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Conceptual Framework

Understanding Radicalization Narratives: An AI-Assisted Mind Genomics Framework

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Abstract

Acts of political violence often generate intense public attention, particularly when the motivations of the perpetrator remain unclear. In such situations, news narratives frequently become the primary lens through which the public attempts to interpret complex events. This study presents a conceptual framework that integrates artificial intelligence–assisted narrative analysis with Mind Genomics thinking to examine how audiences interpret narratives related to radicalization. Using a widely reported news account of the July 2024 assassination attempt on former U.S. President Donald Trump as a narrative stimulus, the study demonstrates how complex news stories can be decomposed into structured informational elements representing online environments, ideological alignment, social connection, autonomy, and emotional states. These elements are organized within a conceptual experimental design consistent with Mind Genomics methodology, enabling the construction of vignette-based simulations that illustrate how different combinations of narrative components may influence interpretation. The framework proposes three illustrative interpretive mindsets—The Radical, The Explorer, and The Outsider—to demonstrate how readers may cognitively segment when encountering narratives of political violence and radicalization. Although the present work represents a conceptual simulation rather than an empirical experiment, it outlines a methodological approach through which researchers, educators, and students may systematically analyze complex news narratives. By combining AI-assisted narrative decomposition with Mind Genomics experimental thinking, the study offers a structured approach for examining how individuals interpret contemporary news events and for promoting more reflective and critical engagement with media narratives.

Keywords: *Mind genomics, Radicalization, Artificial intelligence, Narrative analysis, Media interpretation, Conceptual simulation*

Introduction

Acts of political violence often generate intense public attention and extensive media coverage. When such events occur, journalists, policymakers, and researchers attempt to understand the motivations behind the perpetrator's actions. However, in many cases, the motivations remain uncertain even after extensive investigation. In such situations, public interpretation of the event becomes heavily influenced by the narratives circulating in media and social discourse.

Radicalization has long been recognized as a complex process involving multiple psychological and social factors. Research suggests that ideological extremism typically emerges through interactions among identity processes, perceived grievances, and social influence rather than from a single causal factor [1]. Individuals may adopt increasingly extreme beliefs when they perceive threats to identity, belonging, or social status.

Identity-based uncertainty and social categorization processes can also contribute to ideological extremism. When individuals experience uncertainty about their social identity or group membership, they may be more likely to adopt strongly defined ideological positions in order to achieve clarity and belonging [2]. These psychological dynamics illustrate how ideological narratives can influence cognitive interpretation.

Scholars have also emphasized the role of perceived injustice and social context in shaping radicalization processes. Reviews of the social-science literature highlight that grievances, identity threats, and group dynamics often interact in the development of extremist beliefs [3]. Psychological analyses further indicate that emotional narratives and cognitive framing can influence how individuals interpret political conflict and violence [4].

In recent years, digital communication environments have added an additional dimension to radicalization research. Online networks may facilitate ideological reinforcement and allow individuals to connect with communities sharing similar beliefs or grievances [5]. Social media platforms can accelerate these processes by enabling rapid dissemination of emotionally charged narratives and by connecting geographically dispersed individuals [6].

Understanding how audiences interpret such narratives remains a major challenge. Traditional research approaches often focus on isolated psychological or sociological variables. However, real-world narratives typically combine multiple interacting influences including political rhetoric, emotional reactions, and social context.

Mind Genomics offers a methodological framework capable of addressing this complexity. Mind Genomics investigates how

individuals interpret combinations of ideas embedded within short narrative descriptions known as vignettes [7]. Instead of analyzing isolated variables, the approach explores how people respond to patterns of information presented simultaneously.

Recent studies have extended Mind Genomics into the investigation of complex social issues including radicalization and public attitudes toward political conflict [8]. These studies demonstrate how experimental vignette designs can reveal distinct cognitive segments within populations.

To illustrate how such a framework may be developed, this study draws on a widely reported news account describing the attempted assassination of U.S. President Donald Trump during a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, in July 2024 [9]. Despite an extensive federal investigation lasting several months, the motivations of the shooter remain unclear [10].

