

CULTURE, MEDIA AND POWER: UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE THROUGH MEDIA REPRESENTATION

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Abstract:

The study aims to examine the culture and ideological underpinnings espoused by Newsette, the official publication of De La Salle University-Dasmariñas (DLSU-D), through examination of headlines of articles pertaining to the promotion of culture of community extension service of DLSU-D. Specifically, it aims to: (1) define the ideology espoused on community service; (2) determine the linguistic concepts; (3) and examine the manipulation techniques used by the publication to its readers. Data were obtained through discourse analysis of the publication's headlines. Analysis of this study allows an understanding of the standpoint of Newsette on community development endeavors of the University. It identifies salient points in illuminating messages which are revealing of the social and cultural representations on community services in the University. More importantly, the results provide building material for opinion and explanation of the impression, acceptance and participation of Lasallians towards community extension services.

Keywords: culture, ideology, media, representation, power, discourse analysis, community service.

INTRODUCTION

The principle of a Lasallian institution is marked by an education that is both a mission and a ministry. It is committed not only to the development of its learners but also in easing the plight of the vulnerable and marginalized sectors of the Philippine society. While instruction is the primary function of a university, alongside with research as means to sustain and develop the latter, the conduct of community extension is highly regarded by Lasallian institutions as integrative to the educational mission and equally contributory to human and social development. More than image building, it aims to respond to varied social issues and

contribute a resolution that is life-affirming, mutually empowering and capacitating. Moreover, relevant sustainable community development programs initiated by De La Salle University-Dasmariñas (DLSU-D) define the identity of a true Lasallian education that is relevant and strongly linked to genuine social development beyond instructions and research.

A variety of medium covering DLSU-D's community involvements have prospered over the years, all of which may or may not clearly reflect the real scenario of Lasallian community engagement, but are all representations of the organization's understanding of the University's involvement. According to cultural norms

theory of media effect by DeFleur in Mcquail and Windahl (1993), more than the direct effect on individuals, the media also affect the society it circulates into - its culture, general knowledge, values and norms. Media make available set of images, ideas and evaluations from which audience members can draw in choosing their own lines of behavior. It is in this same notion that an examination of media representations through discourse analysis of *Newsette* conducted. Given the intrinsic power and influence of media, the analysis of this widely circulated official publication provides understanding of the premium given to community development engagements of the University. Also, social and cultural representations of community service provided by this material to its readers through discourse were also illuminated to help provide images, ideas and evaluation of the perspectives of Lasallians towards community services.

This study analyzes the discourse on headlines of community extension services collected from the online version of *Newsette*. I identified the themes on community extension services and applied further analysis to look at the meanings of the text in order to understand the ideologies implied by the said publication. Specifically, I aim to:

1. Define the ideology espoused on community service;

2. Determine the linguistic concepts;
3. And examine the manipulation techniques used by the publication to its readers.

The analysis of headlines on community service, which catches the first sight of the readers, proliferated through media representations promoted by *Newsette* arises out of the valuation on the standing of community service among Lasallians. While community service has had a long history in delivering Lasallian education, an upsurge for a more organized and managed community development efforts came on during the publication of the *Lasallian Guiding Principles of the Philippine Lasallian Family* on 2005. Particularly, this matter continued to gain strength as the document implicitly defined the nature of the Lasallian presence and mission in the country through the document *Principles of Lasallian Social Development*, thereby, promoting a culture on social development and community service.

According to Grossberg, et al (2011), education is dependent on the media for information and viewpoints. The representations of media offer insights on the ideologies and culture that are claimed to be reflective of principles, initiatives and strengths of an institution. Furthermore, the

media do not reside outside their own society and culture, but are part of them, both influencing them and being influenced by them in turn. From this general viewpoint, we hold on to the notion that texts and discourses portrayed by *Newsette* are representations of the culture and ideology that is shaped and socially shaped within and among members of the institution.

