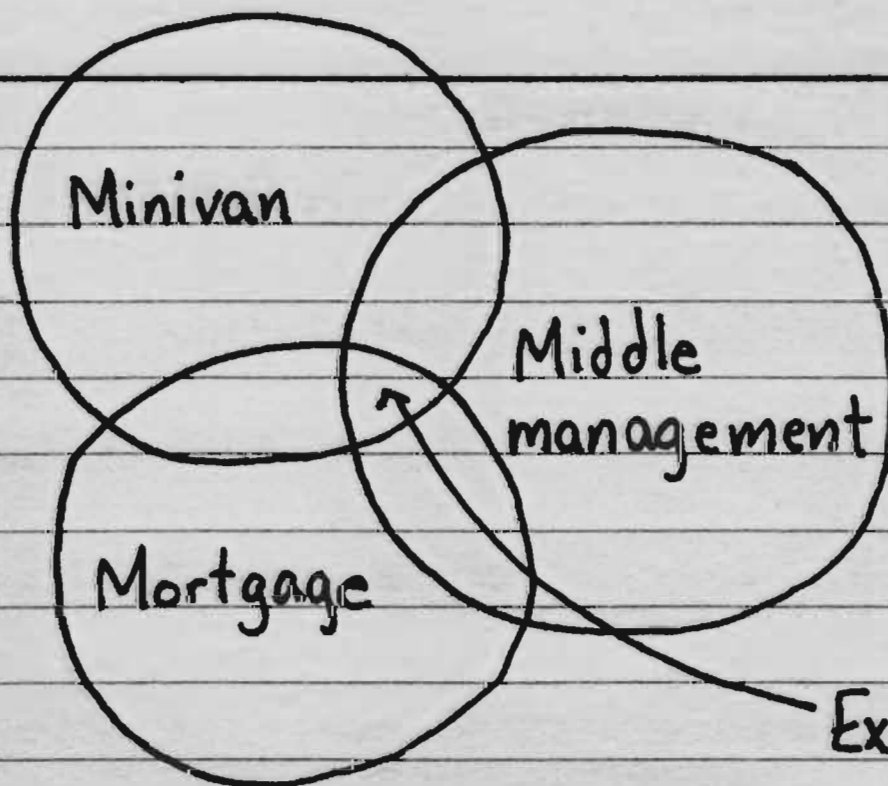


A = Your intended career path

B = Your actual career path

C = Why you drink



Existential crisis

# Jessica Hagy

## Interview

— You choose a very uniform way of presenting your diagrams. What role has simplicity played in the huge success they've achieved? — The simplicity of the format and the simplicity of the content both serve the same purpose: to broadcast an idea quickly. I first started using index cards because they were easy to work with and available. Today, index cards and graphs about life are closely connected, at least in the online world. The index card format is a brand element, you could say. I think the idea took off because it's so accessible, different and familiar at the same time.

— How do you go about taking very complex topics relevant to life, and moving them from concept to simple drawings? — I'm an eavesdropper, and I take notes almost all the time. When you're taking a lot of notes, you don't have time to write a mini-drama, or record an entire speech or incident. For me, graphs became a kind of shorthand—a way to capture the main point of what I overhear or see.

— Drawing diagrams by hand instead of rendering them digitally seems to add to their meaning. Do you agree, and, if so, how do you think this characteristic changes the way people appreciate them? — Drawing makes the ideas feel more authentic. My doodles are more like quick notes than well-funded PowerPoint slides. This gives people the feeling that they're reading a note that's been passed to them while the teacher isn't looking, rather than an annual report.

A lot of the content has various layers of meaning, because the grammar of math is more open ended than the grammar of linguistics. I can use Venn diagrams in place of the words 'and', 'or',

'is', or 'isn't' and x-y graphs in place of the words 'causes', 'influences', or 'relates to'. The language of math means that readers can translate each drawing using their own rubrics, inserting their own verbs into the sentence on the card.

— What role do you think designers play in putting a human element back into the data they're presenting?

