

Appendix A.

Detailed methodology

The research team identified HMRE program evaluations and implementation studies conducted in the United States, written in English, and published from 2008 to 2019. We searched multiple research databases using the search terms “healthy marriage and relationship education,” “couple relationship education,” “marriage education,” and “relationship education.” In addition, we reviewed the bibliographies and references of meta-analyses and more recent articles to identify studies for inclusion. We also reviewed the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) website, as well as curriculum developer websites, to locate evaluation reports. The outcomes inventoried in this brief come from a range of evaluations, including large evaluations of federally funded programs, such as Building Strong Families and Supporting Healthy Marriage; local evaluations of programs that received federal or state funding; and evaluations of other HMRE programs that were funded by nongovernmental sources. In total, this review included 146 studies, of which 117 were program evaluations that met the parameters to be coded and analyzed for the present brief. See Appendix B for a full list of evaluations reviewed for this brief.

The research team developed a template to abstract key information from the HMRE evaluation studies, including the outcomes measured. Based on the outcomes found in the literature review, the team developed a coding scheme to organize various types of outcomes. Outcomes were coded according to an adapted socio-ecological framework and according to categories that emerged within each level of the framework. The outcome categories became domains and sub-domains in the framework presented in this brief.

First, we reviewed all outcomes and identified preliminary categories among these outcomes. We used an inductive approach for this round of coding, creating categories from the outcomes rather than applying a predetermined set of categories to the outcomes.^f Then we assessed, organized, and defined the categories, which allowed us to categorize the outcomes consistently.

We applied the set of categories, refined the categories based on the data, and applied the refined set of categories to the data. At all three coding stages, at least two researchers categorized the outcomes independently before jointly discussing and resolving any outcomes they had categorized differently. When coding, the coders frequently referred to the evaluation studies from which the outcomes were derived to ensure accurate interpretation of the concept each outcome sought to measure. In total, 693 outcomes were identified and coded.

Because this brief focuses on outcomes, not all characteristics that an evaluation measures are included in our results. For example, an evaluation may examine whether the outcomes associated with participation in an HMRE program vary depending on an individual’s gender or childhood experiences; however, the program cannot change these characteristics of an individual. Any traits and characteristics that may influence an individual’s current relationship—but which cannot be influenced by the program and, as such, are not true *outcomes*—are not included in this brief, nor are those outcomes that assess participants’ satisfaction with a program.



^f Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.