In this context, examining representations, through headlines, is essential. A headline has to be impressive as it catches the attention of the readers and reflects the content of the whole article. As Claude Abastado (1980) puts in, “headlines encapsulate not only the content but the orientation, the perspective that the reader should bring in their understanding of the article” (p. 149). Representation, however, is not necessarily realistic, although it is always staking the claim on reality. The word representation, as explained by Grossberg, et al (2011), literally means “re-presentation.” It represents something by taking the original, mediating it, and playing it back. But, again, this process almost necessarily alters the reality of the original. When media become representations, they make claims about the way the world is, they become powerful ideological institutions. However, the following questions may be asked: What are the ideologies and culture espoused by

the media? How do we determine them? Are they reflective of the reality in our institutions? What are the manipulation techniques used in the promotion of these ideologies and culture? How can the understanding of these factors be beneficial an in educational institution?

The choices and use of language conveyed by *Newsette* as evident medium expression produces significant impressions and interpretations that shape reality among readers. Sapir as cited in Littlejohn (2008), explained that human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. He furthers that the “real world” is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. Hence, the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.

Understanding culture, ideology and power, particularly in an educational institution through media texts, leads us into an analysis of discourse not only on texts, as objects of inquiry, but also of the social processes and structures which give rise to the production of the text, and of the social structures and processes within which individuals or groups create meanings in their interaction with text. Jager in Wodak (2001) described discourse

as the flow of societal knowledge which determines the individual and collective formative action that shapes society, thus exercising power. Fairclough (1992, 1995) and Chouliariki and Fairclough (1999) in Wodak (2011) also showed how Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is useful in disclosing the discursive nature of much contemporary social and cultural change. Likewise, discourse could not be understood if it were excised from the context and culture in which it emerged.

Duranti in Van Dijk (2011) asserts that a common view of culture is that it is “made up of practices and knowledge passed down from one generation to the next, the learned behavior patterns characteristic of a group”. Another view is that culture is communication, or a system of signs. This notion focuses on processes of interpretation and meaning thereby centering on the system of negotiating and producing particular views for its understanding. Culture can also be looked at as a system of mediation, or as a way whereby humans can learn to use instruments and tools, including language. But a major shift in our understanding of language within anthropology has been that it’s not only a system of symbols for expressing thoughts and representing human activities and goal, but also a cultural practice. It is in this respect that the term “discourse” can at times be more

important than language. Through discourse, collective and personal past are connected with the present and future (Van Dijk, 2011).

On the other hand, discourse also does ideological work and ideologies are often produced through discourse. To understand how ideologies are produced, it is not enough to analyze texts. The discursive practices (how the texts are interpreted and received and what social effects they have) must also be considered (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). In defining terms, Thompson (1990) in Wodak (2001) refers ideology as the study of the ways in which meaning is constructed and conveyed by symbolic forms of various kinds. He furthered that it consists of social forms and processes within which, and by which, symbolic forms circulate in the social world. On the other hand, Van Dijk (2011) explained that ideologies are general systems of basic ideas shared by the members of a social group, ideas that will influence their interpretation of social events and situations and control their discourse and other social practices as group members. He furthered that ideologies and opinions of newspapers are usually not personal, but social, institutional or political. Ideologies in general are not wrong or right, but rather more or less effective in promoting the interests of a group. He, therefore, assumed that the main

social function of ideologies is the coordination of the social practices of group members for the effective realization of the goals of a social group, and the protection of its interest. Given this general function of ideologies, many ideologies develop precisely in order to sustain, legitimate or manage group conflicts, as well as relationships of power and dominance. What do such ideologies look like? Generally, Van Dijk (2011) stressed that ideologies are seldom expressed directly in discourse. More often than not, only fragments of ideologies will be expressed. However, he proposes that ideologies reflect the basic criteria that constitute the social identity and define the interests of a group. The theoretical notion of ideology is that ideology, first of all, are belief systems. Secondly, these belief systems are not personal, but social beliefs shared by members of social groups. Specifically, beliefs must be socially relevant in order to be shared by groups and members. In order for ideologies to serve and defend the interest of a group, it tends to articulate relationships to other groups which may be dominant, dominating or competing. The idea of distributed ideology does not mean that members would have exactly the same ideology. However, ideologies that are institutionalized are inquired more generally either by concrete events or through mediated communication such as

the use of text books, circulation of campus papers and other mass media.

