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**REAGAN IN THE MEDIA:  
THE USE OF CITATIONS IN *TIME*  
MAGAZINE**

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Tiedotusvälineillä on nyky-yhteiskunnassa tärkeä tehtävä tiedonvälittäjinä. Parin viime vuosikymmenen aikana tiedotusvälineet ovat omaksuneet merkittävän roolin etenkin Yhdysvaltojen poliittisessa elämässä. Poliittisen elämän tärkein hahmo on presidentti. Yhdysvaltain presidenteistä erityisesti Ronald Reaganilla on sanottu olleen hyvä suhde tiedotusvälineiden kanssa, jopa siinä määrin, että Reaganin on väitetty manipuloineen toimittajia.

Tämän tutkimuksen kohteena on Reagan, ja neljä ajanjaksoa hänen kahdelta kaudeltaan Yhdysvaltain presidenttinä vuosina 1981-1989. Ajanjaksot on valittu Reaganin kansansuosion perusteella, niin että kaksi ajanjaksoa - Yhdysvaltain hyökkäys Grenadaan 1983 ja Reaganin toisen kauden alku 1985 - ovat jaksoja, jolloin Reagan oli hyvin suosittu, ja toiset kaksi - lama vuoden 1983 alussa ja Iran-contra skandaali 1986, ovat jaksoja, jolloin Reaganin suosio oli pienempi. Materiaalina on amerikkalaisen *Time* -aikakauslehden Reaganista julkaisemat kirjoitukset näiltä ajanjaksoilta. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, korreloivatko Reaganin suosio ja hänestä kirjoitetuissa jutuissa käytetyistä lähteistä keskenään. Lisäksi selvitetään, keitä jutuissa käytettiin lähteinä ja kuinka usein heitä lainattiin. Hypoteesinä on, että Reaganin ollessa suosittu häntä itseään, ja häntä lähellä olevia lähteitä, lainataan paljon, kun taas Reaganin ollessa vähemmän suosittu, muita lähteitä lainataan enemmän.

Kävi ilmi, että lainauksilla ja Reaganin suosiolla on merkittävä tilastollinen yhteys. Reaganin toisen kauden kaksi ajanjaksoa noudattelevat hypoteesin linjaa, eli Reaganin ollessa suosittu häntä lainataan enemmän kuin muita. Ensimmäinen kausi on kuitenkin täysin erilainen, ja niinpä kun Reagan on suosittu, muita lainataan enemmän, ja kun Reagan on vähemmän suosittu, häntä itseään lainataan enemmän. Tätä selittävät kuitenkin tarkasteltujen ajanjaksojen erilainen luonne. Lainausten lähteet vaihtelivat ajanjaksoittain, mutta myös tietyt vakituiset lähteet esiintyivät kirjoituksissa. Reagania ja republikaanisen puolueen edustajia lainattiin säännöllisesti, samoin demokraattisen puoleen edustajia, entisiä hallintovirkamiehiä sekä muita tiedotusvälineitä.

Presidentti Reagan sai mielipiteensä kuuluviin *Time*-lehdessä suosiostaan riippumatta. Presidentti on politiikassa tärkeä henkilö, on hänellä sitten kansansuosio takanaan tai ei.

Asiasanat: mass media. Ronald Reagan.popularity.sources.

## CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	4
2 PREVIOUS STUDIES ON THE MASS MEDIA	8
2.1 News reporting	8
2.1.1 Making news	8
2.1.2 Quotation in news reports	9
2.1.3 Fairness and balance of news reporting	10
2.1.4 Fairness and balance of newspaper coverage	11
2.2 News sourcing	13
2.2.1 News sources and news contexts	13
2.2.2 News sources on television	14
2.2.3 Sourcing pattern of national security reporters	16
2.2.4 The press coverage of the U.S. invasion of Panama	18
2.2.5 News source use in the crash of 1987	19
2.2.6 The U.S. government as a news source	21
2.3 Presidential reporting	23
2.3.1 The presidency in <i>Time</i> magazine	23
2.3.2 The effect of presidential approval ratings	25
2.3.3 The three faces of Ronald Reagan	27

3 THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES	30
3.1 The Presidency	30
3.2 Ronald Reagan	36
3.2.1 Reagan's background	36
3.2.2 Public relations strategy	37
3.2.3 Major events affecting Reagan	
over the years 1981-1989	42
3.2.3.1 Recession	42
3.2.3.2 Grenada invasion	43
3.2.3.3 Honeymoon period	44
3.2.3.4 Iran-contra affair	45
4 THE PRESENT STUDY	48
4.1. Research questions	48
4.2 Data collection and analysis	49
4.3 Findings	57
4.3.1 Citations and popularity	57
4.3.2 Citations and sources	61
4.3.2.1 Recession	63
4.3.2.2 Grenada invasion	66
4.3.2.3 Honeymoon period	69
4.3.2.4 Iran-contra affair	72
5 DISCUSSION	76
6 CONCLUSIONS	82
BIBLIOGRAPHY	87



## 1 INTRODUCTION

"It is through the mass media that we come to know our presidents" say Tebbel and Watts (1985:13). Indeed, the mass media function as the main source of all information in today's democracies (Johnson et al. 1990:380). The media are supposed to tell people about recent events in the world and offer the public a frame through which to look at society. News tell people what they should know, want to know and need to know (Tuchman 1978:1). This is how the media is seen by many people, and, thus, the mass media have many important functions in modern society.

Especially in the American political life, the media have taken a centre stage in the last few decades. Johnson et al. (1990) point out that as the president, Congress and the Senate are situated in Washington, D.C., people depend on the media for information about politics. In this way, in Hertsgaard's (1988:55) view, the media exercise the greatest possible power in politics: it has "the power to define reality, to say what is - and what is not - important at any given time". News organizations have thus taken important public roles, such as influencing the selection and removal of those who hold office, and interpreting and determining the significance of issues and leaders' activities.

Lasorsa and Reese (1990:60) explain the journalistic principle which guides, or should guide, the news making business today. In their news stories journalists are expected to "present an objective account of news events, giving fair treatment to those with differing positions". It means that news stories should be fair and balanced in

such a way that in the case of a controversy, all the sides are taken into account and reported.

Media and politics researchers (Hart et al. 1991, Wanta 1991) have studied the president/press relations from many angles during the last twenty years, and the results have shown that the more popular the president is among the public, the better coverage he gets in the press. Studies (Paletz and Entman 1981) have also revealed that the stronger media personality the president is and the better the political and economic situation in the country is, the more likely the president can control the news and set the terms of the political debate.

Berkowitz and Beach (1993) have found that sources shape the news more strongly than do journalists. The findings of research on American journalism suggest that government sources tend to dominate news coverage (Dickson 1994, Hallin et al. 1993, Lasorsa and Reese 1990). Journalists have been found to rely on government as a news source because of its accessibility and because of the authoritativeness and newsworthiness of government statements (Berkowitch and Beach 1993).

The Reagan administration, especially, has been said to have skilfully controlled the media coverage (Hertsgaard 1988). Reagan was regarded as a real media president of the United States. He knew how to handle, even to manipulate, the media, in fact, he was supposed to have made use of the media like no other president before him. Dye and Zeigler (1990:264) claim that also other presidents "appreciated the role of the media, but none had the ability to use it as *purposively* as Reagan". With the help of his aides, as Hertsgaard (1988) points out, Reagan successfully managed the news and received favourable coverage. His public relations office took

good care of informing the journalists about important events and arranged them briefings, interviews and background material for their news stories. In this way, much of what Reagan wanted to be covered was covered in the media.

Because of his special relationship with the media, Reagan is probably the president of the United States who has been studied most widely. According to Dye and Zeigler (1990:264), the studies made on Reagan and the media have mainly concentrated on his television performance because of Reagan's exceptionally skilful use of television as a means of communicating with the people. Some studies have been made on his newspaper coverage (Senter et al. 1986) and his coverage in different mass media as well (Paletz and Guthrie 1987). Newsmagazines, however, differ from these other forms of mass media and as they have not been studied much, it is worthwhile to pay attention to them. *Time* magazine being a part of the key national news media and the biggest and most popular newsmagazine in the United States offers a good source of data. Presidential coverage of *Time* in general has been analyzed by Hart et al. (1991), however, not the coverage of an individual president. For all the attention devoted to Reagan, there seems to be surprisingly little information available of his coverage in one medium over the years, and practically no knowledge of the sources used in the news stories about him.

Despite extensive studying both in the field of president/media relations and sources usually used in news stories, little attention has been paid to the possible correlation between presidential popularity and sources cited in the news. One good indicator of such correlation should be a change in the use of the news sources. When a president is popular and the coverage he gets in the media is favourable,

sources close to him are frequently used for information for news stories. Scholars claim (Paletz and Entman 1981:21, Entman 1989:48) that when the president is losing popularity, journalists are eager to present views opposing the president in their news stories, which in turn should result in an increased use of other than the president's administration officials as sources for news.

Therefore, this study sets out to illuminate the relationship between the media and the president, in this case *Time* magazine and president Reagan, the emphasis being in the use of sources and citations in news stories.

## 2 PREVIOUS STUDIES ON MASS MEDIA

In this chapter, some relevant earlier studies on the mass media are discussed briefly. First, studies on news reporting in general, i.e. the effects of quotation, fairness and balance as well as presidential popularity on news stories, are discussed. Second, studies on the use of news sources in different mass media on various issues are presented. Finally, three studies on presidential reporting are scrutinized.

### 2.1 News reporting

#### 2.1.1 Making news

Tuchman's (1978) study *Making news: a study in the construction of reality* concentrated on the constraints of news work and the resources available for the news workers. She conducted her study by observing the work in the news offices. Tuchman (1978:81) stated in her study that "Clearly, whom one asks for information influences what information one receives". Tuchman found that reporters used centralized sources, politicians, and bureaucrats, for their news stories.

Tuchman also pointed out that reporters had to know what to ask from the source and what facts to find, because only in that way was the reporter able to get to the heart of the story. And knowing what to ask in turn influenced whom one asked. She concluded that

the choice of sources and the search for facts determined each other and that together they made up the news frame.

On the basis of her study, Tuchman (1978) claimed that the news workers regarded appointed officials as speaking for the government and in that sense proper sources of news, whereas all others had to demonstrate their validity as news sources. Furthermore, adding names and quotations helped newswriters to distance themselves from the story by getting others to express the opinions desired.

### 2.1.2 Quotation in news reports

*The impact of quotation in news reports on issue perception* by Gibson and Zillmann (1993) studied the role of direct quotation in news stories. Textbooks on journalism insist that a personal testimony contributes to a news report in a variety of ways; it makes the story interesting, believable and understanding. Gibson and Zillmann pursued to establish the actual impact of direct quotation on the reader or the listener of a news report. Respondents, 120 undergraduates, either read or listened to two news reports and then answered questions about them.

The findings of the study supported the view that "a direct quotation is a powerful journalistic tool that can be used to influence news media consumers' perceptions of reality and judgement of issues" (Gibson and Zillman 1993:799). As expected, respondents regarded the news reports with direct quotes more reliable. Therefore, more attention should be paid to the use of quotations as they can so effectively shape people's views on issues.

### 2.1.3 Fairness and balance of news reporting

Newspapers play a crucial role in the formation of public opinion, say Lacy et al. (1991). Especially in cases of controversy all sides of the story should be presented to the audience. Therefore, fairness and balance are important cornerstones of journalistic responsibility and the public credibility of the press.

In a study *Fairness and balance in the prestige press* by Lacy et al. (1991), a content analysis was used to evaluate the fairness and balance of nine U.S. daily newspapers and a sample of large circulation, but less prestigious, newspapers in their coverage of local controversies. Prestige newspapers were selected for the study because they were generally agreed to represent the best in American journalism. As for the large circulation newspapers, the researchers assumed that because of their large circulation they also had large resources for researching for their news stories, which enabled fair and balanced news stories.

Lacy et al. (1991) had two hypotheses which they set out to find answers for. First, they hypothesized that the prestige newspapers would present both sides of a controversy more often than large circulation papers. Second, they assumed that prestige newspapers would present more balanced accounts of controversies than large circulation papers. A total of twenty-one newspapers were used for content analysis: nine prestige and twelve papers of the largest circulation. All news stories involving a controversy during the week of April 21-26 1986 were included in the study. Fairness was divided into two categories based on the reporter's success, or willingness, to contact more than one source: successful contact or contact attempt mentioned, or no-contact. Balance was measured by

comparing the number of words given to each side of the controversy. Three coders were used.

