

What to consider when considering DATAVIS RULES

Lisa Charlotte Rost / @lisacrost / November 2020

Part 1

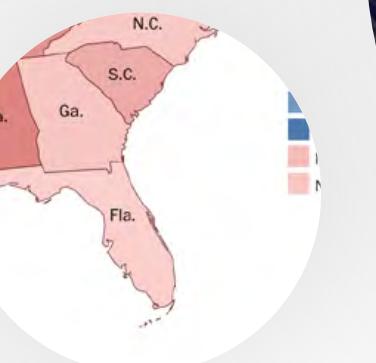
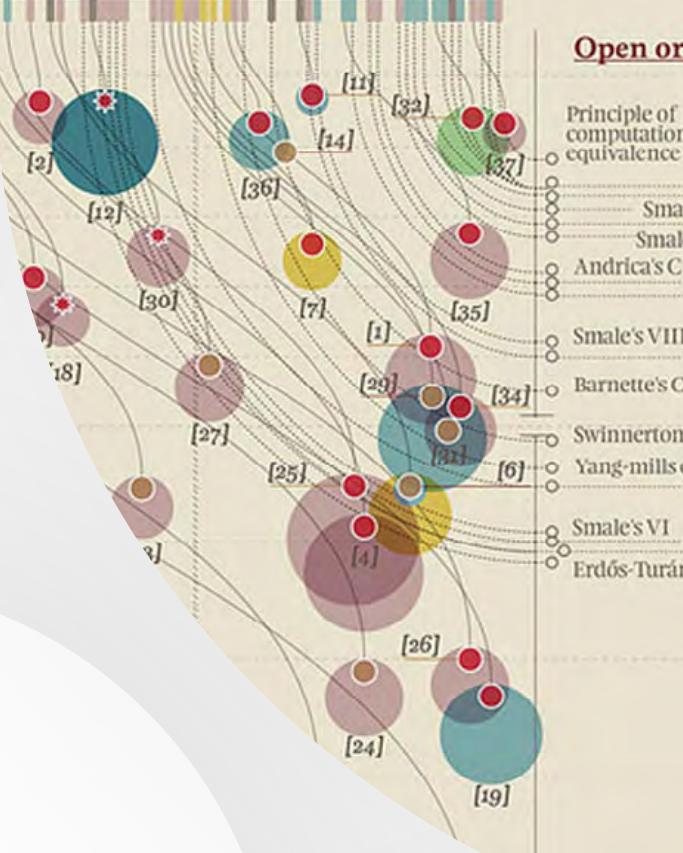
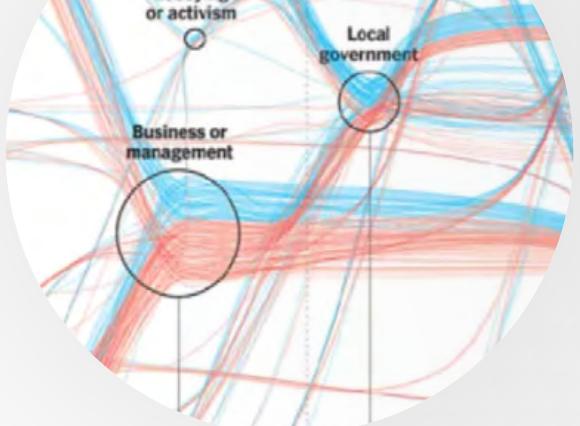
(WHY) I LIKE
RULES

?

You

?

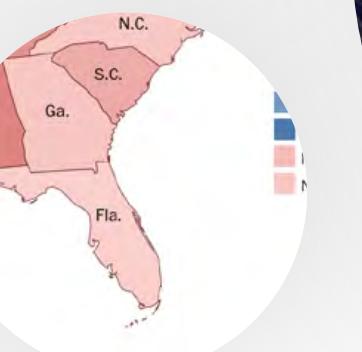
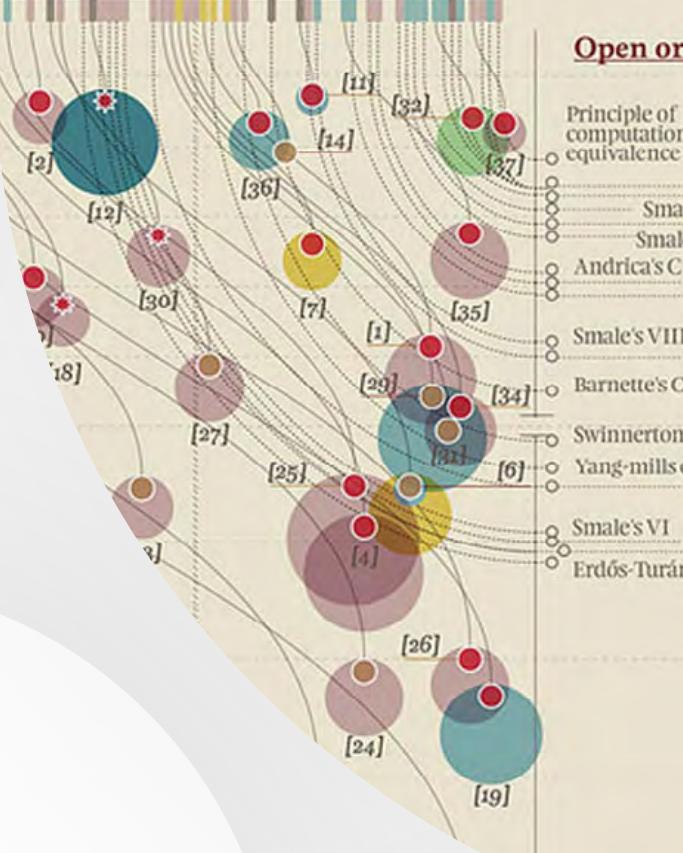
A great-looking data visualization



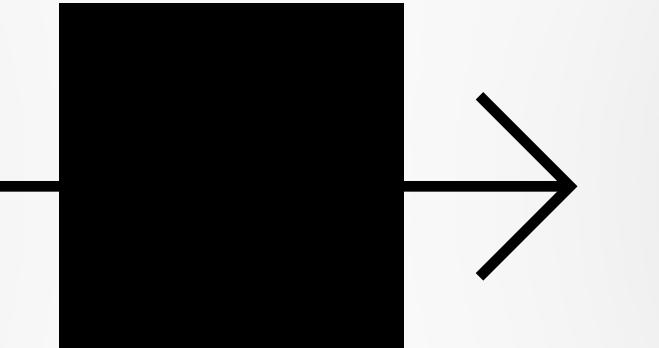
You

?

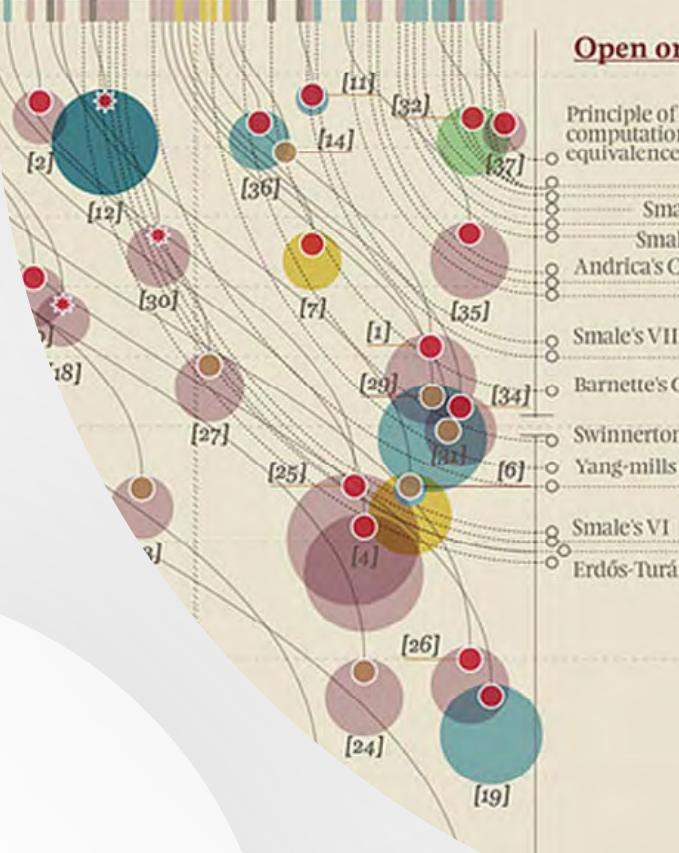
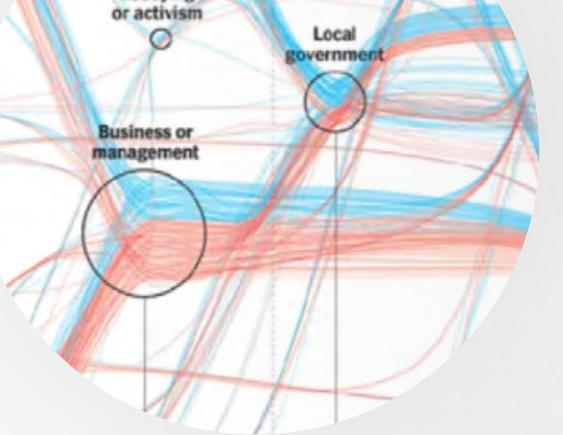
Great-looking things

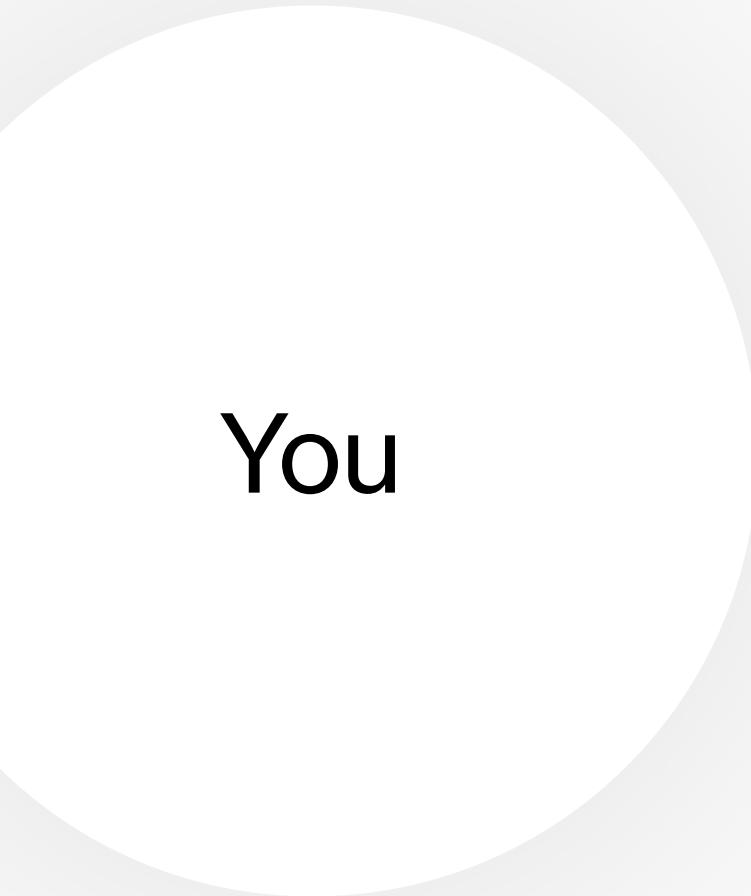


You

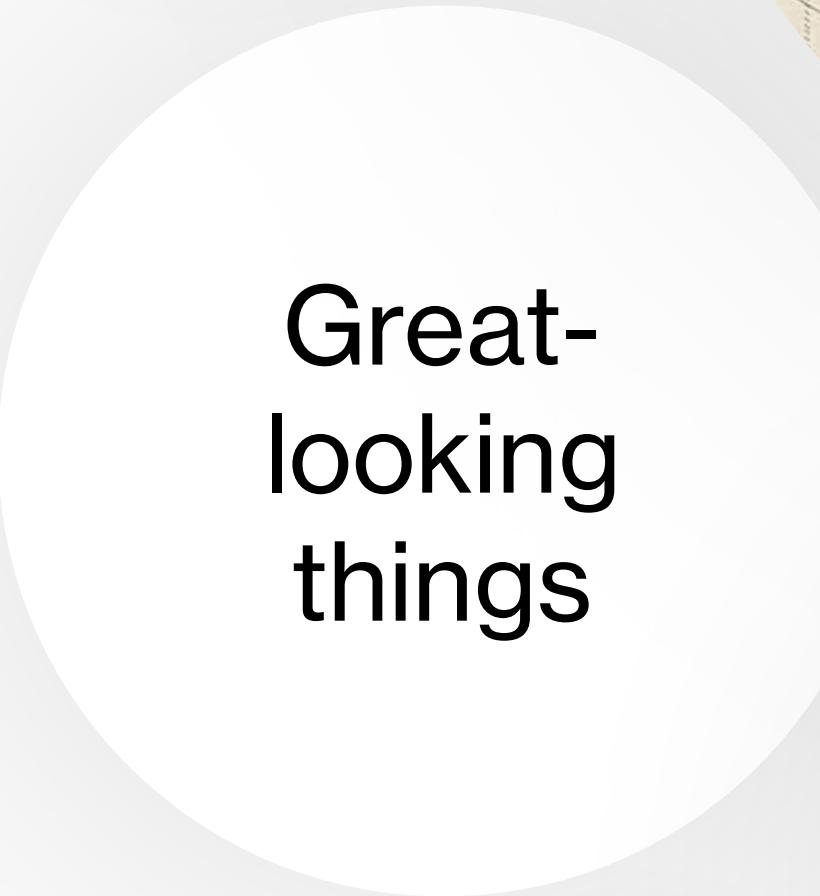


Great-looking things





You



Great-looking things

Inspiration

Feedback

Tutorials

Experimentation

Side projects

University

Opportunity

Internships

Mentors

Software defaults

Play

Books

Coworkers

Inspiration

Feedback

Tutorials

Experimentation

Side projects

Congrats,
you can
design well!

Meetups

Software defaults

Play

Books

Coworkers

So Much Time

Coworkers

Books

Play

Software defaults

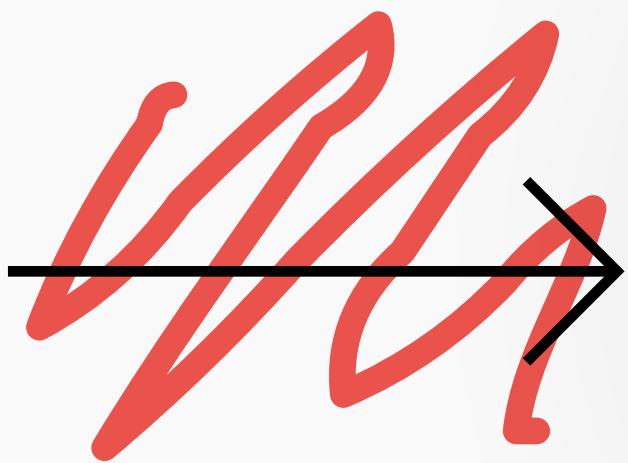
News

Congratulations!
you can
design well!

Inspiration
Feedback
Tutorials
Experimentation
Side projects



2008

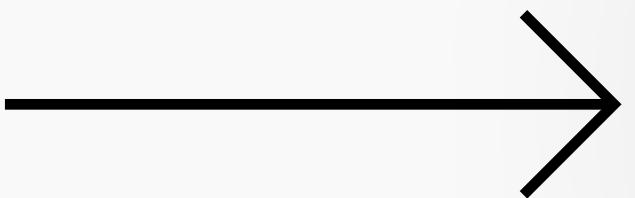


Congrats,
you can
design well!

2008

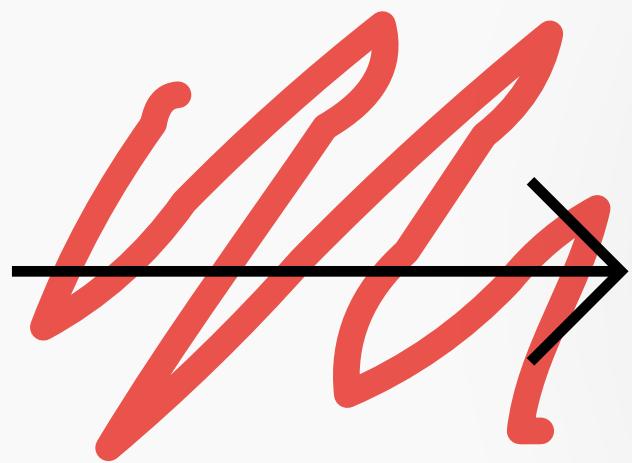


2012



Congrats,
you can
design well!

2012



Congrats,
you can
design well!

2012

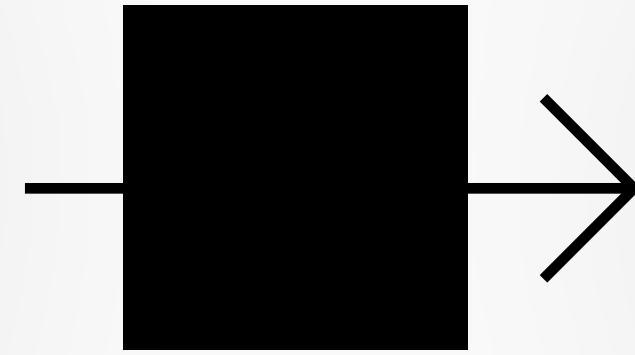


?



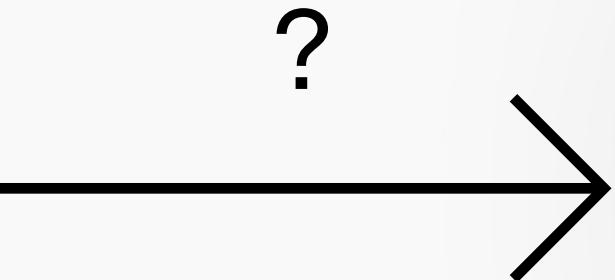
Congrats,
you can
design well!

**Output
& Data**



**More
output**

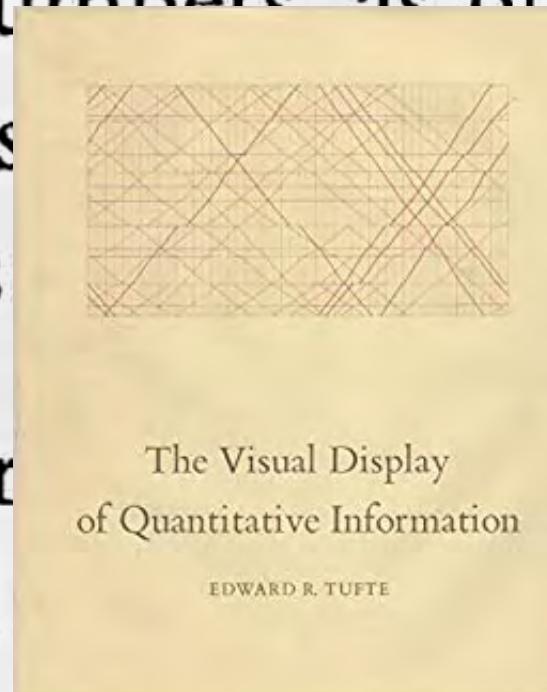
Machine Learning (a simplified model)



Congrats,
you can
design even
better!

