

Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh, Éire
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The Efficacy of Conspiracy Interventions

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Agenda

- Common approaches to combatting conspiracy theories
- Review alternative approaches

Current tactics

- Fact-checking
- Censorship
- Debunking

Red Queen Effect

"Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do just to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast!"

- Red Queen from *Through the Looking Glass*



Burcu Durmuşoğlu
Büşranur Akgül
Bige Özcan

Our Research Questions:

RQ1. What are the existing interventions that have tried to change conspiracy beliefs?

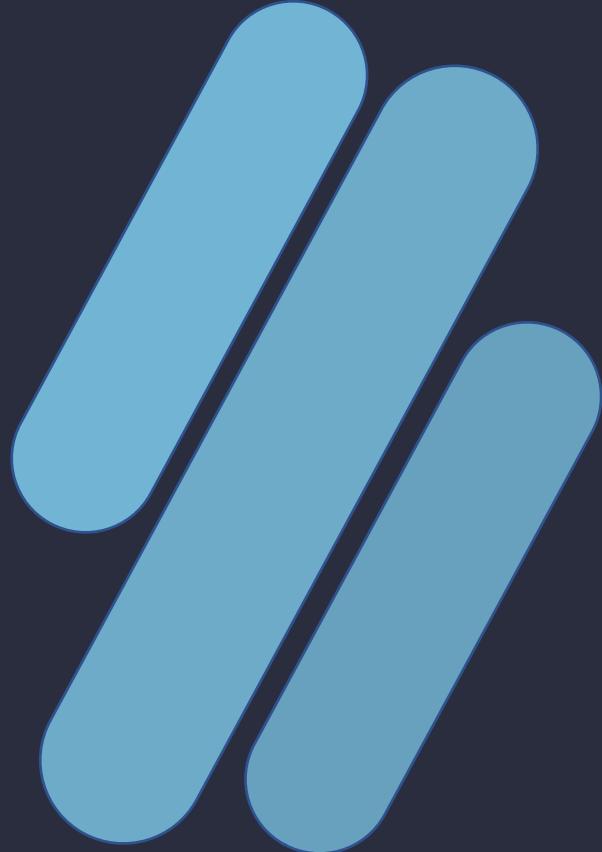
RQ2. How effective are these interventions in changing conspiracy beliefs?

(O'Mahony, Brassil, Murphy, Linehan, *in review*)



Methods

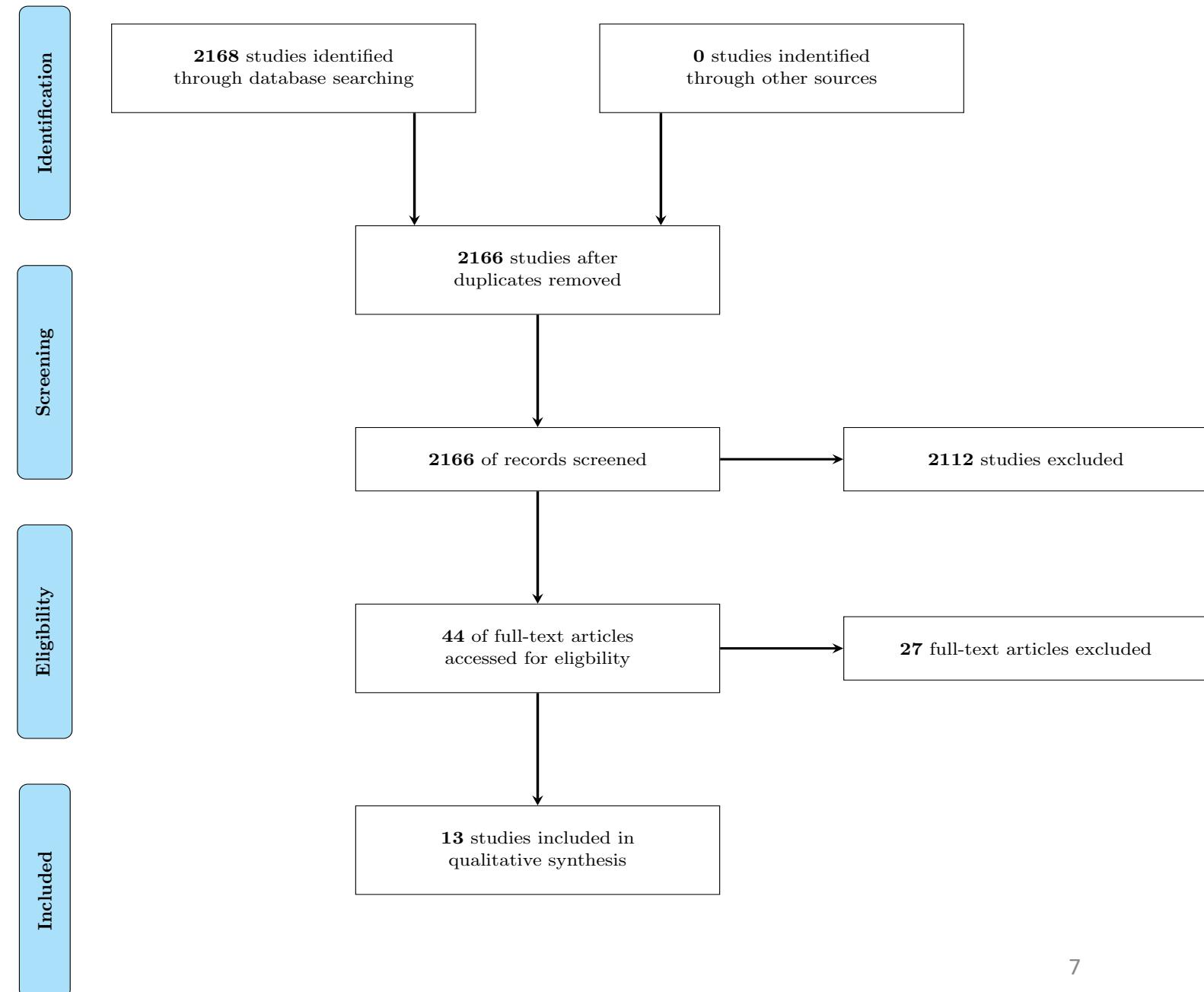
- Registered protocol (PRISMA guidelines)
- 3 Electronic databases
 - Scopus
 - PsycInfo
 - PubMed
- Outcome of interest: Cohen's d



Methods

- 13 Papers included
- 48 Comparisons

PRISMA Flow Diagram



Two main patterns

Successful interventions focused on fostering analytical thinking and teaching critical thinking skills

Two main patterns

Analytical thinking:

Participants were primed to have an analytical mindset

No explicit skills were taught to the participants

Two main patterns

Critical thinking:

E.g. Students enrolled in a pseudoscience class
(Dyer & Hall, 2018)

Taught to spot tell-tale signs of poor scientific practices

Why is this interesting?

Conspiracy theorists do not think too deeply about the content of conspiracy theories (Wood et al, 2012)

“Shallow theorists” (Rothbard, 2006)

Critical/analytical thinking allows people to move past shallow interpretations, and evaluate the content.

What are the implications for design?

- Stresses importance of education
- Using games to teach critical thinking
- Allows people to move past shallow interpretations, and evaluate the content.



Conclusion

What should we take away from all this?

Conclusion

1. Conspiracy theorists often make superficial judgments of a conspiracy's plausibility
2. Technologies that focus on teaching critical thinking skills may show promise
3. Prevention rather than containment



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