The findings of the study supported the first hypothesis which expected prestige newspapers rather than large circulation papers to present both sides of a controversy. The average percentage of stories without both sides was 9 percent in the prestige papers and 20.7 percent in the others. Also the second hypothesis of the prestige papers presenting more balanced account of controversies was supported. Lacy et al. concluded that on average, prestige newspapers performed better than did large circulation papers. Only 9 percent of the prestige paper stories did not include both sides, whereas the average for the others was 20.7 percent. The difference was statistically significant. On the basis of this study, Lacy et al. (1991:370) stated that "if giving equivalent space to different sides of a controversy is a measure of balance, these newspapers are not approaching balance". On the contrary, giving considerably more space for one side than the other seemed to be the norm.

#### 2.1.4 Fairness and balance of newspaper coverage

Fairness and balance in newspapers have been recently studied by Fico and Soffin (1995), too. They, however, included also national and state issues to the study whereas, the study by Lacy et al. (1991), which was discussed above, concentrated on local controversies. Also Fico and Soffin acknowledged the importance of fairness in the press and regard it as "an appropriate standard of journalistic performance". Their view was that because the access to the media was limited, the news media itself should have provided the public



with all the relevant sides of issues. Fico and Soffin's assumption was that fairness would guide how news organizations search for and use sources to cover a controversial issue. For example, the American Society of Newspaper Editors and the Society of Professional Journalists have accepted certain standards of fairness and balance, which the members are expected to follow.

An important objective of the study by Fico and Soffin (1995) was to define the abstract terms fairness and balance on the basis of content analysis. The three key research questions were: 1) How fair and balanced were individual news stories, 2) What issues received the fairest and most unfair treatment, and 3) Did fairness and balance vary with such factors as size and reputation of a newspaper, average workload of the reporters etc. A purposive sample of nine prestige newspapers and a sample of nine largest daily newspapers in Michigan were selected. The newspapers were first analyzed by their circulation, reporter workload and other factors determining the category they belonged to. The study concentrated on public policy issues and as those were defined stories that were published during February 1991 and that focused on opposition between at least two parties on a legislative, executive or judicial branch. 259 stories on 18 issues met this criterion. Fairness and balance were assessed by how many sources on each side of the controversy were cited in the news story, where in the news story the quotations were situated and the total column inches given to assertions by both sides.

Nearly half of the stories were one-sided in their presentation of controversy, and the stories were substantially imbalanced. The stories of the Persian Gulf War were by far the most imbalanced in favour of the Bush administration sources. The researchers concluded that very few of the issues could be said to have been covered in a fair

and balanced manner. It became clear that sources used for stories did not reflect the distribution of opinions on some issues. Fico and Soffin (1995:630) said that "indeed, fairness probably emerges from some inter-action of professional capability and ethical self-consciousness in journalists. If either is lacking, fairness will be lacking."

## 2.2 News sourcing

### 2.2.1 News sources and news contexts

Berkowitz and Beach (1993:4) maintained in their study *News sources and news contexts: the effect of routine news, conflict and proximity* that it is the interaction between journalists and news sources that shape the news most. Based on previous studies they claimed that more than half of news stories were initiated by official sources and deal with government. Berkowitz and Beach collected the data from three of the largest Iowan newspapers by means of a content analysis, and their emphasis was on staff-written articles of at least five column inches in length. Each person to whom information was attributed was considered a news source. People were coded "for their organizational affiliation and their status within the organization" the categories being a) government, b) affiliated citizen (business, interest groups, other organizations), and c) unaffiliated citizens. Also source status was coded: a) executive, b) professional, c) worker, d) position not specified, and e) unaffiliated. Context variables, that is, the news channel: whether routine or non-routine, were collected as well and included to the data for each news source. The last factor included in the study was proximity, which was coded according to whether a

story dealt with matters in the main distribution area of a newspaper or somewhere else.

Berkowitz and Beach (1993:6) found in their study that news related to conflicts were likely to include a wider range of views than news involving no conflict. This reporting on all sides of an issue resulted first from journalists' concern for objectivity and second, from the fact that controversy usually attracts greater readership. The research also revealed that journalists' regular source of news was largely composed of officials in government and business, but journalists were aware and familiar with other people who could provide information for news stories. Routine channel news meant stories coming from officials, also in the form of news releases and press conferences. Berkowitz and Beach concluded that the effect of these kind of official and organization-based news was that people received "a relatively small range of source-defined alternatives." They, as other scholars before them, pointed out that by focusing on elites as the source of news, the media tended to reinforce the dominant ideology.

### 2.2.2 News sources on television

*The structure of news sources on television: a network analysis of "CBS News", "Nightline", "MacNeil/Lehrer," and "This week with David Brinkley"* by Reese et al. (1994) used network analysis to examine the use of sources in television programs. The motivation for the study was the notion that the mainstream media covered issues in a very similar way. Reese et al. (1994:87) argued that

when we look at who says what in the news, it helps us get beyond imprecise statements about what 'the media' say about an issue: the media express views by allowing newsmakers to express theirs. Thus, although the media are often said to be "powerful," in large that power derives from the media's ability to amplify the views of certain powerful sources, such as the president, members of Congress, and other elites.

The interconnections between the sources were emphasized in the study. The hypothesis was that there was a single "insiders" group consisting of officials, which was asked to comment on a number of important national issues. The period of time chosen for this study was October and November 1987, a period during which many important issues, like the stock market crash and the Persian Gulf conflict, were covered by the media. All sources who spoke on camera in the above-mentioned television programs were coded along with their affiliation and title, unnamed sources were omitted. If two or more sources commented on the same issue, they were regarded as symmetrically linked. If a source appeared alone, that person was coded as an "isolate" in the network structure. Sources were categorized in the following way: 1) officials, divided into senators, representatives, judges, administration, former administration, 2) interest group spokespersons, 3) political candidates, 4) corporate executives, 5) experts, 6) labour leaders, 7) other professionals, 8) workers, 9) local sources, 10) foreign sources, and 11) journalists.

A total of 27 groups were identified. The researchers found that the most striking feature was a large, 237-member group, which commented on a number of different issues, such as abortion, the stock market, the Persian Gulf policy and the U.S./Soviet summit. This large group contained most of the senators, representatives as

well as most of the former and current administration sources. Members of this group appeared more than once and thus made the group more coherent. Smaller groups were also found, but they handled a smaller range of issues and the groups were not so coherent.

The hypothesis of a coherent "insiders" group used as sources on television was supported. Reese et al. (1994) saw the need for the use of government sources when covering governmental issues, but they warned of carrying this too far. The increased use of various experts, for example, university professors, economists, and medical doctors, became apparent, too. For future studies, Reese et al. suggested the analysis of what the sources say. But, ultimately, as Reese et al. (1994:104) pointed out, "one need not know what sources actually say on television to obtain an insight into the ideological framework that they constitute. Just the selection of news sources and their combination within and across programs and issues speak volumes."

### 2.2.3 Sourcing patterns of national security reporters

Also Hallin et al. (1993:753) point out the fact that government sources dominate media coverage of both national and international affairs. In their study of *Sourcing pattern of national security reporters*, they analyzed the sourcing of 23 defense and national security reporters from seven major newspapers. The news stories used in the study were from 1988 and every other story from every reporter was taken into account. The sample contained 678 stories. Each time a source was mentioned in the article, the identity of the source was coded. Each source was coded only once in one paragraph, but coded for every paragraph in which it was used. The total number of citations

was 7,956. To guarantee the validity of the study two coders were used.

Hallin et al. (1993) found that particularly executive branch government sources dominated the national security reporting by every twenty-three reporters of the seven newspapers, accounting for 58.2 percent of identifiable citations. Congressional sources accounted for 15.1 percent of the citations being the second biggest group outside the executive branch. Surprisingly, nongovernment sources accounted only for 5.8 percent of all citations. The largest category of nongovernment sources consisted of people from various research groups, who were not, however, entirely autonomous from the government either. On the one hand, Hallin et al. found some significant variation in the use of sources in the different newspapers, but on the other hand, the concentration of sources was fairly high in every paper.

Hallin et al. (1993) set out to explore also other dimensions in the use of sources in the news stories. In the same study that has been discussed above they counted the length of citations, their distribution in the stories and the frequency of anonymous sources. The findings showed that quotations were longest for the least cited sources, i.e. former government and nongovernment sources, which implies that those sources were not used very often but when they were "their function is to provide perspective, and they are therefore often allowed to elaborate at greater length." It also turned out that executive branch sources were cited higher up in the stories than other sources. The percentage of unidentified sources was 43.2 percent. Hallin et al. argued that this high number of unidentified sources could indicate deferential journalism, but it could also indicate the

opposite if it, for example, resulted from investigative journalism where reporters developed sources outside the routine channels.

Hallin et al. concluded that reporters did make choices as to whom cite in their news stories, but they did so in more or less narrow limits. One significant factor was the policy of a particular paper as well as general news gathering routines. However, the dominance of government sources was so extreme that in Hallin et al.'s (1993:763) view the result raised "serious questions about the quality of journalism". They also argued that by using official sources reporters made the information inaccessible to ordinary citizens, reliance on also othersources might make the reporting more understandable and closer to the average reader.

#### 2.2.4 The press coverage of the U.S. invasion to Panama

Mutual dependence between government officials and journalists is a requirement for effective political process, argues Dickson (1994:809). According to Dickson, this state of affairs can result from three different factors. First, the relationship between the press and government officials is nowadays conciliatory rather than antagonistic, which in turn is reflected in the coverage that supports the dominant ideology in society. Second, the close daily working relationship between journalists and government sources may cause "press reliance for officialdom". Third, in a democratic society public officials are representatives of the people so they are actually voicing people's views.

In her study of the press and the U.S invasion of Panama, Dickson (1994) used *The New York Times* as a source of data. The news

stories analyzed in the study were collected between 20 December and 31 March 1990, and all the stories concerning the Panama invasion were taken into account. The articles were coded by type of news source, valence of those sources as well as the presence of government and non-government themes. An opinion for this study was defined as "any statement that contains value judgement about the invasion" (Dickson 1994:812). The sources were then categorized according to whether they were positive, negative or ambivalent towards the U.S. invasion. Independent coders were used for all analyses.

Dickson (1994) found that the press relied heavily on government sources and themes, and served to sustain the U.S. government view. It rarely turned to the Panamanians for a comment. For the entire sample period, the majority of sources were negative towards the U.S. A total of 344 themes were counted in the news stories and 61 percent of them were categorized as governmental. So, although allowing also critics to express their views, the U.S. government clearly defined the political debate. The study thus revealed that at least a subtle ideological bias pervaded the main stream press and that "the press often serves to sustain the U.S. government line in foreign policy crises. Dickson (1994:819) concluded that all this "reminds us of how difficult 'objectivity' is to achieve and how powerful a grip the government has on public communication."

### 2.2.5 News source use in the crash of 1987

Lasorsa and Reese (1990) claimed in their study *News source use in the crash of 1987: a study of four national media* that source attribution, that is, "the attributing positions to individual persons", was a



fundamental practice in the mass media. To write a story, reporters had to turn to people for information and opinions. These people were called sources, and they were, then, cited in the news stories. This attribution of information to particular sources served also important functions for the audience. Judging by the people or organizations used as sources in the news story, a critical reader could evaluate the source's capacity to offer information and also motivation for presenting it.

In Lasorsa and Reese's (1990) view, the choice of sources determined the way news stories are framed. The selection of sources was considered to be an active process in two respects. First, the researchers pointed out how sources could actively promote themselves into the news, and secondly, journalists were active in deciding suitable sources for their stories. What also made sources important was that they were generally assumed to articulate their own interest. This being the case, the examining of sources in the news stories should reveal who actually gained access to the press and how issues were framed.

Employing content analysis, Lasorsa and Reese (1990) examined the coverage of the stock market crash in November 1987 by four national news media: *CBS Evening News*, *Newsweek*, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. This event was chosen because of its importance and the wide coverage it received in the media. The four selected media published 167 crash stories during the time period, and in those stories 1022 sources from government, business, academic life, Wall Street, lobbyist, foreign leaders and unidentified sources voiced their views on the crash. The study revealed that the print media favoured Wall Street sources and used more sources altogether, whereas CBS favoured government sources. The difference

in the use of news stories was significant between the broadcast network and the print media. Television relied more on unattributed sources and the print media on Wall Street sources. Lasorsa and Reese assumed that the majority of sources used in the stories would be identified with particular organizations, and this hypothesis was confirmed. They also found that sources talked more about the effects than causes of the crash.

