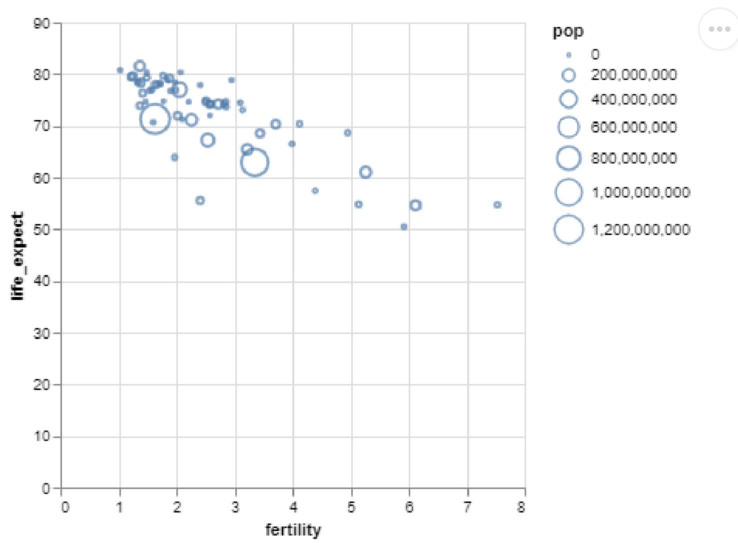




Discussion question: which plot do you prefer (and why?)

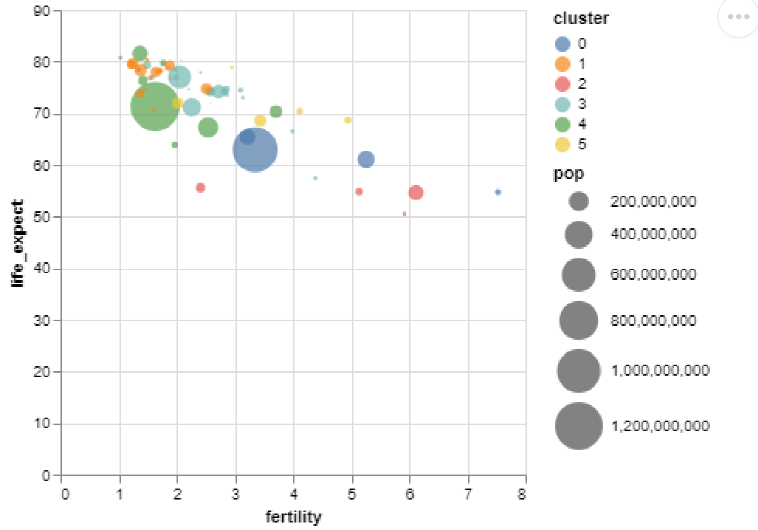
`size`

```
alt.Chart(data2000).mark_point().encode(
    alt.X('fertility:Q'),
    alt.Y('life_expect:Q'),
    alt.Size('pop:Q')
)
```



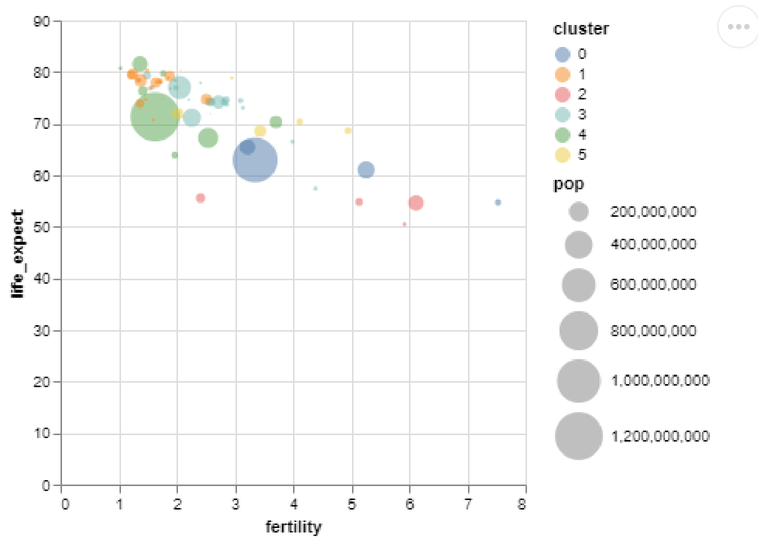
add `color` and `size` with `filled=True` and `range=[0,1000]`

```
alt.Chart(data2000).mark_point(filled=True).encode(
    alt.X('fertility:Q'),
    alt.Y('life_expect:Q'),
    alt.Size('pop:Q', scale=alt.Scale(range=[0,1000])),
    alt.Color('cluster:N')
)
```



