



Disasters: Society's Shadow

How our distance from ourselves
collectively creates tragic events

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Cari G. Bourette, PsyD
The MoodCompass Project
<http://moodcompass.com>

Note: the examples in this presentation focus on U.S. society. However, the ideas should apply to any society on any scale.



COLLECTIVE MOOD AND BEHAVIOR

Collective (or Social) Mood

- Society's mood, desires, and values can be collectively measured by observing what people are most interested in.
- Some ways of doing this are looking at the daily Google Hot Trends or trends in Twitter.
- Examples of themes found are sports, famous people, scandals, and disasters

Collective (or Social) Context

- Events happen within and to a society that may or may not reflect what the people of the society overtly care about. We call these events “News.”
- The society is often responsible for the structure or context that generates the News.
- News events that involve “Nature” or the world outside of a society are often, but not always, attributable to the society’s previous attitudes and behavior.

News Events as Shadow

- Carl Jung called the parts of ourselves that we can't see and don't own as ourselves, "Shadow."
- Shadow can be seen indirectly when someone or something that is "not me" is extremely irritating or extremely admired.
- When a person becomes extremely distant from that part of themselves, a *split* occurs, and the Shadow will manifest through the person's own behavior, others in their lives, and even in the events that occur in their lives from "outside."

News Events as Shadow (cont'd)

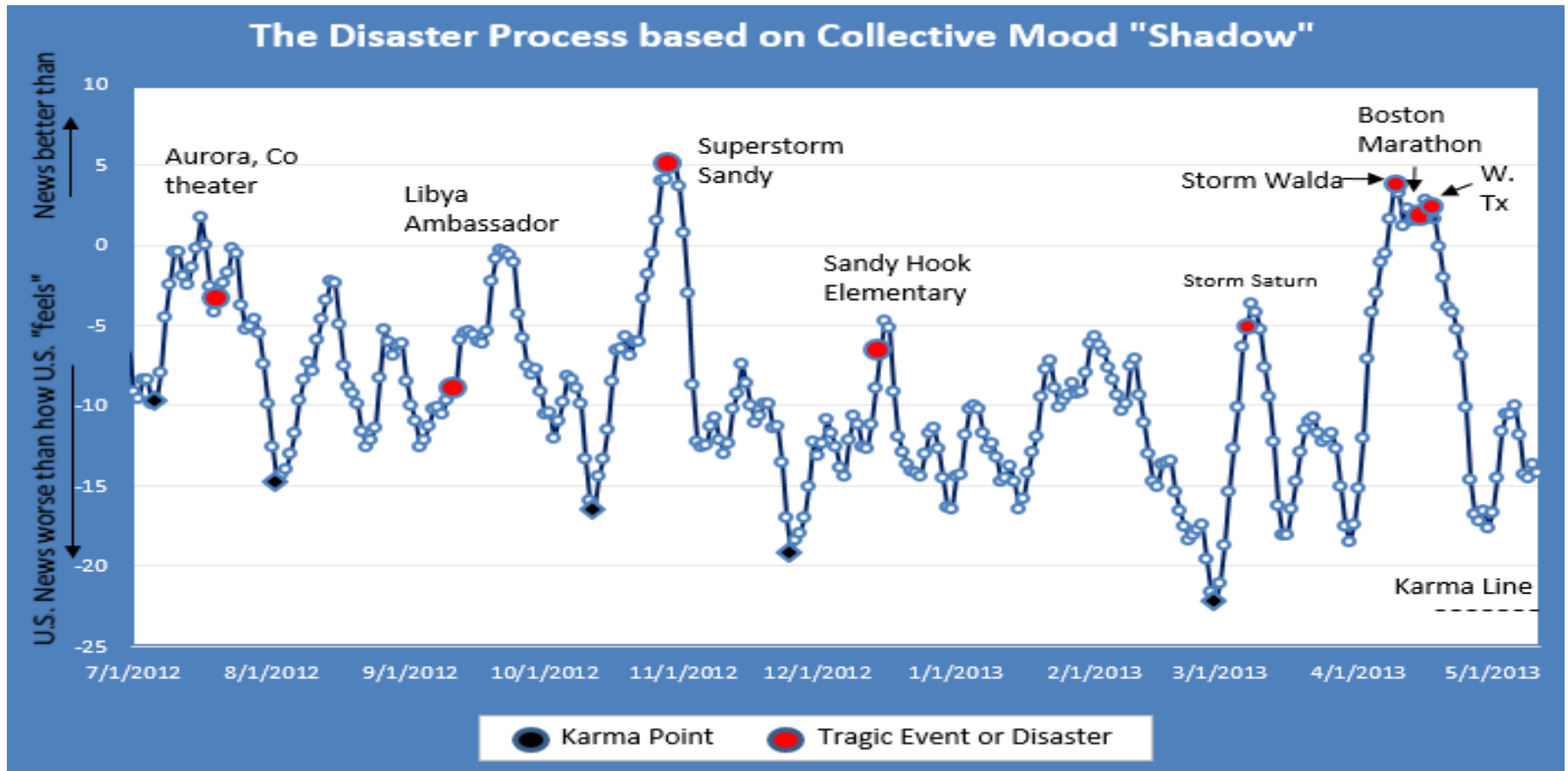
- At times, news events reflect the mood, desires, and values of a society.
- Often, news events reflect issues or circumstances that people don't identify as like them, their values, or desires. These events are seen as things that *should not be happening*. News becomes society's Shadow.