As different sources said different things about the cause and effects of the crash and the media differed so much in their sourcing, Lasorsa and Reese (1990) argued that it was reasonable to ask whether the audience received a different picture depending on the medium they turned to for information. The media gave their audience basically the same story but because of the differences in news sources, the stories published in different media differed in their point of view and emphasis.

Lasorsa and Reese (1990) acknowledged the different audiences of the studied for media and the implications that might have had to the way these media reported on matters. *The Wall Street* journal served the financial community, the *New York Times* was the national elite newspaper and *Newsweek* and the network news casts had more of a mass audience. Different audiences looked for different information in the media which had its effects on the ways of reporting.

#### 2.2.6 The U.S. government as a news source

In the study entitled *Toward a theory of press-state relations in the United States* Bennett (1990) analysed the way in which *The New York Times* covered the U.S. policy in Nicaragua between 1983-1986. To start

with, Bennett (1990:103) defined the proper use of news sources as follows:

Culturally speaking, it is generally reasonable for journalists to grant government officials a privileged voice in the news, unless the range of official debate on a given topic excludes or 'marginalizes' stable majority opinion in society, and unless official actions raise doubts about political propriety.

Bennett's hypothesis was that journalists tend to index a range of opinions in their news stories according to the range of views expressed in the official governmental debate on a given issue. In practice this would mean that other than governmental voices would be included in the news stories only when they expressed opinions already emerging in official discussion. In Bennett's view, such a finding would show journalists' reliance on government officials as a primary source of news.

*The New York Times* coverage of the U.S. policy making on Nicaragua was chosen for the object of the study. Bennett located a total of 2,148 news articles and editorials, and the results were generated by measuring the frequency, direction, and source of opinions voiced in *The Times* in all Nicaragua-related stories. Two coders read the articles and judged whether an opinion was voiced on the contra policy and if that was the case, the coders also judged who voiced it and the direction of the opinion. Then the opinions were assigned to various categories of voice: "editorial, administration source, congressional source, judicial source, and popular (i.e. nongovernmental source, including interest groups and polls), and, finally, foreign opinion from U.S. allies." However, Bennet admitted

that the press did not often apply this model in practice but had a tendency "to index" various viewpoints and sources according to the views expressed in "the mainstream government debate about a given topic". In other words, the press reflected the strength of the debate. Bennett found that out of 889 opinions voiced, 604 came from U.S. government sources. Only 15 percent of the opinions came from nongovernment sources, polls being referred to very seldom.

Bennett (1990:121) concluded that the findings suggested that "*Times* coverage was cued by Congress, not by the paper's own political agenda or by a sense of adversarial journalism." He also remarked that the contemporary journalistic norm tends to ignore the public opinion, or at least fit it into the range of institutional debate. This has turned the political world upside-down where "democracy becomes whatever the government ends up doing" (Bennett 1990:120).

## 2.3 Presidential reporting

### 2.3.1 The presidency in *Time* magazine

Hart et al.'s (1991) large-scale study on *The mindscape of the presidency: Time magazine, 1945-1985* scrutinized the way the presidency has been presented to the American people during the last four decades. By applying a rhetorical approach, which regards news reporting as a persuasive text designed to affect the public's feelings and attitudes, they set out to gather comprehensive data on the nature and quality of the relationship between the presidency and the media.

*Time* magazine was chosen for the study because of its clarity in political reporting. Furthermore, *Time* had been used for studies like this before, which allowed comparison of the results with the

previous studies. The emphasis of the study was in media psychology, that is: how the portrayals of the presidents might influence what people expect of their president. Articles included in this study were those in which the presidency or the name of the president appeared in the title or in the first paragraph. It was also made sure that each president would be proportionately presented in the sample. As a result, 412 articles were selected, a minimum of ten articles per president per year. The content analysis of the articles produced many kinds of data. First, each information source used by *Time* was recorded. Secondly, each presidential role portrayed in each article was categorized in the following way: a) chief legislator, b) commander-in-chief, c) head of party, d) chief diplomat, e) head of state, f) private citizen, or g) multiple. In addition to these, a number of other features were coded: presidential activities, imagery, presidential qualities, and presidential challenges. Last, the president's social world was examined whereby every person cited, depicted, or quoted in the articles were divided into the following categories: a) White House regulars (aides), b) Washington officials (members of Congress, federal office holders), c) Washington power brokers (members of judiciary, military, foreign leaders, celebrities), and d) local constituents (mayors, governors, private citizens).

Hart et al. (1991:19) found that *Time* covered the presidents emphasizing the psychology; depiction of the presidents' personality exceeded the attention paid to their politics. Most regularly, *Time* featured the president as a private citizen. Time was found to project "an integrated presidential personality when times are good, a disintegrated one when times are bad, and it finds the force of personality in each major political event." Hart et al. concluded that

*Time* magazine treated the president more of "a psychic projection" than as a political actor.

### 2.3.2 The effect of presidential approval ratings

Wanta (1991) brought up the importance of the presidential approval ratings in the political life and also in the president's relationship with the press and the public in his study of *Presidential approval ratings as a variable in the agenda-building process*. It has been suggested by mass media researchers that approval ratings play a significant role in the way the president is covered, e.g. reporters may fear for their own public standing if they criticize a popular president. Gandy (as quoted by Wanta 1991:674) suggests that when analysing the relationship between sources and journalists, researchers should pay more attention to the utility of information supplied by sources: "Information generated by a popular president should have more utility to a reporter than information generated by an unpopular president. If the source is perceived to be a more attractive to the general public, information from the source should be a more valuable commodity." Gandy claims that a president will have more success in getting his public statements reported in the media if he is popular.

In his study, Wanta raised the question: can a president use high approval ratings to his advantage in his dealings with the press and public? His hypothesis was that president would have more success in his dealings with the mass media and the public when his approval rating were high. As a basis for the time frame of his study, Wanta used dates during which Gallup polls asking "What is the number one problem facing our country today?" were conducted.

Two polls from each year of the study (1970-1988) were selected. Wanta divided the study into three parts: public agenda, presidential agenda and news media agenda. First, to determine the public concern for individual issues, the Gallup poll results were analyzed, and according to them, a list of public agenda issues was formed. The same list of issues was used to measure also the president and the media. Second, to determine the amount of attention each president devoted to issues, *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* was consulted. All speeches and public policy statements made by the president in the four weeks before and after the Gallup polls used in the study were coded. The total number of lines devoted to each issue was also measured. Finally, two media - *The New York Times* and *CBS Evening News* - were examined from the same time periods as the presidential agenda. One news media agenda was formed by all front page stories on individual issues as determined by the Gallup poll.

This method produced an agenda of issues and their relative importance for the president, press and public, and these agendas were then analyzed and compared by using Spearman rank-order correlations. Then the Gallup polls asking "Do you approve or disapprove of the way President \_\_\_\_\_ is running the country?" conducted nearest in time to the most important polls were included in the study, and the percentage of respondents who approved of the president's job was used as a popularity measure. The results of the analysis showed that the four presidents examined in this study did not influence *The New York Times* at times of high popularity. In other words, hypothesis 1 was not supported. Hypothesis 2, however, was supported since the presidents did appear to have influenced the

public's perception of the importance of the issues more when their popularity was high.

The findings of the study by Wanta (1991) demonstrated the complex relationship between the president, the press, and public opinion. Wanta argued that methodological problems, like possible inappropriate time-lag and the question of direction of causality, might be the reasons for the approval ratings not seeming to have much effect on the relationship between the president and the mass media. Presidential popularity, on the other hand, appeared to play an important role between the president and the public. Popular presidents influenced the public perception of issues, but Wanta suggested that perhaps presidents became popular when they reacted to the news media and public opinion. There seemed to exist a sort of reciprocal influence between the president and the public which was difficult to explain. One more finding was that also individual presidents' popularity can affect his relationship with the media and the public. Finally, the study showed that although the presidential agenda may be covered in the press, the media also cover their own agenda of issues. These two agenda, then, competed for the public attention. Last Wanta (1991:679) stated that despite the president's popularity or unpopularity, the media were forced to pay attention to him, because he was "the nation's number one news maker".

### 2.3.3 The three faces of Ronald Reagan

*The three faces of Ronald Reagan* by Paletz and Guthrie (1987) was a study on the coverage of two events in three different mass media. Paletz and Guthrie pointed out two common beliefs about Reagan's media coverage: some believed it was the favourable media coverage



that largely contributed to Reagan's success, whereas others thought that "rather than bolstering Reagan, the nation's reporters have written or said that Reagan is dumb, lazy, out of touch with reality, cheap, senile, ruining NATO, tearing up his own safety net, even violating his constitutional oath".

To illuminate Reagan's real media coverage, Paletz and Guthrie chose three media outlets, *Durham Morning Herald*, *CBS Evening News*, and *The New York Times*, to be studied. They hypothesized that different media would react differently to Reagan's public relations efforts. The first event they examined was a 25 percent cut in tax rates in 1981, and the second was Reagan's European trip in 1984. Paletz and Guthrie's basic unit of analysis was a sentence, and each sentence was coded to be policy, politics, patriotism, personality or analysis. Secondly, the sources were categorized as follows: Reagan quoted, Reagan paraphrased or discussed, Reagan supported, critic, and neutral or no source.

Paletz and Guthrie found that, to some extent, the three different media focused on different aspects of the presidency, and that they also differed in their vulnerability to the public relations techniques of the Reagan White House. Being a local newspaper, *Durham Morning Herald* had only limited space for national news and thus it did not publish adversity of stories about the presidency. In this newspaper, Reagan appeared as the dominant policy-maker and was most favourably covered. *The New York Times*, for its part, covered Reagan diligently; it published his visions and versions of the events, and policy issues. But, unlike in *Durham Morning Herald*, in the *New York Times* also Reagan's critics received coverage. Finally, *CBS Evening News* showed Reagan wherever he made himself available. Not many critics were allowed to express their views, but instead, the

reporters expressed scepticism about Reagan's intentions and interpreted his actions politically.

In conclusion, Paletz and Guthrie (1987:16) stated that although there were many sides of Reagan, the media was unable to "capture Reagan beyond the cliches, in all his complexity and contradictions." In Paletz and Guthrie's view, this should be of concern when thinking about political news reporting today.

All the studies discussed here show how widely this area has been examined in the last decades, but they also show where there is need for more studying. The impact of quotation as well as fairness and balance of news reporting have been of interest to the researchers. In addition, the use of sources in newspapers has attracted a lot of attention, as well as the interrelations between sources on television. However, not much attention has been paid to the research of newsmagazines, which are different from other news media. Furthermore, previous studies have concentrated on examining news sources in general, but have not related the results to a particular president. The importance of presidential popularity has been noted as well, but it has not been studied enough yet. The U.S. presidents themselves have been studied over the years, some studies have even examined the correlation between presidential popularity and media coverage, but news sourcing and presidential popularity have not been compared with each other before. Considering all this, there is obviously need for more research in this field.

### 3 THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

#### 3.1. The Presidency

The President's central position in American government is based on the fact that he is the only nationally elected politician who can claim to speak for the United States as a whole. Both in foreign policy and in domestic affairs, the President can claim to be presenting the national interest as he sees it.

says Grant (1991:72). This gives the president power that Congress, whose members are elected by the public as well, does not have, since each Congressman is seen to represent only the state from which he comes from.

Denton and Hahn (1986) note that most of the scholars agree on the fact that the presidency is both an institution and a role. The presidency of the United States is an office held by one person at a time, but according to the Constitution it includes a number of different roles. Grant (1991:74-77) lists five roles. First of all, the president is the head of the state who represents the country abroad, welcomes dignitaries and attends also ceremonial functions. The president is also the chief executive, which means he is <sup>thus</sup> responsible for carrying out policies and laws passed by Congress. Third, the president functions as the chief legislator by initiating Bills, persuading legislators and using veto power. Fourth, the president is the chief diplomat for the United States, and fifth, he is the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces. These five roles are the constitutional roles of the president.

These different official roles of the president overlap with each other, and together with unofficial roles, like being the chief of

his party, world leader and the voice of the people, they make up the presidential office as a whole. Denton and Hahn (1986:173) claim that the source of presidential power lies in the combination of these various roles. Sometimes a good performance in one area will help to gain success in another but sometimes the roles are in conflict with each other. In Grant's (1991:79,80) view "Only one thing is certain: the burdens placed upon a President make total success an impossibility. The President must attempt to use his constitutional and political powers to maximize advantages where he can, and minimize the risks of failures and mistakes".

