Freedom, Responsibility, and Keeping [Our] Hope Alive[1]

James P. Walsh
University of Michigan

Abstract

What is progress? Exploring the nuances of marathon running and access to improved sanitation, I conclude that progress is defined by our freedom to be and by our responsibility to help the vulnerable among us. It is embodied at different levels -- in the hearts, minds and behaviors of individuals and in the institutions that enable and safeguard that freedom and responsibility. At a fundamental level, hope embodies progress. What is the scholar's role in a world of hope and hopelessness? If we live with integrity, I argue that we become something of a role model for freedom. And if we cultivate our students' imaginations and talents and at the same time, remind them of their responsibilities, we work to safeguard humanity's future. Truth be told, we are all vulnerable. With faith as hope's companion, I close by asking us to consider the faith that sustains us.

I am pleased to be a part of this inaugural assembly. I can think of no worthier undertaking than to gather a group like this to consider the state of the world, its future, and even our role as scholars in enabling a better world. While I have no particular expertise on the subject of progress, with reflection, I discovered that the idea orients much of my life. What follows then is an idiosyncratic meditation on the nature of progress and its place in our lives. To begin, we need to grapple with the most basic question, What is progress?

Evidence

It is difficult to escape the idea that progress is to be understood as some kind of measurable improvement over time. As a life-long runner, my thoughts first turned to the

---

[1] I want to thank Oana Branzei, Tom Donaldson, Jane Dutton, Ed Freeman, Ira Fried, Subi Rangan, Lance Sandelands and my colleagues at the inaugural assembly for their conversations about this essay, and Sara Hess and Kan Yu for their help collecting the hope and progress data.

marathon. Figure 1 captures the evolution in male and female world record times from 1908 (male) and 1926 (female) to the present.[2]

Insert Figure 1 about Here

We see that the record time dropped markedly over the years. Kenya's Wilson Kipsang recently ran the 2013 Berlin Marathon in 2 hours 3 minutes and 23 seconds. The current women's mark was set ten years earlier by the United Kingdom's Paula Radcliffe. She ran the 2003 London Marathon in 2 hours 15 minutes and 25 seconds. And while the men's record time is faster than the women's record, we see that the rate of progress for women outpaces that for the men (with a roughly 60% improvement over 61 years, compared to about a 30% improvement for males over 105 years). What is progress? Is it an absolute appreciation of the current record time or an admiration for its rate of improvement? Either way, we see evidence of progress here.

But there are complications. As we look at world records, we look at progress at the level of the human species. Countries matter too. How do the record times vary by country? Figure 2 captures the fastest times run by men from the ten "fastest" and "slowest" nations in the world.[3]

Insert Figure 2 about Here

Here we see that progress may not be equally experienced. While the record times among those from the top ten nations differ by less than 3 percent, the fastest time recorded by a citizen from Palau is almost 95 percent slower than a Kenyan citizen's best time … and almost 50 percent slower that the Cayman Islands' best. Perhaps we should appreciate any evidence of progress against deeper ideas of progress, such as how the fruits of global progress are shared.

And if we really want to consider how well progress is shared, we need to appraise individual experience. Figure 3 captures my own twelve marathon times. While I am an American, and hail from a country that sports a current national record that is just 1.8 percent

----

[2] If multiple records were set in a given year, I pictured the fastest time of the year.

[3] These nations are the countries with the fastest and slowest marathon records among the counties that are also followed by the World Bank … and looking ahead, among the countries where we have full information about the quality of their sanitation infrastructure (see Figure 4).

slower than the world record, my own best time is 56 percent slower than this current record. I ran the 1981 Toledo Heart Watcher's Marathon in 3:12:07 (50 percent slower than the record at the time). While this performance is not fast by current world standards, had I run that race in the early Olympic Games, I would have won the 1900 Bronze Medal in Paris and the 1904 Gold Medal in St. Louis. Perhaps the fact that an unremarkable graduate student could run an earlier Olympic medal winning time is itself a form of progress. Still, my experience tells me that we need to be alert to lived experience, in settings marked and unmarked by omnibus progress. The fact that one American can run a marathon in 2 hours and 5 minutes is obliquely related, at best, to any other American's ability to run a marathon. This look at marathon running at multiple levels of analysis reminds us that it is no simple task to appraise the experience of progress.

Insert Figure 3 about Here

It is also no easy task to accurately measure progress. My experience with measurement technology illustrates the point. My first official time of 3:52:59 in the 1979 New York City Marathon does not reflect the actual time it took me to run those 26.2 miles. It is a "gun time," the time that elapsed between the sound of the starter's gun and the moment I crossed the finish line. The problem is that with so many runners at the start of that race (thousands of us stood cheek-by-jowl on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge that October morning), it took me about 15 or 20 minutes to begin running that day. I had a very different experience in Milwaukee seven months later. Conditions changed. My 3:32:04 time that day is accurate. With just hundreds of people running that race, I was able to begin running at the sound of the gun. Fast forward twenty years. My 2001 Chicago Marathon experience was very much akin to my 1979 experience. 37,500 runners registered to run the race that day. Nevertheless, my 3:30:08 time that day is very accurate. It is my "chip time." Each runner these days attaches a sensor to his or her shoe; a mat at the start and finish (and at various points along the way) picks up its unique signal as the runner passes over it. With everyone (regardless of ability) no longer straining to be as close to the starting line as possible, people queue up according to their ability. Faster runners line up in front of the slower runners. Just about everyone starts to run at their ability level when the starter's gun sounds. A runner's race with time begins only when he or she crosses that

special mat at the starting line. Technological progress improved our ability to assess a runner's performance. Such progress reminds us to question the validity of any data we compile.

And even if progress is accurately measured, we need to appreciate the lived conditions under which it is appraised. Flynn (2012), for example, revealed that IQ levels have steadily increased over time. Whether due to improved nutrition, health care, education, or even the demands and consequences of living in a possibly more complex day-to-day living environment, an IQ of 100 today may not be equivalent to an IQ of 100 years ago. It is not clear that today's average New Yorker would thrive as something of a wunderkind if transported back in time to New York in 1914. Relatedly, we know intuitively that running a 3 hour marathon at age 30 is somehow "not the same" as running a 3 hour marathon at age 50. Running the 2001 Chicago Marathon in 3:30:08, I ran my second fastest race twenty years after running my fastest. An age-equivalent calculation, however, tells us that this time for a 48-year old man is equivalent to a 3:10:24 for a 28-year old man. Perhaps 3:30:08 is 1 minute and 43 seconds "faster" than 3:12:07. [4] It is by no means a straightforward task to appreciate the nature of progress.