News Events as Shadow (cont'd)



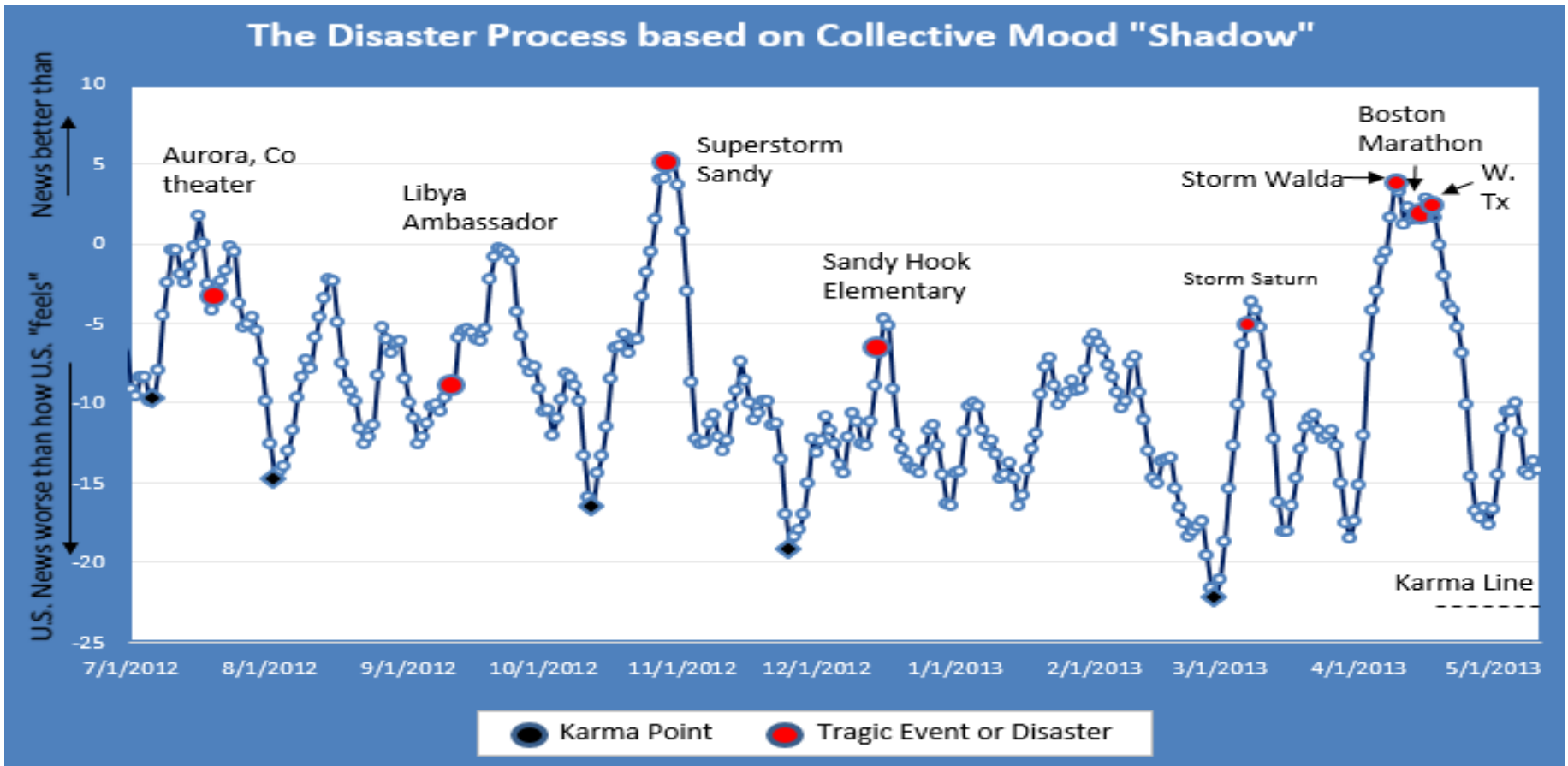
- Periodically, the divergence between society's mood and the news becomes extreme and a split occurs.