The formal qualities of the president of the United States are clearly stated in the Constitution: the president must be thirty-five years of age or over, must have been a resident of the country for fourteen years, and must be a natural-born American citizen" (Grant 1991:217). As Denton and Hahn (1986:181) point out, so far the presidents of the United States have tended to be white, male, Protestants, members of "high status" and they have tended to practice law. All this implies that in addition to the formal qualifications, there are a lot of other qualities that people expect from a president. According to Denton and Hahn (1986), most presidential scholars agree on three major aspects that the American people want from their president. First, the president should be a competent manager of the government. Second, he is expected to initiate programs and legislation as well as take care of the economy. Third, the people also need a sense of legitimacy from their president. Finally, Berkman and Kitch (1986:204) list qualities which people commonly connect with the president: "deciveness, strength, competence and leadership ability". It is also important for citizens that the president is able to

project a good and effective image as well as manage information, and, in general, people want to consider the president their advocate.

"The media and politicians need each other," maintain Johnson et al. (1990:369). Johnson et al. explain that politics and politicians are the most important source of information for the mass media. The media get interviews, opinions about recent events and sometimes even anonymous leaks from politicians. Politicians on their part need the media to get publicity for themselves and their issues. The relationship between the media and politicians is a tense one, and it includes both cooperation and conflicts. The conflicts arise from different goals. The reporters' main goal is to get important and interesting stories published, whereas the politicians try to make sure that the stories written about them serve their purpose.

As Johnson et al. (1990) put it, the media are profit-seeking businesses and their coverage depends on their estimates on what people will find interesting. They decide on the newsworthiness of a matter, and the public only learns about the events the media regards as worth reporting. Denton and Hahn (1986:xiv) maintain that the mass media have increased the size of the audience of politics and they have also provided the public immediate access to politicians. Fink (1988:222) has estimated that there are about 10,000 reporters, editors, writers, columnists, freelancers, and correspondents in Washington, of which 4,300 concentrate on covering Congress and 1,600 the White House. This illustrates how highly politics and politicians are regarded as a source of news. Paletz and Entman (1981:16) argue that "prime news generally involve prominent, powerful people in action or, more desirable from the media's point of view, in conflict". What follows is that news usually deal with

politicians and government officials whose decisions affect the lives of ordinary citizens.

The president is the most important part of the government, at least judging by his newsworthiness. The president gets the most coverage of all the politicians, and any piece of information concerning the president's news, no matter how trivial or private it is. "The president is news: who he is, what he thinks, what he says...where he goes, what he does" say Paletz and Entman (1981:55), and continue that the media covers all the president's actions because it is both important and interesting to the public and because the presidency is the symbol of American democracy. In Denton and Hahn's (1986:272) words, what makes the president so newsworthy is that he leads the country, protects the people and also defines and embodies them. According to Graber (1989), the presidency is a good media target because it is a single-headed institution, which is readily personified and which gives the media and media audiences a familiar and easily dramatized focus of attention.

Indeed, DeFleur and Dennis (1985) suggest that no one in the world makes heavier use of the mass media than the president of the United States, no matter who is in the office. The president being as important a figure as he is, the press has no alternative but to print or record his actions and comments, say Tebbel and Watts (1985:537). The media attention is important for the president so that he will get publicity for his policy initiatives. Johnson et al. (1990) not<sup>with</sup>, however, that although the coverage of the president is automatically guaranteed in the mass media, it does not ensure that the issues themselves will get much attention or that they will get the kind of attention that the president would like them to get.

Lippman (as quoted by Hertsgaard 1988:78) comments on the role of the press that at its best the press is "a servant and guardian of institutions". The media are regarded as a watchdog in the society, and it is expected to keep an eye on the leaders of the country (Tebbel and Watts 1985). Also Hertsgaard (1988) emphasizes this role of the media as the Fourth Estate saying that the prime function of the media is to find and present the truth about government's actions for the public. In Hertsgaard's view, many news organizations define the proper coverage of the White House as reporting of the actions and views of the president and his aides. To be able to do that effectively, the reporters have to be in terms with the White House officials to get important information. On the other hand, the reporters are supposed to have an adversarial relationship with the government. The problem is, how to have such a relationship with the very people upon whom and whose help one is most dependent. This is what puts the reporters into such a difficult position. It is not easy to be a watchdog and hold the government accountable when all the information comes from government itself.

Many media politics researchers (Paletz and Entman 1981, Dye and Zeigler 1990, Johnson et al. 1990) have reported on a clear pattern in the development of presidential popularity. The theory suggests that the president always takes office with broad public support but the support usually declines over time. The renewal of the support takes place with dramatic action or some kind of crisis. Grant (1991:95) maintains that every new president takes office with optimism and good will by the public and the media. Public expectations are often too great and as people are disappointed in their hopes, the president's popularity usually declines.

Fink (1988:224, see also Paletz and Entman 1981:76) suggests that a president's public popularity forms the relationship between the media and the White House. If the president is a weak personality, there is no substantive policy and open leadership becomes apparent, the media assume a leading role. But, on the other hand, if the president enjoys the public's support, is a strong leader, and knows how to project a positive image of himself, the influence of the media wanes. Paletz and Entman especially emphasize that the greater the president's public support, the better reporters treat him in their stories. Tebbel and Watts are of the opinion that the relationship between the press and the presidency is continuously changing. However, Tebbel and Watts (1985:3) observe, some things remain the same although presidents change: "no president has escaped press criticism, and no president has considered himself fairly treated [in the press]". Every administration begins with mutual protestations of good will and end with mistrust and recriminations.

Berkman and Kitch (1986:210) claim that a president who is able to gain control over the media and its political agenda can use the media to enhance his power. If the president loses control over the media, the media can undermine/weaken the presidential power. Paletz and Entman (1981:63) present also four ways by which presidential power can be weakened. First, there are inconvenient events, to which the president can do very little. Second, institutional conflicts within the American political system can weaken the status of the president. Third, the president's personal incapacities or failures at media management can harm his image, and finally, some news-gathering and reporting norms may present him in an unfavourable light.



### 3.3. Ronald Reagan

#### 3.2.1. Reagan's background

Tebbel and Watts (1985) summarize Reagan's background in their book on American presidents. Ronald Reagan was born in 1911, and he grew up in <sup>the</sup> a small town of Dixon, Illinois. He studied sociology and economics and graduated in 1932, at the time of great depression and unemployment in the United States. His successful career as a radio sports announcer in Davenport, Iowa, attracted the attention of Hollywood, and in the 1940s Reagan started playing in mediocre films in Hollywood.

Reagan's political and administrative career started in Hollywood, where he acted as president of the Screen Actors Guild during 1947-1952 and 1959-1960. He was first a member of the Democratic party but quite soon he turned into a moderate Republican. After his film career Reagan seriously turned his attention to politics, and he was elected governor of California in 1967. Tebbel and Watts (1985:534) argue that Reagan began his term as a governor as "a complete amateur" without a proper program for the term and without much knowledge of how the government in the United States works, and "He was, as he himself jokingly admitted, playing the role of a governor, just as he had played movie roles."

In his account of the American political system, Grant (1991:218) remarks that there is no preparation program for the presidency, but the duties of state governors resemble those of the Head of the State, although the state governors' concerns in the state capitals are purely domestic and they have no responsibility for the

vital area of foreign affairs. Therefore, the governors of major states are often presidential candidates. California, one of the most important and most populous states in America, provided an important opportunity for an aspiring politician like Reagan.

Tebbel and Watts (1985:535) describe how Reagan pursued the presidency for the first time in 1975. However, during his campaign he learned that the presidential candidate would receive attention different from that of a governor: "His political ideas were picked apart and shown to be as simplistic as they were, and in his encounters with reporters he demonstrated a lamentable lack of background knowledge."

Reagan tried again in the next presidential election with more experience and knowledge about campaigning. Tebbel and Watts (1985:535) note that he projected the image of himself as an ordinary man who was not a politician. His lack of knowledge about both domestic and world affairs came out at times, and he more than once tried to cover up his hearing loss. Despite his age Reagan advertised himself as young and vigorous candidate. American people saw in Reagan the qualities they wanted from their president. He got the public's support and was elected the 40th president of the United States in 1980.

### 3.2.2. Public relations strategy

By the time Reagan was elected to the White House he had already spent fifty years of his life using all the possible mass media. Barrett (1983:33) lists that Reagan was a former actor, both on stage and in movies, a radio sports announcer, a television personality, an author of a newspaper column and a speech writer. Barret concludes that

considering all this, it should be no surprise how well Reagan's communication strategy worked. Berkman and Kitch (1986:182), for their part, say that there is no doubt that Reagan's skills and ease in front of a television camera made it easier for him to appear at his best on television and in that way to promote his goals. Reagan used television more frequently and effectively than any other president before him.

Tebbel and Watts (1985:535, 536) comment that in the White House there is all the possible knowledge of public relations and news management. The knowledge became still a more powerful instrument in the hands of a president who knew how to use it. To make most use of the public relations apparatus, "Reagan possessed an ideal combination of qualities." He was very popular and he was also an "amiable, wisecracking, pointedly nonintellectual personality." Johnson et al. (1990:481) mention that Reagan was called the Great Communicator because he was a good story teller and a convincing speaker.

As Hertsgaard (1988:6) puts it, Reagan's administration was certainly not the first to establish a public relations apparatus within the White House, but few, if any, administrations had made the news management as central part of their governance as Reagan did. Hertsgaard continues that the Reagan White House public relations model was based on a simple observation by Richard Whirtlin, a longtime Reagan pollster: the way the press covers the president has an effect on people's views on him, because people get their information almost exclusively through the press. In order to ensure positive coverage and thus public support, the Reagan aides, Richard Whirtlin, Michael Deaver, David Gergen, James Baker, concentrated

on controlling to the maximum extent possible what was written about the president and his policies.

Hertsgaard (1988) claims that, all in all, the Reagan White House managed to control the political agenda and it also set the terms of political debate. It was regarded as one of their great successes and key to their policy triumphs. According to Fink (1988), this could only be done by controlling what the President said, how he said it, where and when and under what conditions. As reported by Hertsgaard (1988), the Reagan White House communication policy included also some other very simple but effective principles. Important corner stones were planning everything ahead, staying on the offensive, controlling the flow of information and limiting access to the president. As for the issues taken up, the Reagan White House only talked about issues it wanted to, ignoring other possible topics introduced by the press. Reagan and his aides also paid special attention to being unanimous and repeating the same messages time after time. Planning, however, was the key to everything else. The Reagan model worked so well that the relations between the president and the press will never be the same after Reagan.

Every president has a staff whose sole job is to help manage image and information, say Denton and Hahn (1986:61). They continue that these aides "ensure that the administration gets its side of an issue to the American people as well as ensure that the proper image of presidential behaviour is conveyed". Denton and Hahn list a total of 50 people belonging to the public relations staff who planned and coordinated presidential public appearances and information under Reagan in the White House. Reagan placed such a great deal of importance upon his staff that Dye and Zeigler (1990:264) claim that Reagan was himself only a mediator of messages, a person who

introduced "the daily governmental drama" to the public. He was part of it himself of course, but at the same time he was somehow distanced from it. It was his advisers who seemed to be in control of the matters more than he was, it was said that it was his aides who really made the decisions and run the country.

Hertsgaard (1988:5) regards Deaver, Gergen and their colleagues in the White House as the rewriters of presidential image-making. In his critical book, Hertsgaard claims <sup>that</sup> their objective was not only to "tame the press but to transform it into an unwitting mouthpiece of the government". Leslie Janka (as quoted by Hertsgaard 1988:52), a press officer in Reagan administration, formulates the same observation into three words: "manipulation by inundation". In other words, the Reagan White house took care that reporters were given a new topic every day, facts about the topic, and briefings, they were even given access to people who would give on-the-record interviews on the subject. In this way, the Reagan media apparatus wanted to make sure they controlled the debate in the media and that the reporters stopped being investigative and bringing up their own, possibly harmful topics for the president. And as Robert Frye (as quoted by Hertsgaard 1988:51), executive producer of ABC's *World News Tonight* in 1983, points out, if newspapers, newsmagazines and especially the television networks had not used the material given them by the White House, they would not have had much material about the president at all. In other words, the media did not have much choice.

Reagan became also known as a 'Teflon president', a name which implied to that blame never seemed to stick to him, no matter what he said or did. Reagan's assistant Richard Darman (as quoted by Hertsgaard 1988:67) argues that this 'Teflon phenomenon' was due

to the fact that the press were more interested in and decided to emphasize Reagan's personality over political issues. Maynard Parker (quoted by Hertsgaard 1988:47), an editor of *Newsweek*, acknowledges that most reporters who covered Reagan genuinely liked him and that is why they also found it difficult to be as tough on him as they probably would have wanted to be.

