

What's Up With the Weather?

Fact, Fiction, and Metaphor in the Public Understanding of Climate and Weather Extremes

Stories Matter: framing climate change in terms of extreme weather events reinforces rather than challenges norms that potentially conflict with long-term goals for both mitigation and adaptation.

- How do popular discourses represent extreme weather in the context of climate change?
- What narratives are reproduced or excluded by framing climate change in terms of extreme weather?



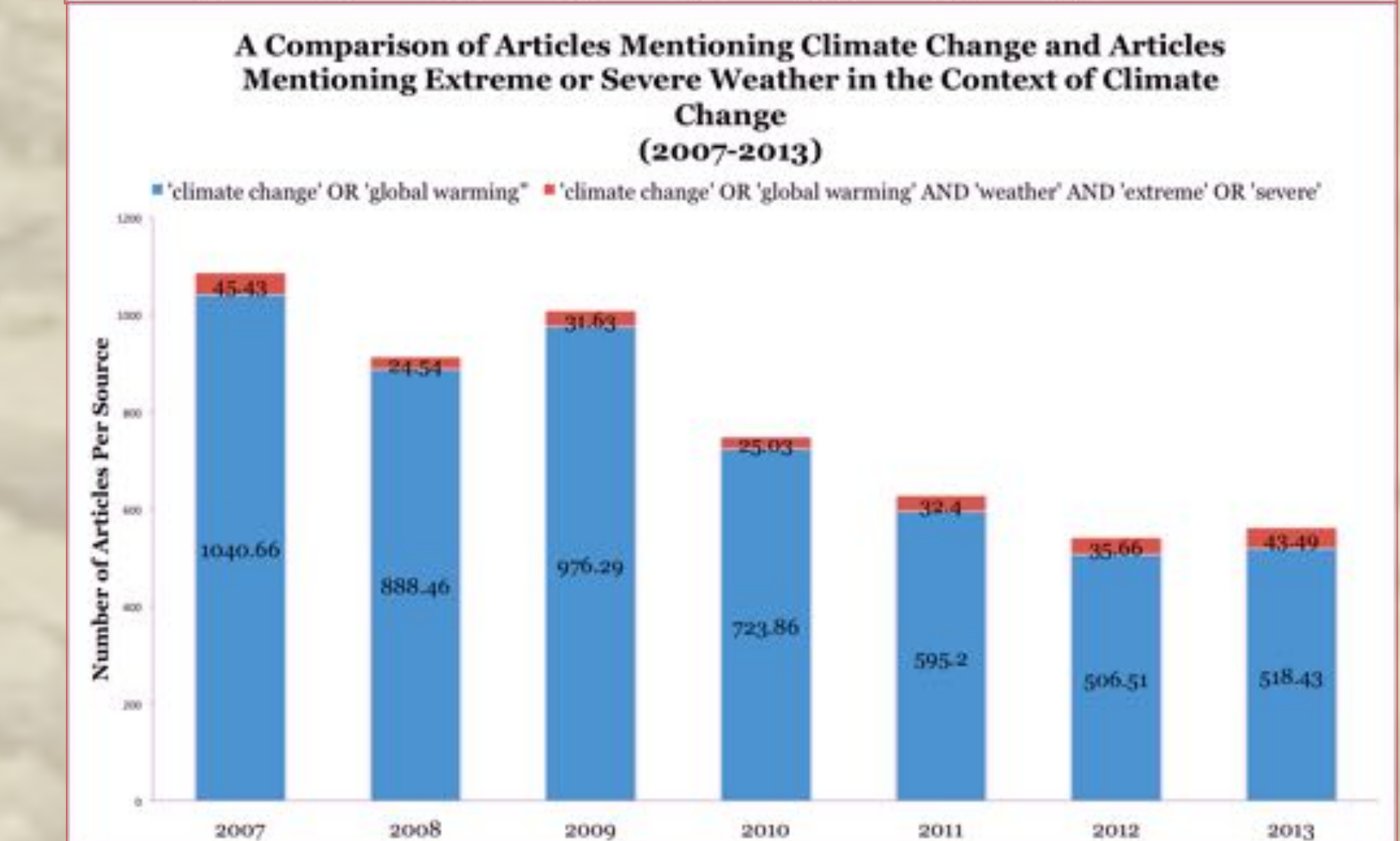
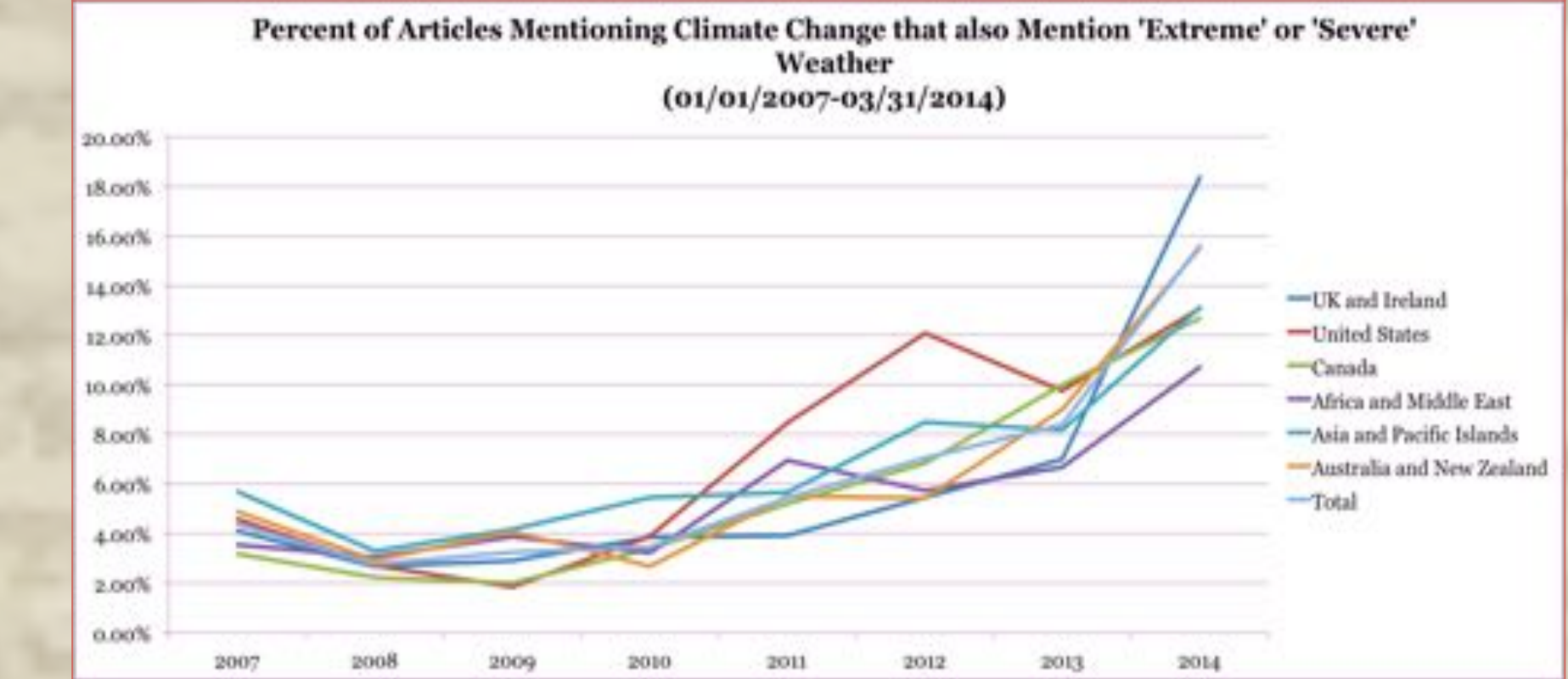
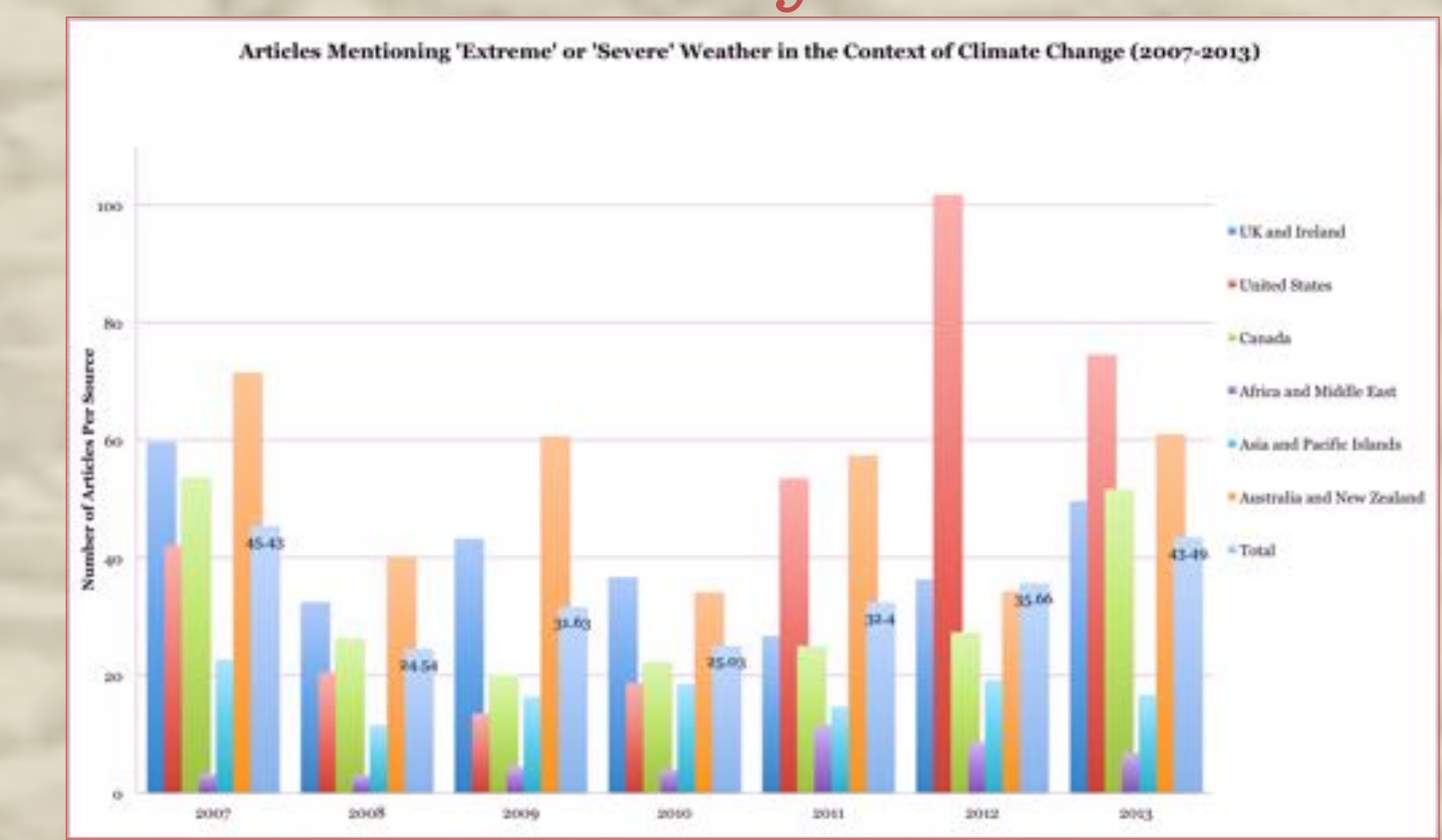
Interdisciplinary Methodologies:

Content Analysis
Searched 35 different newspapers in 17 countries boolean string “climate change” OR “global warming” and the boolean string “climate change” OR “global warming” AND “weather” AND “extreme” OR “severe”

Typhoon Haiyan Case Study
Three sets of discursive texts: Images released just after the typhoon struck, Philippines UNFCCC delegate Naderev Saño’s speech at the 19th Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen and two online op-ed pieces.

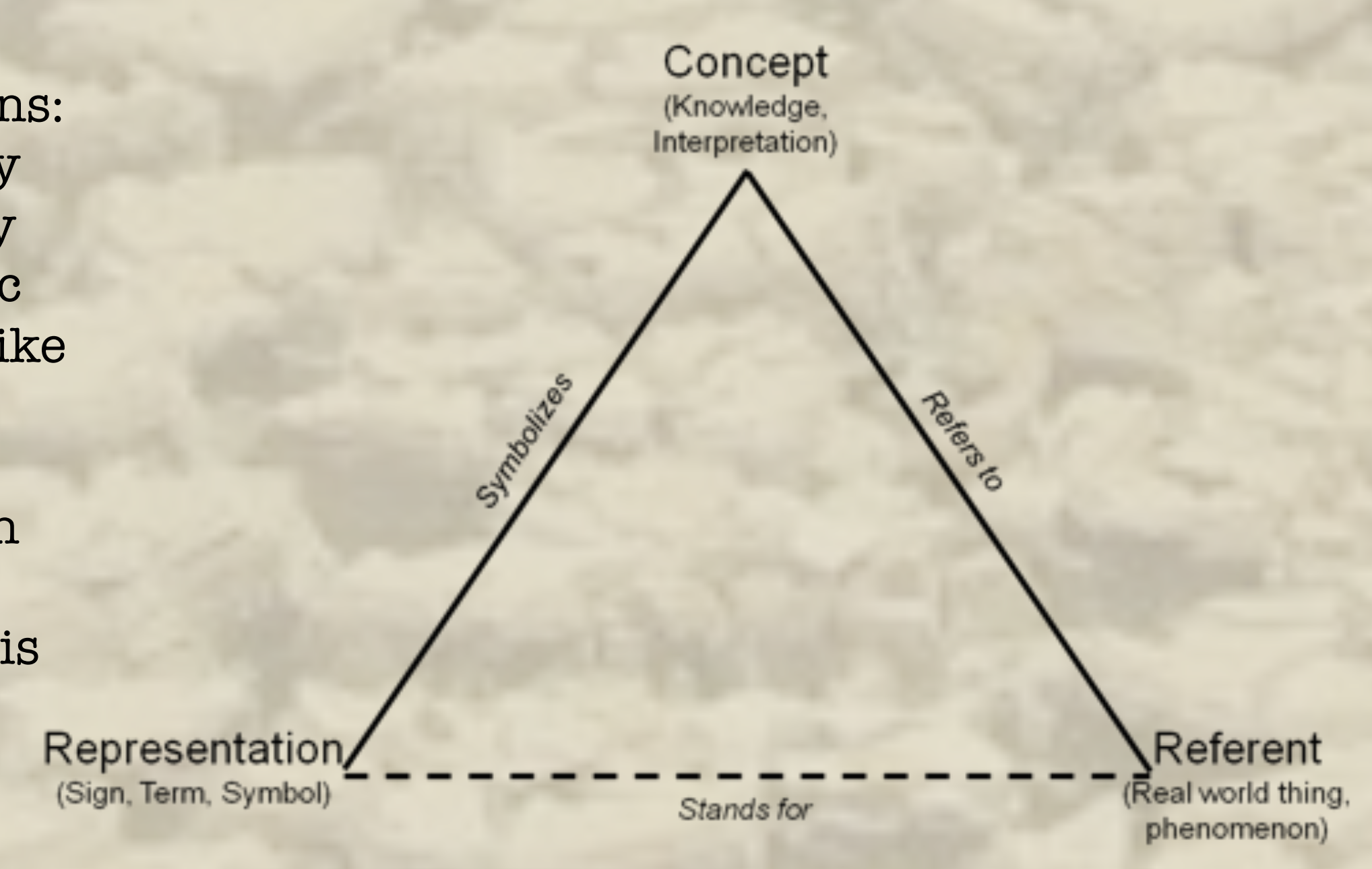
Literary Analysis
Analyzed themes and character development in *Odds Against Tomorrow*, a recent novel by Nathaniel Rich

Content Analysis Results



While there is significant regional variation in the number of articles relating climate change to extreme or severe conditions, the increase in percent of articles discussing climate change in the context of extreme or severe conditions, compared to the total articles mentioning climate change across all newspapers analyzed

Reading the Signs: My methodology was informed by Pierce’s semiotic framework. Unlike Saussure’s two-part sign, it is triadic and often presented in triangles like this one.