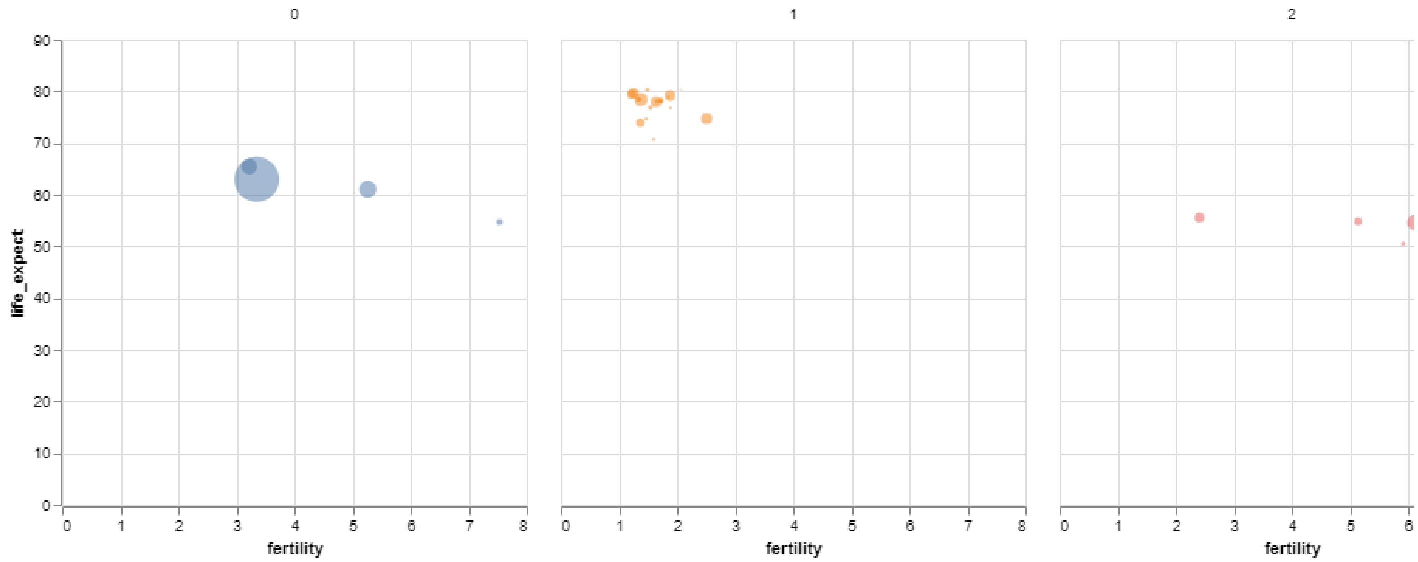
opacity

```
alt.Chart(data2000).mark_point(filled=True).encode(
    alt.X('fertility:Q'),
    alt.Y('life_expect:Q'),
    alt.Size('pop:Q', scale=alt.Scale(range=[0,1000])),
    alt.Color('cluster:N'),
    alt.OpacityValue(0.5)
)
```



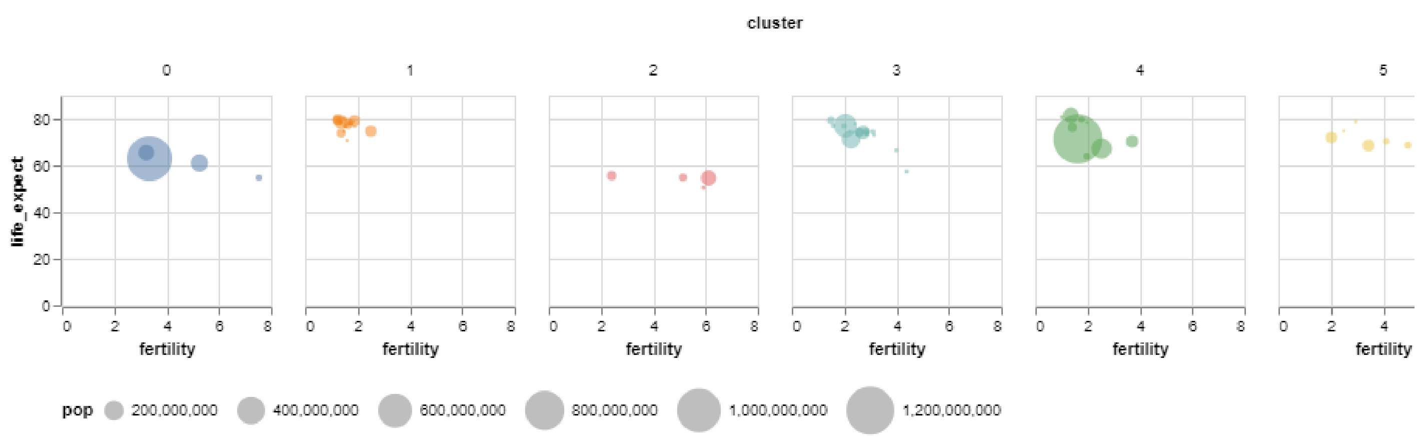
column

```
alt.Chart(data2000).mark_point(filled=True).encode(
    alt.X('fertility:Q'),
    alt.Y('life_expect:Q'),
    alt.Size('pop:Q', scale=alt.Scale(range=[0,1000])),
    alt.Color('cluster:N'),
    alt.OpacityValue(0.5),
    alt.Tooltip('country:N'),
    alt.Column('cluster:N')
)
```