Graphical integrity is more likely to result if these six principles are followed:

The representation of numbers as physically measured on the surface of the graphic itself are directly proportional to the numerical quantities



Clear, detailed, and thorough labeling should be used to defeat graphical distortion and write out explanations of the data on the graphic itself. Label important events in the data.

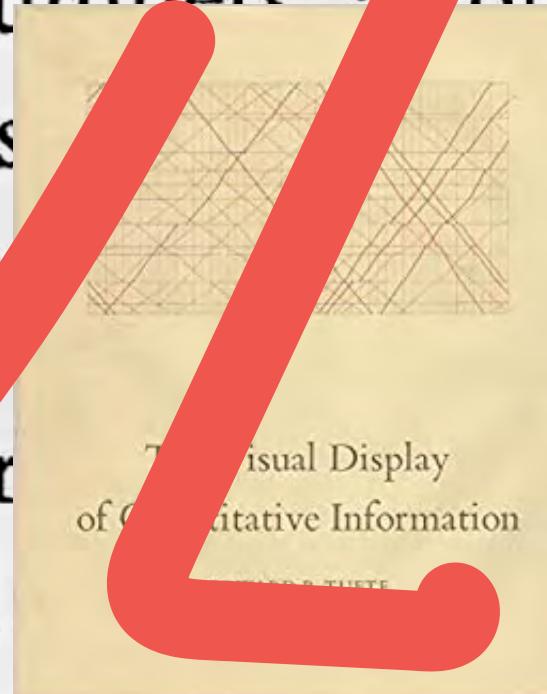
Show data variation, not design variation.

In time-series displays of money, deflated and standardized units of monetary measurement are nearly always better than nominal units

Graphical integrity is more likely to result if these six principles are followed:

The presentation of numbers or physically measured on the surface of the graphic itself should be directly proportional to the numerical quantities.

Clear, detailed, and thorough labeling should be used to defeat graphical distortion and the data on the graphic itself. Label important events in the data.

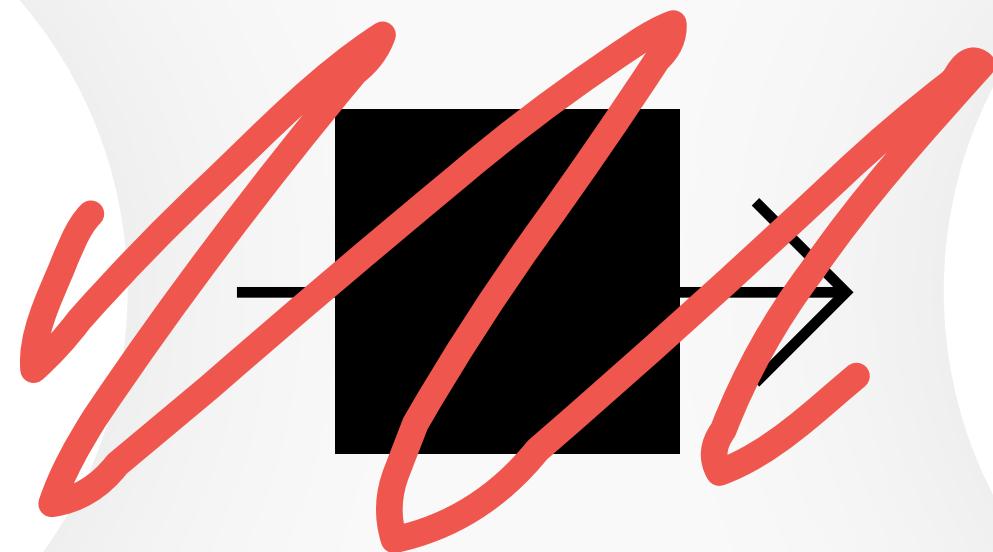


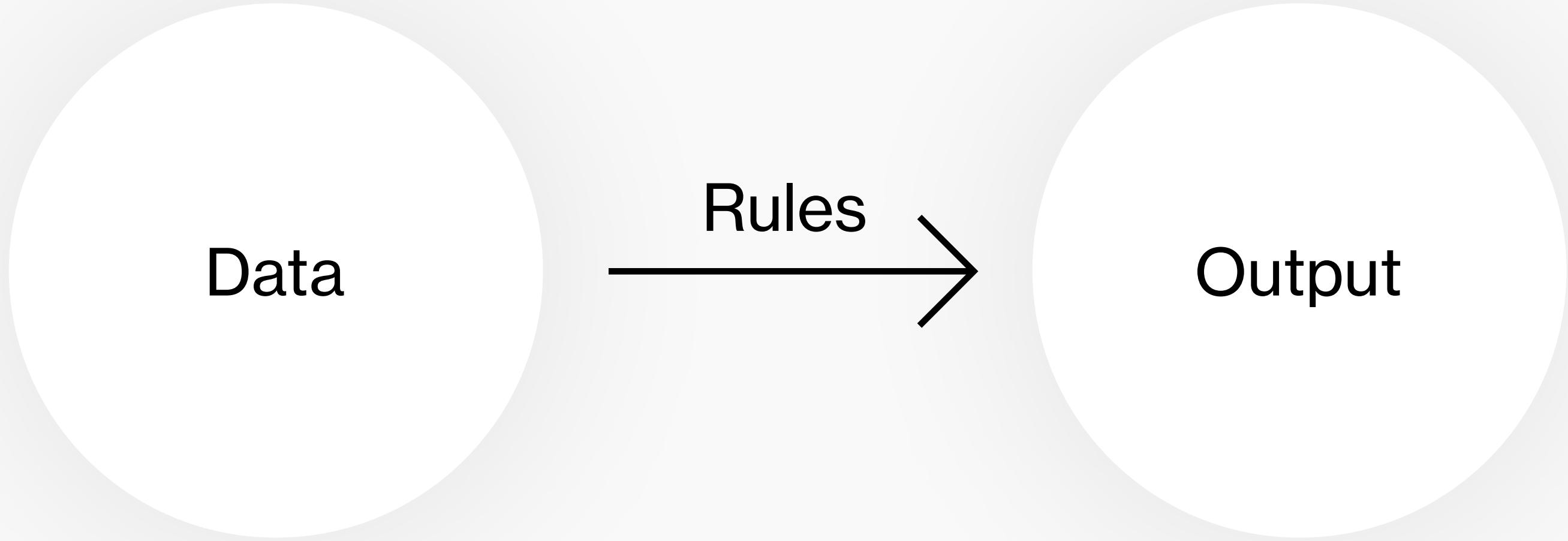
Show data variation, not design variation.

In time-series displays of money, deflated and standardized units of monetary measurement are nearly always better than nominal units

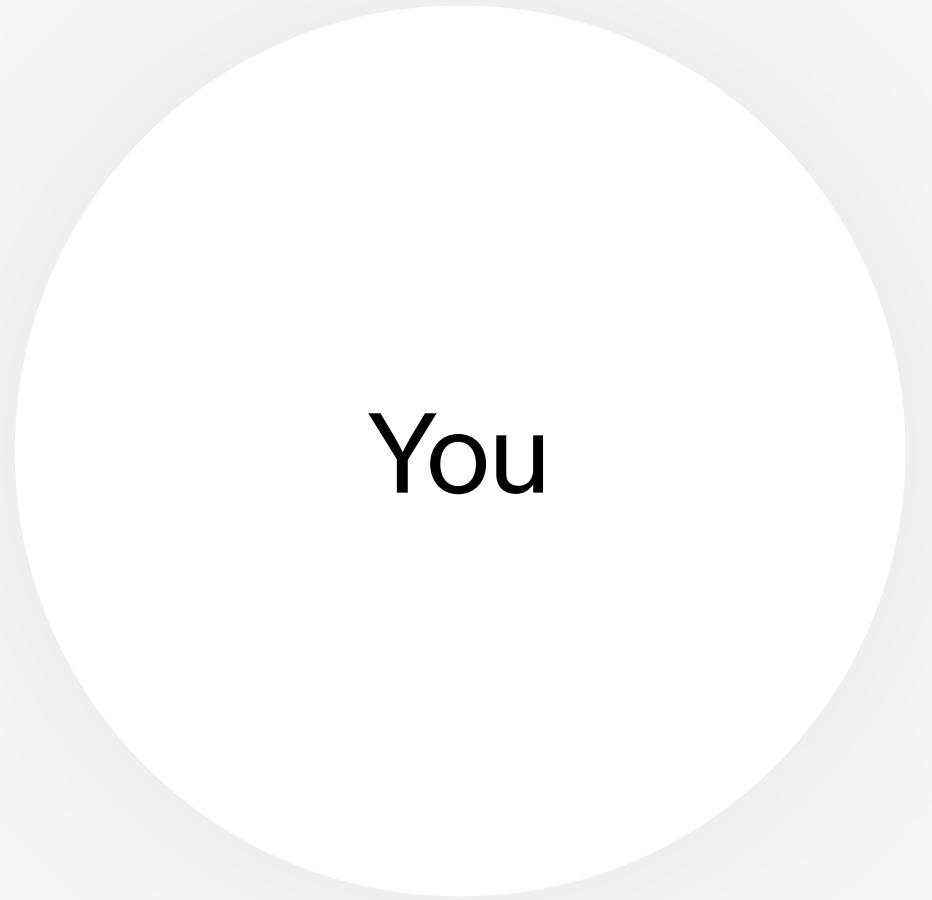
Output
& Data

More
output





Algorithms



You

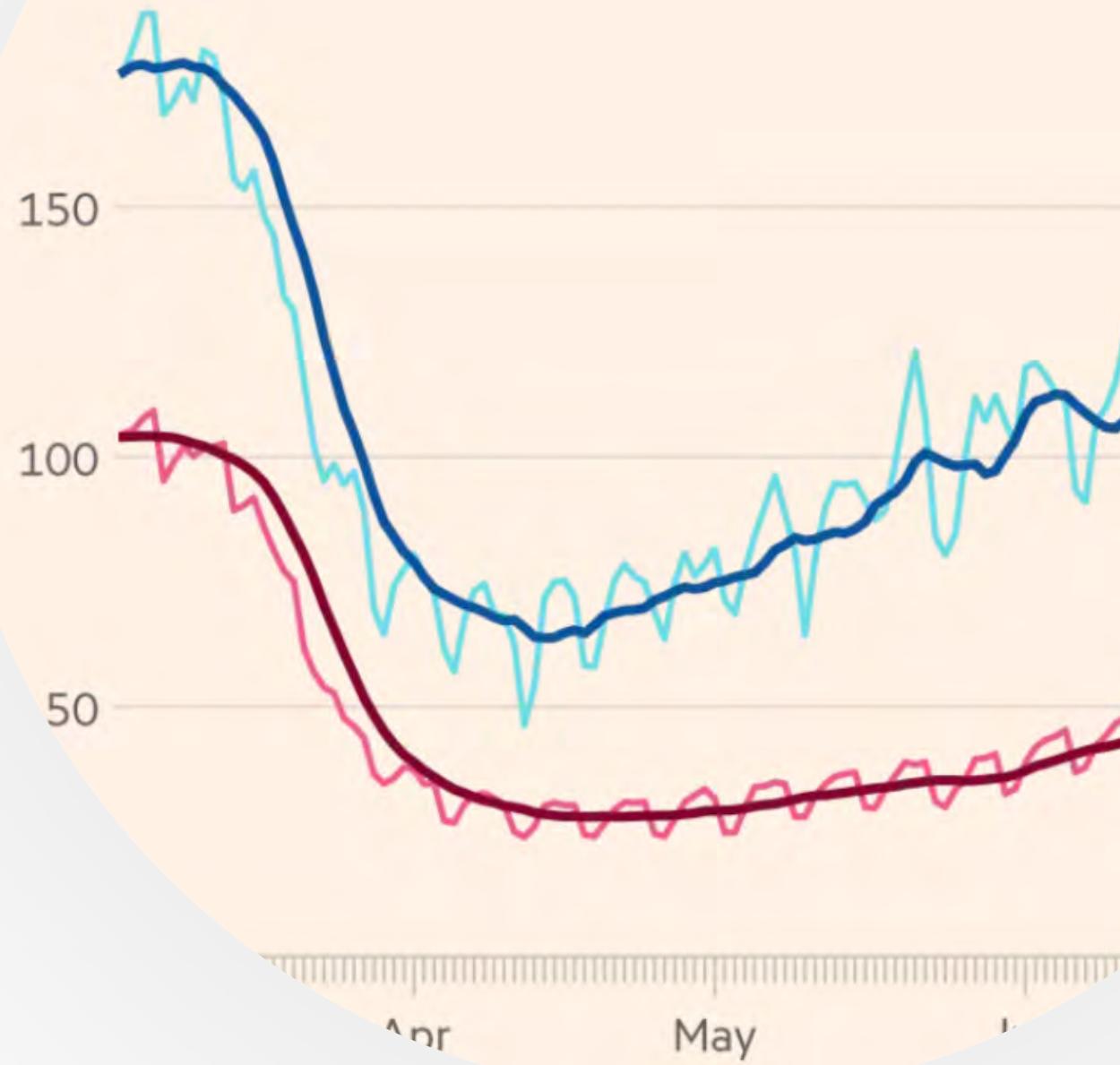


You



.. slow global recovery

of flights, with seven-day rolling average (0)

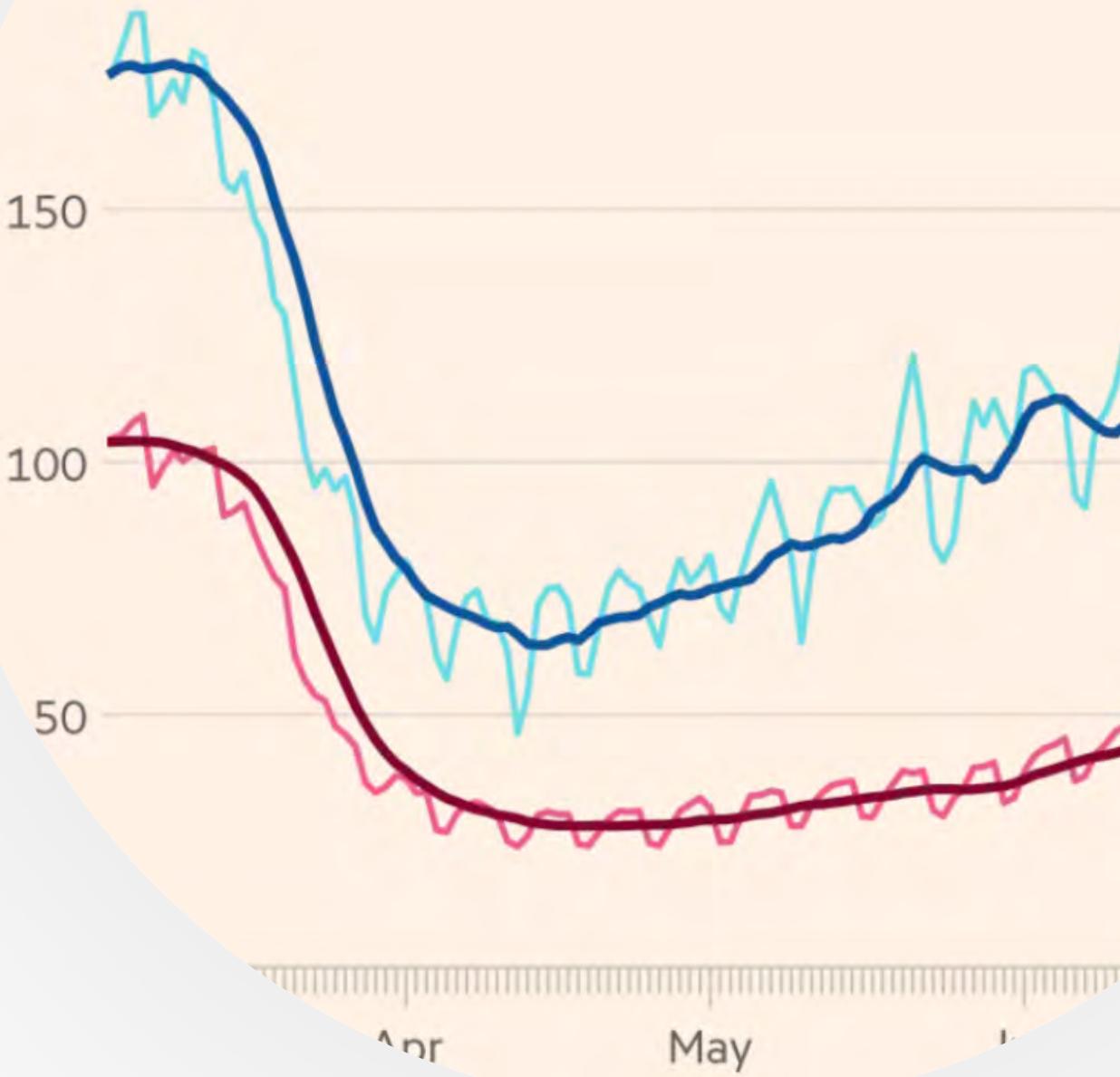


You

Rules

.. slow global recovery

of flights, with seven-day rolling average (0)



What to consider when choosing colors

blog.datawrapper.de/colors/

CHARTABLE

A blog by Datawrapper

Home Datawrapper News

Thoughts & How To's Weekly Chart

About Us Changelog

May 29, 2018 Thoughts & How To's

by Lisa Charlotte Rost

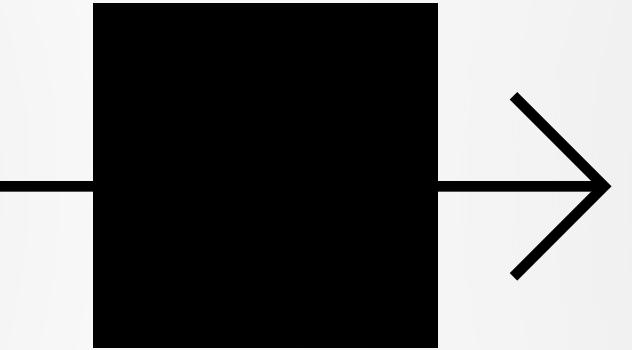
What to consider when choosing colors for data visualization

Data Visualisation can be defined as representing numbers with shapes – and no matter what these shapes look like (areas, lines, dots), they need to have a color. Sometimes colors just make the shapes visible, sometimes they encode data or categories themselves. We'll focus mostly on the latter in this article.

