

# Does similarity matter for romantic relationships?

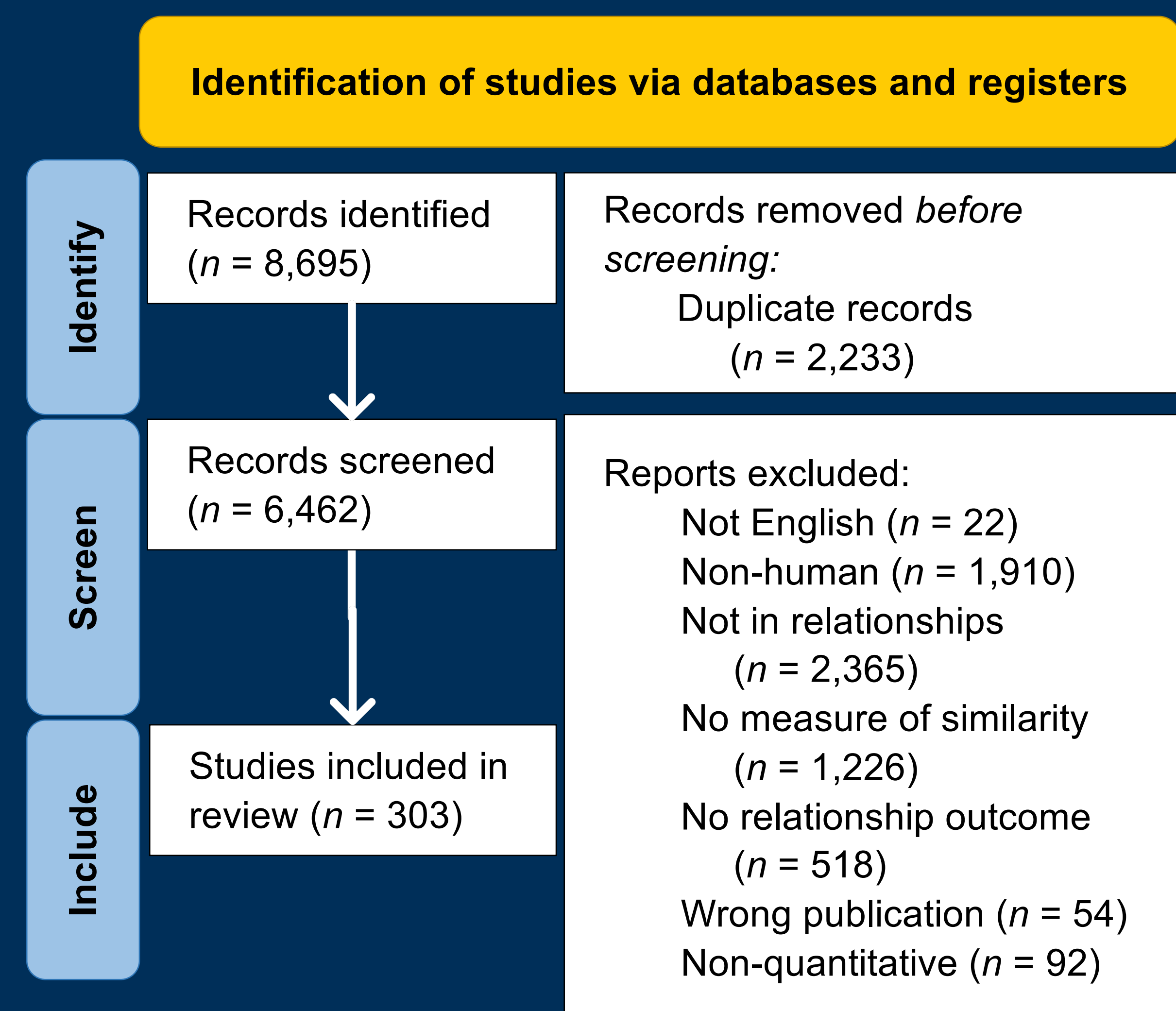
## Results from a systematic review of 303 studies

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### INTRODUCTION

- Scholars have debated the importance of similarity between romantic partners for relationship success since the 1960s<sup>1, 2</sup>
- Due to variability in measurements and lack of comprehensive reviews, we still don't know when and whether similarity is important for relationship outcomes

### METHODS



There is little evidence of a universal positive effect of similarity, although perceived, compared to actual, similarity is more strongly linked to romantic relationship outcomes.