adjust aspect ratio, move pop legend, remove color legend

```
alt.Chart(data2000).mark_point(filled=True).encode(
    alt.X('fertility:Q'),
    alt.Y('life_expect:Q'),
    alt.Size('pop:Q', scale=alt.Scale(range=[0,1000]),
             legend=alt.Legend(orient='bottom', titleOrient='left')),
    alt.Color('cluster:N', legend=None),
    alt.OpacityValue(0.5),
    alt.Tooltip('country:N'),
    alt.Column('cluster:N')
).properties(width=135, height=135)
```



in-class exercise

The plot faceted by column doesn't fit on the page. Redo it instead faceted by row.

Bonus: It still looks bad. What further change is needed?

Encoding channels: summary

- `x`: Horizontal (x-axis) position of the mark.

- `y`: Vertical (y-axis) position of the mark.
- `size`: Size of the mark. May correspond to area or length, depending on the mark type.
- `color`: Mark color, specified as a [legal CSS color](https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/CSS/color_value).
- `opacity`: Mark opacity, ranging from 0 (fully transparent) to 1 (fully opaque)
- `column`: Facet the data into horizontally-aligned subplots.
- `row`: Facet the data into vertically-aligned subplots.

Graphical marks

Graphical marks: roadmap

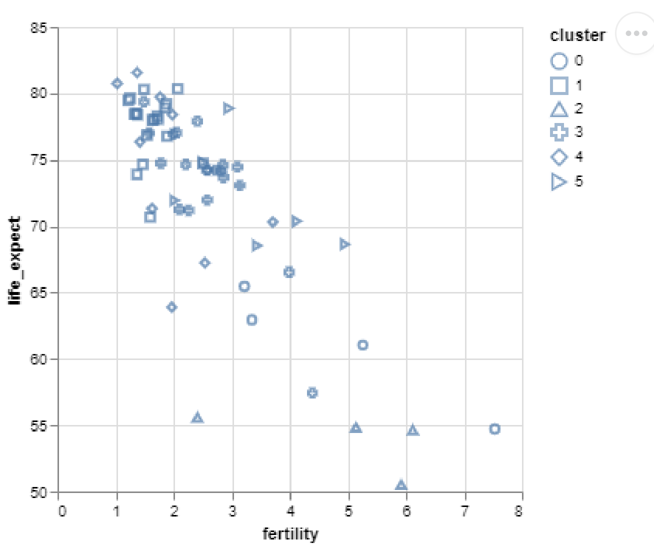
Prior section used only `mark_point()`. Now will cover

- `mark_point()`
  - `mark_square()`
  - `mark_tick()`
- `mark_bar()`
- `mark_line()`
- `mark_area()`

Warning: there are a ton of slides in this section. B2ut each slide is simple. focus is on software.

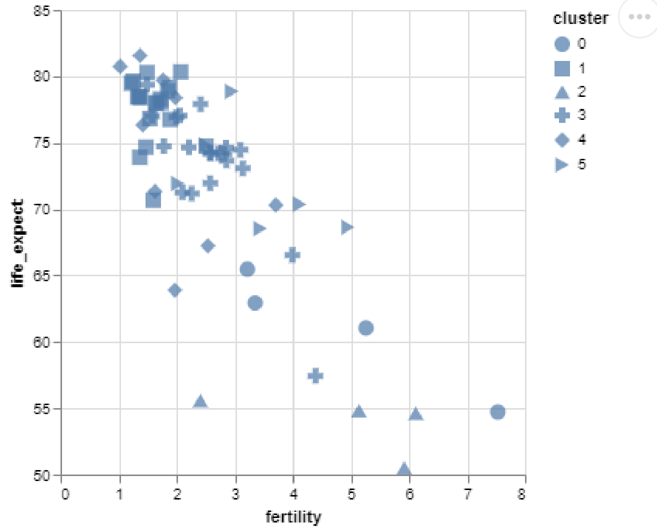
`mark_point()`: add information using `alt.Shape()`

```
alt.Chart(data2000).mark_point().encode(
    alt.X('fertility:Q'),
    alt.Y('life_expect:Q', scale=alt.Scale(zero=False)),
    alt.Shape('cluster:N')
)
```