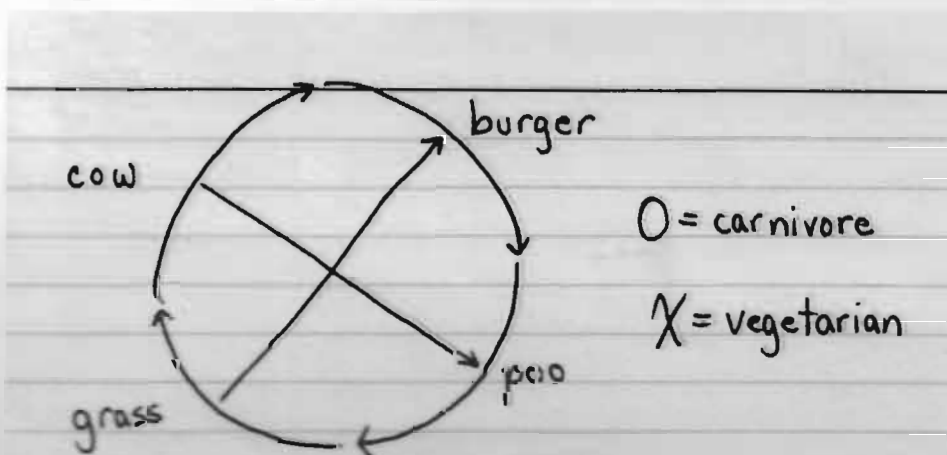
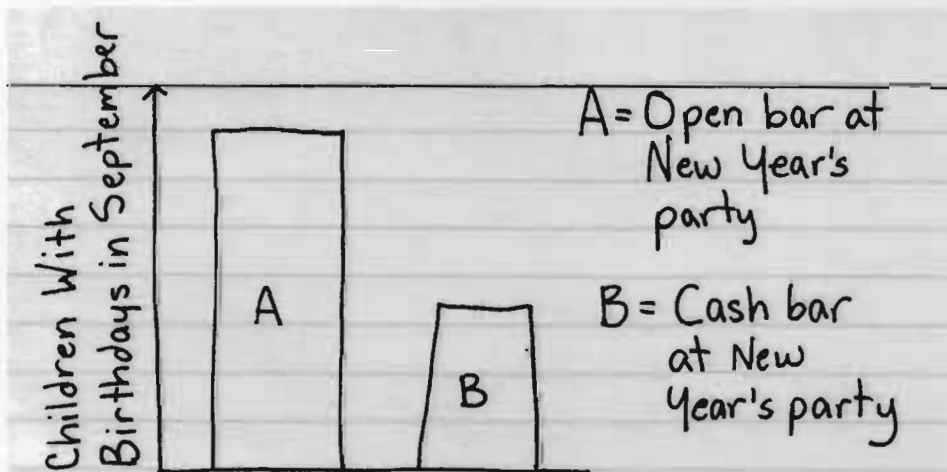
— Designers are translators, and they can inflect content in ways no one else can. Since even something as simple as a choice of fonts can change the connotations of a word, designers are able to spin statistics in ways that even the best orator on earth could never dream of.

### For me, graphs became a kind of shorthand

— Do you use statistics or data to draw up your diagrams? Where does the inspiration come from? — Besides eavesdropping, I read a broad range of disparate information. Sometimes just bouncing from one topic to another helps me relate two ideas to each other. The alphabet contains all the pieces for every book ever written, but it's the mixing up of pieces and parts that turns these letters into stories.

— Do you think designers look at data differently than programmers, scientists, or businessmen? — I would venture to say that designers focus more on the process and outcome of design. Design is something we all do. Every morning when we choose our clothes for the day, we're designing an image of ourselves. Programmers, businessmen, and scientists are all designing ideas; they're just speaking in slightly different design dialects.

— Is technology changing the way people look at data and diagrams? If so, where do you think this is leading us in terms of design? — Technology makes it much easier to crunch a lot of numbers, so it's no surprise that we're seeing more diagrams. We're also bombarded with information, and graphs can take a massive amount of data and distill it ever so neatly. Simplicity fits our frantic pace, and complexity fits our technology. They're symbiotic features of our information diet.