Reagan's communication strategy worked and polls indicated that Ronald Reagan was one of the most popular presidents of the United States. He was seen as a strong and confident leader as well as a comforting figure to the nation and its people. According to Johnson et al. (1990:190), Reagan himself credited his popularity to the fact that he "spoke up for the ideas and values of everyday Americans". Johnson et al. (1990) point out, however, <sup>that</sup> large segments of Americans did not share his values and disagreed with his policies and philosophy. For example, 63 percent of the people who approved of the way Reagan handled his presidency still thought that his administration had not done all that it should have to help the homeless. Generally, it seemed that the public liked more Reagan than his policies.

Grant (1991:81) observes that Reagan left the office with the highest popularity ratings ever. The public approval rate was 64 percent, and he was the first president to serve two full terms since Eisenhower. In Johnson et al.'s (1990) view, especially Reagan's handling of the economy and foreign affairs were considered in positive terms, and the general consensus was that his presidency had been successful. Considering the effectiveness of the Reagan's public relations strategy, which has been presented above, his success certainly did not come as a surprise.

### 3.2.3 Major events affecting Reagan over the years 1981-1989

Johnson et al. (1990) state that during his presidency Reagan was able to bring about some major developments, like reducing inflation and reducing U.S. - Soviet hostilities. Some of the events, however, were the kind he could not do much about, e.g. the assassination attempt against him in 1981 or bombing of the U.S. marine barracks in Beirut in 1983, these are all events that he could only react to. All the events that took place during his presidency, regardless of what had caused them, affected the way the public perceived Reagan, and that in turn accounted for his popularity, or unpopularity. In this chapter, four major events that most affected Reagan's popularity are discussed briefly.

#### 3.2.3.1 Recession

Johnson et al. (1990:475) recall how Reagan was elected president and he took office in 1981 with promises of recovery of the national economy. He had promised his voters to take the U.S. back to the prosperity by cutting spending, trimming government, eliminating the federal deficit, cutting taxes, spurring investment, and reducing inflation.

Hertsgaard (1988:152) argues that Reagan's, as well as other modern presidents', popularity "was directly related to the state of economy; traditionally, there was a strong inverse correlation between the unemployment rate and a President's approval ratings." As people's expectations of Reagan had not been fulfilled and Reaganomics, i.e. Reagan's economic programme described above, was not working out as well as had been expected, the unemployment

rate being over 8 percent - which was more than at any time since the Second World War - the press began turning critical of Reagan. In 1983, "Reagan's slide in the press and, in the polls, accelerated" comments Hertsgaard (1981:105). This meant a beginning of a new stage in the relationship between the White House and the press, since the problems in economy finally seemed to awaken the press to a new kind of criticism. David Stockman, a budget director of the Reagan administration, revealed that Reaganomics, would make the rich richer and the poor poorer if the government follows the program. His comments were not taken very well in the press but reporters saw him as a traitor of the Reagan administration. However, in Hertsgaard's (1988) view, those revelations in a sense legitimized a more sceptical and aggressive press coverage of Reagan administration economics; after someone had brought the subject up, the press felt more comfortable repeating the message. Reagan aide David Gergen (as quoted by Hertsgaard 1988:160) later commented that 1982 was the worst year of Reagan's first term in office.

### 3.2.3.2 Grenada invasion

The U.S. invasion to Grenada took place in October 1983. The Cubans were building an airport with nine-thousand-foot runway from which they were thought to conquer the neighbouring islands and possibly the United States, and that is why it attracted the attention of the Reagan White House. Another reason for the operation was that the United States was rescuing some five hundred American students who were studying on the island. Thus the name 'rescue mission' for the operation. The invasion was carried out by a force of more than six thousand men, opposing some eight hundred Cubans, not all of them



armed, and a Grenadian "army" that was little more than a police force. During the operation, there was considerable confusion, some helicopters were wrecked and eighteen servicemen were killed, at least a few of whom had come under what the military euphemistically called "friendly fire" (Tebbel and Watts 1985:542).

The accounts of the Grenada invasion emphasize different points depending on the researcher, but they all seem to agree on a couple of matters. First, Hertsgaard (1988) argues, the invasion to Grenada was a media event, created only to get positive publicity and public support for the Reagan administration. Second, reporters were left out of the operation, that is: they were not allowed to the island and they were totally dependent on the information coming from the White House, to make sure they would cover the event the way the Reagan administration wanted it to.

Johnson et al. (1990) state the common wisdom in the field of media politics that crises also affect presidential popularity inspiring patriotism and public support for the president. Hertsgaard (1988) points out that the invasion helped Reagan, who had only one year before the re-election. Reagan's overall popularity rating rose sharply after the invasion, and public sentiment on his handling of foreign policy varied, moving from 50 to 42 percent disapproval in September to 55 to 38 percent approval in November.

### 3.2.3.3 Honeymoon period

Reagan won the presidential election against Walter Mondale in 1984, and at the age of 73, he became the oldest person ever to hold the

office of president in the United States. In addition, during the early part of his second term, Reagan received some of the highest popularity ratings in the history of the office.

"The single most important reason for Reagan's high standing in the eyes of the nation's establishment in 1984 was his record on the economy", says Hertsgaard (1988:264). Indeed, during the re-election campaign, the U.S. was in the middle of the biggest economic recovery since World War II, and the public accounted this for Reagan. Reagan's popularity ratings had been climbing since early 1983, and, according to Hertsgaard (1988:258), Reagan was "extremely popular among corporate America."

The thriving economy and the honeymoon period clearly affected Reagan's popularity. The president's high popularity right after the inauguration is called "the honeymoon effect", as Johnson et al. (1990:510) state. During the first months of a new presidency, the press, the public, and also Congress refrain from expressing much criticism concerning the president or his actions. After the honeymoon period, the presidential popularity generally declines as the public start to realize the president will not meet their high expectations after all.

#### 3.2.3.4 Iran-Contra affair

The Iran-Contra scandal was the most serious backlash in Reagan's political career. Up to that time, Reagan had been fairly successful throughout his terms in office. Fink (1988:224) observes that well into his second term, long after most presidents had begun to lose public support after the inauguration, Reagan was, according to popularity polls, more popular than ever. But then in 1986 and 1987, as a result of

the revealings in the Iran-contra affair Reagan started losing popularity.

Johnson et al. (1990) describe how in 1981 Reagan authorized the Central Intelligence Service (CIA) covert operations to support rebels, that is: the Contras, who opposed the Sandinista party controlling Nicaragua. Congress wanted to limit such aid by passing an amendment prohibiting the use of federal funds to overthrow the government in Nicaragua. After it came public that the CIA had mined Nicaraguan harbours, Congress passed a second amendment banning all aid to the Contras by U.S intelligence agencies. "To bypass Congress, help the Contras, and attempt to win the release of American hostages held in Lebanon by groups influenced by Iran", the National Security Council (NSC) started to sell arms to Iran in 1985. National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane claimed later that the sales had the president's approval but Reagan said he could not recall giving such approval. This statement could never be proved to be true or false, since NSC officials destroyed and falsified records in 1985 and 1986 to keep the operation secret. As the Iran-contra affair became public in November 1986, Reagan appointed the Tower Commission to investigate it. The committee expressed criticism against the president's "casual, uninvolved policy-making style" but did not accuse him of direct involvement with the affair.

What made it all worse for Reagan, says Fink (1988:xxi), was that the Watergate scandal and Nixon were still in people's minds, and the media did not make it any easier by bringing this old thing up and comparing these two events with each other. On the other hand, journalists were afraid of covering the topic as they did not know how the public would react to it, fearing that people would start thinking that the press's real goal was to bring down the president. The

journalists wanted to avoid a second Watergate, and that may have saved Reagan from some severe <sup>future</sup> critic. Reagan's public approval ratings went down during the Iran-contra affair investigation, and in Hertsgaard's (1988:302), view the Iran-contra affair spelled the end of the Reagan presidency.

## 4 THE PRESENT STUDY

### 4.1 Research questions

On the basis of what has been discussed in the previous chapters, it is clear that more research in the field of media politics is needed as there still are many aspects of the media coverage regarding presidents to be unravelled. Until recently, studies on news sourcing have mainly concentrated on newspapers. This has left another important form of the print media, newsmagazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek*, without much attention. However, DeFleur and Dennis (1985:181) make a distinction between newspapers and newsmagazines. Newspapers and newsmagazines, they say, are both printed mass media and they both report on news, but they differ from each other in some important respects. Newsmagazines are published less frequently than newspapers, which means that they deal with issues in a different way. Newspapers usually report every detail of a matter, whereas newsmagazines interpret and set topics in a broader context. Newspapers provide answers to questions "what", "who", "where" and "when". The readers of newsmagazines, for their part, seek answers for the question "why". Magazines also often voice reporters' opinions along with the actual news. Consequently, newsmagazines can be expected to have a different way of sourcing from newspapers and that is why it is important to turn to them now. Johnson et al. (1990) comment that, compared with the radio and television, the printed press "provide far more depth of coverage and report on a broader spectrum of events and people", which also speaks for the choice of newsmagazines as research material.

Of the presidents of the United States Ronald Reagan, in particular, has been of interest but as has been seen, the coverage he received in *Time* magazine has not been related to the use of sources and citations and to his overall popularity among the public. As, however, the theories of presidential popularity suggest that the president's popularity follows a certain pattern, it would be interesting to know if this is somehow reflected in the coverage he receives in the media. One good way of examining the coverage is to scrutinize the use of sources and citations in a news story.

Therefore, this study sets out to find out answers to two questions. Firstly, the purpose is to establish if the use of citations in *Time* magazine stories about president Reagan correlates with Reagan's popularity during four periods of time. Secondly, the aim is to examine precisely who were cited in those stories. The hypothesis is that at the times when Reagan was popular among the public, reporters cited sources close to him in their news stories, and when Reagan's popularity ratings were low, reporters used more other than Reagan administration sources for news reporting.

#### 4.2 Data collection and analysis

Lichter et al (1986:11) are of the opinion that the most important national news media in the United States as consisting of *The New York Times*, *the Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*. These media set professional press standards and influence the daily news agenda. In addition, three other reasons made *Time* magazine especially suitable for this study. First, *Time* is the largest weekly newsmagazine in the United States with a circulation of 4.6 million copies, *Newsweek* being the second biggest with 3 million (Stoler

1986:179). Second, newsmagazines are published weekly, which offers them a possibility to give a clear and organized report on events. Third, the copies of *Time* magazine were still available whereas copies of many other newspapers or magazines would have been impossible to get. Furthermore, *Time* has a high standard of quality and it can be expected to follow the proper journalistic principles. It concentrates on major national and international issues weekly, and offers an analyzed description of events. Finally, as *Time* magazine has been studied before in terms of its presidential coverage, it offers an interesting possibility to compare the results of the previous studies with the present study.

In their review of the history of *Time*, Folkerts and Teeter (1989:405) tell how Henry Luce and Briton Hadden started publishing *Time* magazine in 1923. *Time* set out to combine and organize the information appearing in the daily U.S. newspapers. The editors expressed distrust of increasing government authority and admiration for the "statesman's view of the world." *Time* introduced a new, condensed style in writing and became known for its language, which included trick words and inverted sentence structure. All this resulted in a sarcastic and gossipy tone in the magazine. In DeFleur and Dennis's (1985) view, *Time* used to be known for its quite strong Republican bias, but it is now politically more moderate and quite conservative in its views. Today *Time* magazine is owned by Time Warner Inc. In 1989 Time Inc. and Warner Communications merged together, thus creating one of the biggest information companies in the world. Time Inc. is the largest magazine publisher in the United States with magazines such as *Time*, *Life*, *Sports Illustrated*, *People*, and *Fortune*. Warner concentrates on music, filmed entertainment, television programming, and cable operations.

One important feature, as formulated by Grant (1991,) in the American political life are the frequent opinion polls conducted on politics and political leaders. Opinion polls tell the president how the public feels about particular policies, or about his administration in general. Public support is important for the success of a president, and if the polls show that a president is losing popularity, the media, the opposition in Congress, and the administration itself will use their checking mechanisms more extensively. The Gallup Poll has for many years regularly asked a sample of Americans, 'Do you approve or disapprove of the way [the incumbent] is handling his job as a President ?' The levels of support fluctuate from one month to another. According to these polls, diagrams showing the popularity each month can be drawn for each president.