Beyond running

Measurement difficulties notwithstanding, we need to consider what domains of humanity are worthy of measurement. As we have seen, the measurement issues are tricky. We cannot ignore them as we collect our own data or interpret others' data. That said, these issues can almost always be addressed in some fashion. Does all progress matter? The "What?" question may be more important to consider than the "How?" question. Let's pause for a minute. Subi Rangan cares deeply about the state of the world, imagines a gathering such as this to consider its future, and kindly invites me to contribute. And what do I do? I gather all manner of marathon statistics and reminisce about my running past. With this kind of talk, many might wonder why I am invited to join the group. After all, who really cares about how fast a human can run 26.2 miles (42 kilometers)? While we may all care about progress, few may care about the marathon.

How can we think about what matters most? Perhaps we should begin by considering our universally affirmed aspirations for humanity. Let's take the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights as a point of departure. Its thirty articles serve as a yardstick to evaluate the state of the world. Consider Article 25:

---

[4] http://www.marathonguide.com/fitnesscalcs/ageequivalent.cfm

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

The challenge of appraising progress in the world of marathon running pales in comparison to how we might best appraise progress in these more complex domains. Article 25's two sentences belie a host of measurement challenges. Undaunted, the World Bank compiles data that speak to these aspirations. Following the same countries that we followed in Figure 2, Figure 4 captures the 22-year trend in countries' access to improved sanitation (defined as the percentage of the population with access to such improved sanitation facilities as a piped sewer system, a septic tank, a pit latrine, a ventilated improved pit latrine, a pit latrine with slab, or a composting toilet).[5] No one would dispute that clean sanitation facilities are essential to human health and well-being.

Insert Figure 4 about Here

We see good news and bad news in these data. The good news is that we have witnessed a 33.4 percent increase in the worldwide availability of improved sanitation. 47.6 percent of the world's peoples enjoyed such access in1990; that percentage increased to 63.7 in 2011. The bad news is that over 2.5 billion people still did not have access to a clean toilet in 2011. While I cannot imagine that anyone cares about the relationship between a nation's best marathon time and the percent of its population with access to improved sanitation, we see that the world's two fastest countries, Kenya and Ethiopia, reveal two of the poorest levels of access to healthy sanitation (with 2011 figures of 29.4 and 20.7 percent).[6] On the other hand, 100 percent of the population in the two slowest countries, Palau and Monaco, has such access. That simple fact reminds us that variance matters – progress of different kinds may be shared differently around the world.

---

[5] http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.ACSN

[6] The correlation between the 2011 sanitation statistic and the men's national marathon record (for 197 countries and territories) is actually -.18. The experiences of Kenya and Ethiopia notwithstanding, countries whose citizens enjoy access to decent sanitation are somewhat more likely to produce faster marathon runners.

Exploring the kinds of statistics that we did with the marathon, we see that Ethiopia, for all its troubles with sanitation, revealed a very impressive 800 percent improvement over those 22 years (moving from 2.3 percent to 20.7 percent). Palau sets another exemplary world standard. While its sanitation "only" improved by 93.6 percent, it reached a level of 100 percent in 2007 (and sustained it). Tonga reminds us, however, that progress is by no means guaranteed. Their sanitation picture worsened a bit over time. Whereas 95.4 percent of its citizens enjoyed healthy sanitation facilities in 1990, only 91.5 percent did so 22 years later. Said differently, the number of Tongans living with substandard sanitation facilities moved from 4,764 in 1990 to 8,887 in 2011 (the population increased from 103,557 to 104,554 in that same time period).

And while the individual experience of living in unsafe and unhygienic conditions is largely invisible to Americans and Europeans, with very little effort, we can appreciate how others live. Anthropologists (Goldstein, 2003), journalists (Boo, 2012), and filmmakers (Volkers, 2011) bring their lives to us in compelling fashion. While to be sure, people are able to find joy and meaning in most any circumstance, we know that people struggle in this world.

Reflections

What can we learn from this brief look at the evidence for progress in the worlds of running and sanitation? Two things. First, the level of analysis matters. While we should certainly appreciate progress at the level of the human species, we should never forget to examine individuals' lived experiences.[7] To know that the men's world record for the marathon improved by say 30 percent in 100 years may be important but it says little about the lived experience of one person's attempt to better his or her time (or even an attempt to run this distance in the first place). And to know that world's access to improved sanitation improved by 33 percent in a recent 22-year period says little about the life experience of someone still struggling to live in an unhygienic condition, be that one of the 81.5 percent of Guinea's citizens who do or one of the "just" .4 percent of the U.S. citizens who do.[8] And second, we know that in an effort to appreciate progress, a look at running is somehow qualitatively different from an examination of access to sanitation. This second point is crucial. Just how do these two examples differ and does that difference matter?

---

[7] Of course, we can investigate progress at any level of aggregation that interests us (i.e., perhaps investigating country, community, and family differences).

[8] Remember that .4 percent of 311,582,564 is 1,246,330. Seen in this light, the magnitude of America's sanitation problem is shocking.

March (2003) reminds us that human behavior is often seen in one of two ways. One reflects what he calls a logic of consequences, where action is inspired by anticipations, incentives, and desires. The other is rooted in what it means to be human in some essential sense, "It is a tradition that speaks of self-conceptions, identities and proper behavior rather than expectations, incentives and desires" (p. 206.). He refers to this as a logic of appropriateness. To be sure, we can track progress in world, national and personal records but as we do, it might feel either wrongheaded ("Who cares about running?") or just plain wrong ("Who cares about running fast?"). These two reactions tell us that running is not so much about consequences as it is about "appropriateness" in March's human sense.