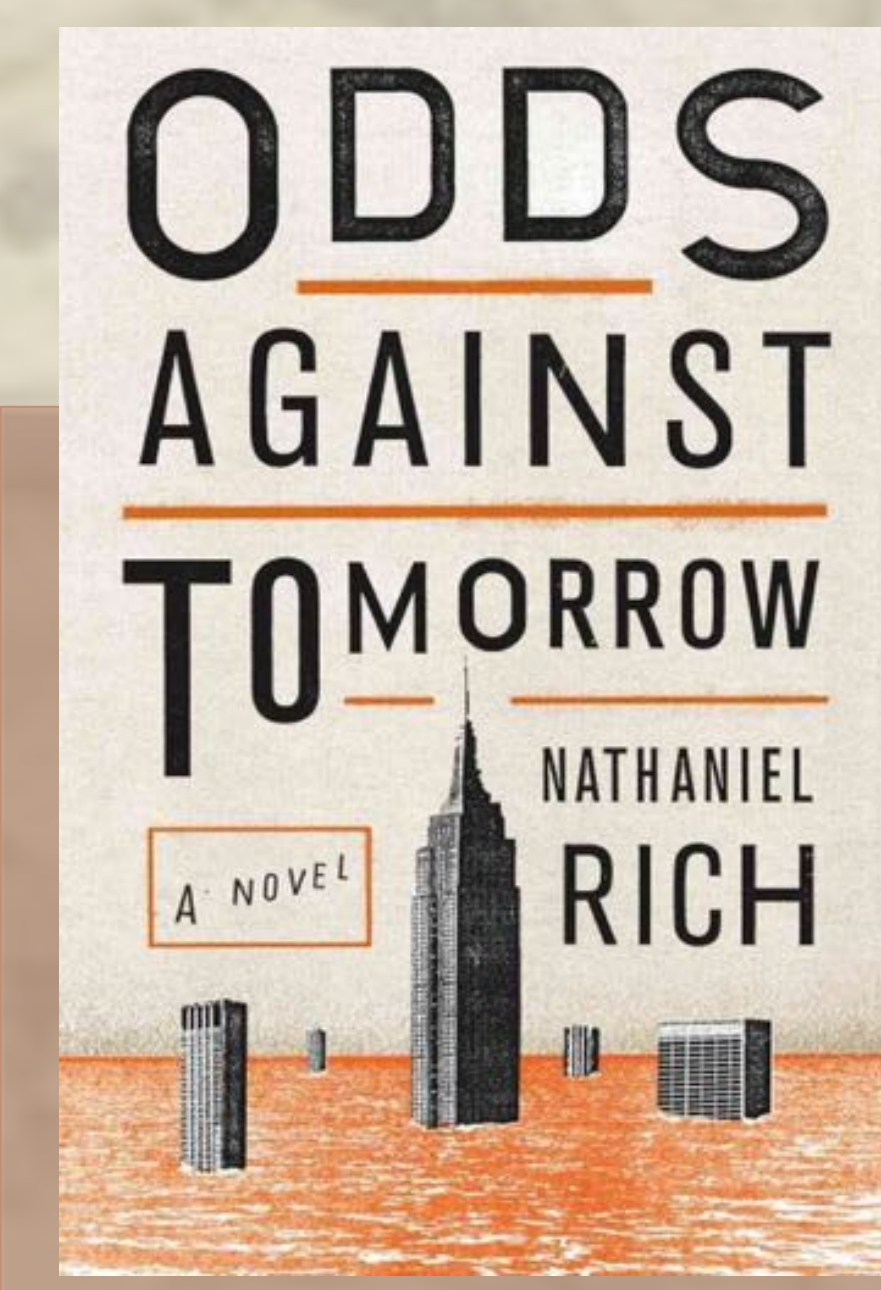
The Pathos of Risk: Typhoon Haiyan as Climate Catastrophe



“I dare you to get off your ivory tower and away from the comfort of you armchair. I dare you to go to the islands of the Pacific . . .”¹

“A lot of people are dead in the Philippines today. A lot more have lost everything . . . So for them, and for future victims, let’s forget the politics. Let’s just be sensible.”²

“First, there is the moral evil of . . . producing global warming. Second, however, is the moral evil of . . . those who would continue to deny, in the face of mounting evidence, that violent climate change is upon us and it is accelerating.”³



Imagining the End: Denial and Apocalypse in 'Cli-Fi' Literature

Fictional narratives like cli-fi novels and films may hold more sway than scientific information. For many individuals stories, more so than facts, "have the power to transfix their audience with horror, to command attention and shock people out of a position of comfortable apathy, in a way that strict adherence to the data cannot even if the long-term implications of that data are terrifying enough in themselves.”⁴

¹In Tearful, Amazing Speech, Philippines Climate Delegate Announces Hunger Strike, 2013. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S6RXGGFBdlo&feature=youtu.be_gdata_player.
²Saño, Naderev. "Typhoon Haiyan: We Cannot Afford to Procrastinate on Climate Action." *The Guardian*, November 11, 2013, sec. Environment. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/11/typhoon-haiyan-philippines-climate-change>.
³Thistlethwaite, Susan Brooks. "Super Typhoon Haiyan: Suffering and the Sin of Climate Change Denial." *OnFaith*. Accessed April 30, 2014. <http://www.faithstreet.com/onfaith/2013/11/12/super-typhoon-haiyan-suffering-and-the-sin-of-climate-change-denial/30026>.
⁴Whitefield, Paul. "Lesson of Typhoon Haiyan: Tackle Climate Change, or It Will Tackle Us." *Los Angeles Times*, November 12, 2013. <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/nov/12/news/la-li-typhoon-haiyan-climate-change-20131112#axzz2kccD87bY>.