This paper considers some of the findings from an ongoing research, which explored the social and cultural worlds of students at the margins of education on an academy site. The students’ socialising practices provide the context for relationship building strategies, which enable the development of a reflexive self-identity. Through exploring these relationship building strategies a set of value claims are illuminated, which relate to the students’ perceptions of moral or ethical ‘goods’. It is the perception of what is good that informs and orientates the students’ practices.

This paper outlines the students’ relationship building practices and illuminates existential questions, which inform the students’ value judgements and subsequent behaviours within the classroom and academy sites. Their perspective of a good life however, sits in juxtaposition to emerging political perceptions of the self-identity presented in current education policy. The values presented in current policy embrace a process of autonomous individuation where individuality, competition and cognitive performance in academies are valued above all.

Drawing on Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and the formation of conventions and values within local cultures and communities, which are managed and engaged by students within the school site; I discuss ethical concerns related to the imposing of values and practices within academies under the current government education agenda, which do not reflect or build on those of some students’ who attend the academy. Particular focus is given to the overriding of local community values and discarding (or making deviant) forms of behaviour and practice, which does not comply with the academy’s values. The discussion concludes by placing the ethical concerns raised against the backdrop of Badman and his claims that a suitable education

“primarily equips a child for life within the community of which he is a member, rather than the way of life in the country as a whole, as long as it does not foreclose the child’s options in later years to adopt some other form of life if he wishes to do so.” (Badman, 2009:6)