—— Are there particular topics you have more fun depicting? —— The way people perceive themselves and others—the social constructs we all employ to present ourselves—are really interesting to me. Hair, politics, materialism, class, status—anything you can observe in an airport—are topics ripe for depiction. I work in advertising as a copywriter, so getting a good feel for sociology, though it's sometimes a little sad, is mandatory and often illuminating.

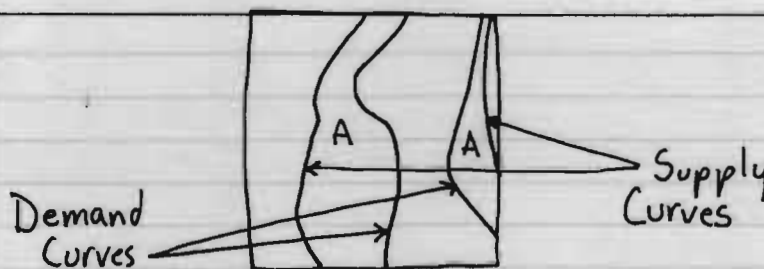
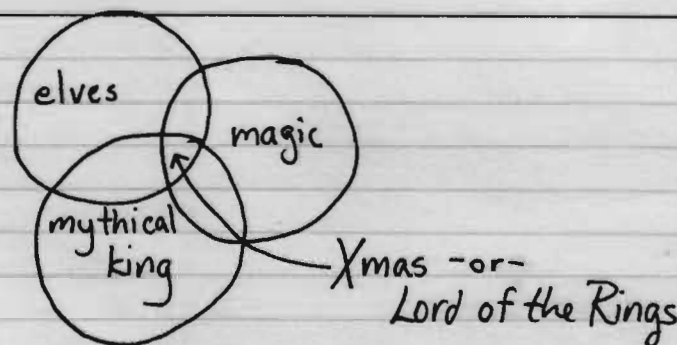
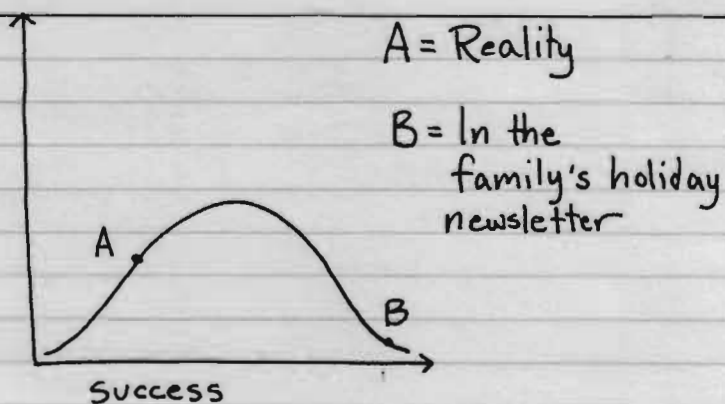
**Simplicity fits our frantic pace, and complexity fits our technology. They're symbiotic features of our information diet**

—— Are there specific things you dislike about the way data and infographics are used in the media today?

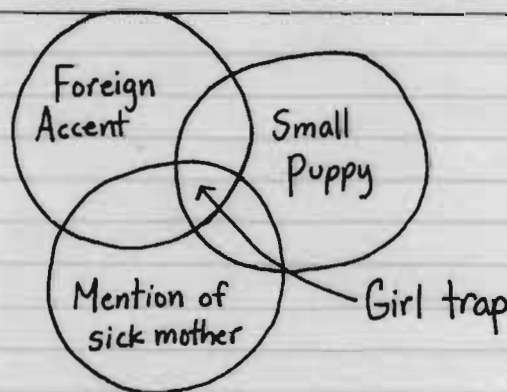
—— I saw a graph once touting the efficacy of a drug. The placebo effect was around 2%, and the drug's effect was around 2.1%. The graph implied that there was a huge difference between the placebo and the drug, because the y-axis only showed 1.5% to 2.5%. But that realisation took a few minutes, and most people don't stare at graphs for even a few seconds, so the graph was a blatant lie, even though it was mathematically accurate. It's these kinds of distortions, where readers are lied to with pictures, that lower the reputation of designers. But when a diagram functions to illuminate and not persuade, it's actually serving a purpose.