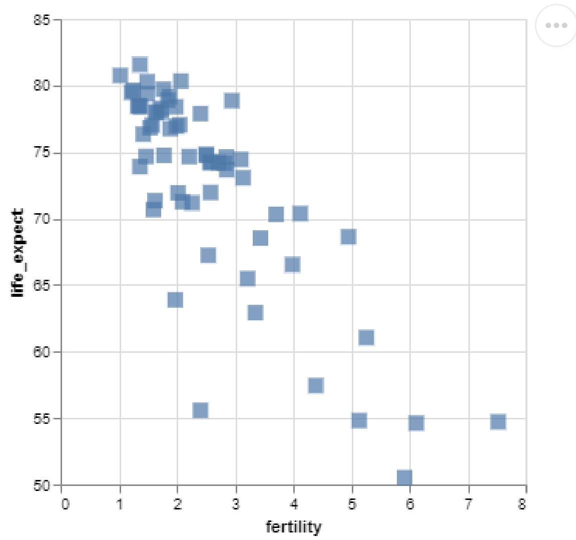
`mark_point()`: format points using arguments

```
alt.Chart(data2000).mark_point(filled=True, size=100).encode(
    alt.X('fertility:Q'),
    alt.Y('life_expect:Q', scale=alt.Scale(zero=False)),
    alt.Shape('cluster:N')
)
```



`mark_square()`

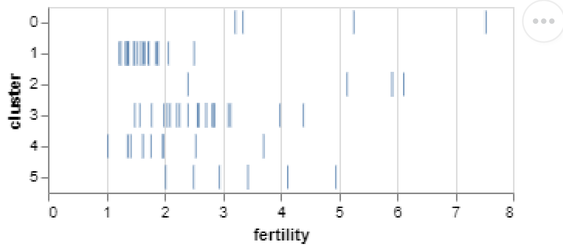
```
alt.Chart(data2000).mark_square(size=100).encode(
    alt.X('fertility:Q'),
    alt.Y('life_expect:Q', scale=alt.Scale(zero=False)),
    alt.Shape('cluster:N')
)
```



`mark_tick()`

- Useful for comparing values along a single dimension with minimal overlap.
- A *dot plot* drawn with tick marks is sometimes referred to as a *strip plot*.

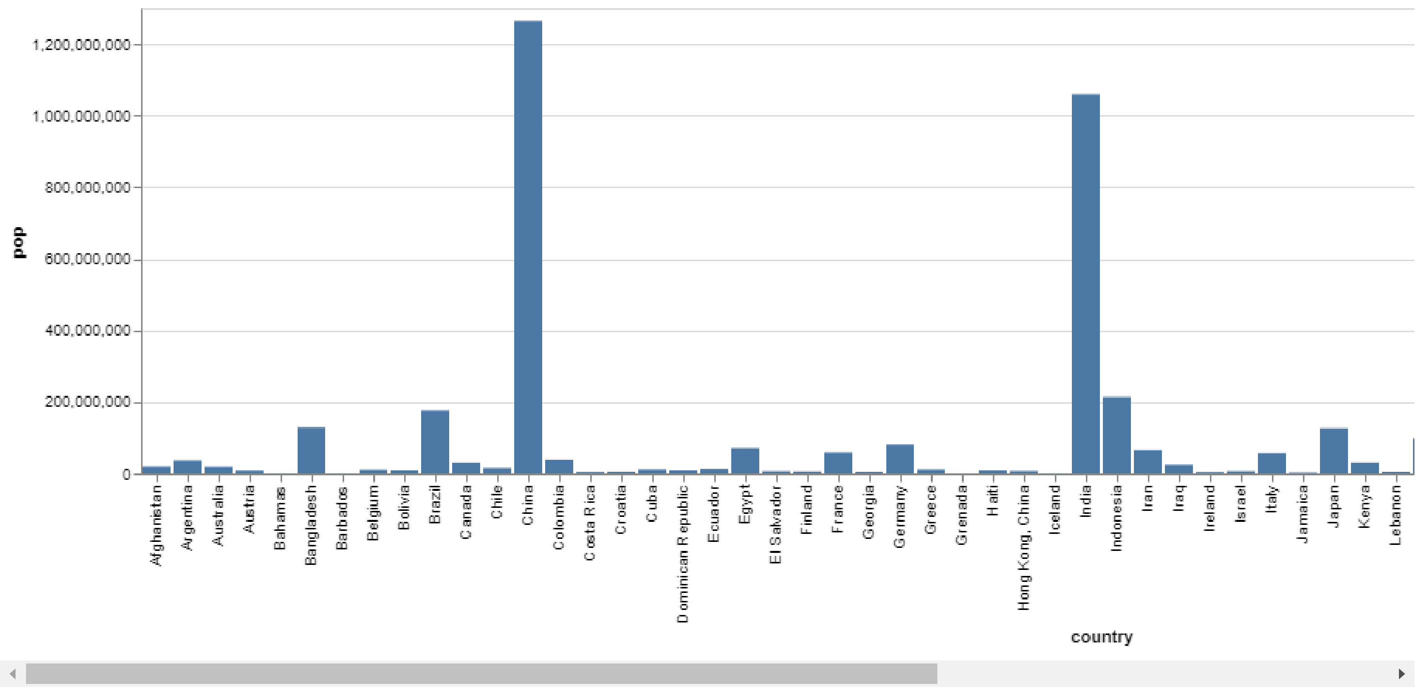
```
alt.Chart(data2000).mark_tick().encode(
    alt.X('fertility:Q'),
    alt.Y('cluster:N')
)
```