The process of carrying out ideologies implies the notion of social power and manipulation. Every instance of language use makes its own contribution to reproducing and transforming society and culture, including relations of power (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Particularly, discourse in mass media is viewed as a site of power, of struggle and also as a site where language is apparently transparent. While media often purport to be neutral in that they provide space for public discourse, Fairclough in Wodak (2011) shows fallacy of such assumptions, and illustrates the mediating and constructing role of the media. He furthered that discourses serve certain ends, namely to exercise power with all its effects. Social power is often organized and institutionalized, so as to allow more effective control, and to enable routine forms of power reproduction. Van Dijk (2006) defined social power in terms of the control exercised by one group, or organization (or its members) over the actions and/or the minds of (the members of) another group. In this sense, he explained that we defined discourse as manipulative first of all in terms of their context categories, rather than in terms of their textual structures. Van Dijk (2006) furthered that discourse structures are not explicitly manipulative but they only have

such functions of effects according to specific communicative situations and to the interpretations made by participants in their context models. One element in the discursive reproduction of power and dominance is the very access to discourse and communicative events. In the academic setting, we find several modes of access from the sponsoring units of the publication, to newsmakers and prominent events and personalities appearing on the headlines, articles, photos and layouts. All of which have direct persuasive access to the ‘minds’ of the readers that may indirectly control actions. This means that those who control the most influential discourse are those that have more chances to control the minds and actions of others. Thus, having the power to control how culture and ideologies are perceived and to how actions are achieved.

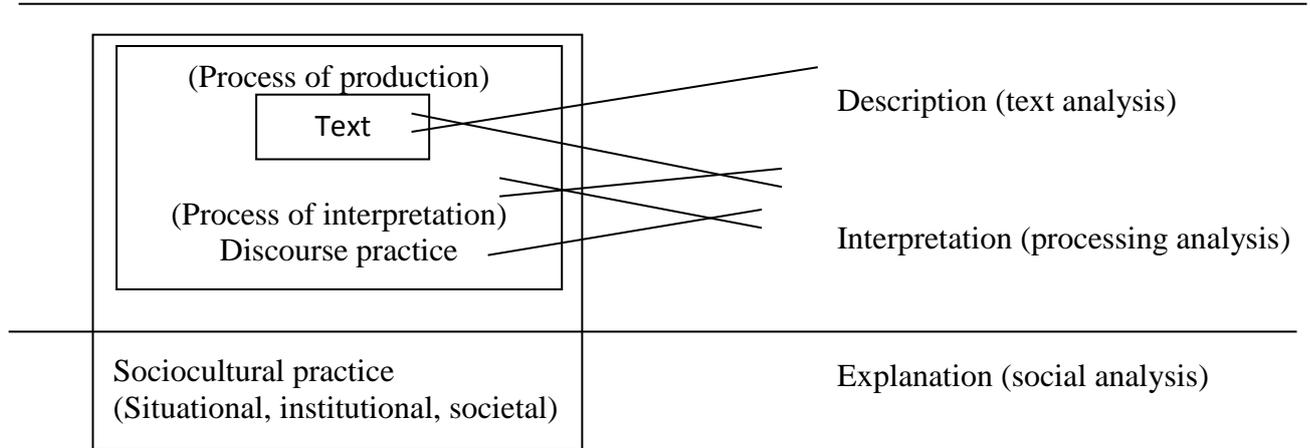
Theoretical Framework

My study uses the three-layer model of Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis which centers on assumptions that language is socially shaped and socially shaping. He argues that every text

contributes in the constitution of the systems of knowledge and in the creation of social identities and discourse. According to Fairclough (1995), the socially shaped aspect of language is an underlying convention and may not always be simple and evident. He used the term “mediator” to refer to indirect relationship of language and society. He argued that language or discourse is just a medium to bring out values, beliefs, conventions and norms of the society.

Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis is based on three components – description, interpretation and explanation. Text is at the core of the analysis and is used for linguistic evidence in the discourse process. It incorporates the textual, processing and social discourse analysis. In this framework, the linguistic properties of texts are described (text analysis), the relationship between the process of production of text and the process of interpretation of discourse practice is interpreted, and the relationship between discursive practice and social practice is explained (Fairclough, 1995).

