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### “Frontier Peoples Maps” Critique

“Frontier Peoples Maps” is a data visualization featuring a map of various religions that have not been converted to Christianity by using multiple border-colored circles to represent them. Although the author efficiently displays religions on the map with a clear distinction, the visualization can be enhanced by better addressing diversity, equality, and inclusion.

As a non-Christian from one of the places on the map, I might feel uncomfortable and concerned about the external perspective since the intention of the categorization is to encourage conversion to Christianity. The central theme of Christianity is to share and spread its beliefs and teachings of Jesus worldwide. Therefore, non-Christians can view the map as an attempt to portray their religion as the target for conversion, potentially conflicting with their identity. Furthermore, the term “Frontier Peoples” in the title could imply a view of their faith as something to be changed in the future, which might be upsetting and disrespectful to those who cherish their beliefs. Finally, the map categorizes some religions as “other/small”, which may imply less significant religions, promoting a hierarchical perspective on religions. If I belonged to one of these minority groups, I would feel discomfort, as it seems to diminish the value of my religious convictions.

The visualization leaves Judaism, especially in predominantly Jewish Israel. I believe that the author purposefully omitted this specific religion because it does not align with the objective of the map, which is to identify locations where Christianity can be reached. Since Judaism has a substantial following of individuals resistant to religious conversion, the Joshua Project appears to have intentionally left them out. However, such exclusion can emphasize discomfort to other religious groups because it implies that their faiths are considered more susceptible to conversion compared to Judaism.

As mentioned above, labeling certain religions as “other/small” can be perceived as dismissive, allowing followers to feel that their beliefs are not acknowledged prominently as those of major religious groups. Even though representing all the minor religions with different colors can clutter the map given the vast number of religions, the author could have listed all the religions classified under the “other/small” category in a separate notes section. This approach would acknowledge their presence without overwhelming the visual representation on the map.

The Joshua Project employs the term “Ethnic Religions”, which lacks a clear definition. I believe it refers to religions that are closely related to a particular ethnic group. Considering its usage in geographically diverse areas without sufficient explanation in a notes section, it potentially suggests that such religions are uniform and homogeneous, completely overlooking the rich and distinct cultural contexts that define each religion.

The Joshua Project gives a disclaimer on its website explaining that it occasionally adjusts profile text from third-party sources to avoid confusion regarding the current reality of a people group, avoid offensive wording, and fix grammar and spelling. While there is no apparent reason for the website to post a false disclaimer, I feel it is invalid as some texts still offend some religious groups. To foster trust with its audience, it would be more transparent for the Joshua Project to note the changes along with the reasons.

“Frontier Peoples Maps” uses a map of the world to display a variety of non-Christian religions. Each circle with a distinct border color indicates a different category. Despite the visualization efficiently delivering the main point, it could have been improved by accounting diversity, equality, and inclusion.