`mark_bar()`

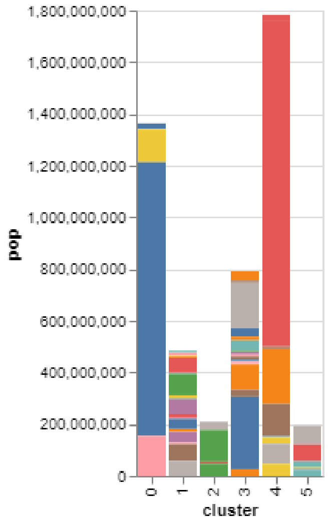
You know how to do this already! This is just a prelude to the next slide.

```
alt.Chart(data2000).mark_bar().encode(
    alt.X('country:N'),
    alt.Y('pop:Q')
)
```



use `alt.Color()` for a stacked bar plot

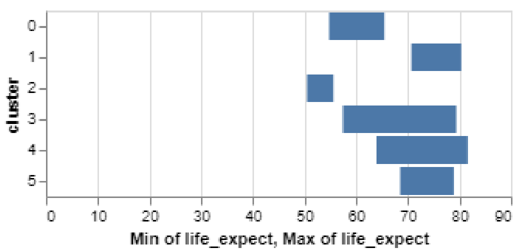
```
alt.Chart(data2000).mark_bar().encode(
    alt.X('cluster:N'),
    alt.Y('pop:Q'),
    alt.Color('country:N', legend=None)
)
```



Note: if we had instead set `alt.Y('pop:Q', stack=None)`, bars would have been overlapped with each other

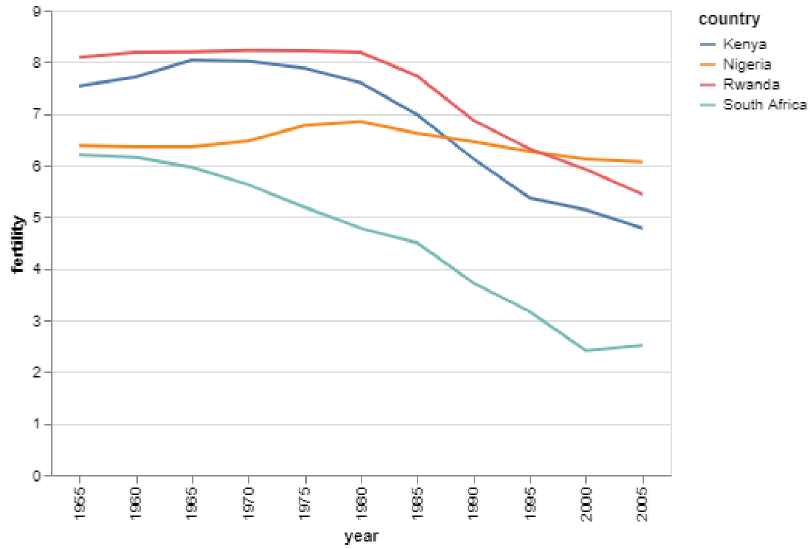
`X2()` to show intervals

```
alt.Chart(data2000).mark_bar().encode(
    alt.X('min(life_expect):Q'),
    alt.X2('max(life_expect):Q'),
    alt.Y('cluster:N')
)
```