This absence of a clear motive creates a particularly interesting analytical situation. When events occur without a definitive explanation, news narratives become the primary source through which the public attempts to interpret what happened. Different readers may interpret the same story in very different ways depending on their beliefs, experiences, and cognitive orientation.

The present study therefore uses the structure of this news narrative not to analyze the actions or motivations of any individual, but to demonstrate how artificial intelligence–assisted narrative analysis combined with Mind Genomics thinking can provide a framework for understanding how audiences interpret complex news stories.

Materials and Methods

Conceptual Study Design

The present study represents a conceptual simulation rather than an empirical experiment. A publicly reported news narrative describing an attempted political assassination was used as a narrative stimulus to illustrate how complex real-world events can be translated into structured analytical frameworks.

Artificial intelligence tools were used in an exploratory manner to assist in identifying recurring themes within the narrative. These themes included ideological rhetoric, social media influence, emotional responses, and perceptions of identity or belonging. AI tools were used only as supportive instruments for narrative decomposition rather than as autonomous analytical systems.

The resulting narrative components were translated into conceptual experimental elements consistent with the principles of Mind Genomics experimental design.

In this sense, the study can be viewed as a conceptual demonstration of how artificial intelligence and Mind Genomics thinking can be combined to help readers and students interpret news stories more systematically. AI tools can assist in identifying key narrative themes within complex reports, while Mind Genomics provides an experimental framework for examining how combinations of narrative elements influence interpretation.

Rather than attempting to determine factual causes of the event itself, the framework focuses on how different informational elements within the narrative may influence how readers understand and interpret the story.

Mind Genomics Methodology

Mind Genomics is an experimental methodology designed to examine how individuals interpret combinations of ideas embedded within narrative scenarios [7]. The method draws on principles of conjoint analysis and experimental design to explore cognitive responses to multi-element messages.

In a typical Mind Genomics study, respondents evaluate a series of short vignettes composed of multiple informational elements. Each vignette represents a unique combination of elements drawn from different thematic categories. Participants rate these vignettes using a defined scale, allowing researchers to determine how different combinations of ideas influence perception and judgment.

The methodology has been widely applied in areas including consumer research, communication studies, and social perception [11]. More recently, the approach has been applied to examine how individuals think about complex social issues such as radicalization [8].

Experimental Design Framework

Based on the narrative stimulus, five conceptual categories were identified:

A. Online environment

B. Social connection

C. Ideological alignment

D. Autonomy

E. Emotional state

Each category contains four conceptual elements. This structure allows a large number of possible narrative combinations.

Total possible vignette combinations:

$4^5 = 1{,}024$ conceptual scenarios

In a typical empirical Mind Genomics study, respondents would evaluate approximately 25–30 vignettes generated through a balanced experimental design.

Results

Conceptual Mindset Segmentation

Radicalization narratives often evoke different interpretations depending on the cognitive orientation of the reader. Within the Mind Genomics framework, audiences can be conceptually segmented into distinct interpretive mindsets. These segments represent patterns of thinking rather than demographic categories.

To illustrate these differences, three conceptual interpretive mindsets were developed: The Radical, The Explorer, and The

Outsider. Each mindset reflects a different orientation toward ideological narratives, social media influence, and perceptions of social belonging.

In the present conceptual framework, these mindsets are not derived from empirical respondent data but are introduced as illustrative cognitive segments. In a full empirical Mind Genomics study, statistical modeling would identify such segments from respondent-level responses to experimental vignettes. Here they serve to illustrate how readers may interpret the same narrative through different psychological orientations.

The comparison of these mindsets across several emerging issues related to radicalization and online discourse is summarized in Table 1.

Understanding radicalization narratives also requires identifying the central questions guiding analytical inquiry. Researchers frequently examine how online environments, ideological narratives, and emotional responses interact to influence interpretation.

The key analytical questions guiding the present conceptual framework are summarized in Table 2.

The experimental structure underlying the Mind Genomics simulation is based on vignette construction using combinations of narrative elements. Each vignette represents a unique combination of elements drawn from the five conceptual categories described earlier.