Disaster Process Overview



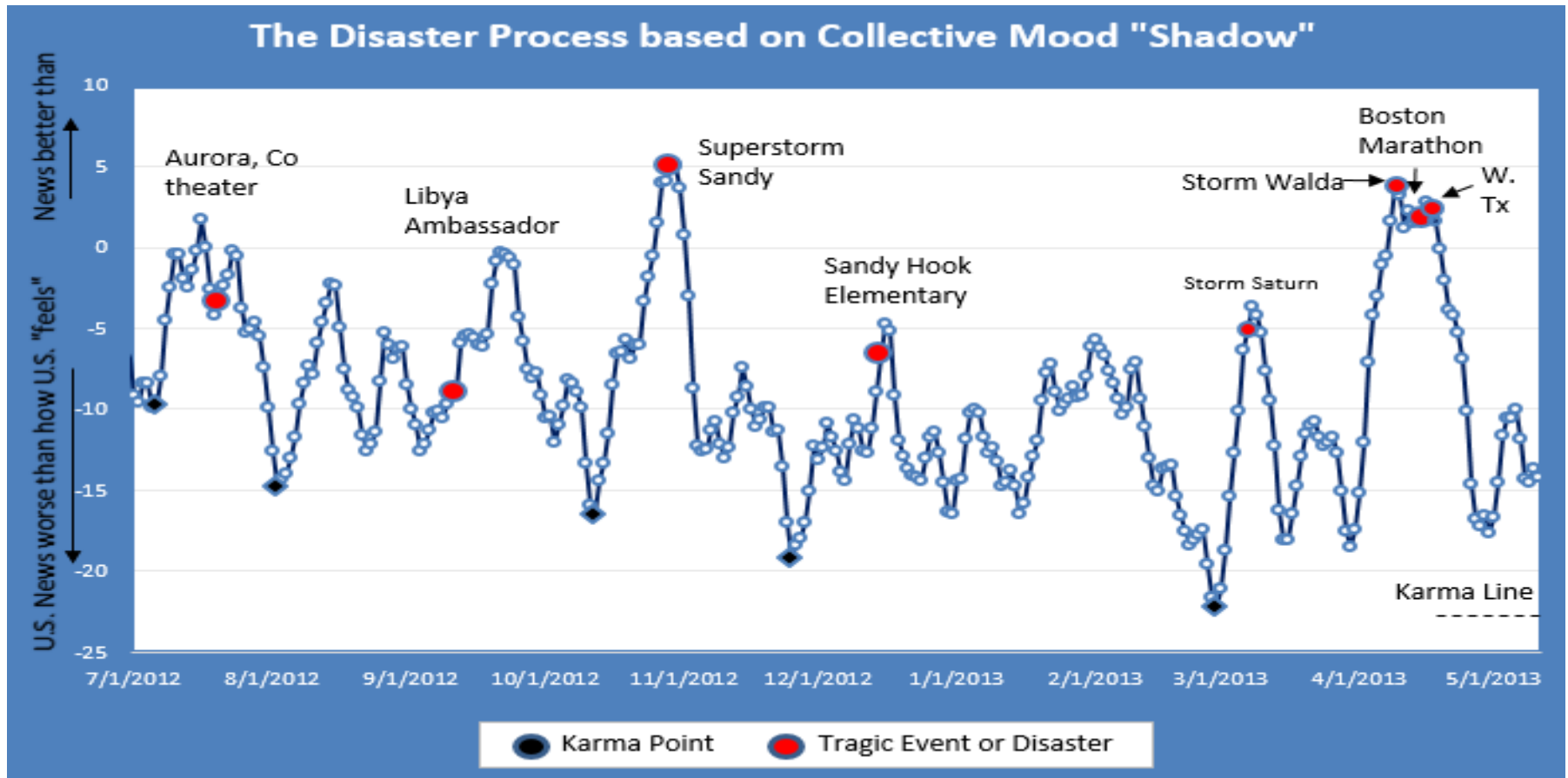
The black dots in the above graph show the point at which the split has occurred in each of the events in the current series of disaster-type events. This is where the news becomes "other" or "not us." We are referring to this as the *karma point*.