To focus on speed *per se* is also "wrong" because we rarely run in an anticipation of prize money or records. We run because we are human. In fact, running may be the one of purest of human activities. We began running as hunter-gathers on Africa's plains and have not stopped. Yes, we used to run for food, just as today we may run for good health. And yes, we can run for speed and the glory of standing on a winner's podium but at a fundamental level, we run because we can. Again, we run because we are human. A runner who reads that last sentence knows exactly what I mean. Speaking to a non-runner, we strain to find words of explanation. Non-runners have no idea that running is about freedom and discipline, self-awareness and self-discovery, character, inner peace, and more. It is about a kind of inchoate fusion between body, mind, and soul. Sheehan (1978:117) captured the challenge of articulation:

> *But what matters whether we can be understood by someone else? By someone who is not a runner? Not certainly to induce them to try it themselves. But rather to encourage them to seek their own art, to become their own artists. To listen for that inner way of being in this world. To what they must be.*

Running is about being. Running exemplifies the logic of appropriateness.[9]

---

[9] While I ran many marathons at a pace that would leave me satisfied at the end that I did my best, this was not always so. I ran my first marathon very cautiously. Never having run more than 18 miles -- and fearful of what "hitting the wall" might do to me -- I ran very conservatively for the first 20 miles that day. Each race has its own story. For example, I ran the Chicago Marathon in October 2000 in 5 hours and 34 minutes; seven weeks later, I ran the Dallas Marathon an hour and a half faster. The difference is that I ran with my brother that day in Chicago, accompanying him on his first marathon. That day was all about love, not speed. I ran the Chicago Marathon in 3 hours and 30 minutes in 2001; four weeks later, I ran the New York City Marathon in 4 hours and 6 minutes. I escorted a disabled person through the streets of New York that day. Speed also meant nothing to me that day. I only trained with real discipline and focus to run at my absolute limit once in my life – for the 2001 Chicago Marathon. My goal was to qualify for the Boston Marathon (for what it is worth, I made it with 51 seconds to spare). Yes, speed can matter. I ran as fast as I could that day just to see if I could (embodying a logic of appropriateness) and yes, I ran in a very determined attempt to enter the Boston Marathon (embodying a logic of consequences). Still, there is so much more to running a marathon than running it fast.

And what of improved sanitation? Bringing hygienic sanitation facilities to everyone in the world is a noble aspiration. It accords with our universal conception of human rights. Setting targets, working toward them, and measuring progress against those targets feels worthy of our attention, time, and talents. At first blush, such progress appears to define a logic of consequences. With some reflection, however, we see that running and sanitation are more alike than they are different. To run is human, just as to enjoy clean sanitation is human. They both embody a logic of appropriateness. Indeed, their difference and yet essential similarity point to a fundamental truth about progress.

Progress

To improve the sanitation facilities of the world's poor and vulnerable is as deeply human as it is to run. Corballis (2011) argues that our recursive mind distinguishes us from the other members of the animal kingdom. We are self-reflective. We think about our thinking. And importantly, we have the ability to take the perspective of others. We are empathetic. With empathy comes the ability, and yes inclination, to care for others, especially those who are helpless. Pinker (2011) argues that violence among the human species began to decline with the invention of the printing press. The interior lives of others were made available to others at scale and with that came empathy, and with empathy, our indifference to others' suffering -- and so, violence -- began to ebb. In March's terms, it is as appropriate to run and it is to care for others.

This look at running and sanitation points the way to a two-fold conception of progress. Progress is defined both by our freedom to be and by our responsibility to help others who are vulnerable, infirm, or helpless. As such, progress is fundamental to human life. It is embodied in our unrestrained ability to become our own artists (to run if that calls us) and it is embodied in our commitment to help the vulnerable among us (the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights enshrines such an aspiration). In words that every America schoolchild understands, progress is embodied in the pursuit of liberty and justice for all. And it is embodied at different levels of analysis -- in the hearts, minds and behaviors of individuals and in the institutions that enable and safeguard their liberties and ensure justice.[10]

Hope and hopelessness

---

[10] To see progress as embodying both freedom and responsibility is broadly consistent with Sen's (1999) view of the importance of freedom. Indeed, freedom enables our ability to take responsibility for the vulnerable and in so doing, ultimately enables their freedom to be. These people can then take responsibility for vulnerable others, enabling their freedom to be. A virtuous cycle is thus sparked and sustained.

Seeing that progress is about both our ability to be free and our responsibility to help the helpless, we see that at a very fundamental level, progress is all about hope – for ourselves as individuals and for us as a people. Our hope for a better world actually embodies progress. Indeed, the thought of it enables us to live with confidence and security.

Our conversation about the evolution of capitalism in this assembly begins with a consideration of society's problems and then moves immediately to consider the nature of progress. Embedding our consideration of problem in a conversation about progress reflects its own kind of hope. I wonder if society's attention to progress might wax and wane with the state of the world. To this end, I turned to *The New York Times* for insight. Figure 5 captures the results of a bibliometric analysis that captures the percentage of articles published each year that mention the word "progress." Using the ProQuest Historical Newspaper database, I analyzed the years between 1890 and 2008. A polynomial trend line shows us that conversations about progress bottomed out around the Great Depression, World War II, and the Korean War. This might have been a particularly hopeless time for *The New York Times'* readers. Figure 6 suggests that this may be so. This same bibliometric analysis, focused this time on the world "hope," shows us that mentions of hope bottomed out in this time period too. Indeed, the correlation between the percentage of annual articles that mention the word "progress" and "hope" is .49. Hope embodies progress.

Insert Figures 5 and 6 about Here

Students of progress and hope might be pleased to see the upward trend lines in both of these two figures. Those positive slopes may reflect a kind of optimism about our future. They might also reflect a longing for optimism, however. Absent further study, we do not know if a great percentage of articles reflect a hunger for hope or its presence. Still the fact of the swings themselves tells us that we may live in times of hope and hopelessness. How are we to live when hope about the human condition fails us, when hope gives way to hopelessness? And what is the scholar's role in such a world of hope and hopelessness?

Keeping hope alive

The scholar is crucial to keeping hope alive. Perhaps Whitehead (1929/1967: 93) saw our role most clearly when he observed, "The justification for a university is that it preserves the

connection between knowledge and the zest for life, by uniting the young and the old in the imaginative consideration of learning." Foreshadowing March's (2003) retirement address, he went on to say, "The learned and imaginative life is a way of living and not an article of commerce" (p. 97). At our best, scholars live a life expressed by the logic of appropriateness. We exercise the freedoms that define the first pillar of progress -- we imaginatively pursue knowledge and share this calling with others, especially the young. If we live our lives with integrity, we can become something of a role model for freedom.

