

**COMMUNICATING COMMUNITY:
Cultural Production, Habitus and the Construction of a City's
Identity**

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Declarations

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Hards', is positioned above a horizontal dotted line.

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Abstract

This thesis is about the making of a selection of stories that have emanated from and/or evolved in relation to, the city of Newcastle, NSW, Australia. In the past thirty years Newcastle's cultural and community identity has undergone some transformation as the social fabric of the town, its cultural geography, and its natural terrain have each responded to changes that de-industrialisation has bestowed on the area. Yet, as this body of work demonstrates, predominant 'traditional' city meanings prevail and continue to be embedded in creative projects affiliated with the place.

It is the contention of this thesis that to come to an understanding of the representation of local cultural identity discourses, specifically through mediated inter-texts such as newspaper articles and reviews, theatrical plays, and mainstream films, that have resonant meaning potential for widespread 'audiences', the practices involved in producing the texts, and the socio-cultural contexts of their creation should be considered.

Therefore a set of sociological concerns which address some of the power relationships, communication exchanges and 'naturalized' activities involved in constructing particular 'Newcastle' narratives have been appropriated for this study. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus (1984, 1992, 1993a, 1996) has provided a conceptual framework for illuminating how and why certain textual material may be generated initially in reaction to socio-cultural conditionings, plus, it has enabled the researcher to deconstruct some of the processes included in the development, progression and dissemination of a selection of texts featuring Newcastle according to professional and non-professional systems of 'authorship'.

The researcher's application of habitus to the analysis of selected plays and films made throughout the 1990s has helped to explain why certain texts may be considered to epitomize the region and its residents, and also accounts for their ongoing communicative currency as performance or pedagogic resources that continue to circulate perceptions of the city.