Disaster Process Overview (cont'd)



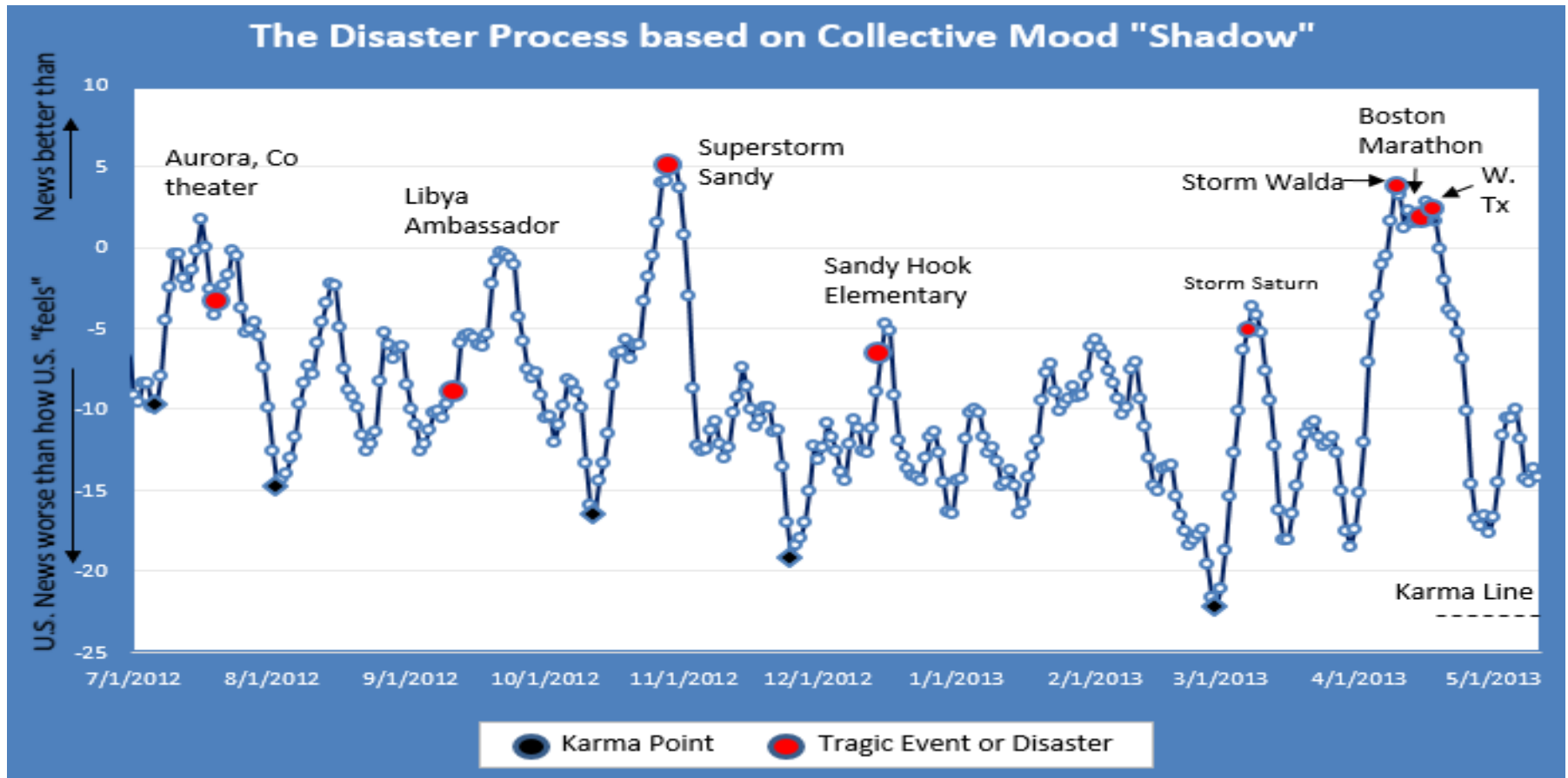
After the karma point, a rebalancing process begins and the mood of U.S. society and the mood reflected in U.S. news are re-unified. Near the climax of this rejoining, a disaster-type event occurs, shown by the red dots.