And just as we are doing here in this assembly, our job is to identify the problems that bedevil us. Having done so, we then help others develop their talents and encourage them to try to solve them. By cultivating our students' imaginations and talents and at the same time, reminding them of their responsibilities to the vulnerable and weak, we work to safeguard humanity's future. In this way, we help to build the second pillar of progress. With this role in society, it is no surprise to see that we are one of just three professions that by custom, don robes (we join the clergy and justices in this practice).[11] If scholars are so important to society and its hopes, then how do we keep our own hopes alive?

Keeping our hope alive

It turns out that this is a timely question. Walsh (2011) chronicled the contemporary forces at play in the Academy, forces that leave many research scholars oriented toward producing research scholarship in much the same way that a factory worker, laboring under a piece-rate control system, might produce widgets.[12] Turning to look at teaching, Edmondson (2013) worries that vocational pressure, pressure on students and faculty alike, works to undermine contemporary education. Sadly, we sometimes hear colleagues say, "I pretend to teach and my students pretend to learn." And looking at even deeper currents in our world, Rorty (1999:263) offered a bracing observation about life in the Academy at the century's end:

> *Whereas intellectuals of the nineteenth century undertook to replace metaphysical comfort with historical hope, intellectuals at the end of this century, feeling let down by history, are experiencing self-indulgent, pathetic hopelessness.*

If these observers are even half correct, we are in trouble. What to do?

---

[11] I am certainly not arguing that we alone (or that we and members of the clergy and the judiciary alone) work to safeguard humanity's future. Humankind safeguards its future. Still, I believe that society grants us a sacred trust. Our work matters.

[12] Research scholars increasingly work under – or work in spite of -- control systems that offer high-powered incentives for publication in well-regarded international journals (Franzoni, Scellato, and Stephan, 2011).

One way forward is to work on projects that directly inform progress. If the freedom to be who we are is a pillar of progress, then we can contemplate and investigate the factors and forces that inhibit such freedom (at any level of analysis). As a business school professor, I might be inclined to look at the attenuation of freedom in the workplace and so, investigate discrimination (Desai, Chugh, and Brief, 2014), toxic work environments (Frost, 2007), or corruption (Svennson, 2005). If I wanted to look at other-serving behavior, I might be inclined to investigate organizational citizenship behavior (Chiaburu, Oh, Berry, Li, and Gardner, 2011), corporate social responsibility (Porter and Kramer, 2006), benefit corporations (Reiser, 2011), or social entrepreneurship (Santos, 2012). And if hope itself embodies progress, then I might even investigate the nature of hope in organizational life (Branzei, 2012; Carlson, Hagen, and Mortensen, 2012; Ludema, Wilmot, and Srivastava, 1997). Whether or not the research scholar is mired in a funk of pathetic hopelessness, such work would contribute to the world and maybe even lift that scholar's spirits.

Teaching is more complicated. The teacher's spirits always matter. Parker (2007: 10) knows this better than most, "Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher." While our research projects may help to lift our spirits, life in the classroom is more difficult. Enter the room feeling hopeless and you will likely leave feeling even more hopeless. Again, Parker (2007: 2-3) identifies the heart of the problem:

> *Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the conditions of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions in my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in the mirror and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge – and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject.*

Like it or not, our interior lives are always on display. Mix Whitehead's high aspirations with Rorty's somber reflections and we are left with an unsettling question, Do we want our children, filled with their zest for life, to encounter teachers who are mired in a state of self-indulgent, pathetic hopelessness? While we may warm to the thought that we scholars can help to keep humanity's hopes alive, we may shiver at the thought that our inner lives are always on display and matter so much.

Faith

Each of us is faced with the challenge of finding hope in a world that offers plenty of cause for hopelessness. Without hope, we risk falling into a state of despair and depression, unable to live with vitality and resilience. We would then be no one's role model. Some appear to be born with an optimistic orientation to life (Scheier and Carver, 1992), but many struggle to sustain it (Seligman, 2006).[13] The phrase "Keep the faith" comes to mind. It may very well be that faith is hope's companion. Religious writings often connect faith and hope. For example, we read in the Bible that "faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1). What is the wellspring of such confidence and assurance? That is a question for each of us to ponder.

Perhaps the "metaphysical comfort" that Rorty tells us was rejected by so many intellectuals in the 19th century still holds promise. After all, there is some evidence to suggest that those who heartily believe in God are more optimistic and hopeful than those who do not (Sethi and Seligman, 1993). While there are scholars in our midst who do believe, and say so out loud (cf., Sandelands, 2003, 2014, 2015), most probably do not. A 2013 Harris poll tells us that there is a negative relationship between education level and a belief in God. Just 37 percent of those with a postgraduate education believe; 48, 55 and 60 percent of those with a college degree, some college, and a high school education or less, respectively, believe.[14] Clarke (2003:165), an expert in treating depression, observed that "most so-called 'intellectuals' cringe at the words 'faith' and hope.'" Still, we are free to select our role models. Nicoli (2002), for example, chronicled the lives of two intellectual giants, C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud, and their very different attachments to God. In his popular seminar, Professor Nicoli has asked a generation of Harvard students to examine their lives for clues about how we may best live. Of course, we are free to embrace or reject the many extant notions of God. We can certainly fashion our own ideas. As we go forward, we might learn from the choices others make.

David Foster Wallace comes to mind. He was the brilliant and much lauded writer who struggled with such questions. Clinically depressed, he took his life three years after offering his best counsel to the next generation. Speaking to the importance of the metaphysical at Kenyon

---

[13] While hope and optimism may be close cousins, Carlson et al. (2012) pointed out their differences. Hope may embody more a sense of openness to unknown possibilities in unarticulated worlds, while optimism may be rooted in an expectation that those possibilities are within reach. As such, scholars, those dispositionally inclined to challenge ideas, their assumptions, boundary conditions, unintended consequences and the like, may live more comfortably in a world of hope while entrepreneurs and innovators, those who imagine a better world and lead organizations to create it may dwell more in the world of optimism.

[14] http://www.harrisinteractive.com/vault/Harris%20Poll%2097%20-%20Beliefs_12.16.2013.pdf

College, he spoke of taking a leap to faith.[15] Likely with a very clear eye on his own struggles, he asked us to examine what he called our default settings. He suggests that a turn to God or the metaphysical would serve us well. I will quote him at length here. Perhaps his words will offer some hope for the hopeless.