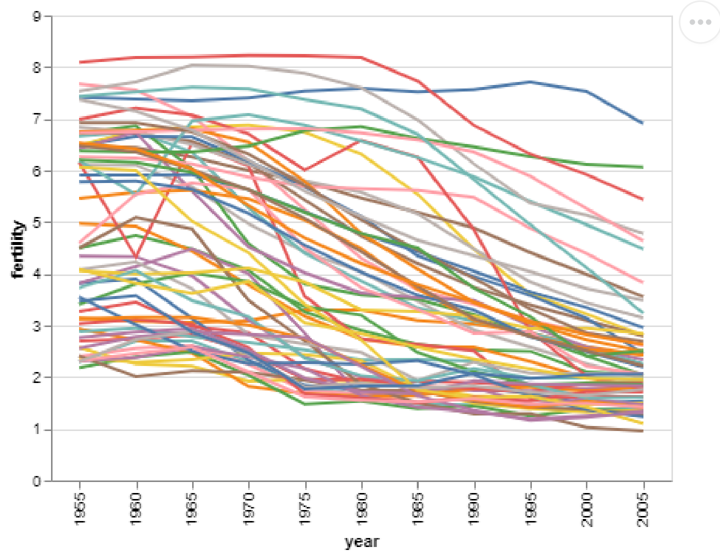


`mark_line()`

```
data_c2 = data.loc[data['cluster'] == 2] #one cluster is more manageable
alt.Chart(data_c2).mark_line().encode(
    alt.X('year:O'),
    alt.Y('fertility:Q'),
    alt.Color('country:N')
).properties(
    width=400
)
```

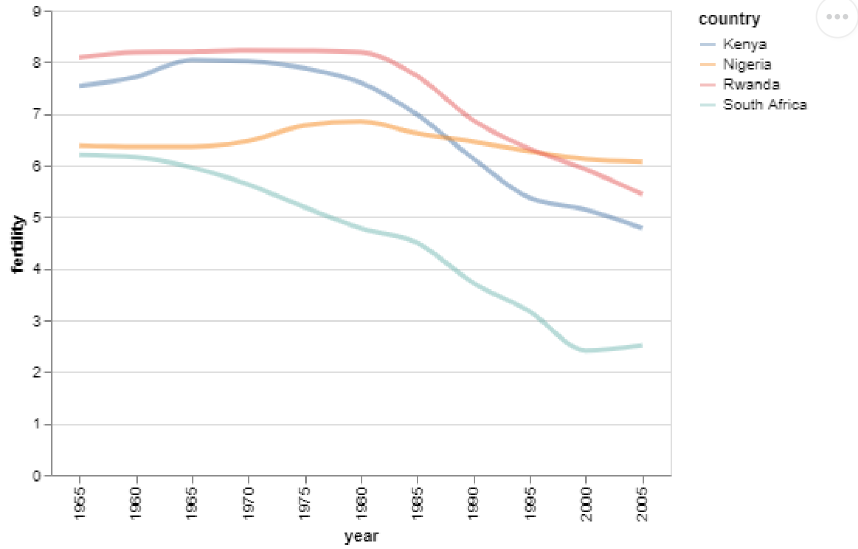



```
alt.Chart(data).mark_line().encode(
    alt.X('year:O'),
    alt.Y('fertility:Q'),
    alt.Color('country:N', legend=None),
    alt.Tooltip('country:N')
).properties(
    width=400
)
```



