HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Level

F	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	B6

*S*ociocultural factors and relationships
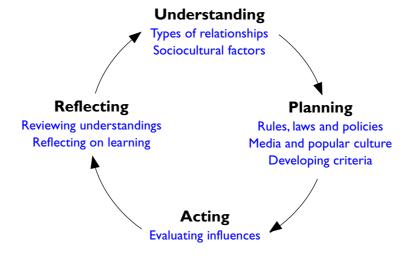
> **Strands**
> Promoting the Health of Individuals and Communities
> Enhancing Personal Development

Purpose

Students explore the influence of sociocultural factors — including community expectations, rules, laws and policies — on relationships between individuals and between individuals and family members. As they engage in activities in this module students develop criteria to evaluate these sociocultural influences. Students also examine how these factors influence the social and physical environments in which relationships occur.

Overview of activities

Activities in this module are based on a learner-centred approach with an emphasis on decision making and problem solving. As the following diagram shows, activities are sequenced in **understanding**, **planning**, **acting** and **reflecting** phases.

Understanding
Types of relationships
Sociocultural factors

Planning
Rules, laws and policies
Media and popular culture
Developing criteria

Acting
Evaluating influences

Reflecting
Reviewing understandings
Reflecting on learning

Core learning outcomes

This module focuses on the following core learning outcomes from the Years 1 to 10 Health and Physical Education Syllabus:

Promoting the Health of Individuals and Communities

6.5 Students assess the impact of rules, laws and policies in promoting healthy social and physical environments.

Enhancing Personal Development

6.2 Students evaluate the influence of sociocultural factors, including community expectations of behaviours, on relationships between individuals and between individuals and the family at different stages of life.

Core content

This module incorporates the following core content from the syllabus:

Promoting the Health of Individuals and Communities

• creation and maintenance of environments that promote and protect health, in particular, the impact of rules, laws and policies;

Enhancing Personal Development

• factors influencing identity and relationships, in particular, the media and popular culture, values, attitudes, beliefs and change.

Assessment strategy

Promoting the Health of Individuals and Communities 6.5

The following are examples of assessment tasks that provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the core learning outcomes identified in this module.

• **Students interpret scenarios to assess the impact that rules, laws and policies have on relationships and on the social and physical environments in which they occur.**

– Does the student understand how social and physical environments influence relationships?

– Can the student develop appropriate criteria to assess the influence of rules, laws and policies on the promotion of healthy social environments?

– Can the student develop appropriate criteria to assess the influence of rules, laws and policies on the promotion of healthy physical environments?

– Can the student assess the impact of rules, laws and policies in relation to promoting healthy social environments?

– Can the student assess the impact of rules, laws and policies in relation to promoting healthy physical environments?

Enhancing Personal Development 6.2

- Students create a presentation that shows the influence of various sociocultural factors on a relationship and that celebrates diversity among individuals in this relationship. Students prepare a report evaluating the influence of rules, laws and policies, community expectations and the media and popular culture on individuals in this relationship. They evaluate whether the influences are positive or negative and/or major or minor.

  – Does the presentation carry a message and visual details that support diversity in relationships?

  – Does the student identify how community expectations are relayed to individuals?

  – Does the student evaluate the influence of community expectations on the relationship he or she has chosen?

  – Does the student justify the extent to which the influences are positive or negative or major or minor in relation to the health of relationships?

  – Does the student explain how the messages in his or her presentation assist in challenging stereotypical images and messages about the type of relationship evaluated?

  – Does the student evaluate the influence of rules, laws and policies on the chosen relationship?

  – Does the student evaluate the influence of the media and popular culture on the chosen relationship?

Other activities in this module provide opportunities for teachers to gather evidence about students' demonstrations of outcomes for assessment purposes.

SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS AND RELATIONSHIPS • LOWER SECONDARY

Background information

Social and cultural construction of relationships

Most individuals have an emotional need for affection and a social need for acceptance. They therefore seek companionship, support, approval and acceptance from others. For many people the relationships with individuals in their family, their peer group or a partner are the most satisfying. Such relationships are important for an individual's social, emotional and mental health and are forged when the individual feels connected to others through experiences such as openness, honesty, sharing, love, acceptance, support, advice and respect.