> *You get to decide what to worship. … In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship--be it JC or Allah, be it YHWH or the Wiccan Mother Goddess, or the Four Noble Truths, or some inviolable set of ethical principles--is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough. It's the truth. Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you. On one level, we all know this stuff already. It's been codified as myths, proverbs, clichés, epigrams, parables; the skeleton of every great story. The whole trick is keeping the truth up front in daily consciousness.*
>
> *Worship power, you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. But the insidious thing about these forms of worship is not that they're evil or sinful, it's that they're unconscious. They are default settings.*
>
> *They're the kind of worship you just gradually slip into, day after day, getting more and more selective about what you see and how you measure value without ever being fully aware that that's what you're doing.*

Progress is defined by our freedom to be and by our responsibility to care for the vulnerable. David Foster Wallace begged us to pay attention. His life and death reminds us that we are all vulnerable. As people who are called to do so much to inspire and ensure progress, we scholars have been granted manifest freedoms and deep responsibilities. Still, life is complicated. Perpetually pursue those freedoms and we may ignore the vulnerable; tend to the vulnerable with all our being and we may lose that being. We cannot forget to take care of ourselves … and each other. In the end, two questions orient so much of who we are and what we do. One, what are our hopes for humanity? And two, what are our pillars of faith? The answers matter. They matter to us as individuals. They matter to our students, those who count on us to be our best and to do our best. And if I am right to think that scholars do much to embody and ensure progress, they matter to the world.

---

[15]His 2005 Kenyon College commencement address is recognized as one of the best ever. Those accolades are summarized in a Kenyon College alumni bulletin: http://bulletin.kenyon.edu/x4276.xml The address itself is available here: http://moreintelligentlife.com/story/david-foster-wallace-in-his-own-words

References

Boo, K. 2012. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*. Random House: New York, NY.

Branzei, O. 2012. Social change agency under adversity: How relational processes (re)produce hope in hopeless settings. In K. Golden-Biddle and Jane E. Dutton (Eds.), *Using a Positive Lens to Explore Social Change in Organizations*, (pp.21-47). Routledge: New York, NY.

Carlson, A., Hagen, A.L., Mortensen, T.F. 2012. Imagining hope in organizations: From individual goal-attainment to horizons of relational possibility. In K.S. Cameron and G.M. Spreitzer (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship*, (pp. 288-303). Oxford University Press: New York, NY.

Chiaburu, D.S., Oh, I-S., Berry, C.M., Li, N., Gardner, R.G. 2011. The five-factor model of personality traits and organizational citizenship behaviors: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96: 1140-1166.

Clarke, D. 2003. Faith and hope. *Australasian Psychiatry*, 11: 164-168.

Corballis, M. C. 2011. *The Recursive Mind: The Origins of Human Language, Thought, and Civilization*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ.

Desai, S.D., Chugh, D., Brief, A.P. 2014. Marriage structure and resistance to the gender revolution in the workplace. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 59 (2): 330-365.

Edmondson, M. 2013. *Why Teach? In Defense of a Real Education*. Bloomsbury: New York, NY.

Flynn, J.R. 2012. *Are We Getting Smarter? Rising IQ in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.

Franzoni, C., Scellato, G., Stephan, P. 2011. Changing incentives to publish. *Science*, 333: 702-703.

Frost, P.J. 2007. *Toxic Emotions and Work and What You can Do About Them*. Harvard Business Press: Boston, MA.

Goldstein, D.M. 2003. *Laughter Out of Place: Race, Class, Violence, and Sexuality in a Rio Shantytown*. University of California Press: Berkeley, CA.

Ludema, J.D., Wilmot, T.B., Srivastava, S. 1997. Organizational hope: Reaffirming the constructive task of social and organizational inquiry. *Human Relations*, 50: 1015-1052.

March, J.G. 2003. A scholar's quest. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 12: 205-207.

Nicoli, A.M. 2002. *The Question of God: C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud Debate God, Love, Sex, and the Meaning of Life*. Free Press: New York, NY.

Parker, P.J. 2007. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA.

Pinker, S. 2011. *The Better Nature of Our Angels: Why Violence Has Declined*. Penguin Group: New York, NY.

Porter M.E., Kramer M.R. 2006. Strategy & society: The link between competitive advantage and corporate social responsibility. *Harvard Business Review* 84: 78–92.

Reiser, D.B. 2011. Benefit corporations: A sustainable form of organization? *Wake Forest Law Review*, 46: 591-625.

Rorty, R. 1999. *Philosophy and Social Hope*. Penguin Books: London, England.

Sandelands, L.E.2003. The argument for God from organization studies. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 12: 168-177.

Sandelands, L.E. 2014. *Being at Work.* University Press of America: Lanham, MD.

Sandelands, L.E. 2015. On taking people seriously: An apology, to my students especially. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 126: 603-611.

Santos, F.M. 2012. A positive theory of social entrepreneurship. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 111: 335–351.

Scheier, M.F., Carver, C.S. 1992. Effects of optimism on psychological and physical well-being: Theoretical overview and empirical update. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, *16*: 201–228.

Seligman, M.E.P. 2006. *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*. Vintage Books: New York, NY.

Sen, A. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. Anchor Books: New York, NY.

Sethi, S., Seligman, M.S. 1993.Optimism and fundamentalism. *Psychological Science*, 4: 256-259.

Sheehan, G. 1978. *Running and Being*. Rodale: New York, NY.

Svennson, J. 2005. Eight questions about corruption. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 19: 19-42.

Volkers, M. 2011. *The Fourth World: Real People. Real Slums. Real Stories.* Prairie Grass Productions: Sioux Center, IA. http://www.fourthworldfilm.com/

Walsh, J.P. 2011. Embracing the sacred in our secular scholarly world. *Academy of Management Review*, 36: 215–234.

