Intro

The design theme this week was *shape* and *scale*. In particular, how to create a compact design while maximizing the meaning of the elements within the dimensions (x and y axes).

For this week's prototype, I drew inspiration from strip maps, like this one by Charles Smith, designed in 1801, showing a route from London to Dover England:

Notice how information about each leg of the journey is condensed into a strip, allowing easy side-by-side comparison of major stages, all shown in a small amount of space.

For this week's d3.js prototype (pages 2-3), I used strips to organize people in the Battle in the Mind Fields poster. As you can see, there are five strips, running horizontally, representing different professions: linguists, anthropologists, mathematicians, philosophers, and psychologists. Some linguists weren't included due to lack of time.

People are labeled by last name and birth year, and they are positioned like so: horizontally, in time, a person is positioned by their birth year (see the time scale for reference), and vertically a person is placed into one of the five strips based on their profession. A person's position in a strip depends on their connections to other people: in general, people are positioned so that connecting lines don't cross, and people in the same circle of thought are grouped more closely together.

The connecting lines use the highway line layout from last week's prototype, but they aren't differentiated (solid, dashed, dotted, colored). They *should* be differentiated in the final poster, even if they aren't the main focus this week.

A striking thing about this week's prototype is how the shapes of circles of thought are now meaningful, as they stay within a strip or extend outside of it to other professions. For example, the "First Generation" of linguists (top left) stays within the linguists strip, whereas "Brentano's circle" starts in the philosopher's strip and fans out to include non-philosophers (Masaryk, Freud, Stumpf). Notice too how the "Third Generation" of linguists dips down to include Boas, who goes on to influence Sapir and other anthropologists.

Another thing worth noting is how obvious the anthropology lineage becomes, with Steinhal, Boas, Benedict, and Mead positioned next to each other. It is also interesting to see more clearly that Sapir was not directly influenced by other linguists, which is harder to see in the original poster.

Because people are positioned in profession-specific strips, there is no need to color code each person individually. This makes the diagram itself is easier to read (no dots to find, and no boxes around names), and the lines and circles of thought stand out more.

An unexpected benefit of this compact layout is how there is more space above and below for descriptions and annotations. In the prototype shown on page 2, I've given an example, with pointers to each circle of thought. One could imagine a short descriptions of the circles of thought

as well, to aid viewers who are less familiar with the material and to give the poster more meaning.

Not shown, it is also possible to have two of these compact diagrams side by side, one on top and the other on the bottom. The two could have the same people in different relationships (for example, institution affiliations). The side by side comparison would function like an overlay, making it possible to see layers of information without sacrificing the readability of each.

On page 3, the same prototype is colored to more closely match the color scheme of the Battle in the Mind Fields poster (yellow: linguists, green: philosophers, blue: psychologists). A number of color schemes can be used, but this prototype shows the benefits of light, dull colors over large areas. A number of other small design decisions are explained on page 3 as well.

Overall, this layout makes certain strong assumptions about ordering people by their profession first, and by their circle of thought second. It is by no means the "right" way to organize the information, as there is no "right" way, but it does make certain comparisons and relationships easier to see.

Next week (the final design week), I will be experimenting with representing overlapping life spans instead of only showing people by their birth years. It will necessitate a less compact design, and connections between people may be less obvious, but other types of comparisons should emerge.