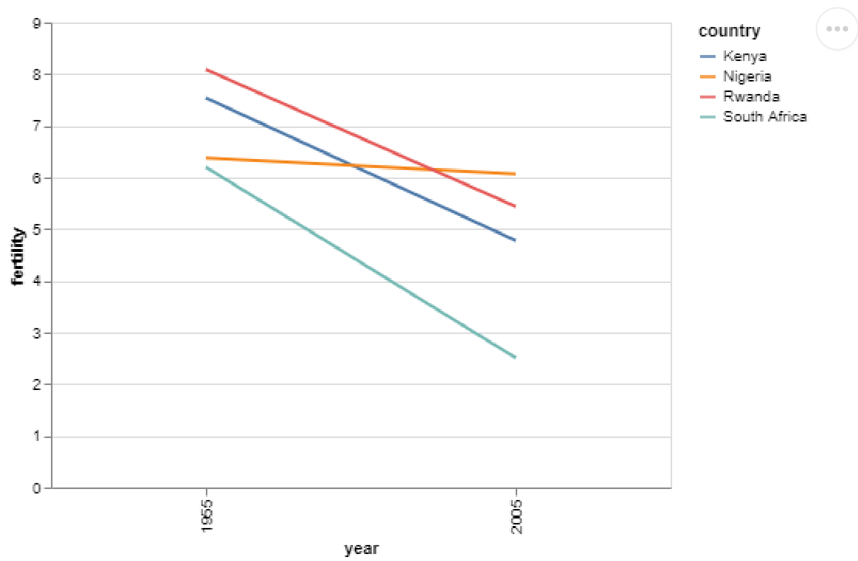
`mark_line()` with cosmetic adjustments

```
alt.Chart(data_c2).mark_line(
    strokeWidth=3,
    opacity=0.5,
    interpolate='monotone'
).encode(
    alt.X('year:O'),
    alt.Y('fertility:Q'),
    alt.Color('country:N')
).properties(
    width=400
)
```



`mark_line()` with cosmetic adjustments

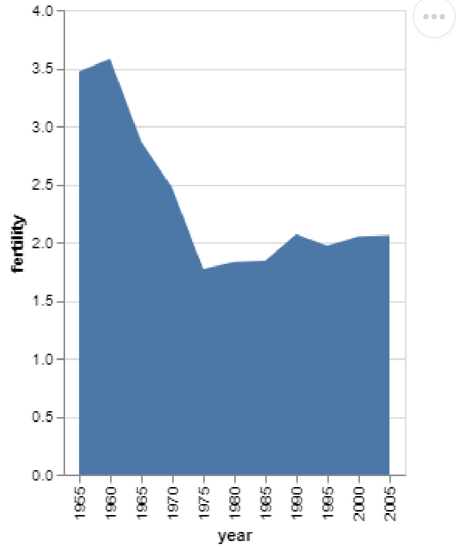
```
data_c2_2y = data_c2[data_c2['year'].isin([1955, 2005])]
alt.Chart(data_c2_2y).mark_line().encode(
    alt.X('year:O'),
    alt.Y('fertility:Q'),
    alt.Color('country:N')
).properties(
    width=400
)
```



`mark_area()`

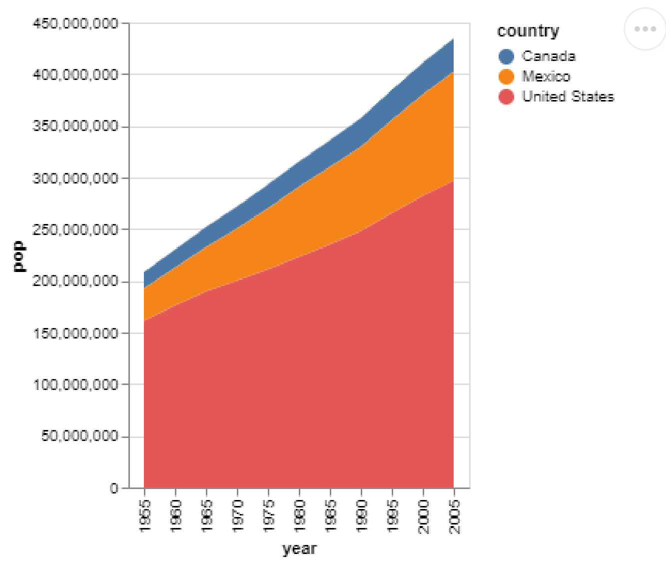
```
dataUS = data.loc[data['country'] == 'United States']

alt.Chart(dataUS).mark_area().encode(
    alt.X('year:O'),
    alt.Y('fertility:Q')
)
```



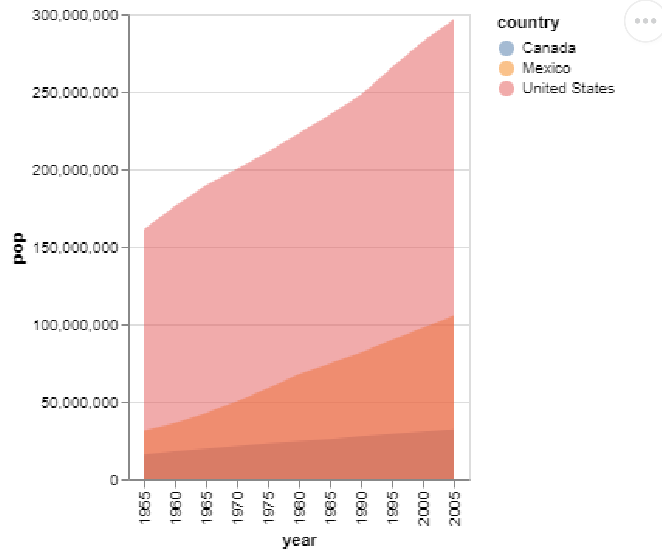
`mark_area()` with stacking

```
dataNA = data[data['country'].isin(['United States', 'Mexico', 'Canada'])]
alt.Chart(dataNA).mark_area().encode(
    alt.X('year:O'),
    alt.Y('pop:Q'),
    alt.Color('country:N')
)
```