The conceptual vignette structure used in this framework is summarized in Table 3.

Discussion

The framework presented in this study demonstrates how AI-assisted narrative analysis combined with Mind Genomics thinking can transform complex news narratives into structured analytical models. Research suggests that radicalization often emerges through interactions among identity processes, perceived grievances, and social influence [12]. Psychological analyses further highlight the role of emotional narratives and ideological framing in shaping extremist cognition [13].

Digital communication environments may amplify these dynamics by enabling rapid dissemination of ideological narratives and connecting individuals with communities that reinforce particular beliefs [5,6]. Mind Genomics provides a complementary perspective by examining how individuals interpret combinations of ideas rather than isolated variables. By systematically varying narrative elements, researchers can explore how audiences interpret complex events and identify patterns of cognitive segmentation.

The framework proposed in this study treats the news event referenced in the narrative solely as an illustrative example used to demonstrate how such an analytical structure may be constructed. The objective is not to determine the motivations or psychological characteristics of any specific individual involved in the incident, but

Table 1: Conceptual comparison of three interpretive mindsets (Radical, Explorer, Outsider) across emerging issues related to radicalization and online discourse.

Issue	Mind-Set 1: The Radical	Mind-Set 2: The Explorer	Mind-Set 3: The Outsider
1. Social media regulation	The Radical opposes regulation, seeing it as an attack on free speech.	The Explorer is open to regulation, but wants to ensure it does not stifle online discussion.	The Outsider is indifferent to regulation, seeing it as a reflection of mainstream values.
2. Online extremism	The Radical sees online extremism as a necessary response to perceived injustices.	The Explorer is concerned about online extremism, but wants to understand its root causes.	The Outsider is drawn to online extremism, seeing it as a way to express their frustration and anger.
3. Hate speech laws	The Radical opposes hate speech laws, seeing them as an attack on free speech.	The Explorer is open to hate speech laws, but wants to ensure they are balanced with the need for online discussion.	The Outsider is indifferent to hate speech laws, seeing them as a reflection of mainstream values.
4. Radicalization prevention	The Radical sees radicalization prevention as a form of social control.	The Explorer is open to radicalization prevention, but wants to ensure it is based on nuanced and multifaceted approaches.	The Outsider is skeptical of radicalization prevention, seeing it as a way to manipulate and control individuals.
5. Mental health support	The Radical sees mental health support as a form of weakness.	The Explorer is open to mental health support, but wants to ensure it is tailored to individual needs.	The Outsider is indifferent to mental health support, seeing it as a reflection of mainstream values.
6. Community engagement	The Radical sees community engagement as a threat to their ideology.	The Explorer is open to community engagement, but wants to ensure it is based on mutual respect and understanding.	The Outsider is skeptical of community engagement, seeing it as a way to manipulate and control individuals.
7. Social media monitoring	The Radical opposes social media monitoring, seeing it as an attack on privacy.	The Explorer is open to social media monitoring, but wants to ensure it is balanced with the need for online freedom.	The Outsider is indifferent to social media monitoring, seeing it as a reflection of mainstream values.
8. Counter-narratives	The Radical sees counter-narratives as a form of propaganda.	The Explorer is open to counter-narratives, but wants to ensure they are based on nuanced and multifaceted approaches.	The Outsider is skeptical of counter-narratives, seeing them as a way to manipulate and control individuals.

Table 2: Key analytical questions used to structure the conceptual framework for examining radicalization narratives and media interpretation.

Question	Importance 1	Importance 2	Importance 3
What role do social media platforms play in radicalization?	Understanding the mechanisms of online radicalization	Identifying potential vulnerabilities in social media platforms	Informing strategies for counter-narratives and online extremism prevention
How can we balance online freedom with the need for regulation?	Ensuring that regulation does not stifle online discussion	Protecting individuals from online extremism and hate speech	Informing strategies for social media monitoring and counter-narratives
What are the root causes of radicalization, and how can we address them?	Understanding the psychological and social factors that contribute to radicalization	Informing strategies for radicalization prevention and intervention	Identifying potential vulnerabilities in individuals and communities
How can we develop effective counter-narratives to extremist ideologies?	Understanding the mechanisms of online influence and persuasion	Informing strategies for counter-narratives and online extremism prevention	Identifying potential vulnerabilities in extremist ideologies

Table 3: Conceptual vignette elements illustrating the Mind Genomics experimental design used to construct narrative combinations.