Ronald Reagan was the president of the United States from 1981 to 1989. The first term lasted from 1981 to 1985 and the second from 1985 to 1989. To get a balanced sample of articles, two periods of time were chosen from both terms based on *The New York Times/CBS News* poll diagram of Reagan's approval ratings (Johnson et al. 1990:217). Figure 1 presents Reagan's approval ratings during his two terms in office.



Figure 1. Reagan's popularity record

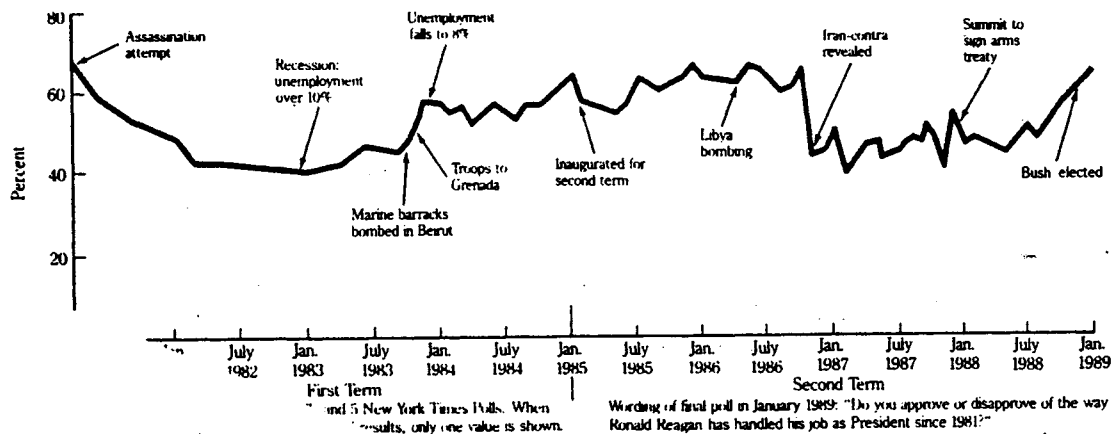


Figure 1 shows that during the first term Reagan's ratings were high at the time of the Grenada invasion in October 1983 and low in January 1983 during the period of recession in the United States. During the second term similar turning points were the honeymoon period at the beginning of the term and the Iran-contra scandal in November 1986 respectively. These periods of time were the focus of this study.

*Time* magazine is published once a week, and all the articles for this study were collected in a one-month time span around the event mentioned. The articles analyzed were news and cover stories about Reagan and these particular events under the heading *Nation*. As the number of pages in the articles varied, it was more reasonable to pay attention to the number of pages than to the number of articles

included in the study. A total of 80 pages of articles were analyzed, which makes 20 pages per event.

The news stories used for this study can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. *Time* magazine articles analysed

TITLE	JOURNALIST	DATE	PAGES
A Little Terrifying	George J. Church	17-Jan-83	8-10
Down with the Deficits	George J. Church	24-Jan-83	19-20
Close Calls for Social Security	Susan Tifft	24-Jan-83	22
New Tactics at Half Time	George J. Church	31-Jan-83	24-26
Mending and bending	Walter Isaacson	7-Feb-83	12-14
Still Stuck in a Vicious Circle	George J. Church	7-Feb-83	15-16
The Low Road of Protest	Susan Tifft	14-Feb-83	15
Clashes and Compromises	Walter Isaacson	14-Feb-83	13-14
Searching for the Recovery	Walter Isaacson	21-Feb-83	16-18
D-Day in Grenada	Ed Magnuson	7-Nov-83	22-28
Weighing the Proper Role	Walter Isaacson	7-Nov-83	42-62
Now To Make It Work	Ed Magnuson	14-Nov-83	18-29
Not All Sugar and Spice	Kurt Andersen	28-Nov-83	20-22
Shake-up at the White House	Ed Magnuson	21-Jan-85	10-14
High Hopes, Hard Choices	Evan Thomas	28-Jan-85	20-24
Shake, Rattle and Roll	Kurt Andersen	4-Feb-85	14-16
Cap on a Hot Tin Roof	George J. Church	11-Feb-85	26-28
On the Chopping Block	Richard Stengel	18-Feb-85	20-23
The U.S. and Iran	George J. Church	17-Nov-86	12-26
Unravelling Fiasco	George J. Church	24-Nov-86	12-22
The Tower of Babel	George J. Church	1-Dec-86	18-22
Who was betrayed ?	George J. Church	8-Dec-86	16-27

A total of 22 articles were included in the study. Four articles were chosen from each time period. An exception to this made the period of recession at the beginning of 1983. The economic situation in the country did not produce similar long cover stories as did, for example, the Iran-contra scandal three years later. Thus, instead of four long articles, nine shorter ones dealing with the recession were included in the present study. The page numbers in Table 1 show the

total length of each article including also possible advertisements, therefore, the actual articles can be shorter than could be concluded on the basis of the page numbers. In *Time* magazine various reporters, columnists and essayists wrote about Reagan over the years. They all had different views and opinions about matters, but their articles also reflected the general atmosphere of the time they were written. The writers varied, but there were also writers who regularly wrote about Reagan, for example George J. Church, Ed Magnuson and Walter Isaacson, and most of the articles used for this study were written by them.

As has been discussed earlier, studies on news sources have been made before but from different angles, so none of them offered a suitable testing method as such for the present study. This being the case, relevant parts of earlier studies were modified and combined to a research design for this study. As in Hallin et al.'s study (1993:757), the primary unit of analysis was a citation mentioned in a news story. Each time a source of a citation was mentioned, the identity of the source was coded. A source was defined as "any person, institution, or document to which the reporter explicitly attributed information". A single source was coded once for all the comments in one paragraph, but coded for every paragraph in which it was used. Thus, if a source was mentioned twice in one paragraph, it was coded only once; but if it was cited in two paragraphs, even in consecutive ones, it was coded twice. To clarify the coding, two examples are presented here.

The just released Jacobsen, in a moving appeal at his welcoming party ceremony at the White House, warned reporters that "unreasonable speculation on your part can endanger their lives." Cried Jacobsen: "In the name of God, would you just be reasonable and back off !" (Church 1986:14)

These two citations by Jacobsen were coded as one, since they appeared in the same paragraph. Yet, the source in the following extract was coded twice because it was situated in two, although consecutive, paragraphs.

Deaver commented briefly by saying 'It is too early to draw any conclusions right now.'  
During the next meeting with the press, Deaver paid attention to 'the positive development of the economy.'  
(as above)

What is important for this study, however, is the difference between a source and a citation. Both were counted, but since one source could be cited many times in a news story, the number of citations offered a better measure for the distribution of views, and that is why the emphasis of this study was on the citations. The coding of sources was mainly used to help the categorization of citations.

The categorization of sources was done based on the classification presented in the study of presidential coverage in *Time* magazine by Hart et al. (1991) and in the study of reporters' sourcing patterns by Hallin et al. (1993). The purpose was not to analyze the citations as for whether they praised or criticized the Reagan administration, but only to code the source of information. The division of citations into two, coming from Reagan administration and other sources, was done by using Grant's (1991) account of the working procedures of the American political system as a basis. The Reagan sources were considered being Reagan himself, members of his family, presidential aides, the vice-president, unspecified government sources (e.g. U.S. officials, government officials), representatives

of the Army, cabinet secretaries - that is, the heads of executive departments who were selected and appointed by the president - as well as Republican senators and Congressmen. Senators and Congressmen are not generally included in a president's close administration but in this study their party membership was the deciding factor as the members of a president's own party tend to support him (Entman 1989:48). The president is the leader of this party, and he is expected to support and carry out the changes written down in his party's platform. The same applies for the members of Congress. They are not required to vote with the party on any particular bill, but nevertheless, they do that quite frequently. Moreover, when Congress is divided on an issue, "the split is likely to be along the party lines" (Johnson et al. 1990:266). Anyway, for this study it was not relevant whether all the sources that were counted as Reagan's actually shared the Reagan administration view on things or not. All the other sources mentioned in the articles were regarded as other than Reagan administration sources. This category of sources included Democratic senators and Congressmen, foreign leaders, other foreign sources, academics, critics, private citizens, laws, polls, other media, and unidentified sources.

After the counting and categorization of the citations, a test for independence was executed to establish if the citations used in the news stories were independent of or dependent on Reagan's popularity. The Reagan and other citations were cross-tabulated with the four periods of time chosen for this study according to the popularity ratings, and Chi-square was calculated. The same method was used also by Berkowitz and Beach (1993), and it was found suitable for this kind of a study. In the cross-tabulation also the expected frequencies of the citations for each time period were

obtained, and they were used as figures with which the actual frequencies were compared to see if the hypothesis was supported or not. If the actual frequencies differed from the expected ones, it was regarded as significant enough to show that the hypothesis had been true or false.

Finally, to see how the events correlated with each other, a linear-correlation coefficient, which is a quantitative measure of the degree of correlation or the probability that a linear relationship exists between two observed quantities. The value ranges from 0, when there is no correlation, to +1 and -1, when there is complete correlation. A diagram presenting this relationship between the citations and time was drawn.

## 4.3 Findings

### 4.3.1 Citations and popularity

Firstly, the first research question about the relationship between the use of citations and Reagan's popularity was taken under study. The data analysis started with counting and categorizing the citations and sources in the selected news stories. The study included 22 articles of *Time* magazine, altogether 80 pages. A total of 589 citations were coded.

After the citations from each period were coded, the number of citations and the four periods of time were cross-tabulated to establish a possible relationship between them. For testing purposes, a general null hypothesis of 'no association', i.e. independence, between the two classification variables was adopted. If the null

hypothesis were confirmed, it would mean that the two variables of the study, citations and the four periods of time, would be independent of each other. Table 2 tests the hypothesis.

Table 2. The Reagan citations and popularity/ Chi-square

SOURCE	RECESSION	GRENADA	HONEYMOON	IRAN-CONTRA	TOTAL
REAGAN	86	67	102	63	318
	76,1	81,5	88,5	71,8	
	61 %	44,40 %	62,20 %	47,40 %	54 %
OTHERS	55	84	62	70	271
	64,9	69,5	75,5	61,2	
	39 %	55,60 %	37,80 %	52,60 %	46 %
TOTAL	23,90 %	25,60 %	27,80 %	22,60 %	100 %
Sig. Chi-square p= .00165 x=15.20 df=3					

First of all, Table 2 shows that the Reagan sources accounted for 54 percent of the citations and the other sources for 46 percent. The difference was not large, but it was in the favour of Reagan. Secondly, the table shows that the citations were scattered quite evenly between the four periods of time. The honeymoon period in 1985 made up 27.8 percent of all the citations in this study, the Grenada invasion 25.6, the recession 23.9 and the Iran-contra affair 22.6 percent. Thirdly, Table 2 shows the distribution of citations between Reagan and the other

sources. The number of citations was in favour of Reagan during the Grenada invasion and the honeymoon period and in favour of other sources during the other two periods of time. Finally, Table 2 shows that the  $p$  value of the test was .00165, which meant that the probability that the same result would have been obtained by any random sample was so small that the result is statistically very significant. Thus, the null hypothesis of the independence of the citation and time variables had to be rejected. On the basis of this test, it can be concluded that there is a significant statistical dependence between the sources used in the news stories and president Reagan's popularity.

However, the most important finding for this study are the expected frequencies of citations in Table 2. The expected frequencies are the second figures in each square. It can be observed that during the recession, the 86 Reagan citations exceeded the expected frequency 76.1 by ten. Similarly, during the honeymoon period, the Reagan sources were cited 102 times, the expected frequency being 88.5. Thus, these periods of time clearly represent dominance of the Reagan sources. Furthermore, Table 2 shows that during the Grenada invasion, the Reagan sources were cited only 67 times whereas the expected frequency was 81.5. As for the Iran-contra affair, the figures were 63 and 71.8, respectively.