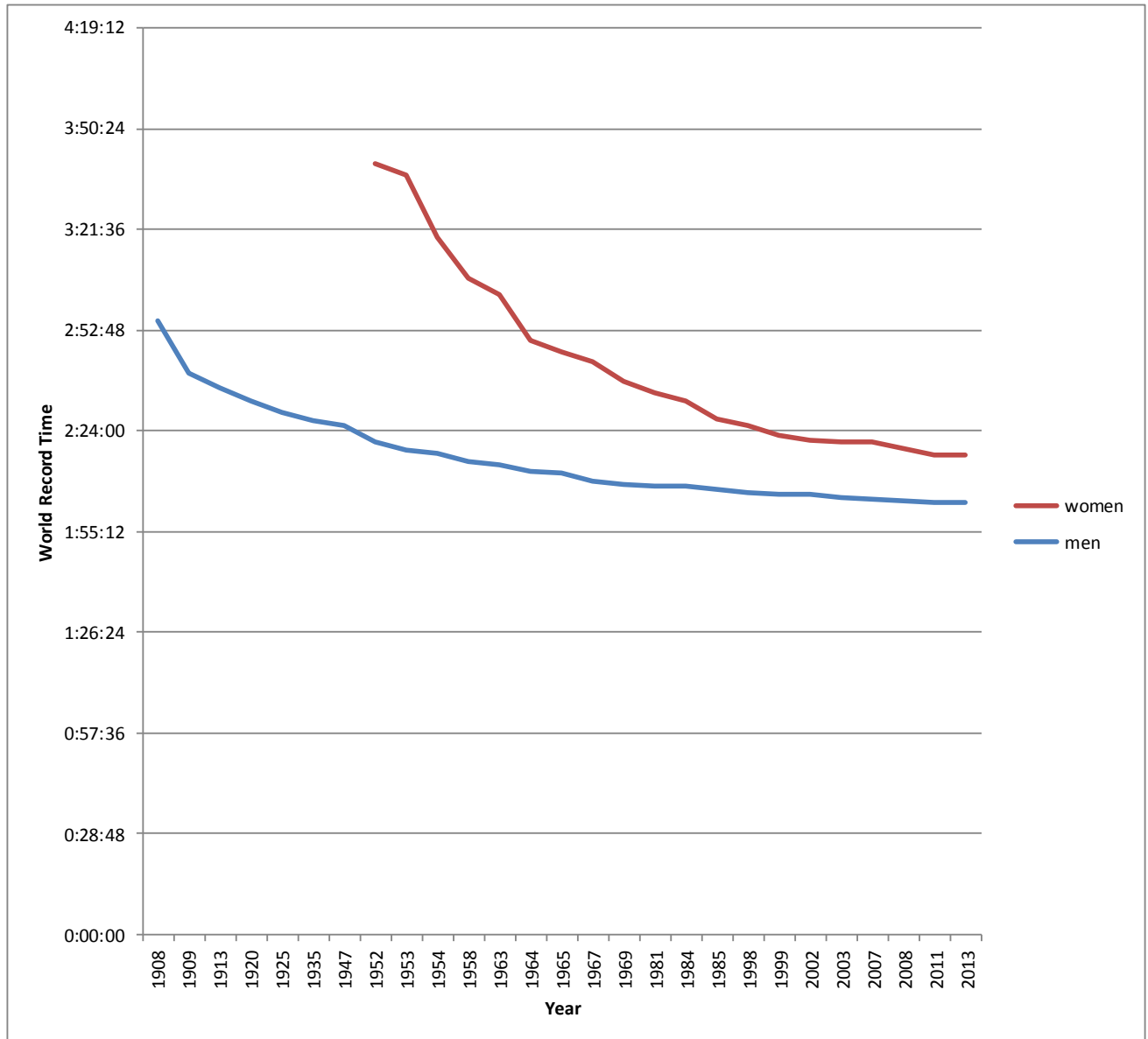Whitehead, A.N. 1929/1967. *The Aims of Education and Other Essays*. The Free Press. New York, NY.

Figure 1

World Record Marathon Times

Figure 2

The Ten Fastest and Slowest Countries
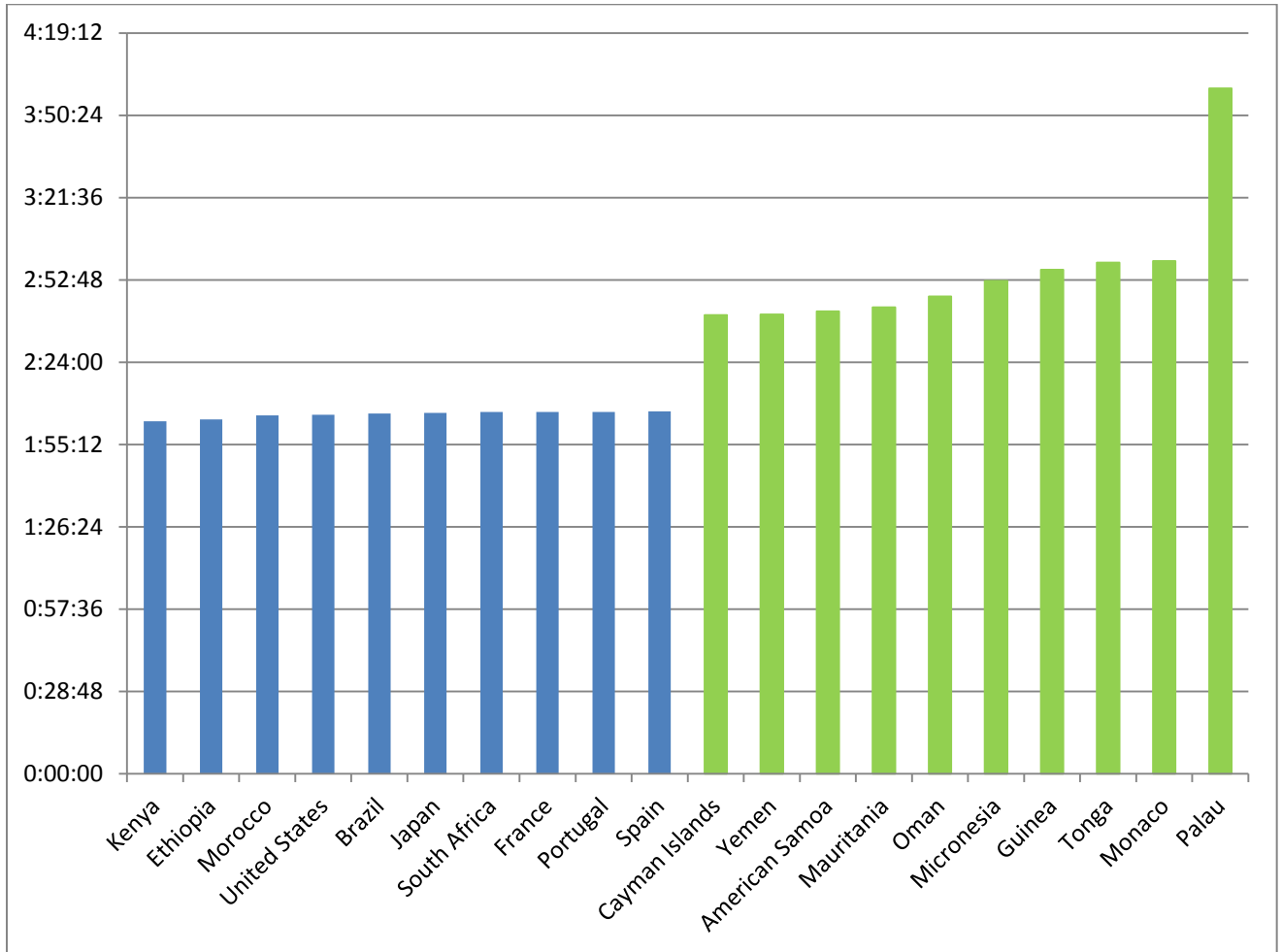
Figure 3