But we'll also take a general look at colors and what to consider when choosing them:

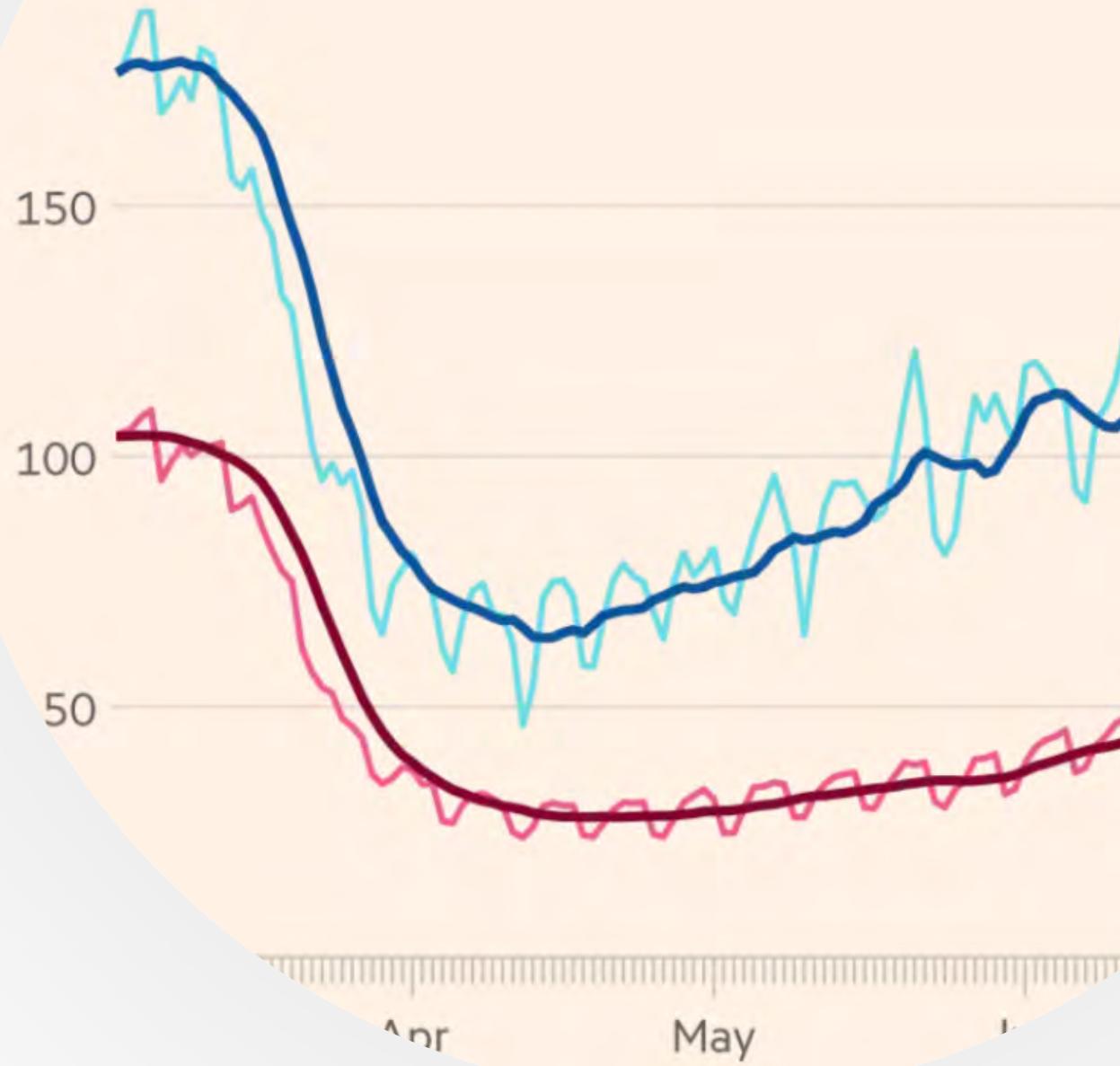
When to use colors in data visualization

You



.. slow global recovery

of flights, with seven-day rolling average (0)

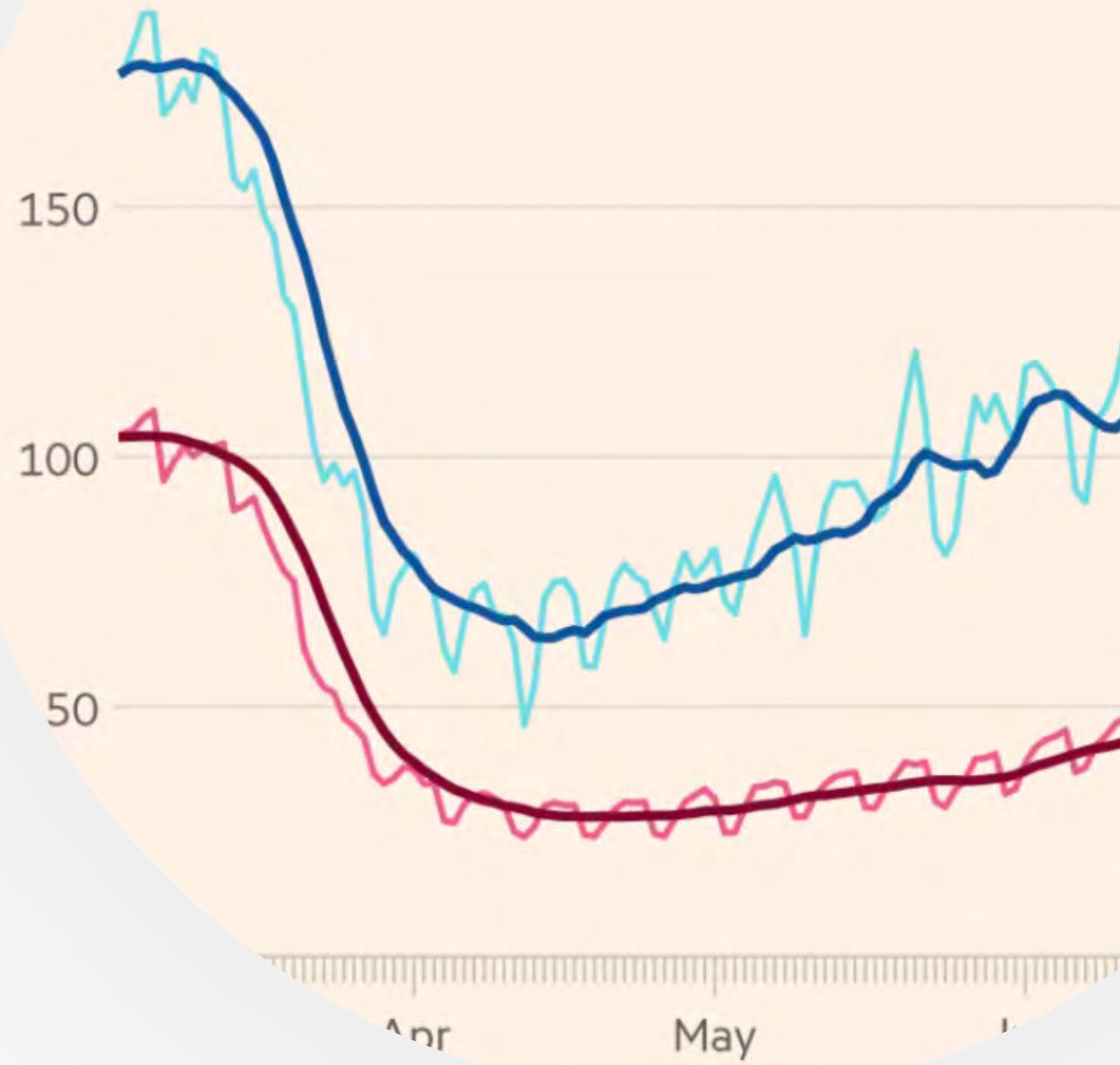


You

Rules

.. slow global recovery

of flights, with seven-day rolling average (0)



Part 2

WHICH KIND OF
RULES I LIKE

Which kind of
rules I like

complete

Which kind of
rules I like

complete

Stacked column charts are great to show the parts of multiple totals. If you only want to show parts of one total, consider a bar chart instead. It will use your available space better than a stacked column chart. In addition, readers will be able to compare the parts better with each other. If you only want to communicate one share of one total, consider if your chart is still necessary at all, or if your number should rather be communicated with text.



NOT IDEAL

BETTER

Which kind of
rules I like

complete

A WORD ABOUT
**BREAKING
RULES**

Which kind of
rules I like

complete

**“If a rule prevents you from improving
or maintaining Wikipedia, ignore it.”**

Wikipedia: Ignore all rules

Which kind of
rules I like

complete

“If a rule prevents you from improving or maintaining Wikipedia, **ignore it.**”

Wikipedia: Ignore all rules

“By all means break the rules, and **break them beautifully, deliberately and well.** That is one of the ends for which they exist.”

Robert Bringhurst, The Elements of Typographic Style

Which kind of
rules I like

complete

“If a rule prevents you from improving
~~or maintaining Wikipedia, ignore it.”~~

Wikipedia has more all rules
your DATA VIS

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Robert Bringhurst, The Elements of Typographic Style

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rules I like
complete

“If a rule prevents you from improving or maintaining Wikipedia, **ignore it.**”

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Robert Bringhurst, The Elements of Typographic Style

Which kind of
rules I like

complete

skimmable

Which kind of rules I like

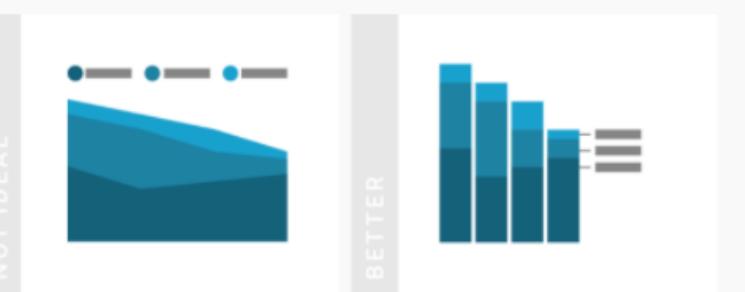
complete skimmable



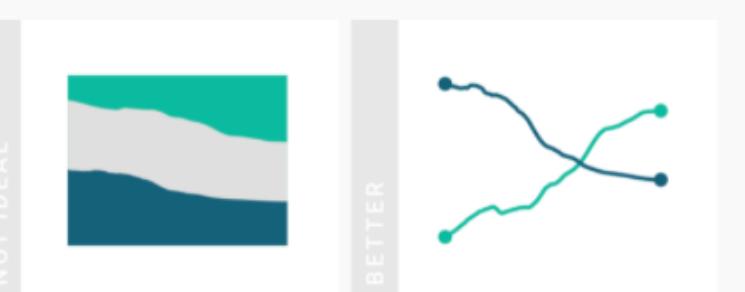
Area charts work best to show multiple values over time. If you just want to show one value over time, also consider a line chart instead; especially if you don't want your y-axis to start at zero. If you only have a few dates, you can also consider using a column chart. In both cases, labelling will be better.



Area charts work best if you have many dates. If you have less than ten or so dates, consider a stacked column chart instead. Labelling will be improved and readers have an easier time reading the values, especially if you have lots of shares you want to show and especially if these shares vary a lot over time.

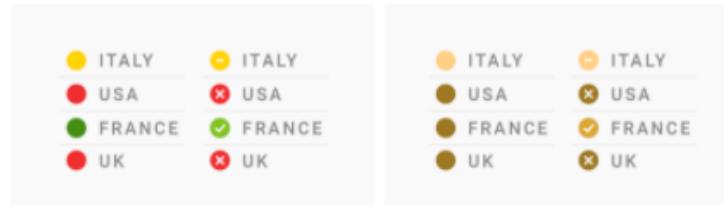


Area charts are not the best choice if you want to compare the size of different shares with each other. If you want to show that one share overtook another one, consider a line chart instead. One extra benefit is that you don't need to show all the shares. E.g. you could show the share of <30-year-olds, 30-60-year-olds and >60-year olds in a country over time in an area chart. But if you want to emphasize that starting in 2015, there are more >60-year-olds than <30-year-olds, it's better to just show these two shares in a line chart.



If you can't "get it right in black and white" – e.g. because you need to use the brand colors of your company – **don't rely on the colors alone to communicate your data.** Consider using symbols in tables, shapes in scatterplots, patterns in maps, and dotted lines in line charts.

Let's focus on symbols first. To show colorblind readers that something is good or bad, double-encode with symbols like ✓:



In the table above, I didn't just add symbols but also changed the green from to a lighter . As a result, all three colors now vary by lightness. This makes it easier for green- and red-blind people to skim this table.

Shapes

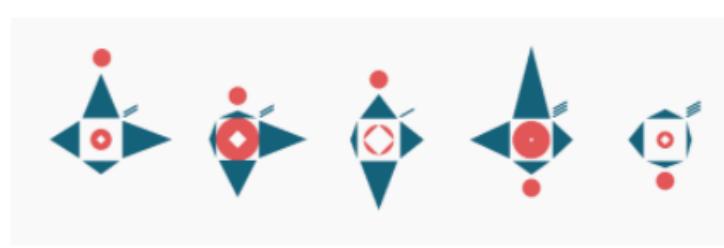
If you're using a chart type like scatterplots, consider using different shapes instead of just a circle. **Rectangles, triangles, crosses, and stars** are popular choices.



Unfortunately, using all these different shapes quickly looks like confetti. Limit yourself to three or four to avoid that.

Position & shapes

To encode lots of variables with only a few shapes, you can combine them with a fixed position and create so-called "**glyphs**". They're little markers consisting of a few elements which size, color, and/or form depends on the data:



Glyphs are made out of shapes, but readable because of the always same **position** of these shapes: The glyph above has two circles , but one is in the middle and the other is not. That makes it easy to understand that they encode

Which kind of
rules I like

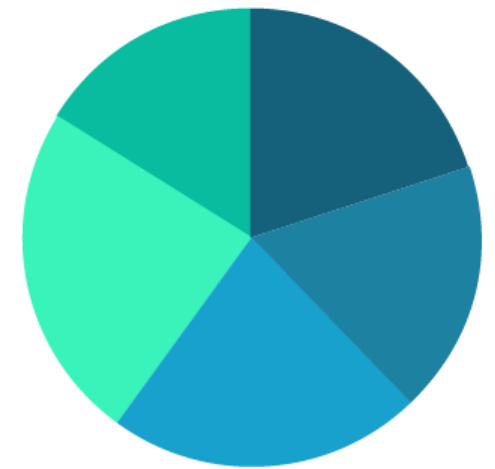
complete
skimmable

self-evident

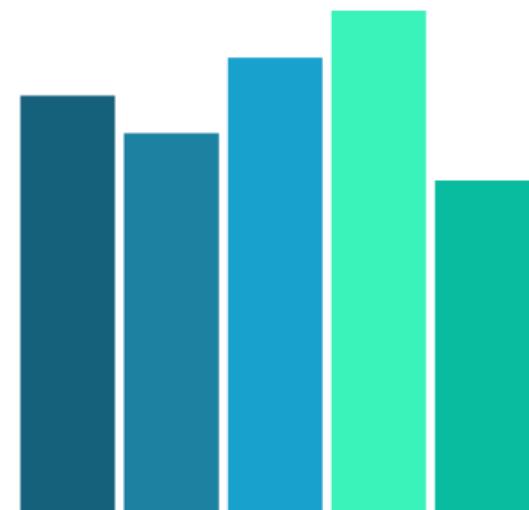
Which kind of
rules I like

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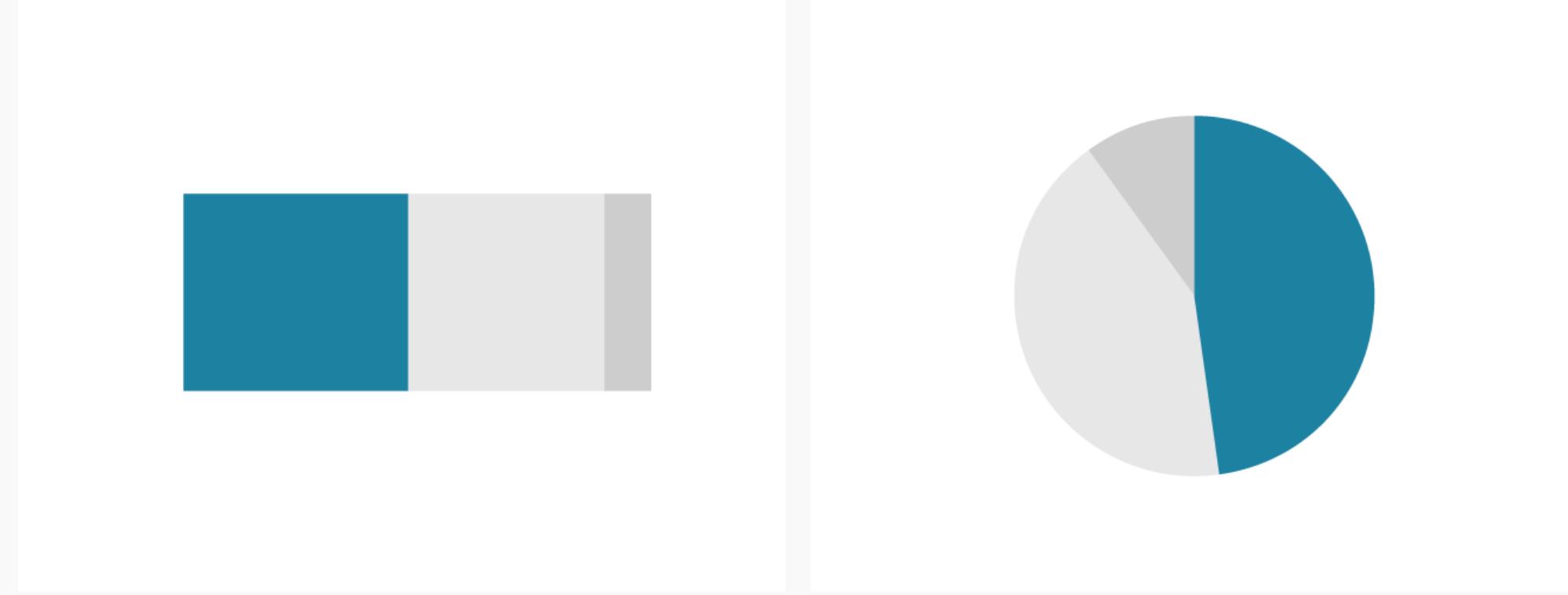
NOT IDEAL