Figure 1
Dimensions of discourse and critical discourse analysis (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, & Vetter, 2000, p. 152) (based on Fairclough, 1992)



METHOD

My analysis included all headlines pertaining to community extension services initiated by the University published between academic years 2007 to 2011. Data was constituted out of 37 *Newsette* issues posted online. As the official publication of the DLSU-D carrying its best possible goals and intentions, it is reasonable that it more likely than any other publication to reflect the engagements of the university in community extension services. Headlines are given premium in this research as this paper holds that headlines are reflective of the social and ideological representations circulating in the community. As Claude Abastado (1980) puts it, headlines summarize not only the content but also the perspectives of the readers. Because of its impressive and bigger fonts, headlines reach wider attention than those who actually read the whole article. More so,

headlines in the front page generally give observers the impression that particular topics are more important and prominent.

In the first part of my analysis, I identified all the headlines related to the conduct of community extension services. Then I re-read the headlines to categorize them into themes. Frequency of headlines containing same specific topic or event is also determined to reveal the prominence given to particular community extension topics. Repetition both through synchronicity (co-occurring specific subject headlines in the same issue of *Newsette*) and diachronicity (recurrence over time) were noted as such recurrent topics imposed importance and provide certain connection to the readers. Van Dijk (1991) noted that the assignment of importance or relevance may have ideological implications. As to the criteria used in the identification of relevant headlines, I included all headlines

on front page and internal pages which addressed the community extension services initiated by the University. Projects/programs particularly expressed in headlines shall cater and directly benefit the marginalized sectors and partner communities of the University. It does not include advocacy campaigns alone without concrete projects/programs that are directed to the marginalized sector. Other factors that may indicate prominence of headlines are also noted such as the order of appearance among pages, the top to bottom position of headlines in the page, the size and the font.

In the second part, I re-examined the articles and the headlines clustered into categories and looked into the structures, modalities and linguistic concepts. Text is interpreted in this phase. According to McCarthy (2000), making sense of a text is an act of interpretation that depends as much on what we as readers bring to a text as what authors put into it. Van Dijk's (1991) discourse approach in media research comprising of different analysis is adapted. Particularly, this part helps in understanding and interpreting the important ideological dimensions of the text and the manipulation techniques imbedded in the linguistics of the publication. Types of implications include linguistic presupposition that are inscribed from syntactic structure, anaphoric use (looking-

backward) and cataphoric use (forward looking). Style, the generalizations and the double-meanings in headlines were also examined.

In the third part, social cognition and sociocultural contexts are analyzed. The cognitive representations and strategies in the production of the news are spelled out. This part requires not only the text in understanding ideologies but also the cognitive representations and relations of the text that are shared and understood by readers.

DISCUSSION

Presentation and interpretation of results

Part 1: News Themes

The data compiled contains 15 issues of *Newsette* that are reflective of the community extension services initiated by the university. Table 1 depicts the prominence of these headlines by identifying the themes, the number of occurrences, and the pages in which they appeared. Out of 57 issues of *Newsette*, 15 reflected the community extension services initiated by the university. Table I shows that *Newsette* published a total of 17 news reports focusing on community extension services: 5 on environment; 3 on scholarship; 2 on good governance; 2 on bloodletting; 2 on volunteerism; 1 on relief operation; 1 on out-of-school-youth and 1 on detainees' rehabilitation. The

hierarchical set of topics as presented by the publication showed that community extension service-related news articles are not prominent enough to make it to the front page. The structure of the news articles favor attention to research-related presentations conducted by faculty

members and the Autonomous Status Level 4 accreditation granted by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to DLSU-D last 2011.

Table 1. Community Extension Service Headline Themes of Newsette from January 2007-December 2011

Themes	Number of Occurrences	Page number and description
Environment	5	Page 2; Full page with photos Page 5; Full page with photos Pages 3-4; Full pages with photos Page 5-6; Full pages with photos
Scholarship	3	Page 3-4; Full pages with photos Page 7; Lower half page with photo Page 8; Full page with photo
Bloodletting	2	Page 4; Full page with photo Page 6; News bit column
Good governance	2	Page 5; Upper half page Page 10; Lower half page with photo
Volunteerism	2	Page 5; Full page with photo Page 3; Full page with photos Page 6; Lower half page
Relief operation	1	Page 3; Full page with photos
Out-of-School-Youth	1	Page 3; Full page with photos
Detainees' rehabilitation	1	Page 3; Full page with photo

Closest to the front page are the environment programs published at page two of the newsletter, which focused on One Million Trees and Beyond Project (OMT), a tree planting project initiated by De La Salle Philippines and is supported by De La Salle Schools all over the country. Likewise, the said environment program and project appeared in synchronicity and

in diachronicity thus repeatedly imposing the significance of the said theme to its readers.