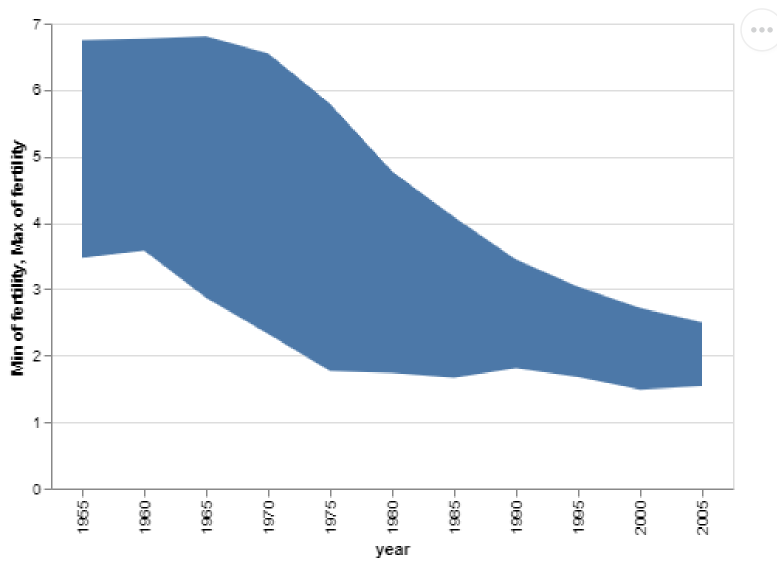
`mark_area()` with no stacking and opacity

```
alt.Chart(dataNA).mark_area(opacity=0.5).encode(
    alt.X('year:O'),
    alt.Y('pop:Q', stack=None),
    alt.Color('country:N')
)
```



`mark_area()` to show range

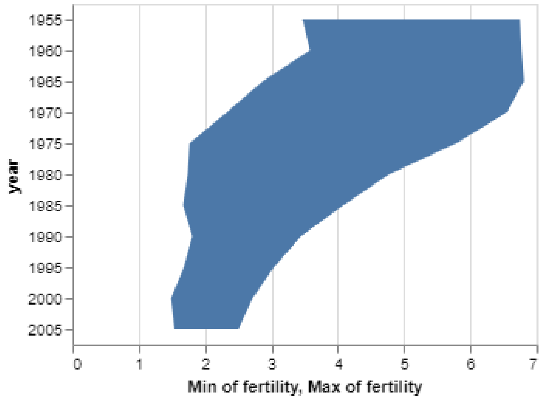
```
alt.Chart(dataNA).mark_area().encode(
    alt.X('year:O'),
    alt.Y('min(fertility):Q'),
    alt.Y2('max(fertility):Q')
).properties(
    width={"step": 40}
)
```



We can see a larger range of values in 1995, from just under 4 to just under 7. By 2005, both the overall fertility values and the variability have declined, centered around 2 children per familty.

Syntax: `mark_area()` swap axes

```
alt.Chart(dataNA).mark_area().encode(
    alt.Y('year:O'),
    alt.X('min(fertility):Q'),
    alt.X2('max(fertility):Q')
).properties(
    width={"step": 40}
)
```



Graphical marks: summary

Covered today

- `mark_point()` - Scatter plot points with configurable shapes.
  - `mark_circle()` - Scatter plot points as filled circles.
  - `mark_square()` - Scatter plot points as filled squares.
  - `mark_tick()` - Vertical or horizontal tick marks.
- `mark_bar()` - Rectangular bars.
- `mark_line()` - Connected line segments.
- `mark_area()` - Filled areas defined by a top-line and a baseline.

Not covered in lecture

- `mark_rect()` - Filled rectangles, useful for heatmaps.
- `mark_rule()` - Vertical or horizontal lines spanning the axis.
- `mark_text()` - Scatter plot points represented by text.

For a complete list, and links to examples, see the [Altair marks documentation](#).