BETTER

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rules I like

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skimmable
self-evident



NOT IDEAL

BETTER

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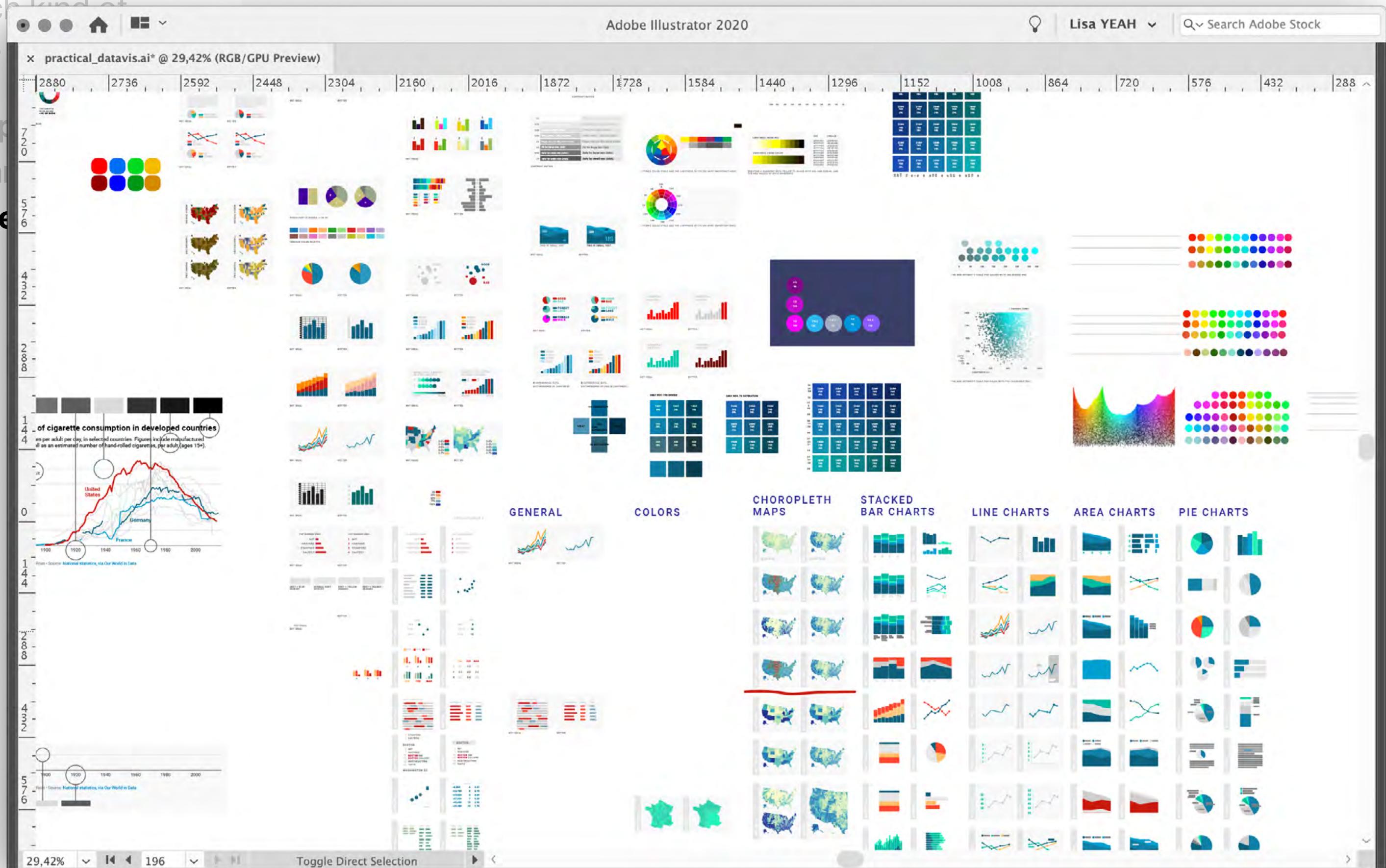
Which kind of

rules

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rules I like

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skimmable

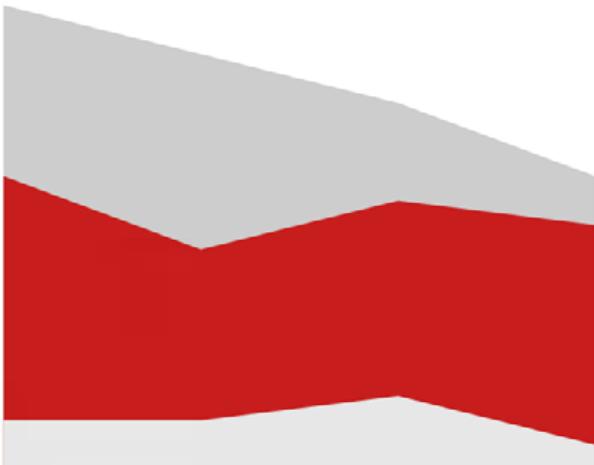
self-evident

explained

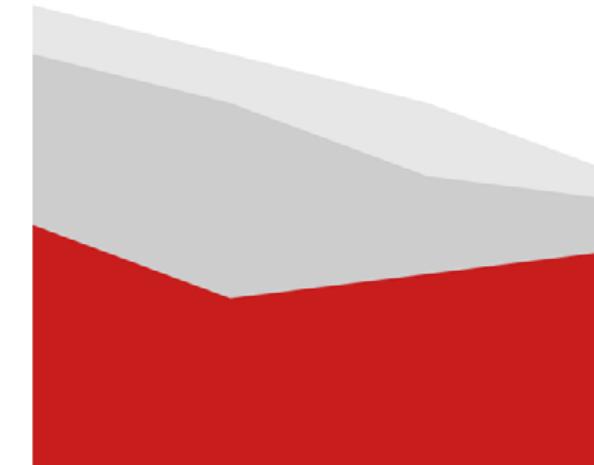
Which kind of
rules I like

complete
skimmable
self-evident
explained

Bring the most important value to the bottom of the chart and use color to make it stand out. Your readers can compare values easier with each other if they have the same baseline.



NOT IDEAL



BETTER

Which kind of
rules I like

complete

skimmable

self-evident

explained

optional

Which kind of
rules I like

complete

skimmable

self-evident

explained

optional

rule [/'ru:l/] *noun*

lat. regula

→ *lat. regō*, “*I rule, govern*”

Which kind of
rules I like

complete

skimmable

self-evident

explained

optional

Re•gel ['re:g'l] noun, feminine

1. **rule** *n,*
sich an die Regel halten
2. **usually, normally** *adv*
in der Regel

Which kind of
rules I like

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The screenshot shows a web browser window with the following details:

- Title Bar:** "What to consider when creating area charts" (partially visible)
- Address Bar:** "blog.datawrapper.de/area-charts/"
- Header:** "CHARTABLE" (in large, bold, grey letters), "A blog by Datawrapper" (with "Datawrapper" underlined).
- Navigation:** "Home", "Thoughts & How To's", "About Us", "Datawrapper News", "Weekly Chart", "Changelog".
- Post Details:** "Jan 9, 2018" (date), "by Lisa Charlotte Rost" (author), "Thoughts & How To's" (category).
- Main Title:** "**What to consider when creating area charts**" (in large, bold, blue text).
- Text Content:** "Area charts are great to show how a total and their shares developed over time. They are not easy to read (see the links at the bottom of the article to learn more), so there are many cases when a line chart or a stacked column chart is a better choice:"
- Section Header:** "**When to use area charts**" (in bold black text).
- Footnote:** "Use area charts only if you want to show how values develop over time. If you want to..." (partially visible).

Which kind of
rules I like

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optional

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the following details:

- Title Bar:** "What to consider when creating..." (partially visible), a "+" button, and a tab icon.
- Address Bar:** "blog.datawrapper.de/area-charts/"
- Header:** "CHARTABLE" in large, bold, uppercase letters. Below it, "A blog by" and "Datawrapper".
- Navigation:** "Home", "Thoughts & How To's", and "About Us" on the left; "Datawrapper News", "Weekly Chart", and "Changelog" on the right.
- Post Details:** "Jan 9, 2018" (date), "by Lisa Charlotte Rost" (author), and "Thoughts & How To's" (category).
- Section Header:** "~~Must do's and don'ts when~~ creating area charts" (title, with a red horizontal line through "Must do's and don'ts when").
- Text Content:** "Area charts are great to show how a total and their shares developed over time. They are not easy to read (see the links at the bottom of the article to learn more), so there are many cases when a line chart or a stacked column chart is a better choice:"
- Footer:** "When to use area charts" (sub-section title) and "Use area charts only if you want to show how values develop over time. If you want to..." (partial text).

Which kind of
rules I like

complete

skimmable

self-evident

explained

optional

conditional

Which kind of
rules I like

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A

T R E A T I S E
O F
Human Nature :
B E I N G
An ATTEMPT to introduce the ex-
perimental Method of Reasoning
INTO
MORAL SUBJECTS.

*Rara temporum felicitas, ubi sentire, que velis ; & que
fentias, dicere licet.*

TACIT.

BOOK I.

Which kind of
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A
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Book I.

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A

T R E A T I S E
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TACIT.

Book I.

Which kind of
rules I like

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optional

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**“There is nothing either good or bad,
but thinking makes it so”**

William Shakespeare, Hamlet

Which kind of
rules I like

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YOUR DATA VIS
IS NEITHER
“~~There is nothing either~~ good or bad,
but thinking makes it so”

William Shakespeare, Hamlet

Which kind of
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YOUR DECLARED
GOALS

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YOUR DATA VIS
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~~"There is nothing either good or bad,
but thinking makes it so"~~

William Shakespeare, Hamlet

YOUR DECLARED
GOALS



Part 3

WHY RULES CONTRADICT EACH OTHER

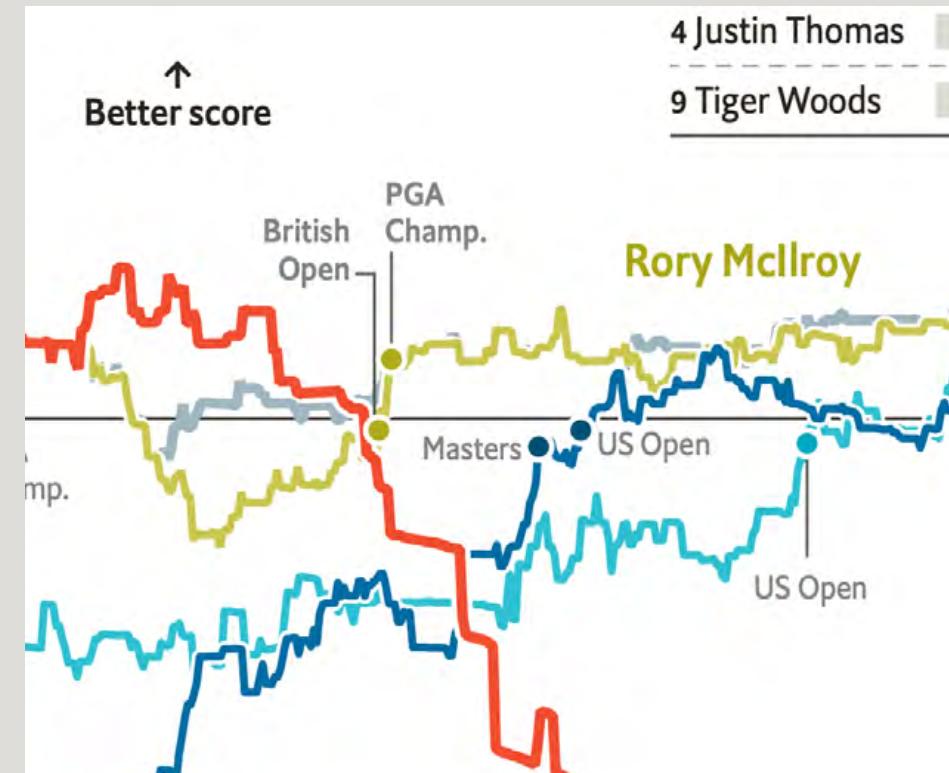
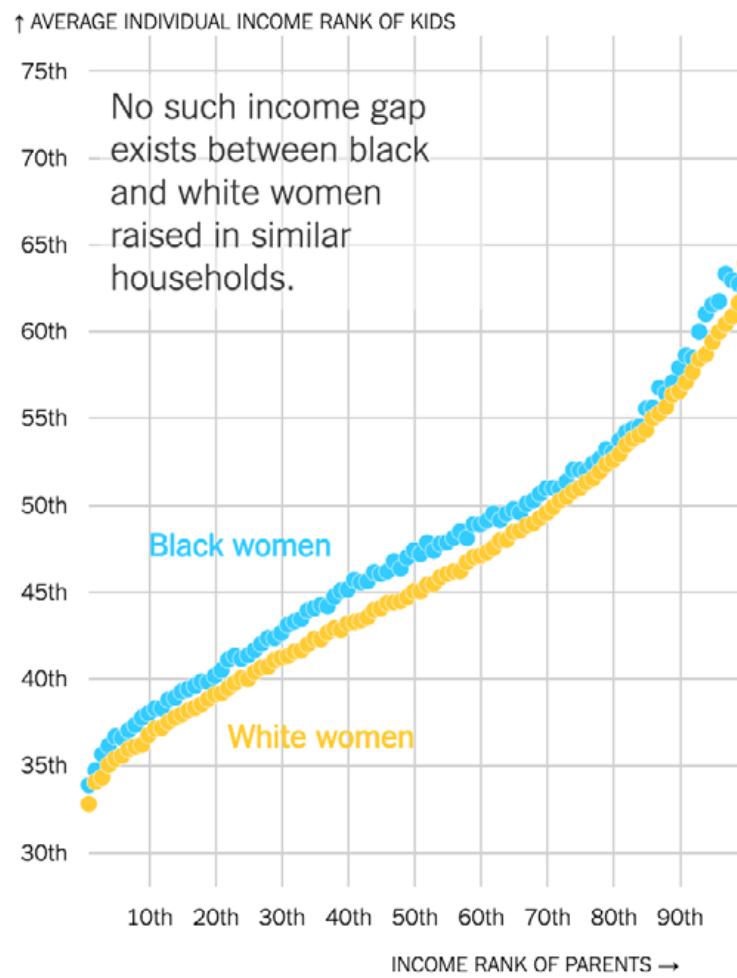
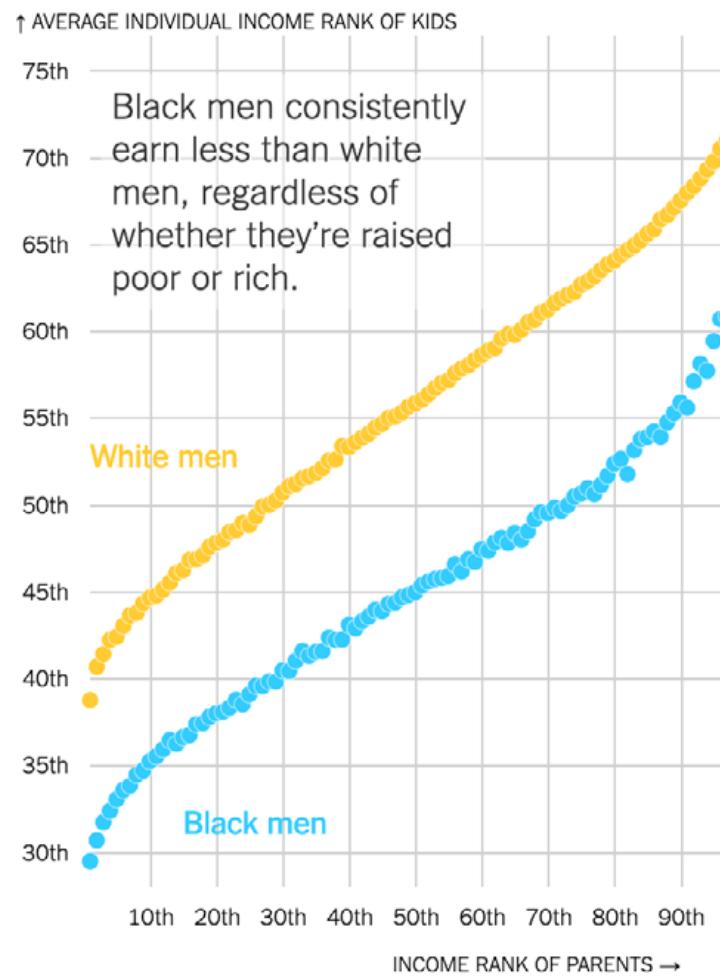
(according to art theory)

“Follow the
Web Content
Accessibility
Guidelines for
color contrast.”

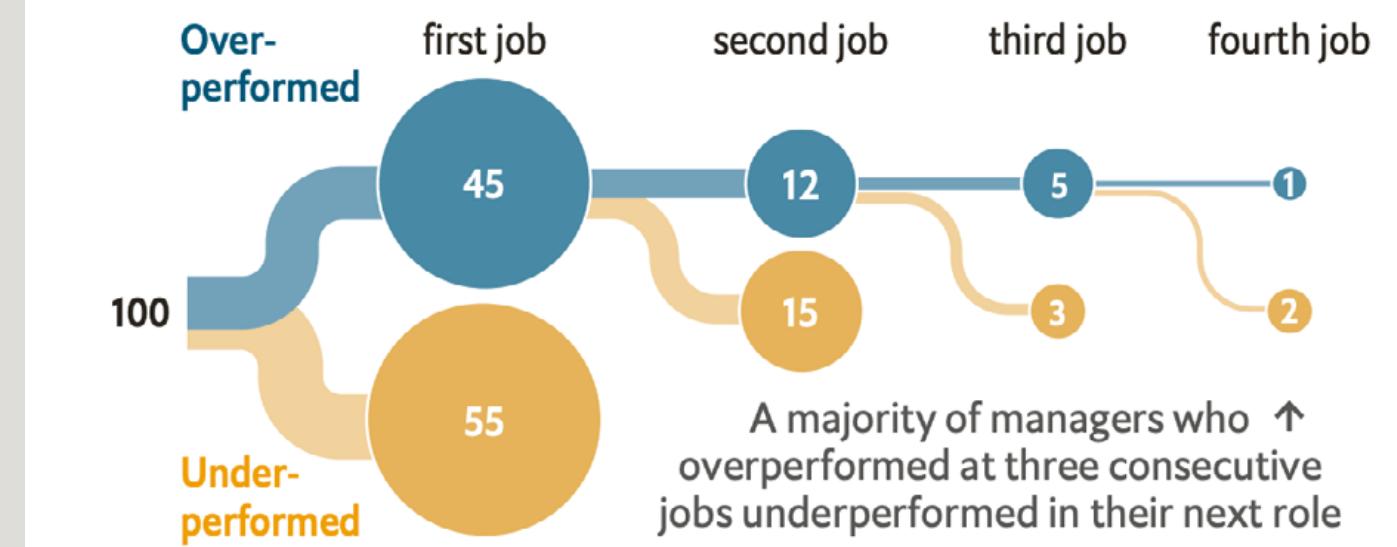


“Use
beautiful
colors.”