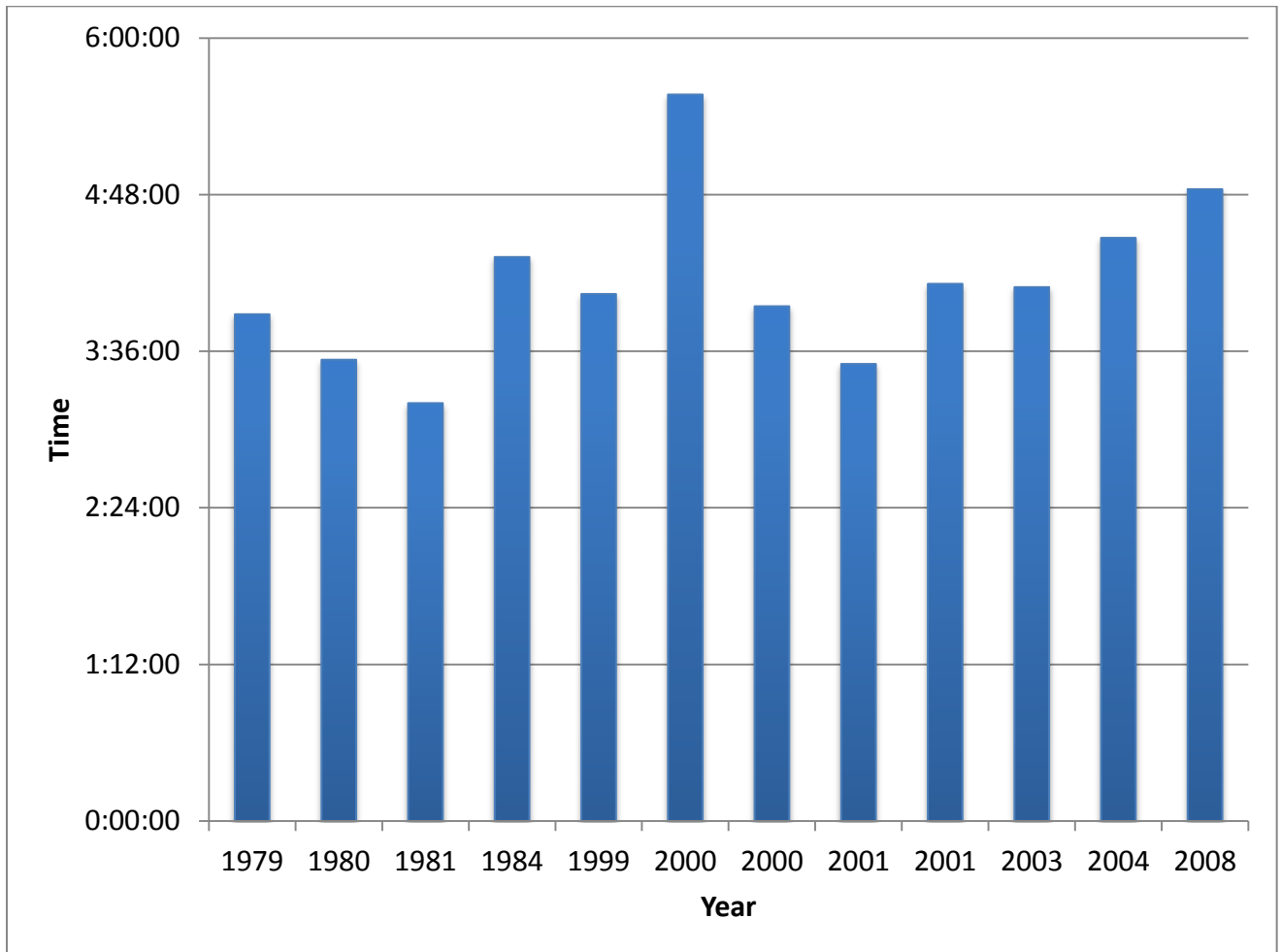**My Marathon Experiences**

Figure 4

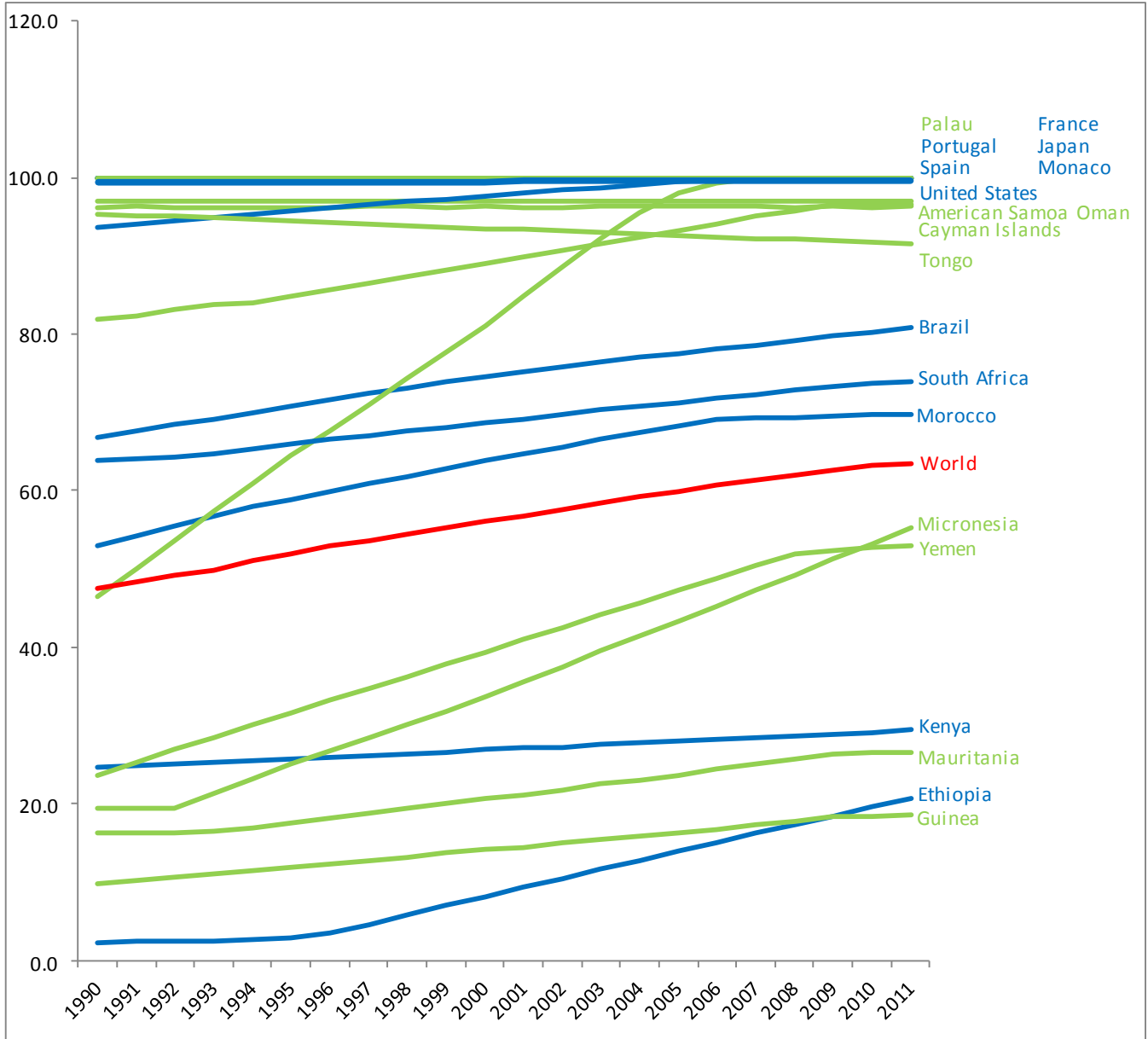**Improved Access to Sanitation: 1990-2011**

Figure 5

