Dear Jeremy White, Robert Gebeloff, Ford Fessenden, and Shan Carter,

I was lucky enough to come across your interactive visualization “The Top 1 Percent: What Jobs Do They Have?” \(^1\). As a student in Prof. Shneiderman’s Information Visualization course at the University of Maryland, I am writing this letter to offer my humble insights and suggestions regarding this visualization.

I was able to run the visualization on a number of browsers including Internet Explorer v9.0, Firefox v15.0, Chrome v21.0, Safari v6.0, and Opera v12.02. I was impressed by the application’s response times on all these browsers. Due to fact that treemaps are a space-filling approach to showing hierarchies, it is well suited for this application. In this visualization, size of the rectangles reflects the number of people in the top 1 percent and color is mapped to the percentage of people within that occupation, which is easy to make sense using this visualization. With this approach, users are able to intuitively visualize by overviewing first, zooming and filtering and then obtaining details on demand such as comparing scales, and identifying hierarchical relationships. In fact, the visualization provides necessary tools such as zoom in, out, and full screen to deliver these capabilities. In addition, the search box allows filtering option so that the relevant occupations are listed upon user’s entry. The selected occupation is zoomed and relevant data is consistently displayed in the center of the view as soon as user invokes the tool. Error prevention is attained by returning no results when an irrelevant entry is made. In addition, the labels clearly stand out. All these features add value to the usability and effectiveness of the visualization. However, I would like to offer a few suggestions, if I may.

Although the application’s response times on various browsers on personal computers are impressive, the response time on an IPhone 3GS mobile device’s browser can be improved. It took more than 5 seconds to load the page, and another few seconds to respond to user’s actions.

The visualization was published on January 15, 2012. However, there is no reference on the page as to what year or period of years the data belongs to for this visualization. In fact, it would be even more useful to provide multiyear data set and offer interactive visualization so that users could compare the results by year \(^2\)?

Even though the occupations are hierarchically grouped together and displayed inside a thicker white frame, average data is not available for the entire group. In other words, the application


provides only a single layer of data. Wouldn’t it be nice if the application allowed users to click on an industry, then occupation group, then a finer grained occupation, gradually revealing subgroups and relevant data per level? A similar treemap offering multiple layers with more details on demand is available.\(^2\)

One of the useful features treemaps can provide is highlighting items that meet user’s search criteria so that users can compare relevant items by their color, size and locations. Unfortunately, multiple item selection and highlighting capability is not offered here. An interactive visualization supporting this capability is available.\(^3\)

My final suggestion would be providing users with an option to set their color scales interactively. This way, users can adjust the scale dynamically.\(^3\)

Thank you for providing these powerful interactive visualizations and I hope that you find my suggestions useful.

Sincerely,

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