Important concrete community extension programs of the university still gained attention despite taken less prominently than other subjects. Most of the related articles are published full page with photos highlighting the Lasallian

mission to the vulnerable marginalized sectors as deemed important in the Lasallian Guiding Principle.

Part 2: Structure and linguistic concepts

I analyzed the linguistic features following Van Dijk's (1977) discourse approach in media research on notions of coherence, implications and style. I also included examination of common characteristics in headlines such as the cultural knowledge, designations and generalizations.

Coherence

According to Van Dijk (1997), our shared social knowledge provides connection between concepts and propositions of the text. The local and global coherence of texts which refers to the relations of subsequent text, for instance, by relations of time, condition, cause and consequence, and the overall semantic unity which summarizes the text and specifies the most important information are crucial in the property of discourse. In news discourse, it is conventionally expressed in the headline and lead paragraph. Headlines in *Newsette* may be understood best in the context of subsequent and preceding text.

One Million Trees and Beyond Project (OMT):

DLSU-D joins tree planting at Balimbing Park (*March 9-30, 2007*)

Preparing for a greener future (*July 21-August 3, 2007*)

Getting closer to One Million Trees (*April-May 2010*)

These headlines encourage readers to link events of previous issues in order to understand the whole context of the project. Coherence was made through statements of progress towards attainment of OMT. Likewise, the terms "*preparing*" and "*getting closer*" calls for a collective identity and unified action among Lasallian readers as well as imposing certain expectation and interpretation. Hence, this can be interpreted as "*we are preparing*" and "*we are getting closer*" thereby making a connection with Lasallian readers. Other related environmental themes, which composed of majority of the community extension service headlines generally make coherent reflection of the ideological stand of *Newsette*.

Implications:

- a. Linguistic presupposition from syntactic structure

In the headline DLSU-D's bloody cause recognized (*July 21-August 3, 2007*), the structure of the sentence implies that DLSU-D has already been carrying out a

“*bloody cause*”: only that this cause is now being recognized.

- b. Linguistic presupposition from anaphoric / cataphoric reference

Getting closer to One Million Trees and Beyond (*April-May 2010*) presupposed that looking backward, the university has already been making efforts to reach the One Million Trees and Beyond and is therefore coming close to attaining it.

Style

According to Van Dijk (2007), there are few theoretical notions that are necessary to explain the mental structures and processes. First is the textual representation or the meaning of the text itself. Second is the model or the unique representation of the news events as referred by the texts. These texts are socially shared and are not explained implicitly but are assumed to be known by the readers belonging to the same communicative context.

- a. Generalization and abstraction

Evident in the analysis of *Newsette* headlines is the use of imprecise and abstract terms which modifies understanding, beliefs and ideologies of readers. The headline LCDC and BJMP-Cavite work towards better rehabilitation of detainees (*June 20-July 4, 2008*) do not clearly bring out the summary of the news

article which was only about the counseling workshops for jail personnel and not the general betterment of detainees as broadly implied in the headline.

DLSU-D helps Reming victims in Bicol (*December 15 – January 11, 2007*) which denotes a wide and all-encompassing assistance to victims instead of being more precise by using “*gives relief donation*” as written in the news article. The same is also evident in the headline SERVE goes above and beyond service (*September 25-October 8, 2010*) in which focus was given more on the abstract beliefs and ideologies of SERVE rather than on specific mental models.

b. Play of words

De La Salle University-Dasmariñas: creating possibilities for environment (*November 9, 2010*) made use of the university slogan “*creating possibilities*” to encapsulate the environmental efforts of the university such as the One Million Trees and Beyond Project (OMT) and the Project Carbon Neutral (PCN). The use of such slogan creates connectedness with Lasallian readers and the recognition of its use, despite being ambiguous, relies on the cultural knowledge shared by the intended readers.

Similar to this item is the headline Preparing for a greener future (*July 21-August 3, 2007*) wherein green implies not

only a better future but also the color all La Salle Institutions and Universities. The identification of the words/phrases used relies on cultural knowledge that is assumed to be known widespread in the society.

