**He/She/Spline**

I've been pondering your paper on "Using Personal Pronouns to Incite War" and our brief discussion about data fitting.

I think it's something of a toss-up between using a spline or "fitted curve X" -- you're still going to have to tinker with the degrees of freedom to get a fit that "feels right" which obviously isn't super scientific.

Have you thought about using segmented (piecewise) linear regression?  Your data isn't so spiky as to prevent you from doing this and ending up with a fairly reasonable result.  The plus side is that it would make trends/peaks/valleys very obvious to the reader and the analysis a little more straightforward.  The downside is that the overall function isn't differentiable so you wouldn't be able to look at rate of change, but maybe that doesn't matter.

[Here's a package in R](http://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/segmented/segmented.pdf" \t "_blank) that makes this a non-horrible endeavor.  Rather than messing with DF for splines/polys, you're going after N number of breakpoints (for N+1 pieces).

Anyways, whatever.  It popped into my head and I didn't know if you've considered this or not, so thought I'd throw it out there.  Feel free to happily ignore and/or print this email and use as toilet paper.