Figure 1. Domains of similarity.

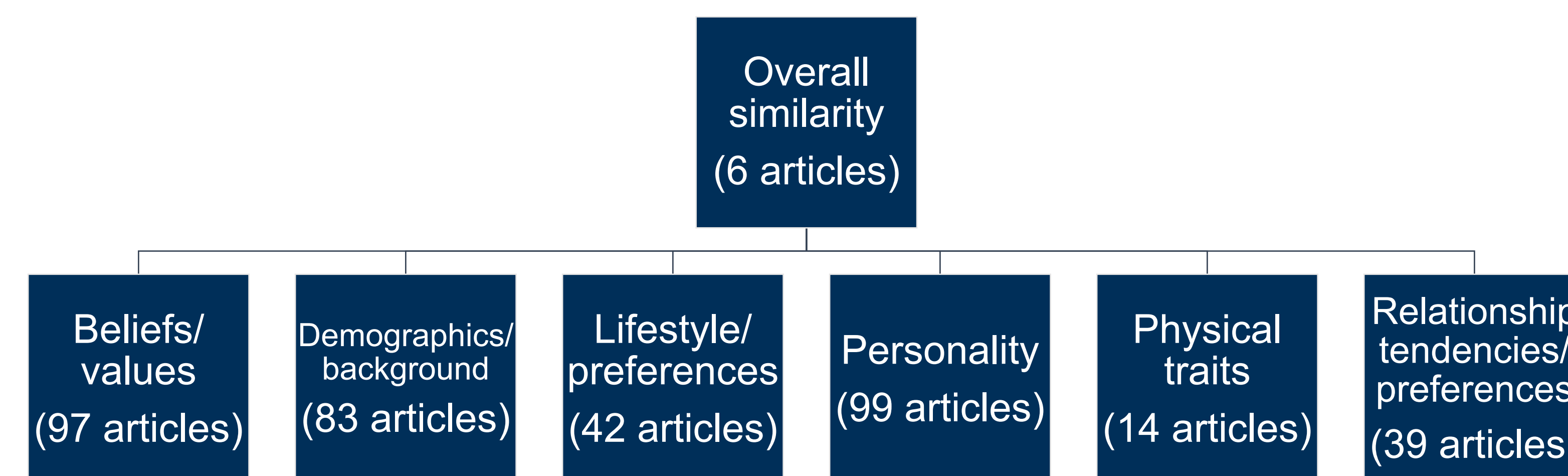


Figure 2. Statistical methods of measuring similarity.