Percentage of Articles in *The New York Times* that Mention the Word "Progress"
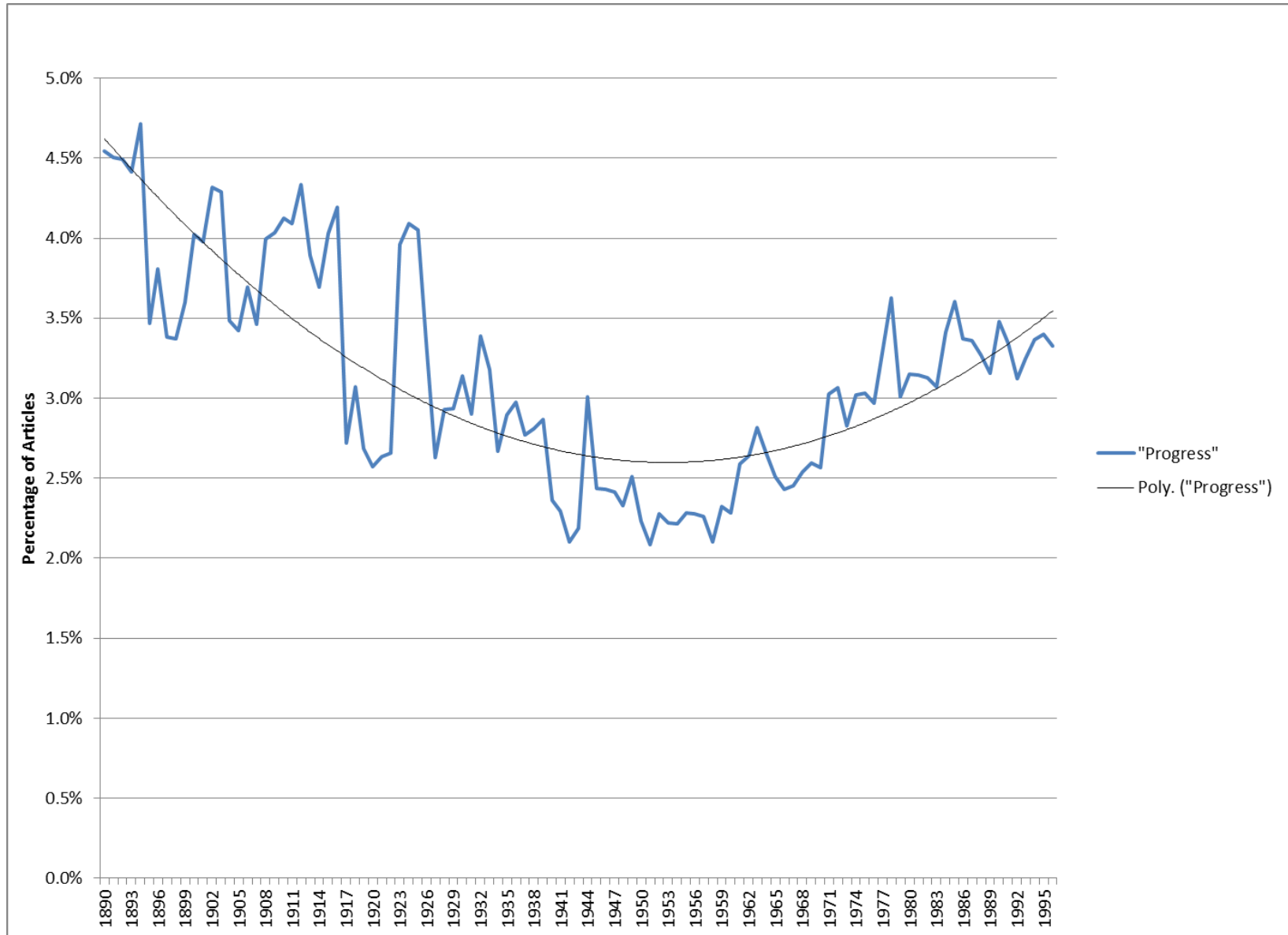
Figure 6

Percentage of Articles in *The New York Times* that Mention the Word "Hope"