Relationships are socially and culturally constructed. A range of sociocultural factors — including community expectations and rules, laws and policies, economic and physical resources, technological and ethical factors — can influence an individual's attitudes towards, behaviours in and expectations about relationships. The media and popular culture often present unrealistic images of relationships and play a critical role in persuading people to attempt to conform to these.

Many young people experience confusion about the physical and emotional boundaries of relationships — for example, the level of physical intimacy or the extent of self-disclosure. They are also vulnerable to exploitation. The activities in this module provide opportunities for students to investigate their rights, roles and responsibilities in relationships and to reflect on and clarify their own values in regard to the range of relationships they might experience at various stages of their life. They also have opportunities to understand how social and cultural factors influence their attitudes towards, behaviours in and expectations about relationships. Students are assumed to have an understanding that individual factors also influence relationships.

Teachers need to be aware that because some activities in this module involve students reflecting on their own relationships it could be personally challenging and cause distress to some students. It is essential that the classroom environment is appropriately supportive and is based on mutual respect and trust and teacher sensitivity to students' needs. A case study approach may be a useful strategy to prevent students personalising experiences.

Terminology

Learning activities in this module involve use of the following language in the context of Health and Physical Education:

community expectations	physical dimension	social environment
conflict	policies	social laws
economic factors	popular culture	spiritual dimension
emotional dimension	relationships	stereotypes
intimate	rules	supportive environment
laws	self-esteem	technological factors
media	social dimension	

School authority policies

Teachers need to be aware of and observe school authority policies that may be relevant to this module, in particular those relating to sensitive issues.

Social justice principles

This module provides opportunities for students to increase their understanding and appreciation of supportive environments and diversity. It includes activities that encourage students to:

- develop an understanding and acceptance of the diversity of relationships that occur in the community;
- accept that levels of physical and mental–emotional intimacy vary in different relationships.

Students with disabilities or learning difficulties may require some activities to be modified in order to optimise both their participation and their ability to demonstrate the outcomes. Teachers should consult with parents/carers and specialist support staff to determine whether modification is necessary.

Support materials and references

Bennett, P. & Kearney, E. 1994, *Never Felt Better*, Rigby Heinemann, Melbourne.

Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs 1997, *Families in Form*, Curriculum Corporation, Carlton, Vic.

Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, *RELATE: Relationship Skills for Love, Family and Life*. Available URL: http://www.relate.gov.au/home.html (accessed December 2000).

Pickup, M. & Sunderland, G. 1993, *In Great Shape: Book 1*, Rigby Heinemann, Melbourne.

Relationships Australia.
Available URL: http://www.relationships.com.au (accessed December 2000).

West Australian Government, Family and Children's Services, *Living with Parents*. Available URL: http://www.fcs.wa.gov.au.parenting/lwp/home.htm (accessed December 2000).

Activities

It is recommended that students keep a personal journal throughout this module in which to record notes from discussions and survey results.

Understanding

TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS	Identifying the types of relationships at different stages of life between individuals and between individuals and the family

Resource Sheet

▶ Students reflect on the range of people with whom they formed relationships as an infant, child and teenager and predict the range of people with whom they may develop relationships in the future, as a young adult and as an adult. They differentiate between 'close', 'casual' and 'distant' relationships and categorise their current relationships accordingly while recognising that there will be variations in the degree of closeness, casualness or distance (see Resource Sheet, 'Relationships across my life span').

Focus questions could include:
- Who was dominant in your relationships as an infant and as a young child? Why?
- Who is dominant in your relationships now, as a teenager? Why?
- What will be the context of your relationships as a young adult and as a mature adult? Why?

Teaching consideration

Clarify with students that:
- for an infant, the dominant context of relationships is within the family, in particular, with parents/carers;
- for a child and teenager, the major contexts for close and casual relationships may be the family, peer group, school, church and recreation groups;
- for a young adult and mature adult, the contexts for close and casual relationships may stem from study, work, religion and recreation.