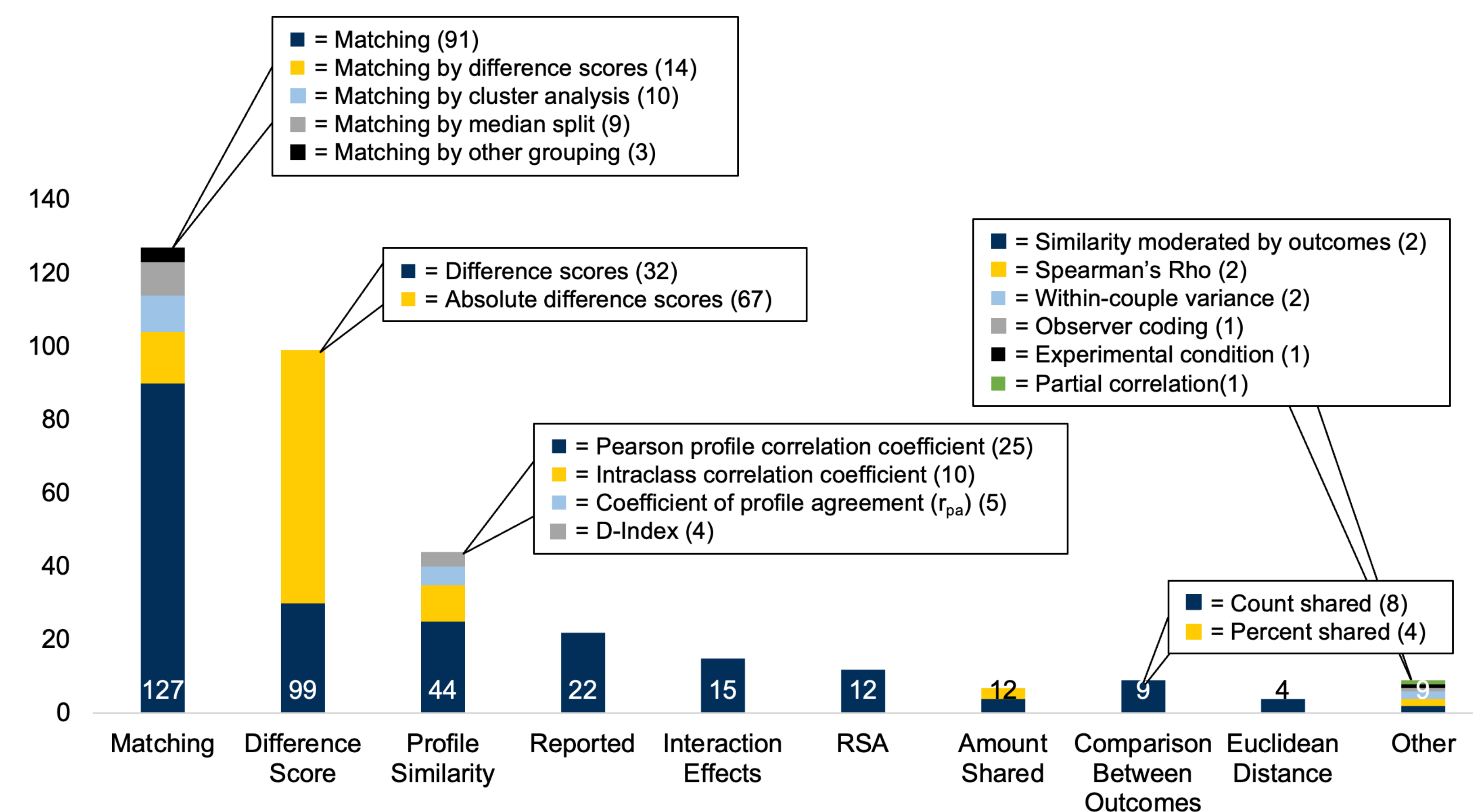


Table 1. Results by domains of similarity.

	Actual Similarity					Perceived Similarity					Total
	Positive	Negative	Mixed	Null	Total	Positive	Negative	Mixed	Null	Total	
Beliefs/Values	10	1	44	19	74	13	0	4	3	20	94
Demographics/Background	24	0	42	15	81	0	0	1	0	1	82
Lifestyle/Preferences	8	0	15	10	33	4	0	3	1	8	41
Personality	10	1	51	18	80	5	0	4	3	12	92
Physical	1	0	6	3	10	0	0	0	1	1	11
Romantic Preferences/Tendencies	2	0	23	4	29	5	0	0	1	6	35
Overall	2	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	1	4	6

### RESULTS

- Studies varied in the measures of similarity studied, with measures grouped into six main domains (Fig 1)
- Most research examined dyadic, U.S.-based samples and measured relationship quality as the outcome of interest
- There was a wide range of methods used to analyze similarity, with most studies using matching or difference scores (Fig 2)
- Across domains of similarity, most of the initial results suggested mixed (rather than positive, negative, or null) associations between similarity and relationship results (Table 1)

### DISCUSSION

- There does not seem to be a general effect of similarity on relationship quality or stability, though there may be particular instances when similarity is beneficial
- Future research on similarity in romantic relationships should incorporate non-U.S. samples, same-gender and non-dyadic couples, multiple domains of similarity, and robust statistical methods

### REFERENCES

- Byrne & Nelson (1965). *Psychonomic Sci.*, 3(1).
- Montoya et al. (2008). *JPSP.*, 25(6).