Code	Element
QUESTION A	What role do social media platforms play in radicalization?
A1	Social media platforms provide a conduit for extremist ideologies to spread.
A2	Social media platforms can also be used to promote counter-narratives and prevent radicalization.
A3	Social media platforms have a responsibility to regulate online content and prevent extremism.
A4	Social media platforms are merely a reflection of societal values and norms.
QUESTION B	How can we balance online freedom with the need for regulation?
B1	Regulation should prioritize online safety and security over freedom of expression.
B2	Regulation should prioritize freedom of expression over online safety and security.
B3	Regulation should strike a balance between online safety and freedom of expression.
B4	Regulation is not necessary, as online communities can self-regulate.
QUESTION C	What are the root causes of radicalization, and how can we address them?
C1	Radicalization is often the result of psychological and social factors, such as mental health issues and social isolation.
C2	Radicalization is often the result of ideological and theological factors, such as extremist ideologies and charismatic leaders.
C3	Radicalization is often the result of a combination of psychological, social, ideological, and theological factors.
C4	Radicalization is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that cannot be reduced to a single cause or factor.
QUESTION D	How can we develop effective counter-narratives to extremist ideologies?
D1	Counter-narratives should prioritize empathy and understanding over confrontation and critique.
D2	Counter-narratives should prioritize confrontation and critique over empathy and understanding.
D3	Counter-narratives should strike a balance between empathy and confrontation, and critique and understanding.
D4	Counter-narratives are not necessary, as extremist ideologies will ultimately collapse under their own weight.

rather to show how complex news narratives can be decomposed into informational elements that allow systematic exploration of audience interpretation.

Beyond its relevance for research on radicalization, the integration of artificial intelligence–assisted narrative analysis with Mind Genomics thinking may also offer important educational value. Students and readers are frequently exposed to complex news stories involving political violence, social conflict, or ideological tensions. Without structured analytical tools, such narratives may be interpreted primarily through emotional reactions, media framing, or pre-existing political beliefs.

By decomposing news narratives into identifiable informational elements and examining how different combinations of these elements influence interpretation, the combined use of AI and Mind Genomics thinking offers a systematic approach for understanding how readers make sense of complex public events. Such an approach may help students develop more reflective and structured ways of engaging with contemporary news stories, thereby promoting critical thinking, media literacy, and a deeper awareness of how narratives shape public perception.

Conclusion

This study presents a conceptual framework demonstrating how artificial intelligence–assisted narrative analysis can be integrated with Mind Genomics thinking to examine how audiences interpret complex news narratives related to radicalization and political violence. Using a widely reported news account as a conceptual stimulus, the paper illustrates how complex media narratives can be decomposed into structured informational elements and organized into a conceptual experimental design consistent with Mind Genomics methodology. The framework highlights how combinations of narrative elements—such as online environments, ideological alignment, social connection, autonomy, and emotional states—may influence the ways in which individuals interpret events associated with radicalization.

Although the present work represents a conceptual simulation rather than an empirical study, it outlines a methodological pathway for future research. Empirical Mind Genomics experiments could apply this framework to measure how different narrative components influence audience interpretation and to identify distinct cognitive segments among readers exposed to narratives of political conflict and extremism. Such investigations could contribute to a deeper understanding of how individuals process complex and emotionally charged news stories.

More broadly, the integration of AI-assisted narrative decomposition with Mind Genomics thinking offers a structured analytical approach for studying contemporary news discourse. Beyond research applications, the framework may also have educational value by helping students and readers develop more systematic and reflective ways of interpreting complex media narratives. By transforming unstructured news stories into analyzable informational components, the approach may contribute to improved critical thinking, media literacy, and a deeper understanding of how narratives shape public perceptions of radicalization and political violence.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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