▶ Students discuss why an individual's relationships with others can change over time. They record the key points of the discussion in their journal for use in reflecting on their own relationships.
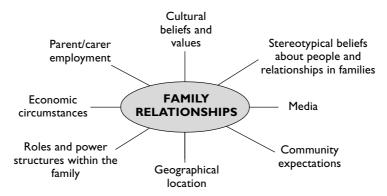
Teaching consideration

Highlight that relationships change over time as a result of an individual's growth and development. Most individuals move from a state of dependence on parents/carers to a state of independence. Some relationships break down — for example, a friendship might dissolve. Relationships may alter as a result of changing values and interests, meeting new people, injury, illness, death or distance.

SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS	Developing an understanding of sociocultural factors that influence relationships

▶ Students discuss their understandings of what is meant by sociocultural factors and identify some of these. They determine which of these they believe influence their relationships and use this information to create two concept maps: one that shows the factors influencing relationships within their family and another that identifies the factors that influence their relationships with others — for example, their peers. Students record these concept maps in their personal journals.

Sociocultural factors influencing relationships within the family

Focus questions could include:
Relationships between individuals and the family
- Which sociocultural factors influence relationships among family members?
- Which community expectations influence relationships among family members? How?
- Which family rules influence relationships among family members? How?
- Which of society's laws and policies influence relationships among family members? How?
- Which cultural or religious factors influence relationships among family members? How?
- Which technological factors can influence relationships among family members? How?
- How can economic factors influence family relationships?
- Which aspects of the media and popular culture can influence family relationships? How?
- How does availability of community facilities (meeting places) affect family relationships? For example, are there places where family members can go for recreation, counselling or to meet others?
- Which aspects of culture can influence family relationships? How?

Relationships between individuals (peers)
- Which sociocultural factors influence relationships between individuals in a peer group?
- Which community expectations influence relationships between individuals in a peer group? How?

SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS AND RELATIONSHIPS • LOWER SECONDARY

- Which rules influence relationships between individuals of a peer group? How?
- Which of society's laws and policies influence relationships between individuals in a peer group? How?
- Which cultural norms influence relationships between individuals in a peer group?
- Which technological factors can influence relationships between individuals in a peer group? How?
- How can economic factors influence relationships between individuals in a peer group?
- Which aspects of the media and popular culture can influence relationships between individuals in a peer group? How?
- How does availability of community facilities (meeting places) affect relationships between individuals in a peer group?
- Which aspects of culture can influence relationships between individuals in a peer group? How?

Teaching considerations

Students should include in their concept maps individual and social factors such as gender, community expectations, individual rights, culture, age, media, popular culture, rules, laws and policies, technology.

Issues relating to individual factors need to be balanced with discussions about the social and cultural construction of relationships, particularly community expectations, rules, laws and policies and images and messages in the media and popular culture.

The following contexts could be used to facilitate student understanding of the influence of sociocultural factors on relationships:
- community expectations about adults, parents/carers, childhood, gender and sex roles and relationship behaviours;
- technological factors such as modes of communication including television, contraceptive devices;
- family rules associated with obedience, respect, communication;
- society's laws associated with family protection — abuse (sexual, physical, mental–emotional);
- facilities such as meeting places, support agencies;
- cultural/religious factors — relationship beliefs and behaviours associated with communication, discipline, power, values, roles.

Highlight to students that such sociocultural factors may send contradictory messages to individuals.

This activity provides an opportunity to gather information for assessment purposes.

▶ In groups, students discuss the various dimensions and boundaries of behaviours within relationships. They describe levels of intimacy and communication they believe are appropriate for various kinds of relationships and investigate diversity among cultural groups. They identify how various sociocultural factors influence the development and expression of the dimensions of relationships. Each group presents a summary of their deliberations.

Focus questions could include:

- Is there a physical dimension to all relationships? An emotional dimension? A mental dimension? A social dimension? A spiritual dimension?