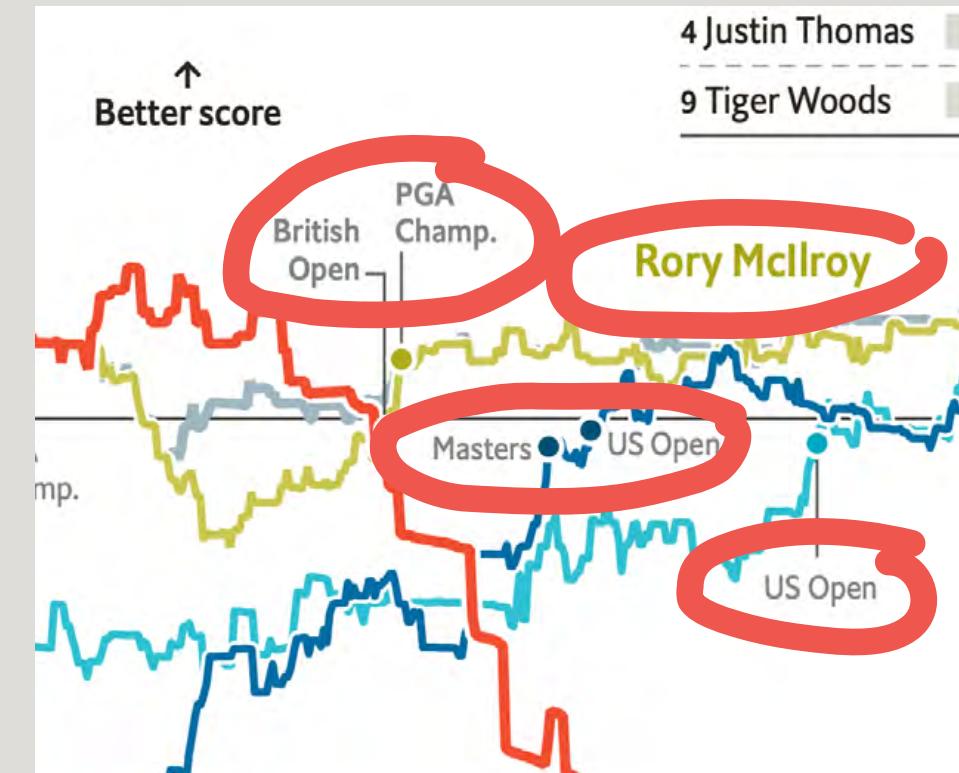
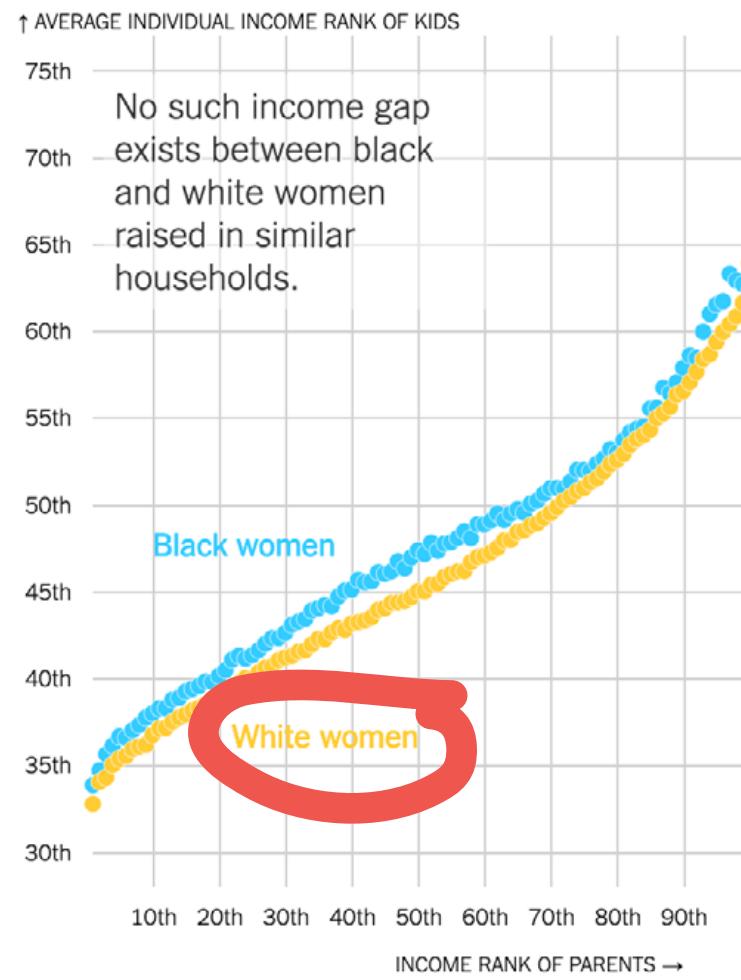
Large income gaps persist between men — but not women.



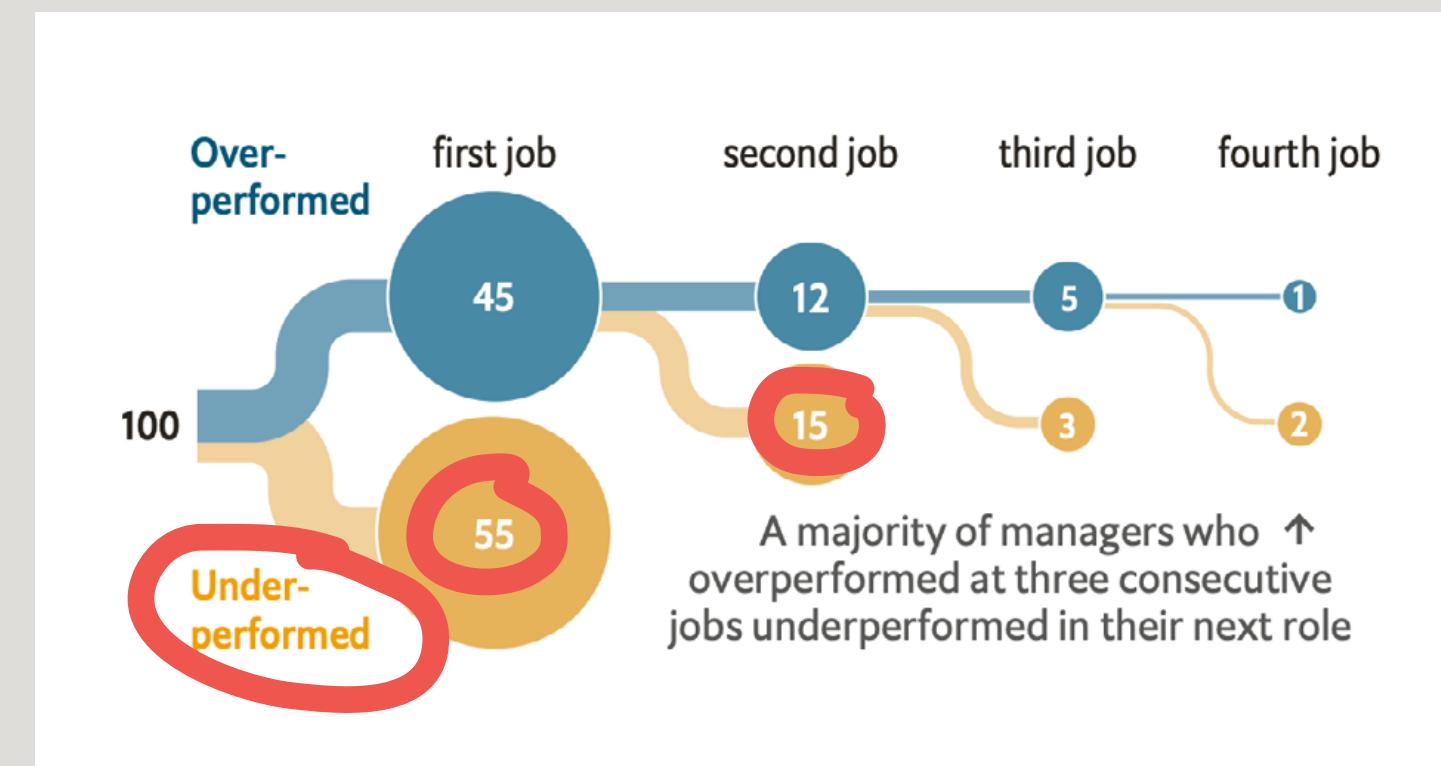
The New York Times, Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach of Racism for Black Boys, 2018
The Economist, Graphic Detail, 2019



Large income gaps persist between men — but not women.



The New York Times, Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach of Racism for Black Boys, 2018
The Economist, Graphic Detail, 2019





do you
e ar



Paul Klee, Angelus Novus, 1920

Rembrandt, The Storm on the Sea of Galilee, 1633

**How do you
judge art?**

Formalism

Instrumentalism

Expressionism

Imitationalism

Institutionalism

**How do you
judge art?**

Formalism

Instrumentalism

Expressionism

Imitationalism

Institutionalism



Grace Crowley, Abstract painting, 1947

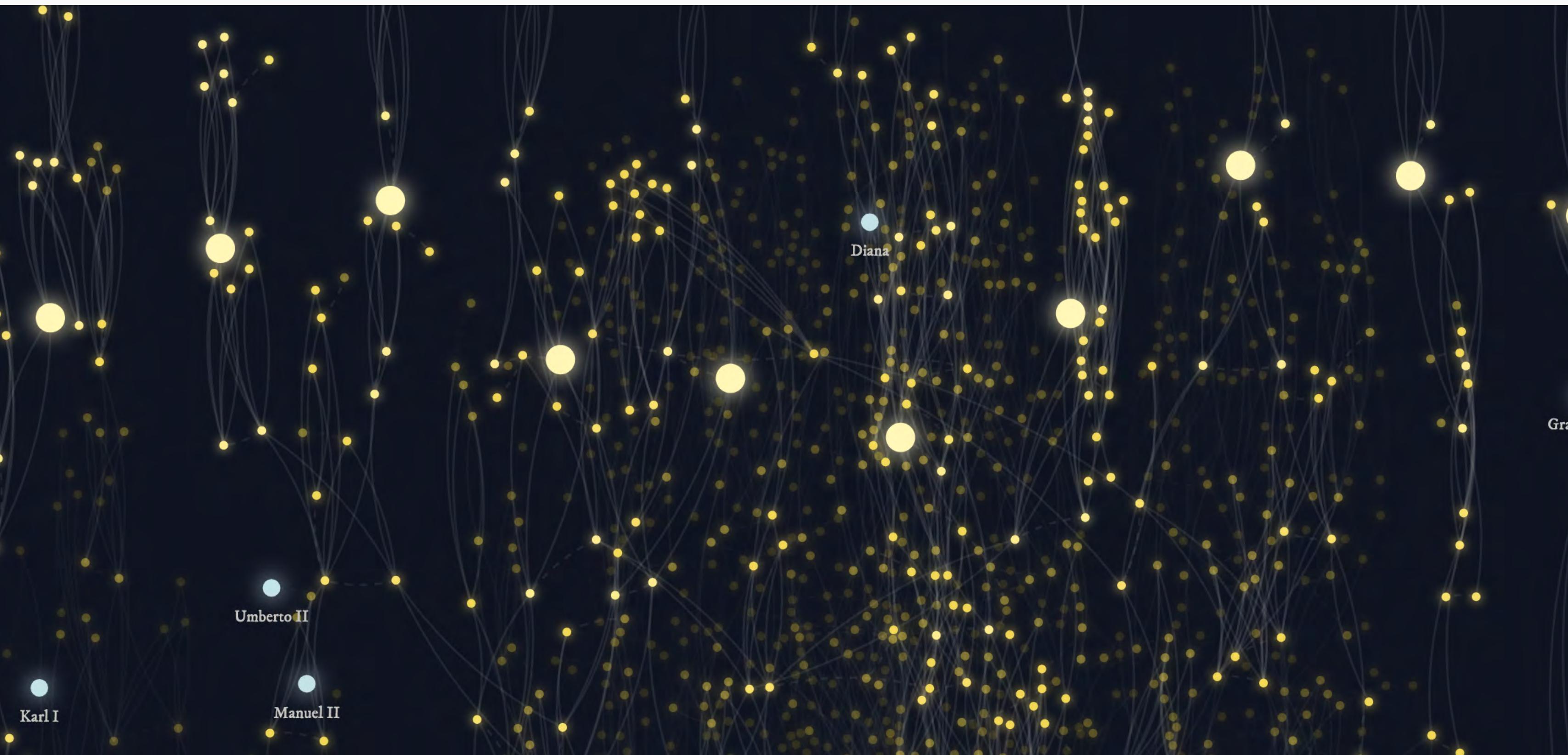
Formalism Style

Instrumentalism

Expressionism

Imitationism

Institutionalism



Formalism

Style
Innovation

Instrumentalism

Expressionism

Imitationalism

Institutionalism

Hover on faces for
more information



Formalism

Style
Innovation

Instrumentalism

Expressionism

Imitationism

Institutionalism



Steve Lambert, Capitalism Works For Me! True/False, 2011

Formalism
Style
Innovation

Instrumentalism
Activism

Expressionism

Imitationism

Institutionalism



Demonstration in Berlin, 2019. Photo by Leonhard Lenz, Wikimedia

Formalism

Style
Innovation

Instrumentalism

Activism
Usefulness

Expressionism

Imitationism

Institutionalism

NEUINFEKTIONEN

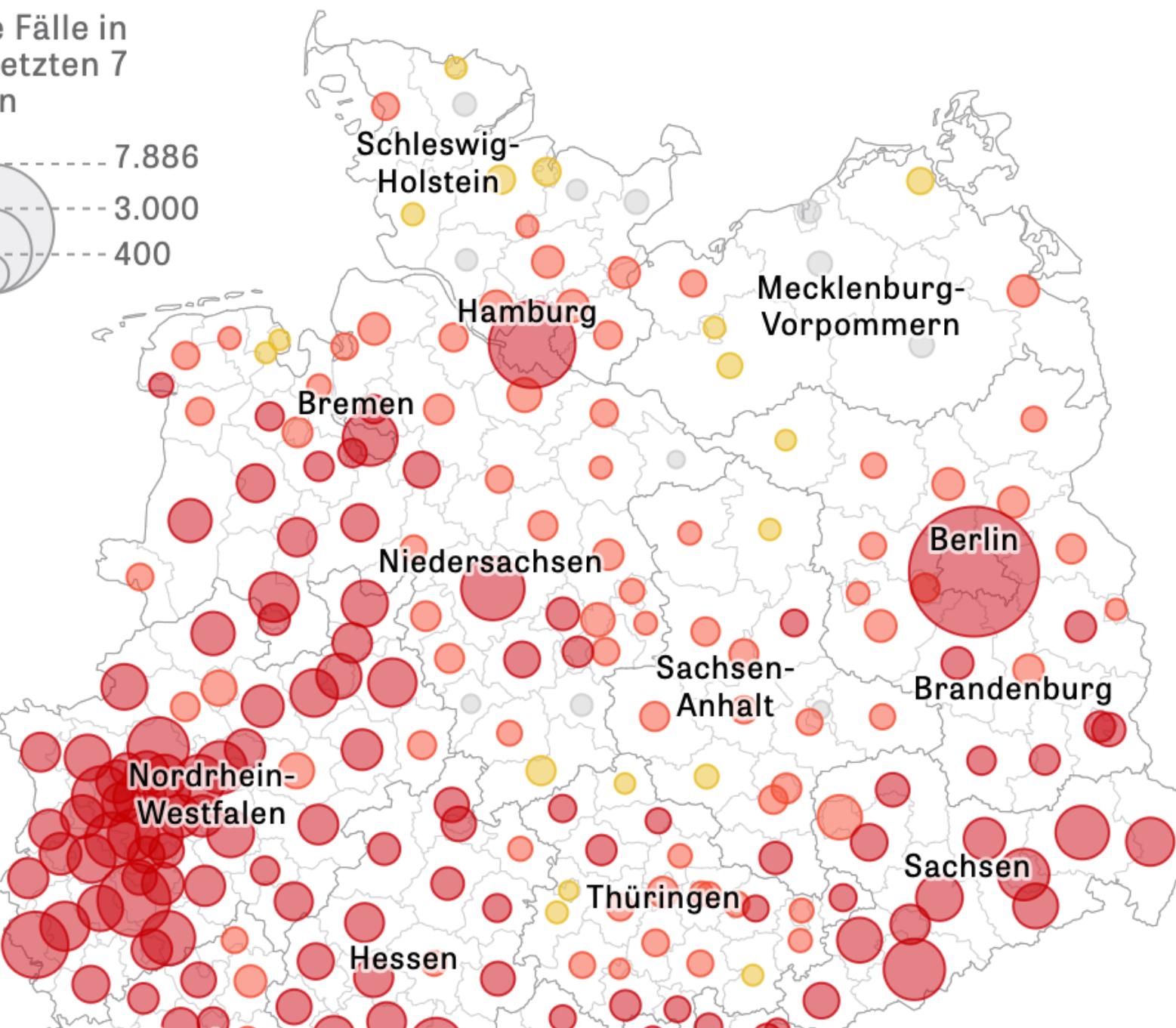
FÄLLE

AKTIVE FÄLLE

INTENSIVBETTEN

TODESFÄLLE

Neue Fälle in
den letzten 7
Tagen



Deutschland

Je 100.000 Einwohner ↓

131.691 bestätigte Neuinfektionen i in den letzten 7 Tagen

781.962 bestätigte Fälle i seit Beginn der Pandemie

276.289 aktive Fälle i

6.553 freie Intensivbetten i

12.608 gestorben i 15,2

493.065 genesen i 592,9

Formalism

Style

Innovation

Instrumentalism

Activism

Usefulness

Expressionism

Imitationism

Institutionalism



Alex Prager, Eve, 2008

Formalism

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Giorgia Lupi and Kaki King, Bruises, The Data We Don't See, 2018