Double-meaning

In the headline LCDC, CEAT make out-of-school youth HAPPY (*November 1-16, 2007*), the abbreviation HAPPY which stands for *Harnessing Alternative Productivity Project of the Youth* was structurally used in the sentence not directly to introduce the project but to describe the blissful out-of-school youths who are benefiting from the project.

DLSU-D's bloody cause recognized (*July 21 –August 3, 2007*) If not for the anaphoric reference, the term “bloody cause” would have signaled a different meaning. Cataphoric and anaphoric references tell readers that “bloody cause” refers to the blood donation activities regularly conducted by student organizations in the University. One reference includes the headline Student councils spearhead series of bloodletting activities (*July-August 2011*).

Part 3: Social context

Along with education and research, the role of community extension service in the realization of the Lasallian presence and mission in the country was defined during the circulation of the *Lasallian Guiding*

Principles of the Philippine Lasallian Family on 2004, particularly through the *Principles of Lasallian Social Development*. The early years of publication were marked with responsive actions yet incoherent projects on social development among 17 Lasallian institutions in the country. On September 23, 2006, De La Salle Philippines (DLSP) launched concrete environment projects called the One Million Trees and Beyond Project and, soon after, the Project Carbon Neutral. Thus, headlines gathered from 2007 onwards were inclined on environmental programs. Though other social development projects still continue, much prominence is given to OMT because of its direct link to DLSP. Meanwhile, on 2010-2011, much of the headlines gathered were focused on research and in the attainment of Level 4 Autonomous Status of the university. Achievements of the university, students and faculty members were given preference in the publication. Thus, community extension service headlines never made it to the front page from 2007-2011 though it should be noted that it occupied spaces in center pages and in full pages.

As expected, negative presuppositions were never expressed within the discourse of an official university publication. Evident in the headlines are the generated and maintained social representation, which may be half

understood and ambiguous to others, but are socially shared, implicit and mutually accepted by Lasallians. Generalization and abstraction were also widely used in the discourse favoring wide and encompassing forms instead of the more precise discourse.

CONCLUSION

Newsette headlines examined in this study offer a powerful insight of the ideology circulating among Lasallians as represented by the media. The occasional use of some representations and play of words indicated a sense of identity, collectivity and supposed familiarity of the cultural knowledge shared with intended readers. *Newsette* also reinforce a sense of belongingness to Lasallian readers through reference to presuppositions and cataphoric and anaphoric references. Among community extension service published, preference was given on environmental projects that were directly linked with De La Salle Philippines and is, consequently, being shared and implemented by Lasallian institutions.

The analysis of power dimension involves an account of the kinds of information that are provided and how these are presented by *Newsette* to its readers. As an official publication, it purposely circulates the knowledge, culture, and attitude that DLSU-D would like to build on to its readers. It facilitates understanding

of information that is consistent with their goals and interests and hinders those that are not.

The motivation and persuasion involved texts that made events appear more extensive and abstract than how they are specifically discussed in the news articles. Hence, emphasis was given not on the specific action or project implemented but on the general beliefs and ideologies that gave rise to the execution of specific actions. Also apparent in the study are the salient positions of text on specific themes and the larger bold fonts which attract more attention to readers and hence will be processed with extra time or memory resources. The concepts of environmental responsibility and preservation, education and volunteerisms emerged in this review. According to Van Dijk (2006), the most influential form of manipulation do not focus on the creation of specific preferred mental models but on more general and abstract, attitudes and ideologies. He added that changing the attitude is far more stable than specific mental models of individual language users. Thus, modifying attitudes are aimed at developing social practices meant to influence knowledge beliefs and indirectly even the actions of the recipients over a relatively long period.

This paper has allowed a cautious interpretation of the range of persuasion circulated within DLSU-D and the variety

of manipulation carried out for the creation and promotion of institutional ideologies. Furthermore, results of analysis provide building material for opinion and explanation of the perception and participation of Lasallians towards community extension services. As argued earlier, headlines draw part of its power and meaning from shared knowledge that is both influencing them and being influenced by them in turn. A further step would be to recognize the need for more appropriation on community extension service news reports that are illuminating of the ideology and identity of a Lasallian institution.

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