Physical dimension of relationships

- How do the boundaries change in relation to the physical dimension of different relationships?
- How do the boundaries of the physical and social dimensions of relationships vary among cultural groups?
- How do we know what is acceptable in the physical dimension of any relationship? What is acceptable in the social dimension? How much flexibility is there?
- Where do these ideas come from?
- How does the law, the media and religion define the physical boundaries of relationships? Are we given conflicting messages about this?

Social dimension of relationships

- Can the boundaries of the social dimension of relationships change? How?
- How do we know what is acceptable in the way we relate to others in a relationship — for example, what we say and how we behave?
- Are we given conflicting messages about the way we relate to others? Where do these ideas come from?

Teaching considerations

Highlight to students that relationships can have a physical dimension (acceptable touching), an emotional dimension (sharing feelings), a mental or intellectual dimension (sharing and discussing thoughts, interests), a social dimension (communicating, interacting) and a spiritual dimension (sharing beliefs, hopes).

Advise students that different types of relationships carry different boundaries, depending on time, the stage in a relationship and the culture of those involved. The type of physical contact (for example, a hug) in one relationship may not be appropriate in another. Self-disclosure may be appropriate for individuals in a close relationship (for example, best friends and family) but not for individuals in more casual relationships. Some individuals, however, may find it easier to self-disclose with strangers than with close friends or family.

Help students to appreciate that boundaries of relationships are socially and culturally constructed.

To assist students to understand cultural norms have them consider cultural contexts when it is appropriate and inappropriate for individuals to touch one another. For example, students might discuss when it is appropriate for individuals to touch or hold the hand or arm of another. Discussion should also include cultural differences — for example, in some Pacific cultures it is acceptable for adult males to hold hands.

▶ Students survey family members, neighbours and community members to gather information about expectations of relationships within a family and of relationships between young people. They use this information to analyse how community expectations influence their relationships with individuals in their family and with others. Where appropriate, students compare general community expectations with those of various ethnic communities.

SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS AND RELATIONSHIPS • LOWER SECONDARY

Focus questions could include:

Relationships among family members

- What types of expectations does the local or ethnic community have about physical contact, power and respect, verbal communication and provision of care in:
    - parent–child relationships;
    - sibling relationships;
    - couple relationships?
- Are these expectations the same among all social groups in our community?

Relationships between individuals

- What expectations does the community have about physical contact, verbal communication, social interaction (obedience and cooperation) and power in relationships between:
    - young people dating;
    - doctor and patient;
    - retailers and consumers;
    - neighbourhood friends;
    - work colleagues?

Teaching considerations

Be aware that real ethical issues could arise during discussion. Advise students that ethnic groups may have different expectations. For example, in some communities, harsh physical discipline is normal procedure.

Ensure students consider the influence of community expectations on the physical, mental, emotional and social dimension of their relationships with others.

▶ Students discuss how community expectations about relationships are conveyed to individuals. They develop a concept map to show how an individual comes to these understandings.

Teaching considerations

Students could personalise their concept maps for their journals.

Point out to students that community expectations are conveyed through role modelling and social conditioning. Social exchange and observing others, whether directly through daily living or indirectly via the media, are vehicles for acquiring understanding of community expectations.

▶ Students identify and discuss the rules, laws and policies that contribute to healthy social and physical environments which support relationships in families and between individuals. They record their findings in their journals.

Teaching consideration

Explain to students that certain rules, laws and policies influence the environmental context in which relationships occur.

Planning

RULES, LAWS AND POLICIES	Analysing influences of rules, laws and policies on relationships

► Students analyse the impact of rules, laws and policies on social and physical environments that surround the family and within which other relationships occur.

Focus questions could include:

Family rules

- Which family rules can impact on the social and physical environment?
- How do family rules impact on the social and physical environment within families?
- How can these rules promote a healthy social environment? To what extent do they do this?
- How can these rules promote a healthy physical environment? To what extent do they do this?
- Who makes these rules? Why?
- Are these rules fair to all individuals?
- How do some family rules challenge or reinforce inequities in power? How are these appropriate or inappropriate?