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DATA HUMANISM

~~SMALL~~ big data

data bandwidth ~~QUALITY~~

~~imperfect~~ infallible data

~~SUBJECTIVE~~ impartial data

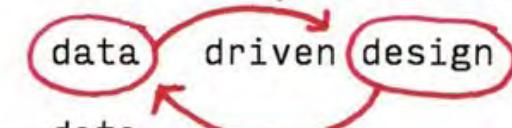
~~INSPIRING~~ descriptive data

~~SERENDIPITOUS~~ predictive data

data conventions ~~POSSIBILITIES~~

data to simplify complexity / ~~DEPICT~~

data processing ~~DRAWING~~



~~SPEND~~ save time with

data is numbers ~~PEOPLE~~

data will make us more efficient ~~HUMAN.~~

@giorgialupi

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Evoking emotion

Imitationalism

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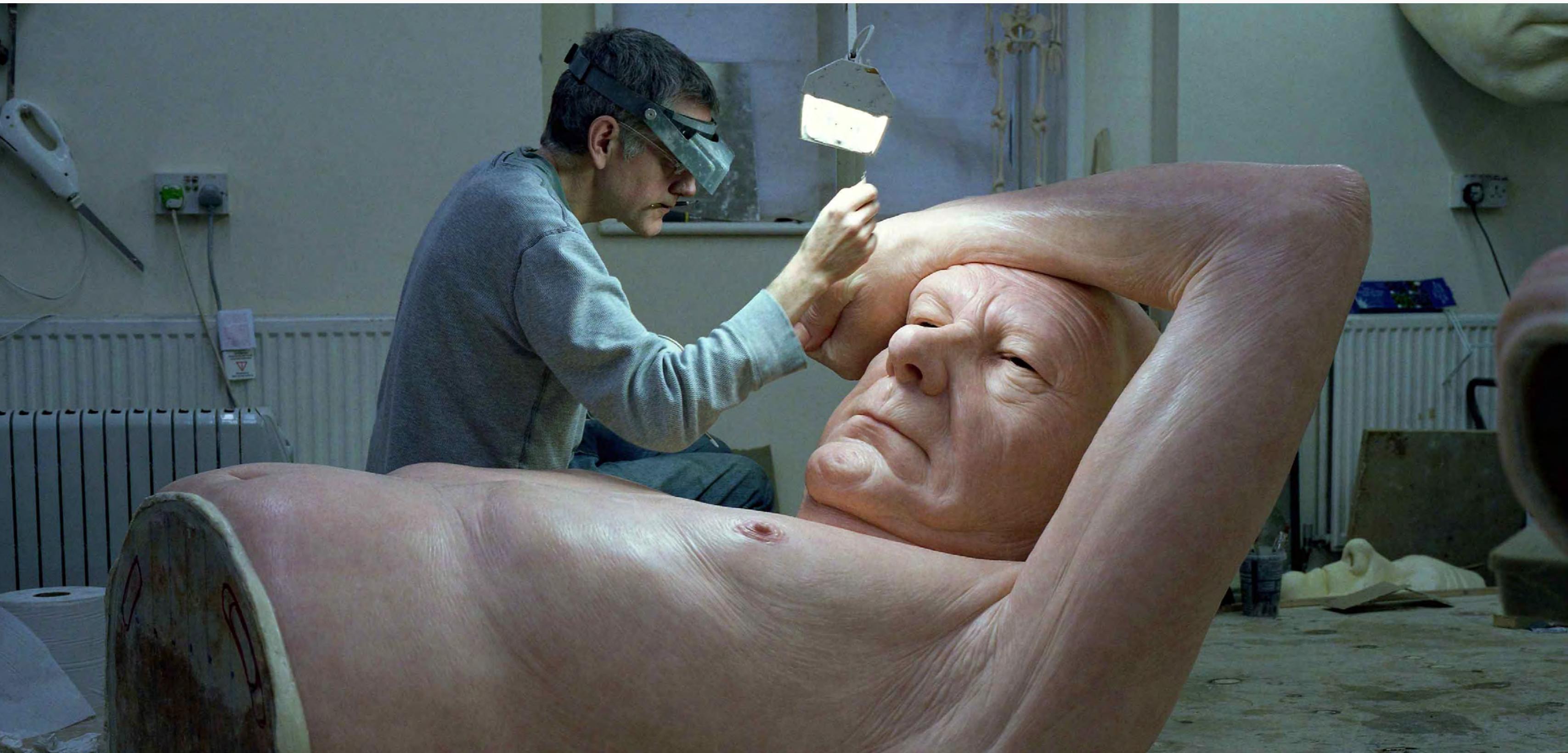
Activism
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Evoking emotion

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Gautier Deblonde, Still Life: Ron Mueck at work, 2013

Formalism Style Innovation

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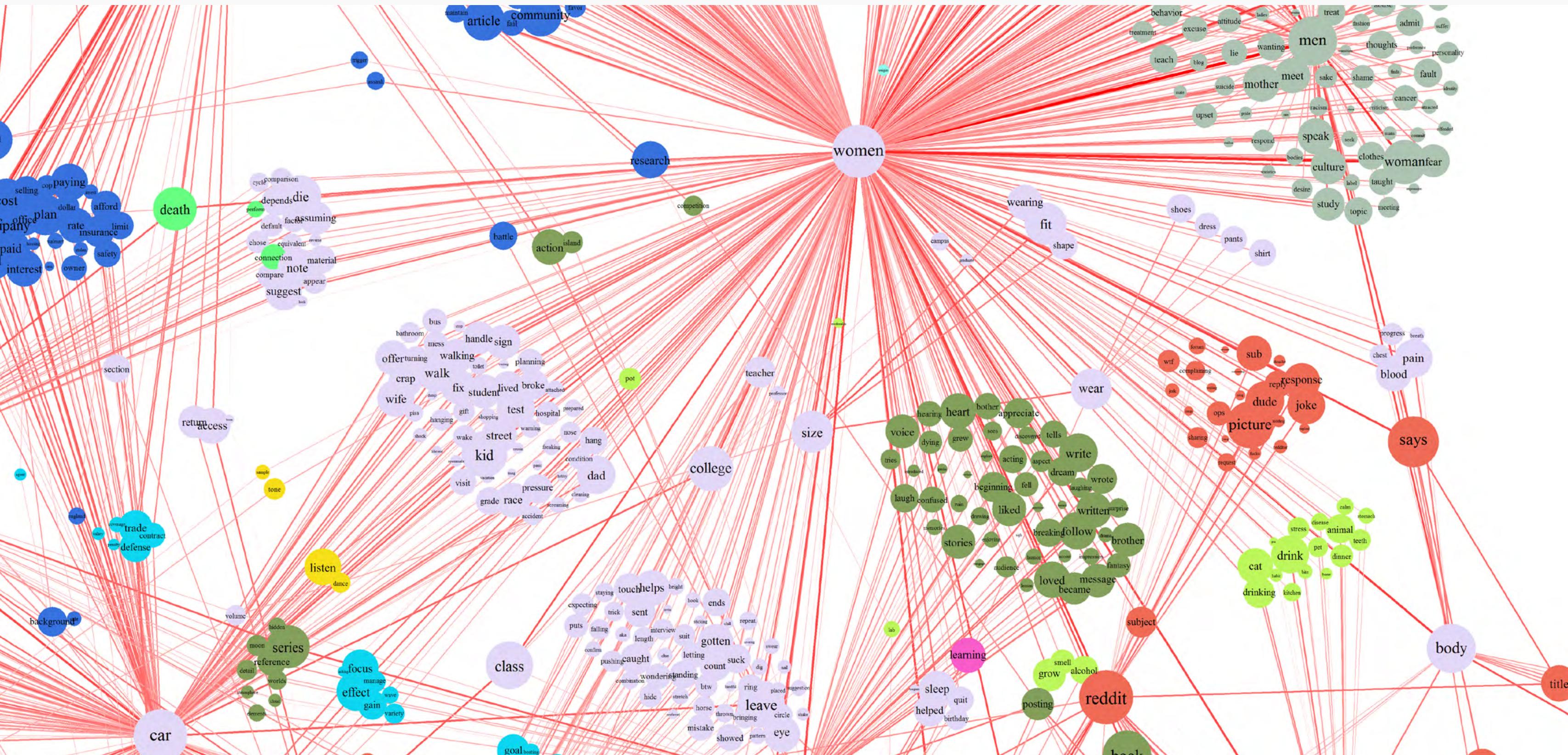
Expressing emotion

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Mark Allan Thornton. What interests reddit? A network analysis of 84M comments by 200K users. 2014

Formalism

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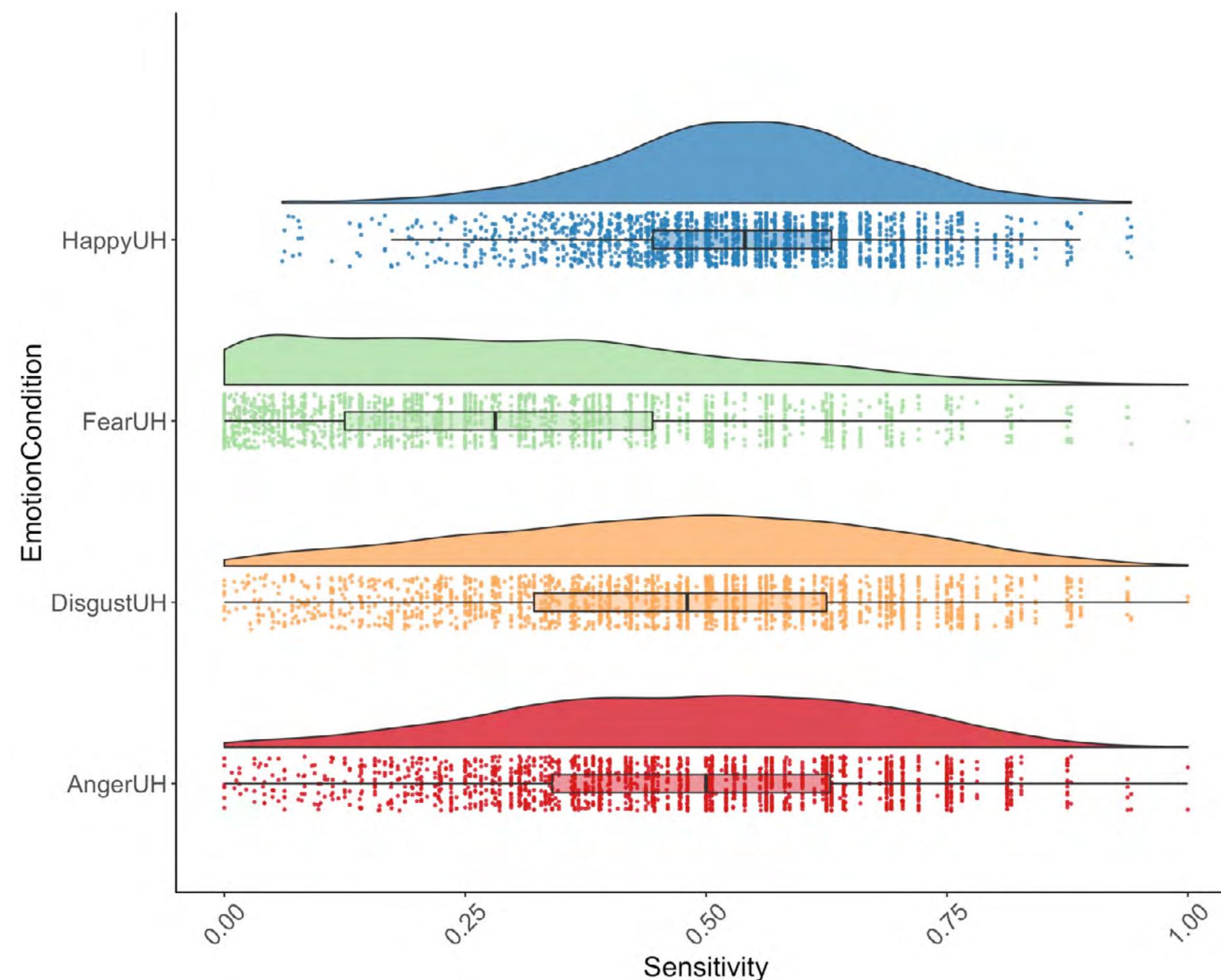
Expressionism

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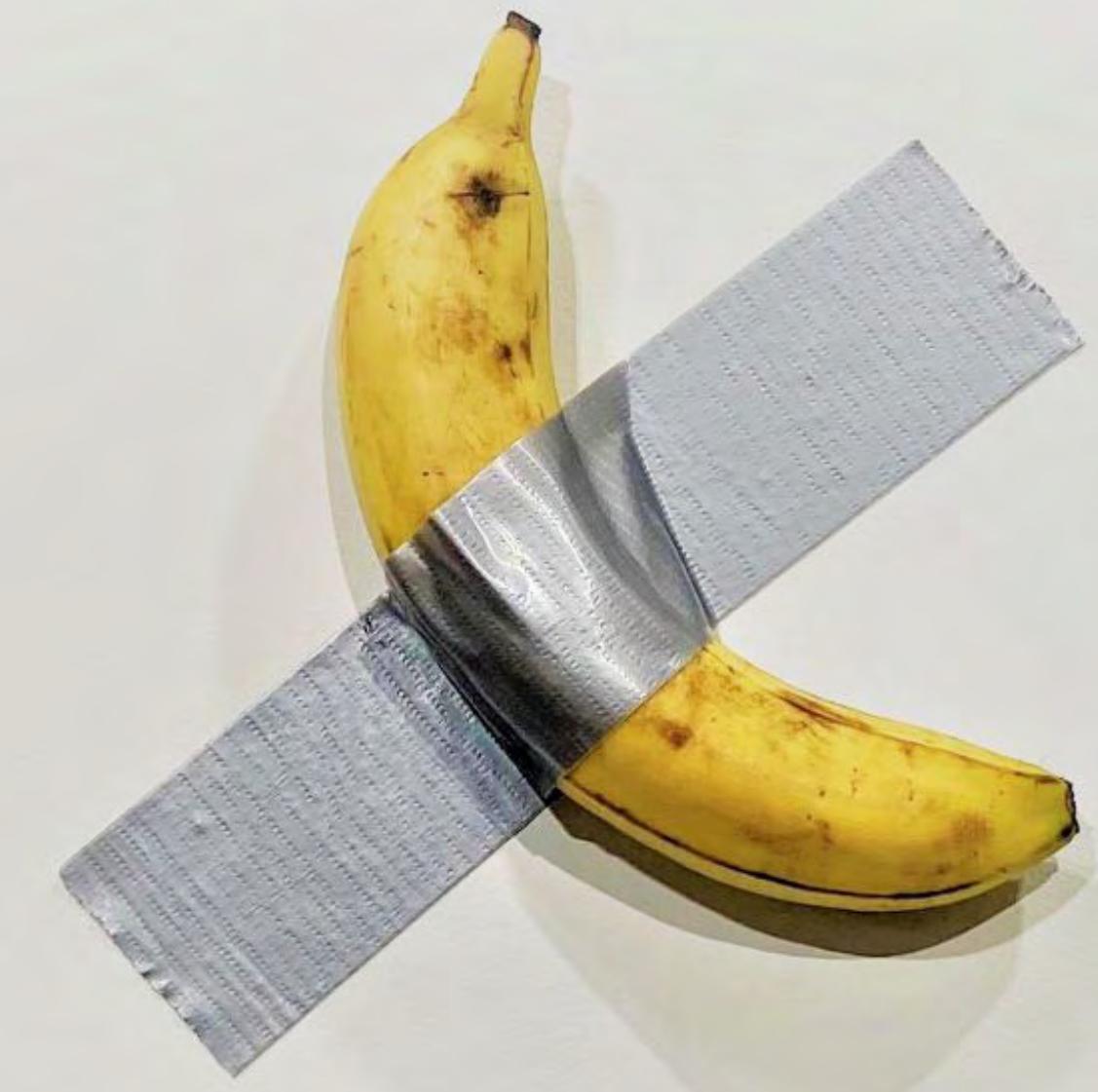
Expressionism

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Maurizio Cattelan, Comedian, 2019. Photo by Sarah Cascone

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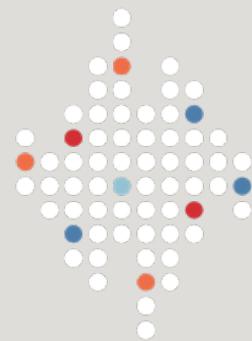
Showing complexity
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Awards



KANTAR
Information is Beautiful
Awards



MakeoverMonday



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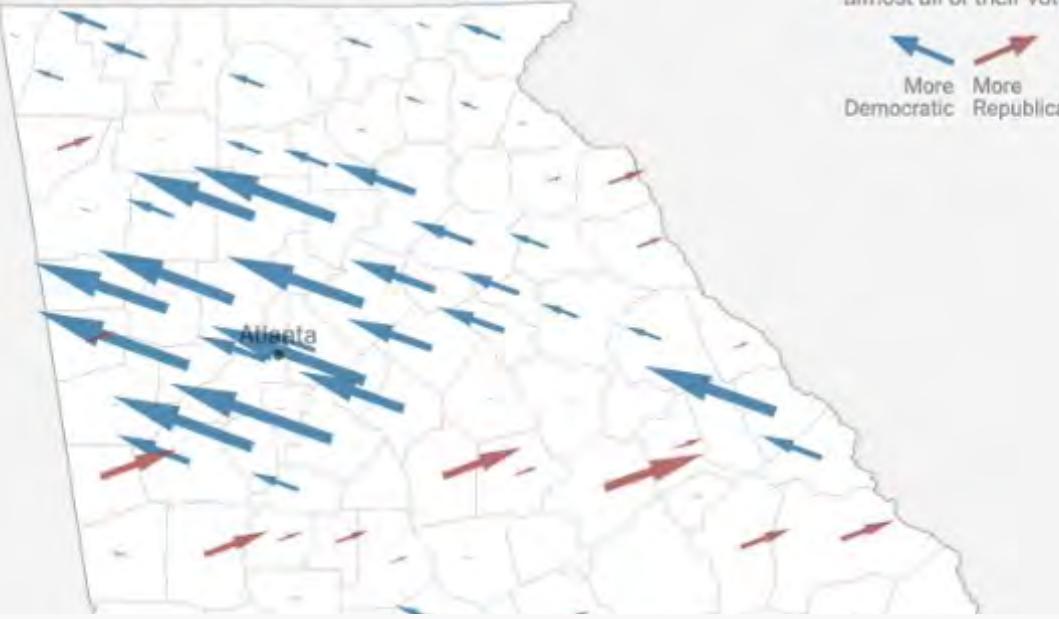
Showing complexity
Truthfulness

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Endorsements

 **Alberto Cairo** 
@AlbertoCairo

...
I saw some people last night (sorry, I don't remember who) making fun of these maps but I like them quite a bit:
nytimes.com/interactive/2020-election-shifts-us-map.html #dataviz #infographics