Disaster Process Overview (cont'd)



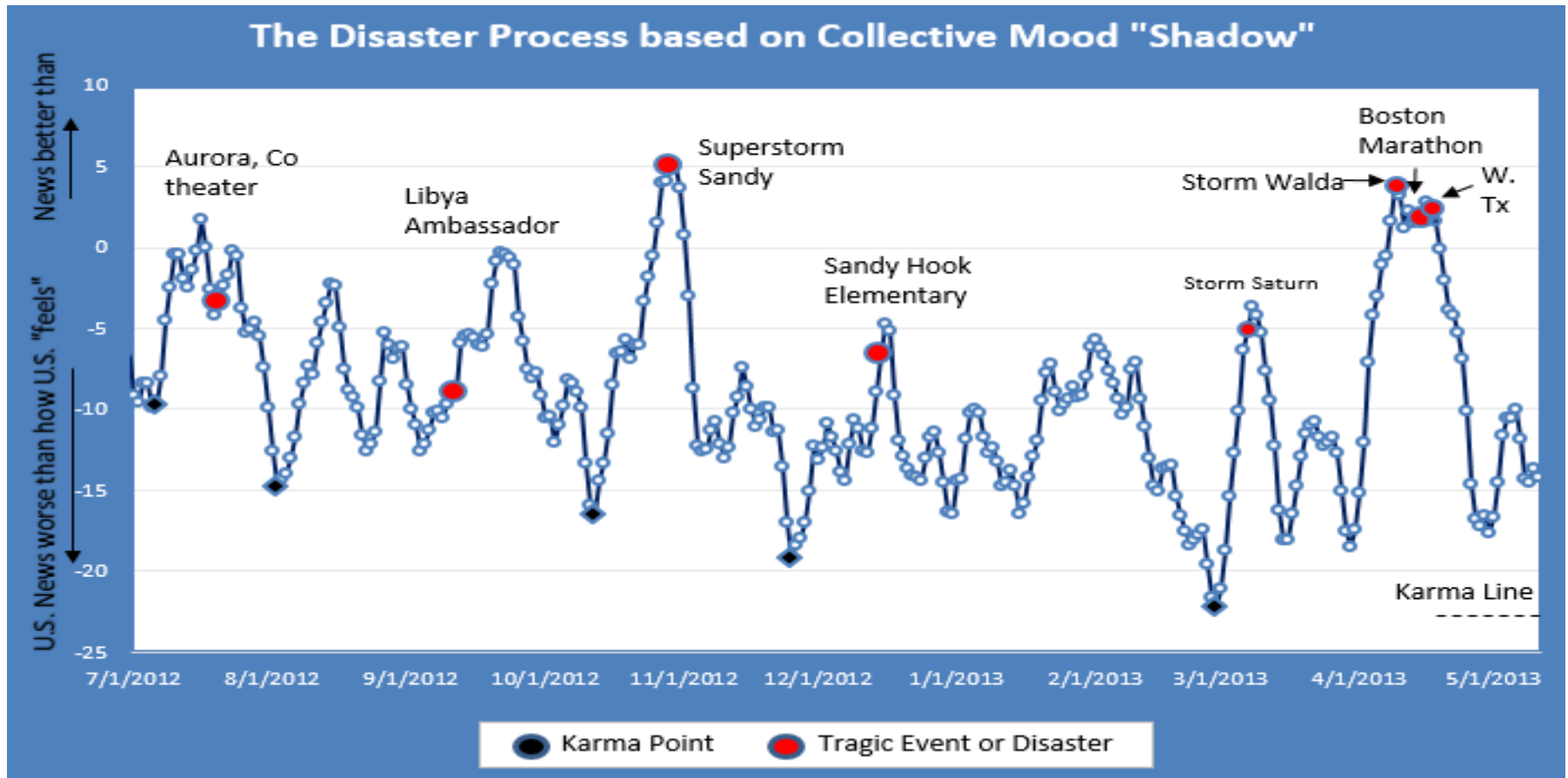
Notice that each karma point is lower, or more severe of a split than the previous one. Should a new split occur that would initiate the process towards the next major U.S. disaster, it would likely need to cross the Karma Line.