Society's laws

- What impact are laws designed to have on the social and physical environment within families?
- What influence are school rules, such as those related to bullying or harassment, designed to have on the social and physical environment?
- How are these laws effective or ineffective? Why?
- How are these laws culturally biased? What social groups do not value these laws?
- Who is advantaged or disadvantaged by these laws?

Teaching considerations

Guide students to understand that not only are some family rules and rules within the peer group perceived by individuals to be unfair, cause conflict between members and be damaging to self-esteem, some laws are perceived the same way.

Social justice issues should be highlighted through the last of the focus questions, particularly when applied to domestic violence or anti-discrimination laws. Highlight to students that people with little power who are marginalised or oppressed need laws to help counter the injustices they suffer.

This activity provides an opportunity to gather information about student learning.

► Students analyse how rules, laws and policies influence their relationships with individual family members and with other individuals. They record this analysis in their journals.

SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS AND RELATIONSHIPS • LOWER SECONDARY

Focus questions could include:

Relationships among family members

- Which family or cultural rules influence your relationships with others in your family?
- How do existing rules reinforce gender stereotypes and the power status of particular individuals, cause conflict and influence harmony and cooperation?
- What family rules influence your relationships with others — for example, relationships with same-sex peers, opposite-sex peers, acquaintances and individuals from other cultures?

Relationships between individuals

- How do peer-group rules influence your relationships with your family members, your peers and individuals from different cultures?
- Which school rules and policies influence your teacher–student relationships, your parent–teacher relationships and your relationships with other students?
- Which of society's laws influence relationships between individuals in families, dating behaviours among young people, consumer relationships with retailers, and relationships between neighbours, individuals from diverse social groups and among work colleagues?

Teaching considerations

Ensure students consider the impact of rules, laws and policies on the physical, social and mental–emotional dimensions of their relationships.

Point out to students the various laws that can affect relationships — for example, anti-discrimination laws, domestic violence laws and ethical codes of practice for the various professions.

| MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE | **Analysing influences of the media and popular culture on relationships** |

▶ Students analyse how the media and popular culture influence their relationships with individuals in their family and other individuals. They analyse images and messages from magazines and television and challenge these. To do this they:

- collect articles from a range of magazines targeting young people and describe the images portrayed and messages conveyed;
- view a segment of a television program or music video clip and describe the images portrayed and messages conveyed.

Focus questions could include:

- Which images and messages do the media and popular culture use to portray the 'ideal' relationship between parent and child, step-parent and step-child, siblings, same-sex peers, opposite-sex peers, young people dating, teacher–student relationships, neighbourly relationships, doctor–patient relationships, consumer–retailer relationships and workplace relationships?
- Which types of relationships are portrayed in the media?

- Which types of relationships are not portrayed in the media? Why? What messages does this send?
- What are some conflicting messages about relationships conveyed by the media?
- How are media images of relationships realistic or unrealistic?
- For which social groups are they realistic? When are they unrealistic?
- Which social groups would identify with the messages conveyed in the media?
- For which social groups would these messages conflict with cultural values and community expectations of behaviours?
- Why are these images realistic for some groups and unrealistic for others?
- What groups are not represented in or by these messages? (Encourage students to consider issues of race, disability, social class.)
- Are these representations typical of the general population?
- What messages are these images telling you about your own relationships with your parents/carers, your siblings, your peers, your teachers, your boyfriend or girlfriend, your neighbours, your coach and your doctor?
- Are the images presented by the media representative of the general population? Why?

Teaching consideration

Highlight to students that most relationships portrayed in the media involve good-looking, able-bodied individuals, predominantly of Anglo-Saxon origin.

DEVELOPING CRITERIA	**Identifying the influence of sociocultural factors on relationships**

▶   Students identify criteria to recognise healthy social and physical environments against which the influence of rules, laws and policies can be evaluated.

▶   Students identify criteria that can be used to evaluate the influence of sociocultural factors on relationships between individuals and between individuals and the family at different stages of life.