Tweet by Alberto Cairo, Nov 6, 2020

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↑
7.2k
↓

↑↓ 3K

♥ 5.4K

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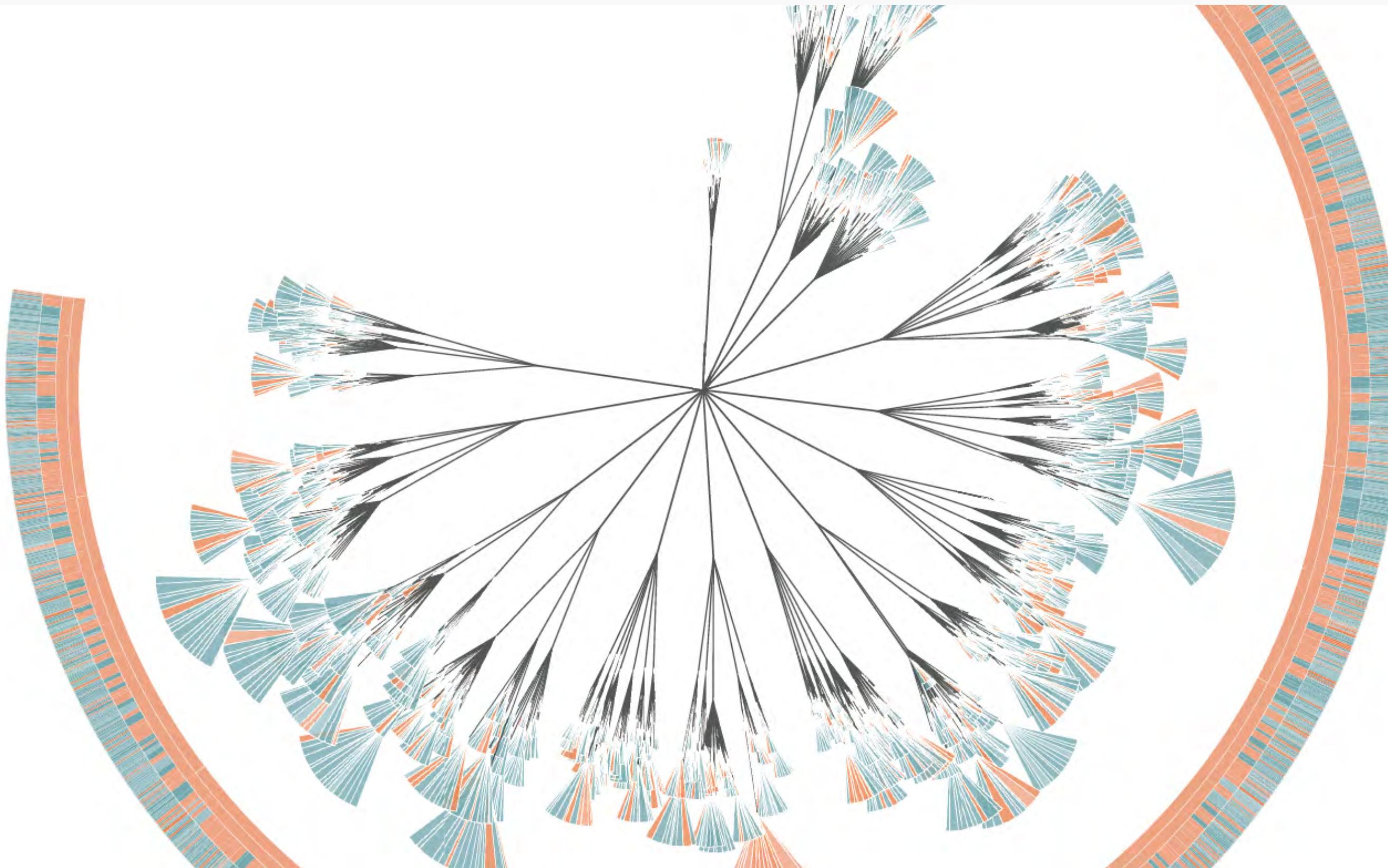
Showing complexity

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Stefanie Posavec and Greg McInerny, The evolution of The Origin of Species, 2009

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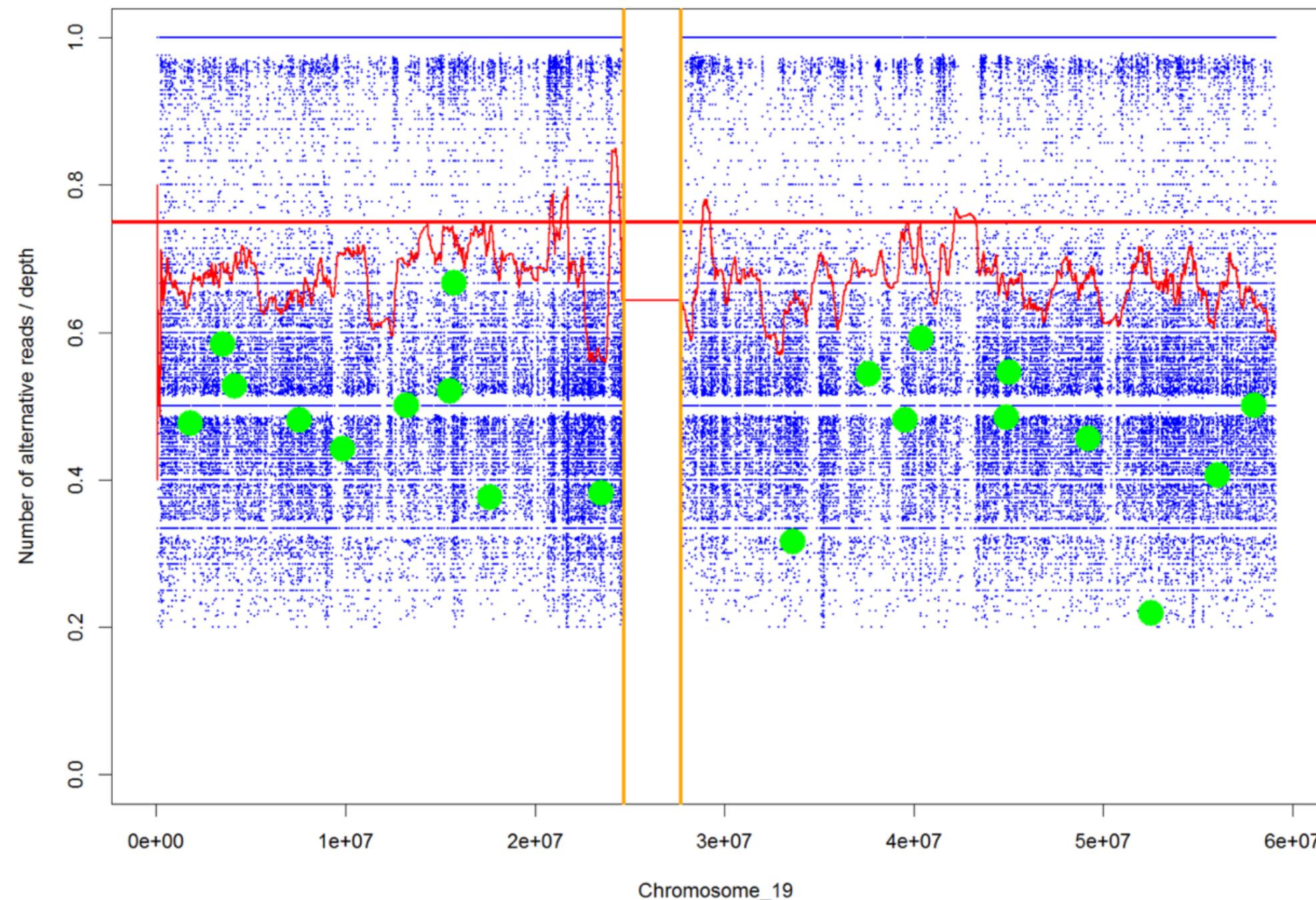
Showing complexity

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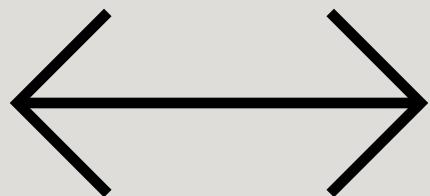
Imitationalism

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**“Follow the
Web Content
Accessibility
Guidelines for
color contrast.”**



**“Use
beautiful
colors.”**

Formalism

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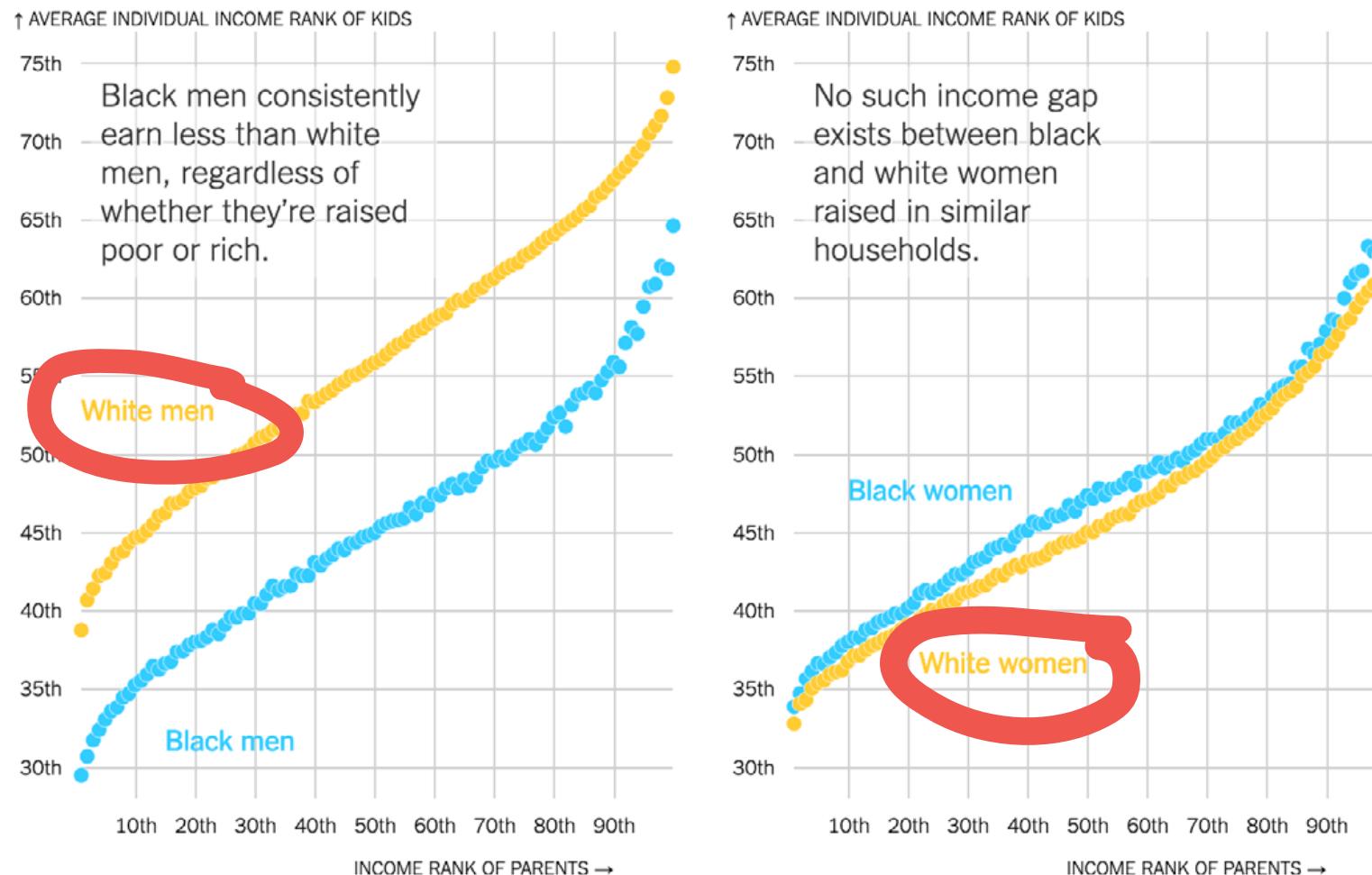
Expressing emotion
Evoking emotion

Imitationism

Showing complexity
Truthfulness

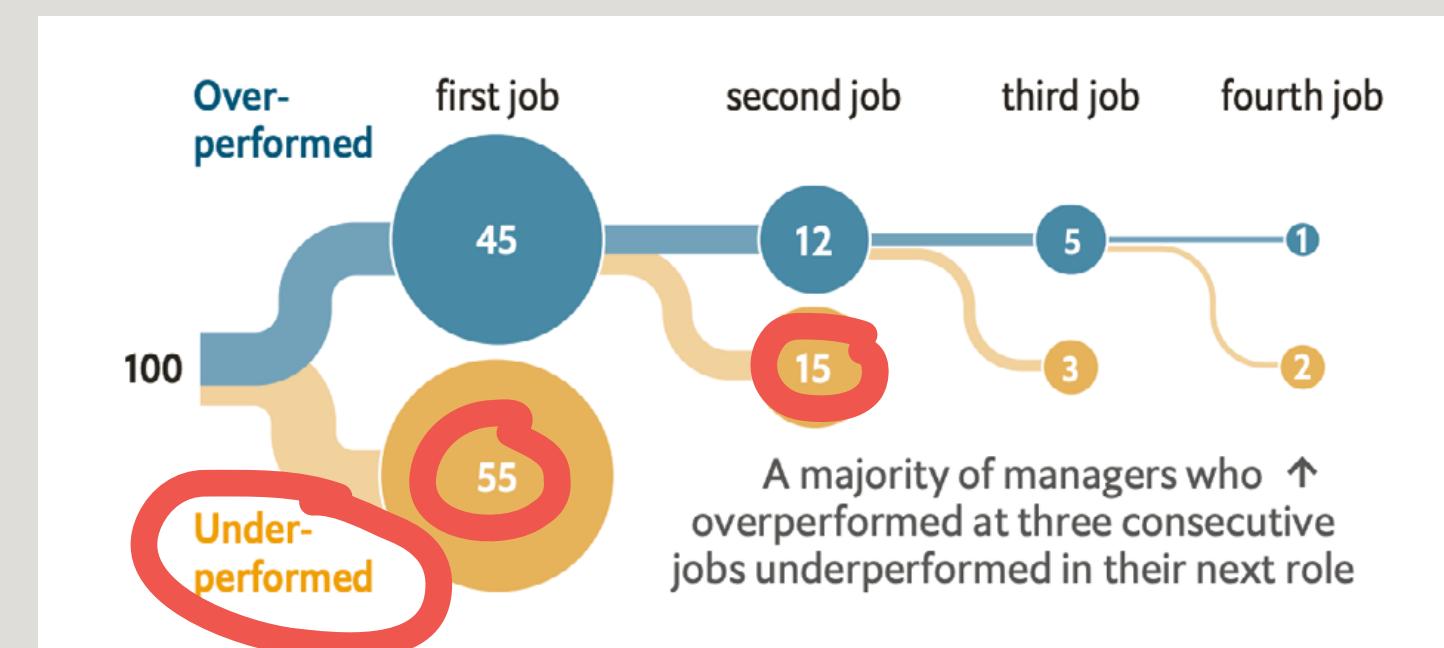
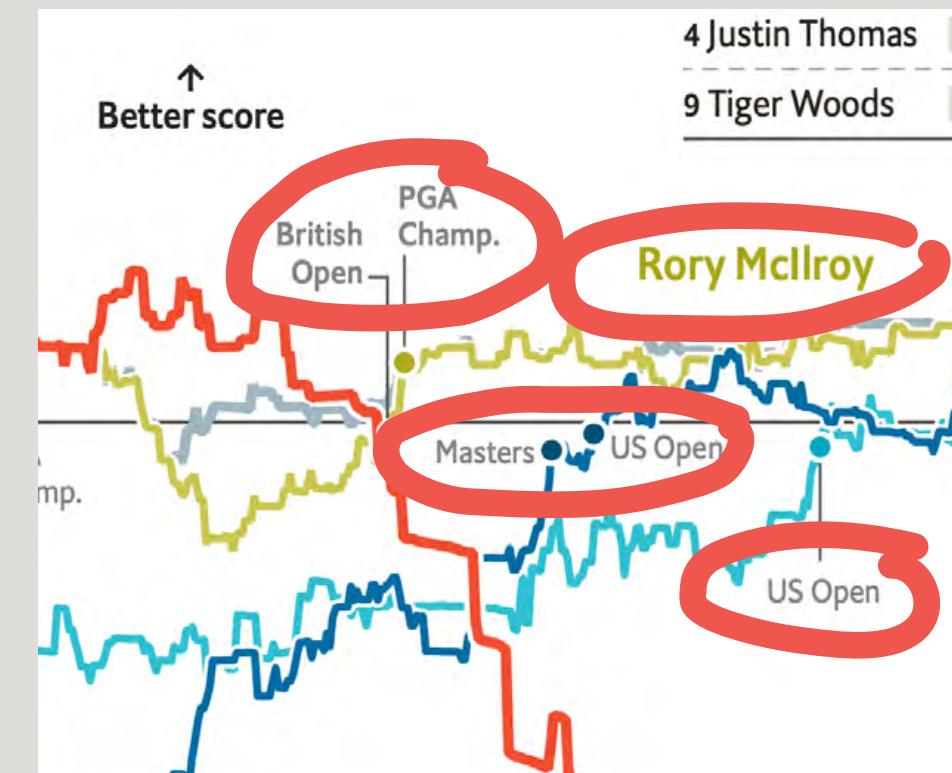
Institutionalism

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The New York Times, Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach of Racism for Black Boys, 2018

The Economist, Graphic Detail, 2019



Formalism

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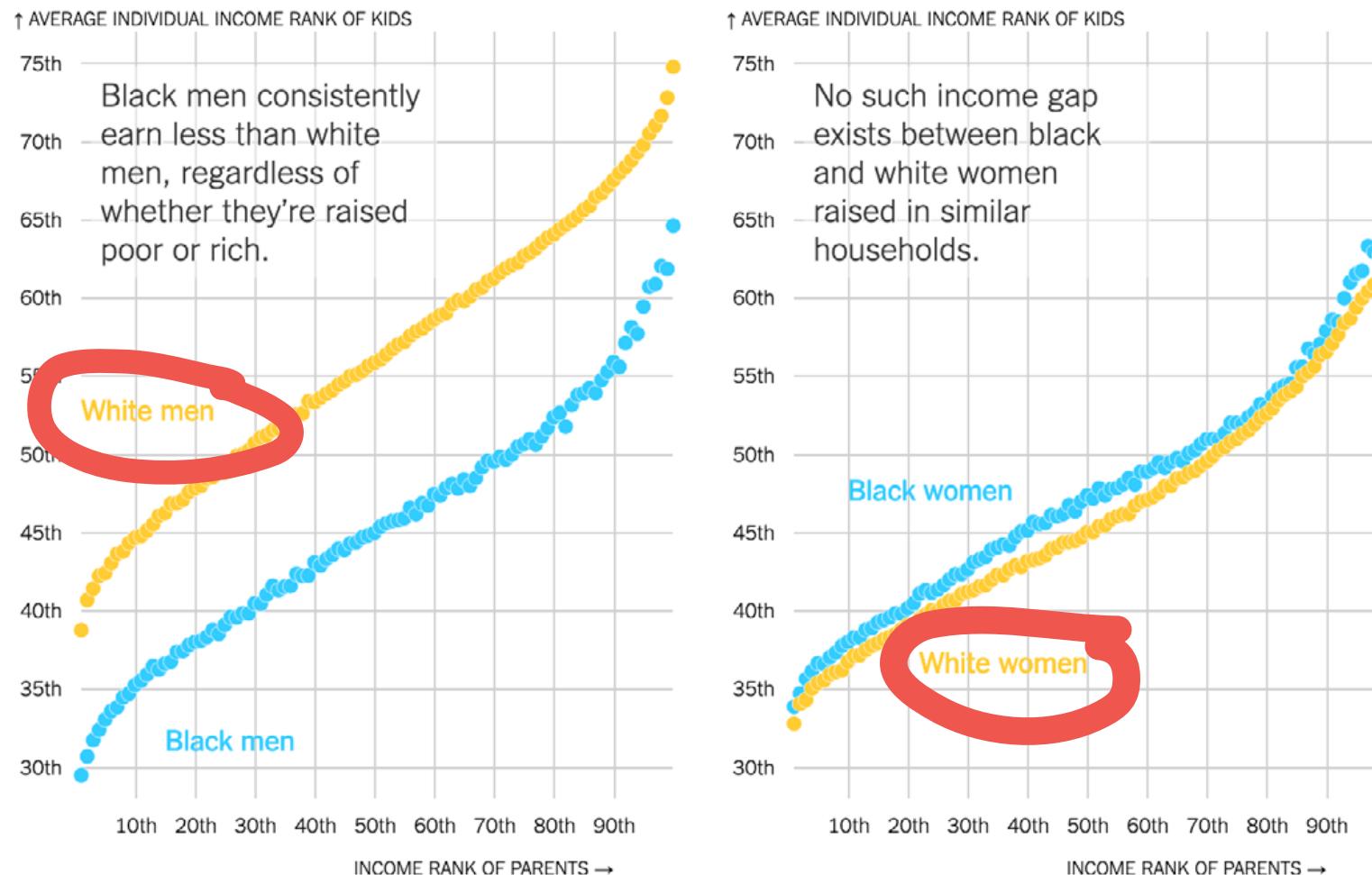
Expressing emotion
Evoking emotion