Disaster Process Overview (cont'd)



Occasionally, an event occurs, such as Winter Storm Saturn in March 2013 which was significant, but not a national disaster.

Disaster Process Overview (cont'd)



The rejoining process took another month and climaxed in the Boston Marathon event. Notice that two other significant events, Winter Storm Walda and the Fertilizer plant explosion in West Texas also occurred around this climax.

A blurry, high-contrast image of a person's silhouette against a bright light source, creating a strong shadow effect. The person is positioned on the right side of the frame, with their head and shoulders visible. The background is a bright, hazy light, possibly a window or a bright outdoor setting, which causes the person to appear as a dark shadow. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

HOW THE COLLECTIVE SHADOW MANIFESTS TRAGEDY

Three Step Process

- A three step process has been observed in each of the major tragic events that occurred in the United States during 2012-2013.



Three Step Process

The background features three large, colorful blocks stacked in a 1-2-3 arrangement. The top block is yellow with the number '1' in the center. The bottom-left block is green with the number '2' in the center. The bottom-right block is red with the number '3' in the center. The blocks are slightly blurred and have a soft shadow beneath them.

- These events were: July – Aurora, CO theater shooting, Sept – Libya ambassador shooting, Oct – Superstorm Sandy, Dec – Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, and April 2013 – Boston Marathon bombing.

Step One – Maximum Divergence




- 17 – 49 days before each tragic event, Social Mood and the News reached maximum divergence. The News became as opposite as possible of where the people in society saw themselves as being or wanting to be.

Step One – Maximum Divergence

- The News, the players in the news, and the events occurring, all became “*other*.”

Step Two – Naming the Shadow



- For approximately two to four weeks after the “othering” occurs, there will be a spike in the news of what “we” have had too much of. This may be evident thematically, or it may be specifically named.
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Step Two – Naming the Shadow



- A recent example, after weeks of talk of “The Sequester,” pundits and commentators started talking about “Sequestering the Sequester” or “Sequester the Hype.” This reflected an othering of themes related to U.S. politics, government, economics, jobs, and the sequester situation.

Step Two – Opposing the Shadow

- At the same time the Shadow is being named in the news, collective mood shows people exaggerating opposite themes in how they feel and what they value.
- For example, in distancing from discussions of budgets, government and politics, people focused more on fantasy, video games, and entertainment.

Step Three – Focus Shift

- 3 – 23 days before a tragic event occurs, there is a measurable shift in both themes in the news, and themes in collective mood. However, the difference between the two is actually less pronounced than at step one.
- The themes beginning to show up in the news reflects the tragic event about to occur.

Step Three – The Shadow “Acts”

- Either a person not entirely part of society (e.g. criminal, mentally ill, terrorist) or something not part of society (e.g. natural event) does something tragic to “us.”
- After this occurs, the divergence is eliminated. The tragic event brings a unity of focus in both the news and in social mood.

CAN TRAGEDY BE PREVENTED?

Preventing Societal Tragedy

- Societal tragedy, as unpleasant as it is, currently is part of a stabilizing process when “we” stray too far in our focus from the circumstances that society is creating and finding itself in.
- Earlier societies used group prayer and ritual to minimize Shadow-type tragic events. Living in a large, fragmented society makes this difficult.
- Greater awareness of our collective attitudes and actions may help us correct our course earlier.
- More research and action is needed in this area.