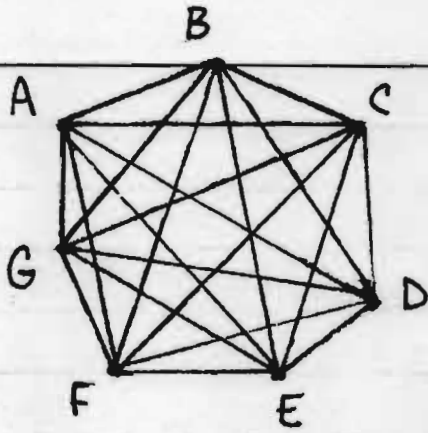
—— When working with data, do you consult with scientists or other experts in the field to confirm that the charts make sense from a scientific point of view? Do accuracy and validity play a role in what you're attempting to depict?

—— Many of my graphs are debatably true or rational, because I work with qualitative features about ninety per cent of the time. It's possible to prove or disprove most of my pieces via anecdote or opinion, and that's why reading the comments on my site is so interesting for me. I'm making observations and changing the visual grammar, and when you have a fluid grammar, you have a fluid message. That's at least half the fun.



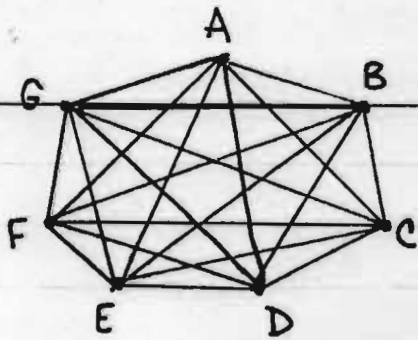
A = Female self esteem issues





- A = Lust
- B = Gluttony
- C = Greed
- D = Sloth
- E = Wrath
- F = Envy
- G = Pride

- $\overline{AB}$  = Edible Undies
- $\overline{AC}$  = Prostitution
- $\overline{AD}$  = Quickie
- $\overline{AE}$  = Domestic Abuse
- $\overline{AF}$  = Adultery
- $\overline{AG}$  = Trophy Wife
- $\overline{BC}$  = Last Donut
- $\overline{BD}$  = Saturday
- $\overline{BE}$  = Bulimia
- $\overline{BF}$  = High Metabolism
- $\overline{BG}$  = Fat men in Speedos
- $\overline{CD}$  = Get rich quick scams
- $\overline{CE}$  = Muggings
- $\overline{CF}$  = Advertising
- $\overline{CG}$  = Status Symbols
- $\overline{DE}$  = Passive Aggression
- $\overline{DF}$  = Welfare
- $\overline{DG}$  = Slackers
- $\overline{EF}$  = Cattiness
- $\overline{EG}$  = Boxing
- $\overline{GF}$  = 2<sup>nd</sup> Place



- A = Chastity
- B = Generosity
- C = Moderation
- D = Diligence
- E = Kindness
- F = Patience
- G = Modesty

- $\overline{AB}$  = Hand job
- $\overline{AC}$  = Tease
- $\overline{AD}$  = Thinking about baseball
- $\overline{AE}$  = Pity date
- $\overline{AF}$  = After Prom
- $\overline{AG}$  = Granny panties
- $\overline{BC}$  = Buying gifts on sale
- $\overline{BD}$  = Kissing up to your boss
- $\overline{BE}$  = Complimenting bad art
- $\overline{BF}$  = Waiting for your rich aunt to die
- $\overline{BG}$  = Lending the stripper your coat
- $\overline{CD}$  = Procrastination
- $\overline{CE}$  = 15% tip
- $\overline{CF}$  = Occasional Outbursts
- $\overline{CG}$  = Just a little cleavage
- $\overline{DE}$  = Forced Smiles
- $\overline{DF}$  = Making license plates in prison
- $\overline{DG}$  = Always wearing your eye-patch
- $\overline{EF}$  = Your friend's Pampered Chef party
- $\overline{EG}$  = Keep the door closed, Mom.
- $\overline{FG}$  = Holding in a toot