Imitationism

Showing complexity
Truthfulness

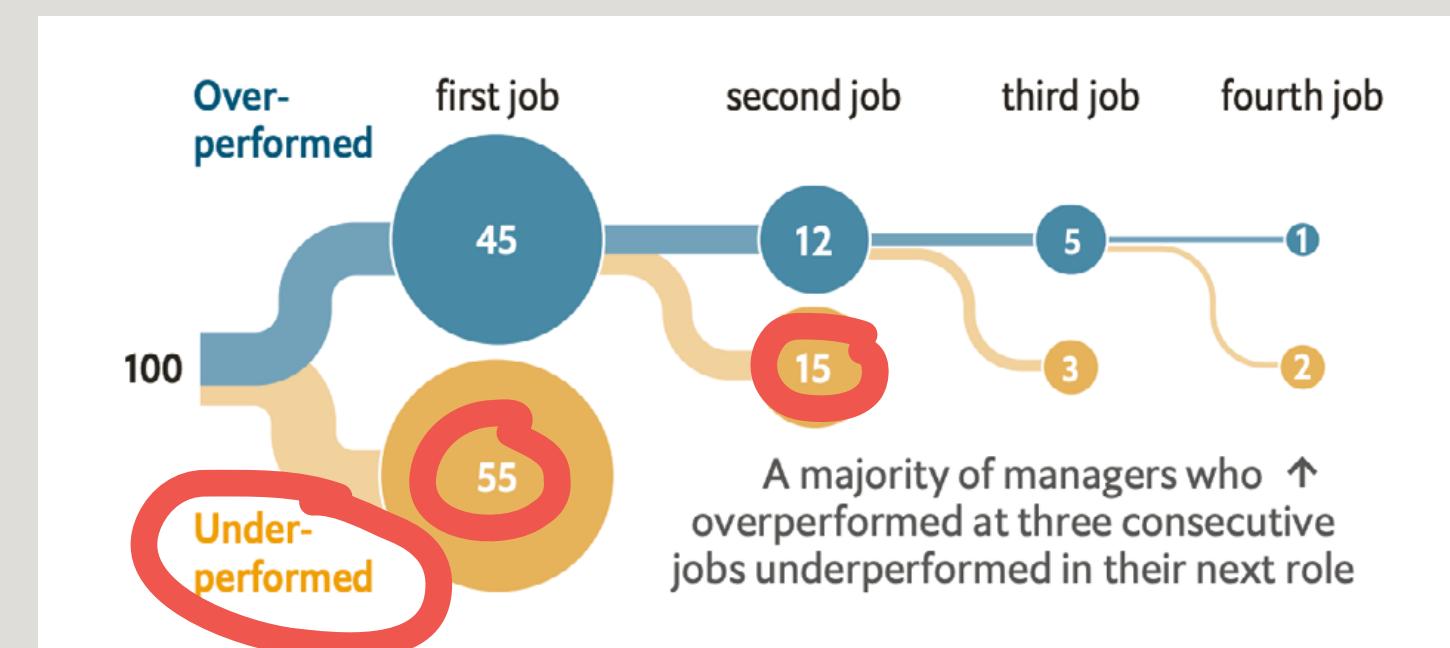
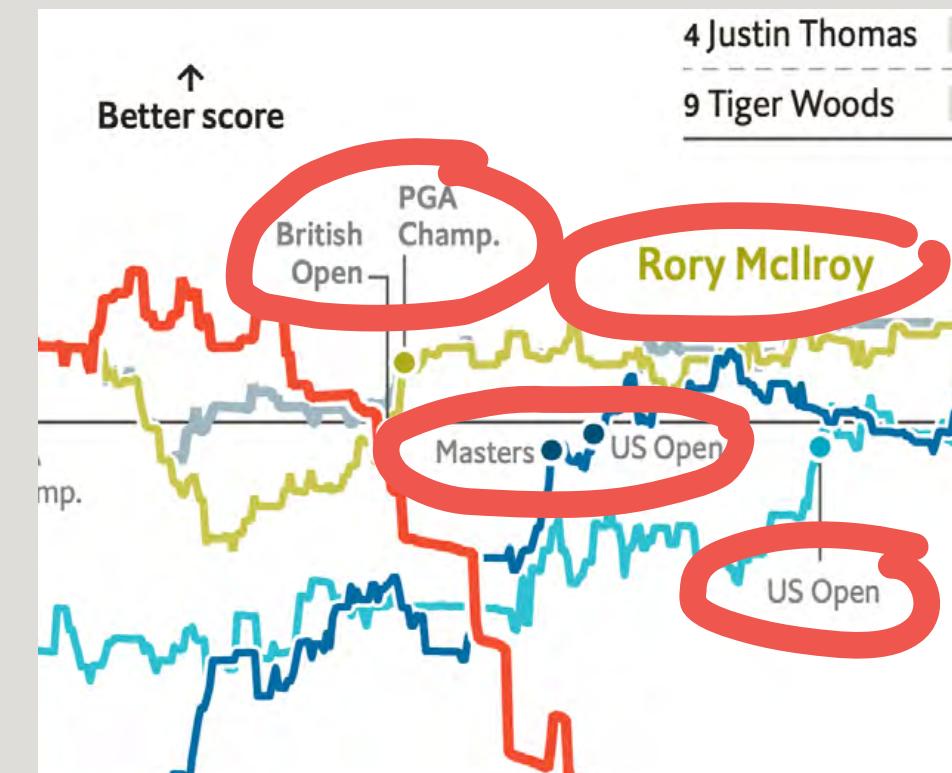
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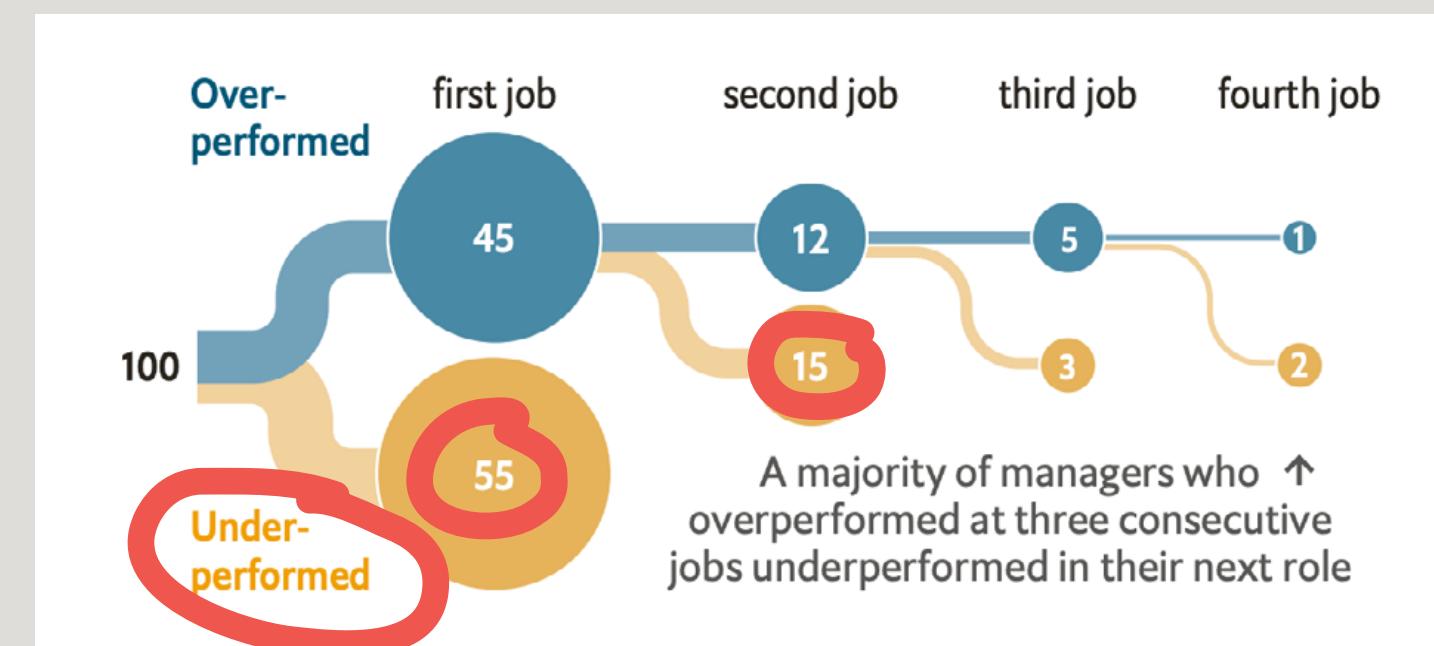
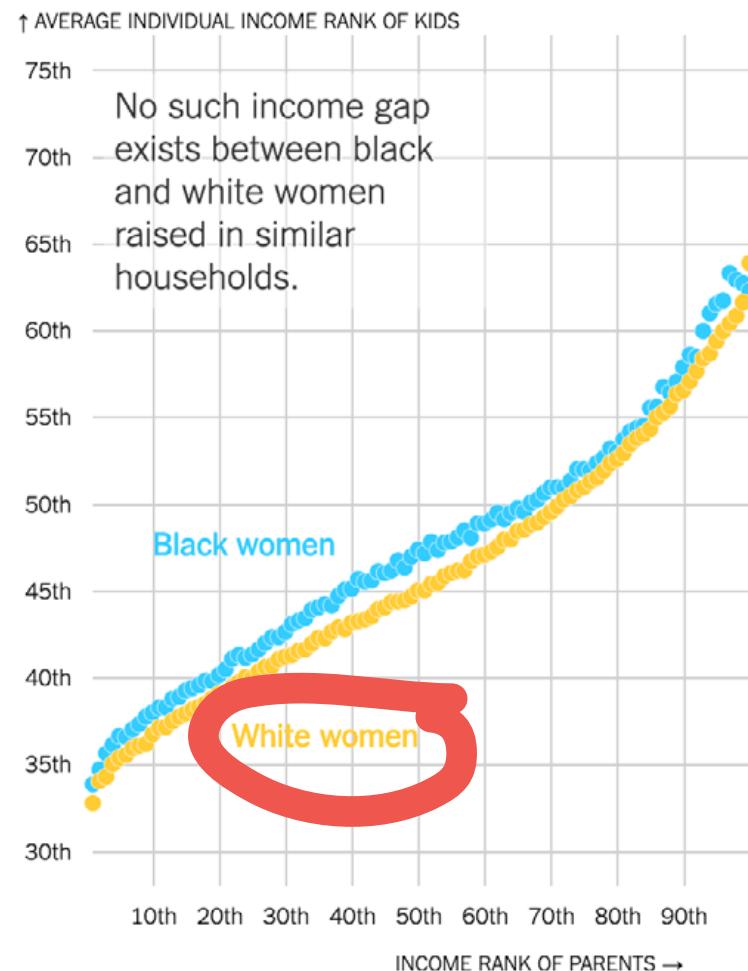
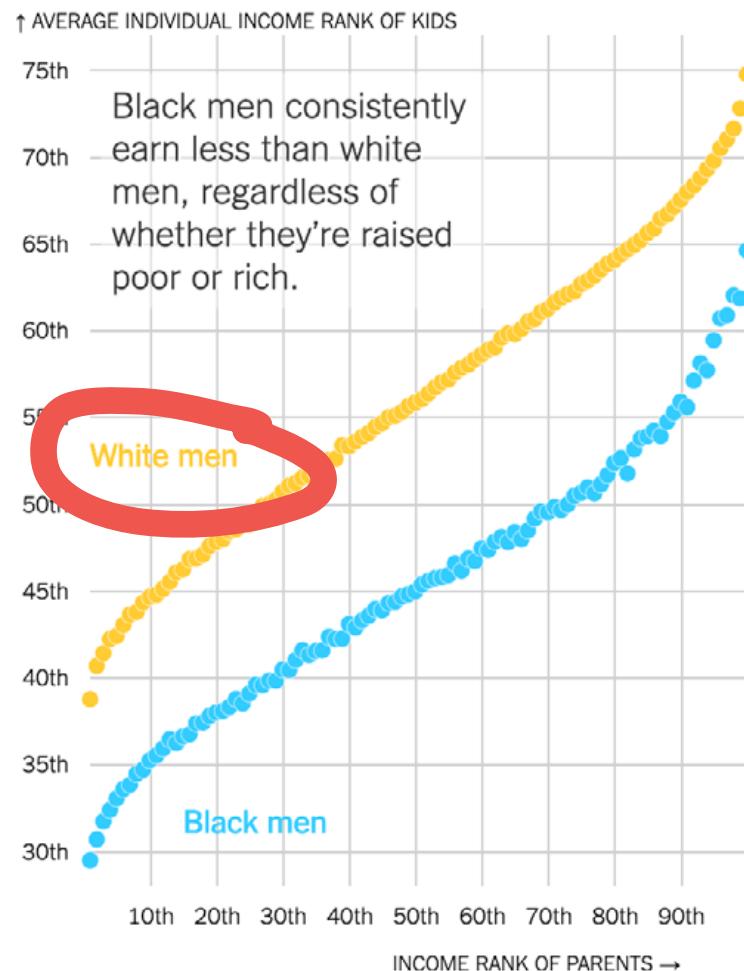
Expressing emotion
Feeling emotion

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The New York Times, Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach of Racism for Black Boys, 2018
The Economist, Graphic Detail, 2019

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Evoking emotion

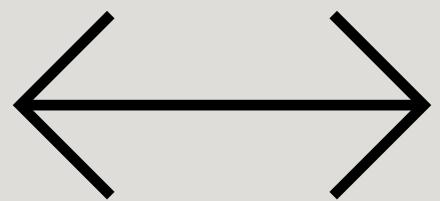
Imitationalism

Showing complexity
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“Make a clear statement with your data that’s quick to grasp.”



“Do justice to the complexity of the topic.”

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“Ease of understanding has to be our single most important goal as data visualization practitioners. We might have found some more mathematically correct way of doing things, but if this is loosing some of our audience along the way, then that’s a mistake.”

John Burn-Murdoch, Lessons Learned from Visualizing the Pandemic, 2020

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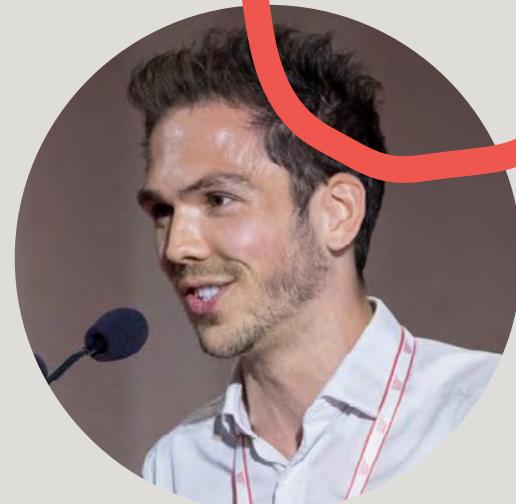
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**“Attract & hold
the attention
with your data
visualization.”**



**“Don’t do
bar chart
races.”**

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Google bar chart race - Google Search

google.com/search?q=bar+chart+race&rlz=1C5CHFA_enDE725DE726&sxsrf=ALeKk000LI2A2gWXomy0VZWVclvHbV...

bar chart race

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The most populous cities in the world from 1500 to 2018

1968

Bar Chart Race in Python with ... towardsdatascience.com

Animated Bar Chart Race appsource.microsoft.com

How to Create Bar Chart Race. Why? | by ... medium.com

Urban population by country Coloured by continent

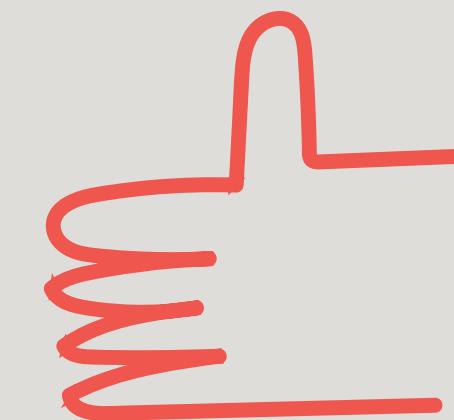
1966

Make bar chart races without coding ...

Custom Bar Chart Race with ... bar-chart-race · GitHub Topics · GitHub

data come alive with bar chart races ...

2008



Formalism

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WHY SOME EXPERTS HATE THE HOTTEST TREND IN DATA VIZ

Bar chart races got banned from the biggest data viz subreddit. How on Earth did they get so controversial?

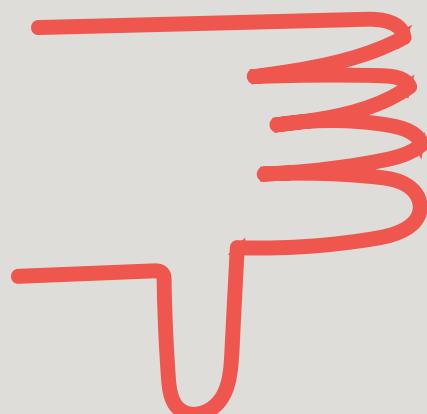


Neil Kaye
@neilrkaye

Although tempted at times I am proud to say i never succumbed to making a bar chart race 😊

An Alternative to the Bar Chart Race

An alternative solution to the controversial animated Bar Chart Races in Microsoft Excel



builtin.com

Tweet by Neil Kaye

clearlyandsimply.com

gravyanecdote.com



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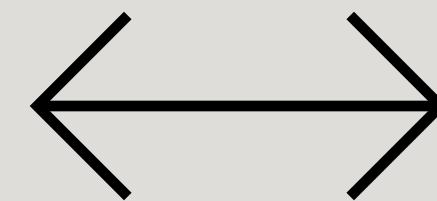
Truthfulness

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WHAT DO YOU
WANT YOUR DATA
VIS TO BE
JUDGED FOR?

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WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR DATA TO BE JUDGED FOR?

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Thoughts & How To's

What to consider when creating pie charts

Pie charts are great to show how 100% divide up into parts. It can be tempting to use them often, pie charts are only good for your data. Here we have a closer look to understand when to use this chart type. If you feel inspired after the reading, you can always come back to this page.

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[blog.datawrapper.de/
tags/what-to-consider](https://blog.datawrapper.de/tags/what-to-consider)

@lisacrost

lisacharlotterost.de

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