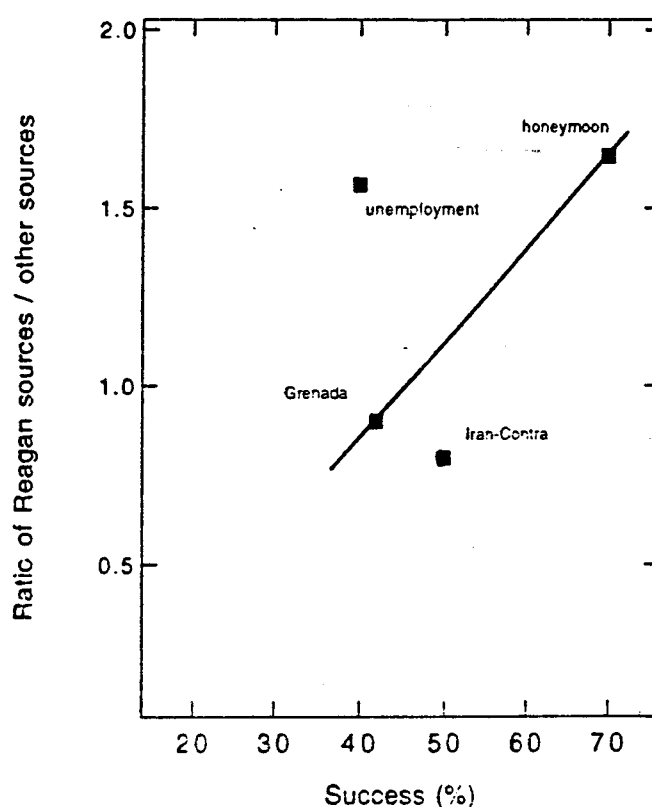
The hypothesis of the dominance of the Reagan citations during the times of his high popularity was partly supported by the findings. This hypothesis was supported by the honeymoon period, but, surprisingly, not by the Grenada invasion. Also the hypothesis of the high frequency of the other sources during Reagan's low popularity was only partly supported. During the Iran-contra scandal other sources were cited more than the expected frequency would have



allowed to expect. Striking are the results from the recession period and the Grenada invasion. In these cases, the use of citations in *Time* magazine was the exact opposite of what had been hypothesized.

To see how the events relate to each other, a diagram of correlation between the number of citations and Reagan's overall popularity was drawn. For the diagram, the number of the Reagan citations was divided by the number of the other citations from each time period. In this way, variable X was acquired. Variable Y, then, displays the percentages drawn from the popularity Gallup poll. The diagram is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Citations and Reagan's popularity/ Coefficient correlation



There was a positive correlation between the number of citations and presidential popularity. The correlation was obvious but not very strong. The correlation coefficient was 0.4 in the range from

-1 to +1, where 0 meant no correlation at all. The Grenada invasion and the honeymoon period could be set to the same line, and the Iran-contra scandal was located quite near it as well, but the time of recession clearly differed from the others.

One explanation for this could be the different sample of news stories for this period that was discussed above. Another reason could be the nature of this period of time. The recession was not a clear, single, easily-defined event like the Grenada invasion which lasted a definite time, but a prevailing situation in the economic life. Such a situation is likely to be treated differently in the media. It was also noteworthy that the periods of time when Reagan was popular, that is, the honeymoon period and the Grenada invasion, correlate with each other, whereas the periods of time when Reagan was not so popular, the recession and the Iran-contra affair, could be separated from them.

#### 4.3.2 Citations and sources

The second research question concerned the use of sources and citations in *Time* magazine stories about Reagan. The total distribution of sources and the frequency of citations of this study are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Frequency of citation (n=589) by source

Source	Frequency	%
REAGAN ADMINISTRATION		
Reagan	95	16.1
Presidential aides	57	9.7
Vice president	10	1.7
Secretaries	26	4.4
Administration officials	45	7.6
Republicans	40	6.8
Army	32	5.4
Advisers	12	2.0
Family members	2	0.3
Total	318	54
OTHER SOURCES		
Democrats	85	14.6
Former administrators	20	3.4
Other media	23	3.9
Polls	5	0.8
Laws	5	0.8
Statistics	3	0.6
Academics	8	1.4
Business	8	1.4
Foreign reports	25	4.3
Foreign leaders	20	3.3
Local officials	8	1.3
Private citizens	26	4.4
Critics	5	0.8
Others	13	2.2
Unidentified (ie. "reports")	9	1.6
Total	271	46

Table 3 clearly demonstrates the relationship between the sources and citations. It also shows that the Reagan administration sources could be divided into nine categories, whereas the other sources consisted of various individuals and groups. Out of a total of 318 citations, Reagan himself was the most cited source accounting for 16.1 percent of the citations. The Democrat sources accounted for 14.6 of the citations, and presidential aides 9.7 percent. Those were the sources that the *Time* magazine reporters mostly relied on in their news stories. Together these three categories made up 40 percent of the citations. All these sources were readily available to the reporters and, for most the part, they were willing to comment on issues, which could explain their dominance.

#### 4.3.2.1. Recession

During the recession at the beginning of 1983, *Time* wrote regularly about the economic situation in the United States. The news stories were, unlike the other stories selected for this study, relatively short consisting only of one to three pages. No cover stories on this issue was written during January 1983. The nine articles analysed were collected from the time period between January 17 - February 21, 1983.

To make the results from different periods of time comparable with each other, the categorization of sources presented by Hart et al. (1991) was slightly modified for the purposes of this study. Table 4 displays the sources cited and the number of citations by each source.

Table 4. Citations (n=141) during the recession

Source	Frequency	%
<b>REAGAN ADMINISTRATION</b>		
Reagan	32	22.7
Presidential aides	15	10.6
Vice president	3	2.1
Secretaries	4	2.8
Administration officials	12	8.5
Republicans	11	7.8
Army	2	1.4
Advisers	7	4.9
Family members		
Total	86	61.0
<b>OTHER SOURCES</b>		
Democrats	29	20.6
Former administrators	3	2.1
Other media	1	0.7
Polls		
Laws		
Statistics	2	1.4
Academics	1	0.7
Business	5	3.5
Foreign sources		
Foreign leaders		
Local officials		
Private citizens	8	5.7
Critics		
Others	4	2.8
Unidentified (ie. "reports")		
Total	55	39.0

For this period, 141 citations were coded, of which 86 were counted as coming from Reagan administration sources and 55 as others. Reagan himself was quoted 32 times, presidential aides 15, and Republican senators and Congressmen 11 times, which together made up almost two thirds of all the citations on Reagan's side. Also the Reagan budgeter David Stockman was quoted (3), as well as the Council of Economic advisers (3). The Economic Reform package put together by the Reagan administration was quoted four times. The other sources included 29 citations from Democratic senators and Congressmen, which was the biggest group on this side and it alone accounted for almost half of other than Reagan administration sources. Ordinary citizens voiced their views 8 times, and spokesmen for various businesses 5 times.

Table 4 shows that during this time, no critics were quoted. Of course, other sources may have voiced critical views, but the term 'critics' was not used of them, and, consequently, they are not recognized as such here. Also, no foreign leaders or other foreign sources could be found among the sources, which resulted from the domestic nature of the recession. *Time* reporters seemed to have concentrated on government sources in their coverage, since no local officials were cited in the news stories on economy.

The 1983 economic recession was a period of time when Reagan's overall popularity ratings were low; only 40 percent of the population approved of the way he was handling his job. Despite that Reagan sources were cited 86 times whereas other sources were cited 55 times. One explanation for this was that Reagan's State of Union speech accounted for many of the citations; it is understandable that reporters cite the presidents' view of the state of affairs no matter how unpopular the president is. Also, it was the Reagan administration

who had created the economic recovery program so it was only logical to give them a privileged voice in trying to explain what, if something, had went wrong with it. The great number of citations from the Democratic party, in this case 29 citations, was to be expected, since it is always the opposition party which criticises the president's party most. Ordinary citizens were given voice in order to show how the economic situation had affected the public, and businessmen represented the commercial life of the U.S.

#### 4.3.2.2. Grenada invasion

The Grenada invasion took place in October 25, 1983, and the first stories about it appeared in *Time* magazine in November 7, 1983. The last story on Grenada invasion that was included in this study was from November 28, 1983. A total of 151 citations were coded from four news stories. The Reagan administration accounted for 67 of the citations, the other category consisting of 84 citations. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Citations (n=151) during the Grenada invasion in 1983

Sources	Frequency	%
REAGAN ADMINISTRATION		
Reagan	15	9.9
Presidential aides	5	3.3
Vice president	3	1.9
Secretaries	7	4.6
Administration officials	10	6.6
Republicans	1	0.6
Army	26	17.2
Advisers		
Family members		
Total	67	44.4
OTHER SOURCES		
Democrats	15	9.9
Former administrators	8	5.2
Other media	11	7.3
Polls	1	0.7
Laws		
Statistics		
Academics	4	2.6
Business		
Foreign sources	9	5.9
Foreign leaders	12	7.9
Local officials		
Private citizens	17	11.3
Critics		
Others	4	2.6
Unidentified (ie. "reports")	2	1.3
Total	84	55.6



14 different individuals or parts of the administration served as sources on Reagan's side, whereas there were 55 different sources on the other side. From the Reagan administration the *Time* magazine cited most often the Army (26 times), Reagan (15), administration officials (10), and Reagan's aides (5). The U.S. invasion to Grenada was an international event, which can be seen from the citations. Foreign leaders, including, for example, Margaret Thatcher, Helmut Kohl, and Francois Mitterrand, were cited only once each, but together they make up 12 citations. Ordinary Grenadians were cited 12 times, Democratic senators 6, American students who were studying in Grenada 5 times and a Harvard professor 4 times. Other news media were cited 11 times in *Time*, too.

Table 5 shows that *Time* reporters concentrated mainly on covering the views of the army and president Reagan. The Republicans were cited only once this time. One poll was also used, and academics were interviewed. Two unidentified citations were coded during this period of time. Local officials were still not cited, as the event covered dealt more with international matters.

The Grenada invasion, for its part, made Reagan more popular, and in October 1983 half of the Americans supported him. Of 151 citations Reagan accounted for 67 and the others for 84, which makes 17 citations fewer for Reagan than the others. This, however, is not so surprising considering the international consequences of the invasion. Other nations were worried about the reasons and outcome of the invasion, and that is why foreign leaders were cited as many as 12 times. Grenadians offered first-hand information and the local population's view of the invasion, and American students who were rescued from the island during the operation gave also important insights to the necessity of the whole operation. From Reagan's side

the Army was of course cited most often, 26 times, since it carried out the operation, and Reagan himself 15 times, because he alone as the commander in-chief used his power to start the invasion without consulting Congress. The strong reliance on other media was probably due to the scarcity of information concerning the operation available. As the media was not allowed to Grenada, the reporters had to rely on the government, and also on other media sources for information.

#### 4.3.2.3. Honeymoon period

Reagan's second term started with a honeymoon period in January and February 1985. The four news stories analysed from this period of time were published between January 21 - February 18, 1985. 164 citations were found, 102 Reagan and 62 other citations. During this period of time, the difference in the number of citations between Reagan and others was the biggest. The results can be found in Table 6.

Table 6. Citations (n=164) during the honeymoon period in 1985

Sources	Frequency	%
REAGAN ADMINISTRATION		
Reagan	28	17.0
Presidential aides	27	16.5
Vice president	3	18.2
Secretaries	7	4.2
Administration officials	6	3.6
Republicans	22	13.4
Army	4	2.4
Advisers	3	1.8
Family members	2	1.2
Total	102	62.2
OTHER SOURCES		
Democrats	19	11.6
Former administrators	4	2.4
Other media	5	3.0
Polls	2	1.2
Laws		
Statistics		
Academics	3	1.8
Business	3	1.8
Foreign sources		
Foreign leaders	2	1.2
Local officials	8	4.9
Private citizens	1	0.6
Critics	5	3.0
Others	4	2.4
Unidentified (ie. "reports")	1	0.6
Total	62	37.8

Reagan was cited 28 times, his aides 27, and representatives of the Republican party 22 times. The Secretary of State was cited four times, the Secretary of Defense twice, and the Head of Interior Department once. In addition, this was the only period of time in the study where also the First Lady Nancy Reagan was cited, even twice. 23 different individuals accounted for these 102 Reagan administration citations.

On the other side, 34 sources produced 62 citations. Sources that were cited most often were representatives of the Democratic party (19 citations), local officials (8), other media (5), and academics (3). Also critics, who were not more closely identified, were cited 5 time. Foreign leaders, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko and Iranian Prime Minister, were cited twice.

Table 6 displays that various sources were cited in the four news stories during the honeymoon period. On Reagan's side all the sources included in the categorization were cited, and on the other side views of only three sources categorized were not included in the articles. This time only one private citizen was cited, but business leaders, academics, local officials, and polls were used as sources many times, which reflected the reporters judgements about whose views were important and of value when covering the honeymoon period.

