Dear Josh Katz,

My name is Bor-Chun Chen and I am a PhD student at university of Maryland. As a class assignment for my Information Visualization class, I am required to write a critique based on my experience with an interactive visualization. After some browsing, I came across your nice work about How Non-employed Americans Spend Their Weekdays: Men vs. Women [1] published on The New York Times. I found it really interested and wish to give you some feedback as a user of the visualization.

First of all, I think the visualization you provided is very informative. It is interesting to see the difference between how man and woman spend their time at a single glance: man spend more time watching television while woman spend more time on house work. It is also interesting to find out only little time is spent on job search. The interactive design is also straightforward and helpful. With simple mouse movement, I was able to find out that more than half of the man and sixty percent of the women are awake at 8:00AM, which is much early than I expect. The interface is consistent and easy to use which follows the one of the Eight Golden Rules of Interface Design [2]: strive for consistency. There are also many design detail I admire. For example, I like the color you choose, which looks warm and comfortable. I also think putting the label in the wide part of each section is rather clever. Even people with color deficiency can easily comprehend the interface with the help with the labels. This follows another Golden Rules: cater to universal usability. The transparent tooltip, which can provide information and does not block the overall system, is another thing I think makes the design wonderful. It complies with third Golden Rule: offer informative feedback. Therefore, I think the system is really well designed.

During my navigation of the system, I came up with some suggestion that might help to further improve the system. First, I found myself scrolling up and down to compare the overall system with the detailed data. It might be helpful to integrate the system together. One simple way I suggest is to allow user to zoom-in to the data. For example, if the user wants to find out how people usually spend their time on television, they can scroll the mouse on the television part to zoom-in and we then
can provide the details. This way, the system can pursue the rule of support internal locus of control. If the want to go back to the overall system, they can scroll the mouse back to zoom-out, and the system obey another Golden Rule: permit easy reversal of actions.

Another question I have is that I am wondering how you order the data. Why is the television part at the bottom and personal care part at the top? If there is no specific reason to order the data this way, I suggest the order can also be interactive! It will be nice to rank the order based on percentage of people at a specific time. For example, a user might want to know what most people are doing around 8:00PM. This information can be easily obtained from the current system since television takes up most of the percentage. However, if a user wants to know what most women are doing around 6:00PM, it is not really clear from the current system. Therefore, the user can click on the 6:00PM and the data can be re-ordered by percentage of what people doing at 6:00PM. This is another way to offer informative feedback, which is also a Golden Rule for interface design.

Thank you again for providing such a great system that shows many interesting insights, and also thank you for reading this letter. I hope the feedback can be helpful for improving the system or some other future works you might create. If not, at least it shows my appreciation of the system.

Sincerely,

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