Focus questions could include:
- What kind of impact can sociocultural factors have on relationships?
- Which sociocultural factors can strengthen or weaken relationships?
- How can the impact of sociocultural factors:
  - be positive or negative;
  - be major or minor;
  - be health-promoting or health-damaging;
  - promote equity or inequity in power?
- How can sociocultural factors promote stereotypes?

Teaching consideration

Students should record identified criteria in their personal journals.

SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS AND RELATIONSHIPS • LOWER SECONDARY

Acting

EVALUATING INFLUENCES	Evaluating the influences of sociocultural factors on relationships and the environments in which they occur

▶ Students use criteria to assess the impact of rules, laws and policies in promoting healthy social and physical environments. In doing so they consider rules, laws and policies with which they may be familiar — for example, school rules about bullying and anti-discrimination and domestic violence laws.

Focus questions could include:
- To what extent has the school bullying policy impacted on the social and physical environment within the school?
- To what extent have anti-discrimination laws impacted on the social and physical environment in the community?
- To what extent have domestic violence laws impacted on the social and physical environments of families in our community?

Teaching consideration

Use student-developed scenarios for this activity.

▶ Students use scenarios to assess the extent to which sociocultural factors, including rules, laws and policies, influence relationships between individuals and between family members and influence the social and physical environments in which they occur.

Focus questions could include:
- To what extent have family rules influenced your or others' relationships?
- To what extent have society's laws and policies influenced your or others' relationships?
- To what extent has technology influenced your or others' relationships?
- To what extent has the media influenced your or others' relationships?

Teaching considerations

To minimise what may be a sensitive issue for some students, use published scenarios for them to evaluate. *Families in Form* (Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs 1997) contains some suitable scenarios.

Teacher-developed scenarios could be used if specific issues need to be considered.

SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS AND RELATIONSHIPS • LOWER SECONDARY

► Students create a presentation, such as a poster or powerpoint display on a web page, that shows the influence of various sociocultural factors on a relationship type of their choice and which celebrates diversity among individuals in this type of relationship. They prepare a report to accompany their presentation that evaluates the influence of rules, laws and policies, community expectations and the media and popular culture on individuals in that type of relationship. They evaluate whether the influence is positive or negative and/or major or minor.

Focus questions could include:

- How do family rules influence the social or physical environments in which relationships between family members occur?
- Which of society's rules, laws or policies influence the social and physical environments in which relationships between individuals occur?
- How do school rules influence relationships between individuals?

Teaching consideration

Suggest students choose from the following relationship types: family (parent–child, parent–teenager, siblings), workplace, school (student–teacher, students) or a couple dating.

Reflecting

REVIEWING UNDERSTANDINGS	**Reviewing what has been learnt about the nature of relationships and influences on them**

▶ Students review their personal journals to reflect on the activities they have participated in throughout the module. They discuss how their opinion may have changed about relationships, how they have coped with accepting their own and others' relationships and the strategies they have learned for rejecting stereotypes about relationships.

Teaching consideration

Respect students' wishes if they do not want to share their journals with others.

REFLECTING ON LEARNING	**Evaluating the use of an inquiry approach for learning about relationships**

▶ Students brainstorm the advantages and disadvantages of using the inquiry approach to investigate the influence of sociocultural factors.

Focus questions could include:
- Did the inquiry process assist you to identify the information you needed?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of conducting inquiries to investigate relationships?
- Are there other ways of understanding relationships?

Relationships across my life span

Consider the types of people with whom you have, or are likely to have, relationships at different stages of your life. List these people in the appropriate columns of the table.

Stage of life	Close relationship	Casual relationship	Distant relationship
Infancy			
Childhood			
Adolescence			
Young adulthood			
Adulthood			

This sourcebook module should be read in conjunction with the following Queensland School Curriculum Council materials:

Years 1 to 10 Health and Physical Education Syllabus
Years 1 to 10 Health and Physical Education Sourcebook: Guidelines
Health and Physical Education Initial In-service Materials