In January 1985, as much as 65 percent of the American population approved of Reagan. The Reagan administration was cited 102 times and other 62 times, which is 40 citations more for Reagan. In this case, the difference is clear and significant. As during the 1983 recession period, also the honeymoon period included Reagan's State of Union Speech, which again was largely relied on by the *Time*

reporters. Worth noting was that although reporters had no choice than to report such statements coming from the president, they could have, if they had wanted to, included also opposing views in their news stories. This, however, for some reason or other, did not happen. Reagan was cited 28 times, that is more often than during any other period of this study. Also his aides and representatives of the Republican party were regarded as a valuable source of facts and views by the *Time* reporters.

#### 4.3.2.4 Iran-Contra affair in 1986

The Iran-contra affair became public in November 1986, and the four articles examined here were from the time period between November 17 - December 8, 1986. They were all written by George J. Church, and all but one of them were long cover stories. 133 citations by 50 sources were coded from this time period. The Reagan administration was cited 63 times, other sources were used 70 times, thus there was no significant difference in the use of the sources. The sources and citations are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Citations (n=131) during the Iran-contra affair in 1986

Sources	Frequency	%
REAGAN ADMINISTRATION		
Reagan	20	15.0
Presidential aides	10	7.5
Vice president	1	0.8
Secretaries	8	6.0
Administration officials	17	12.8
Republicans	6	4.5
Army		
Advisers	1	0.8
Family members		
Total	63	47.4
OTHER SOURCES		
Democrats	22	16.5
Former administrators	5	3.7
Other media	6	4.5
Polls	2	1.5
Laws	5	3.7
Statistics	1	0.8
Academics		
Business		
Foreign sources	16	12.0
Foreign leaders	6	4.5
Local officials		
Private citizens	1	0.8
Critics		
Others	1	0.8
Unidentified (ie. "reports")	6	4.5
Total	70	52.6

Reagan himself was quoted 20 times, and his administration officials were given a chance to comment on the issue 17 times. Presidential aides were the source of information 10 times, the Republicans 6, and Heads of Departments 8 times. A total of 17 different sources on Reagan's side were cited.

Also the Iran-contra affair concerned others along with the Americans themselves. First of all, the Democrats accounted for 22 citations, foreign reports 16 - from which 7 were from Israel - and unidentified sources for 5 citations. Other media were quoted 5 times. Remarkable is that laws, e.g. the Arms Export Control Act of 1976 and Intelligence Oversight Act were quoted 5 times, which results from the accusations against Reagan of breaking the law with his secret arms dealings. 33 sources were coded on this side.

Surprisingly, no critics were cited in this period of time, despite the seriousness of the alleged abuse of presidential power. Surely there were critics, but they were cited under some other heading. Only one citation came from a private citizen, laws and polls were used as sources more often than during any other time. Also other media were quite frequently cited.

The Iran-contra scandal was the last period of time examined for this study. Interesting was that the difference between Reagan and other sources was not big, only 7 citations in favour of the other side. The number of Reagan sources cited in *Time* could be explained by the nature of the scandal. Reagan and his closest aides had caused it and tried to cover it, and even when the secret arms dealings were revealed, Reagan and his aides first denied it. In that situation, Reagan's explanations were likely to be cited, although also contradicted by opposing facts in the same news stories. It came as no surprise that once again the Democrats presented their views in 13 citations. It

is more a rule than an exception that when the incumbent is having problems in the office, members of the opposing party will present their view of the abilities of the current president to lead the country.



## 5 DISCUSSION

There were two research questions in this study. First, the purpose was to establish if there is a correlation between the use of citations and the president Reagan's popularity, and secondly, locate the sources and citations in news stories about president Reagan. It was established that there was a statistically significant relationship between the use of citations and Reagan's popularity. But the hypothesis was not completely supported. Reagan's first term in office, 1981-1985, was in accordance with the hypothesis that the more popular Reagan was, the more he was cited in *Time*. As for the second term, 1985-1989, the result was that the more popular Reagan was, the less he was cited.

As for other findings of this study, it turned out that there seem to be some basic sources which are cited independent of the event and also apparently independent of the president's popularity. Reagan was cited a lot, as were also his aides and the members of the Republican party. On the other side, the Democrats expressed their views on every issue. What varied most in the use of sources was the citing of private citizens, ranging from one to seventeen citations. There was also considerable variation in the citations coming from foreign leaders and other foreign sources. Surprisingly, vice president Bush accounted for only 10, that is, 1.7 percent of the citations.

As there are no similar previous studies, the findings of this study can be compared with other studies only with some caution while the underlying assumptions, points of view, data gathering techniques, data analyses etc. have varied from one study to another. For example, many studies on news sourcing have taken the opinions expressed in the citations into account, which naturally affects the

outcome of the studies. However, some general tendencies can be pointed out.

Firstly, the strong reliance on government sources in newstories, which has been reported by many researchers (Bennett 1990, Hallin et al. 1993, Hart et al. 1991), became evident in this study as well, but it was not as heavy as was expected. The Reagan sources accounted for 54 percent of all the citations, but at times even 62.2 and 61.0 percent of the citations. It is noteworthy that when Reagan sources were cited more, they were cited significantly more than others, but when others were cited more, the difference between them and the Reagan sources was fairly small. In other words, presidential views were always given space in the news stories.

Secondly, this study differed from other studies on news sourcing as regards to the distribution of citations. Unidentified citations accounted for one percent of the citations, whereas Hart et al. (1991) found in their study only 0.3 percent such citations. Also in Hallin et al.'s (1993) study, the percentage of unidentified citations was much smaller, only 1.6 percent. What was surprising was the almost total absence of citations from Reagan's family members: there were only two citations, 0.3 percent, coming from Nancy Reagan. This may have been caused by the nature of the articles under study, since they mostly dealt with the economy, war and politics. Private citizens, 4.4 percent, were cited slightly more than in Hart et al.'s study, 3.5 percent. The most striking finding was the difference between the citations by the Republicans and the Democrats. Normally, it seems to be the tendency to cite the president's party more, as in the study by Hart et al. The president's party accounted for 6.9 percent of the citations and the opposition party for 5.9 percent. In the present study, the percentages were 6.8 and 14.6, respectively.

Thirdly, the findings of this study were found to be quite consistent with some earlier, more detailed observations of Reagan's relationship with the press. For one thing, Hertsgaard (1988:105) claims that especially during the early months of its second term the Reagan administration and the White House media apparatus were able to get all their messages across in the press, in fact the press "resembled less a filter than a clear pane of a magnifying glass". This view was clearly supported by this study. In no other time was Reagan so cited and the difference between Reagan's (102) and other citations (62) so great. As a popular president starting his second term in office, Reagan was given a privileged voice in the news. The honeymoon effect worked for Reagan, and, in addition, at the beginning of 1985 there were no controversial events or issues which might have brought various sources to the news stories.

Hertsgaard (1988:260-261) observes,

The press's generally favourable disposition toward Reagan did not, it should be stressed, spare the President from critical coverage entirely...Still, the overall tone of Reagan coverage was decidedly positive. It was not simply that the relatively few news stories that questioned the President's policies were overwhelmed by a vastly larger volume of stories implicitly praising what he had wrought. It was also that critical stories tended to be scattered, one-shot affairs and thus, from the White House's perspective, relatively harmless.

In the light of the present study, this observation seems to be true, as far as the distribution of citations is concerned. Reagan had only two relatively brief periods when the polls showed downturns in his support, in 1982/3 when the economic recession bit deeply and unemployment rose and immediately after the Iran-Contra affair.

Gallup recorded 63 percent approval in late October 1986 before exposure of the Iran-Contra, which declined to 40 percent in late February 1987 when the Tower commission issued its critical report of the affair. The approval rate recovered to 53 percent by June, and by December 1987 support levels were again above 60 percent, following the successful summit meeting between President Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev. Grant (1991:93) points out how Reagan's underlying popularity with the public - "three quarters of those polled still held a high opinion of him personally and felt he was honest even at the height of the Iran-Contra affair" - allowed him to survive and recover from short-term crises. In the use of citations, these two periods of time were observed, but they did not, as has been mentioned before, greatly affect the way Reagan was covered. Indeed, it is remarkable how Reagan quickly won back the public support and how these periods of low popularity did not affect more the way his administration was cited in *Time*.

Furthermore, Bennett (1990:123) comments on the Iran-contra scandal coverage in *The New York Times* saying that "the media seemed content to allow the government to investigate itself, assess the importance of the problem, define the solution, and pronounce the denouement of the story. As a result, a scandal with deep institutional roots passed with only minor punishments handed out to minor actors." The present study showed how during the Iran-contra scandal Reagan sources were cited almost as often as were other sources (63-70), which could vaguely support Bennett's view. In *Time* magazine, the reporters practised a balanced use of sources, and it was slightly surprising that Reagan sources were cited so often. It seemed as if they had been given a chance to defend themselves at the expense of excluding some other important opinions from the public.

Hart et al. (1991:15-16) present a view of *Time* magazine coverage of U.S. presidents saying that *Time* heavily relies on official sources in its search for information. Hart et al. found also in their study the same 'dialectical balance' between sources as was found in this study. They mention that there was "similar equivalence in number of mentions between congressional members in the president's party and those in the opposition party, between power brokers inside the White House and those outside it ... Each of these pairs contains a natural rivalry that *Time* regularly exploits, often quite artfully." In Hart et al.'s view, then, all this boils down to the tendency of the media to dramatize everything and its love for conflicts. All in all, the results of this study show that at least during the Grenada invasion and the Iran-contra scandal *Time* magazine seemed to practice quite balanced news reporting. In fact, these two periods of time represented the ideal case of news reporting.

In Entman's (1989:46-47) model of news reporting there are certain biases which affect how journalists make judgements concerning the importance of events. The first two biases, which are relevant as for a president's popularity, are called evaluation biases. The first bias is the popularity bias and according to it, presidents should enjoy public esteem. Only when journalists think a president is unpopular, will they start writing negative news about him. On the other hand, when they perceive a president to be popular, they hesitate to convey negative and damaging information. Second, the power bias expects a president to be capable of handling his work and if he is not, the media should tell it to the public who has elected him. The journalists' view on the president is formed through their interaction with the Washington politicians, who Entman calls "elite sources". To protect their own interests, elites tend to withhold

criticism when they regard a president as popular and powerful. If, however, the elites believe a president is losing popularity, elite opponents provide reporters with sources willing to criticize the president. This is significant in the sense that in order to report critically or negatively on a president, reporters need sources who will provide that criticism.

On the basis of these biases, Entman (1989) suggests that one way of analysing the way in which a president is covered in the media would be to pay attention to the appearance of critical quotations with named sources in news stories. In *Time* magazine stories, a source called 'critics' was cited five times during the honeymoon period in 1985 without identifying those critics more closely. Entman talked about quotations with named sources, but as this study did not pay any attention to the content of the quotations, it cannot be said which named sources expressed criticism and which did not. But, it is noteworthy that the only time during which the critics were cited in *Time* under that title was when Reagan was more popular than ever before. If one follows the line of thought presented by Entman, this would mean that these sources were willing to criticise the president but since the president was highly popular at the time, it was not appropriate and they did so anonymously.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to find out if *Time* magazine use of citations in stories about president Reagan was dependent on Reagan's popularity among the public, and who in fact were cited in those stories. The hypothesis was that at times when Reagan was popular among the public, reporters would cite sources close to him, but at times when Reagan was losing popularity, his critics and other than Reagan administration sources would be cited in the news stories. On the basis of Reagan's Gallup poll popularity record, four periods of time were selected: a period of time when his popularity was high and when it was low during his first term in office and the same during his second term. Thus, the periods of time selected were the recession at the beginning of 1983 and the U.S. invasion to Grenada, respectively, from the first term and the honeymoon period in 1985 and the Iran-contra scandal in November 1986 from the second term.

The findings of this study partly supported the hypothesis. The use of sources and citations changed depending on the event covered, in other words: a significant relationship between Reagan's popularity and the use of citations was found. Surprisingly, the hypothesis applied for Reagan's second term but not for the first term. The honeymoon period during Reagan's second term was when Reagan was popular and that is when he was also cited most, and at the time of the Iran-contra affair Reagan was less popular and also less cited. During the first term, however, everything was the other way around: when Reagan was popular he was cited less, and when he was less popular he was cited more.

The findings imply that in the United States, the president is the number one news-maker, and he and his views are covered

despite his possible unpopularity. The reporters of *Time* magazine greatly rely on government as the main news source, but they do allow also other sources to express their views. What is important is that the choice of news sources frames the news story, and thus by choosing the sources a reporter inevitably expresses his view on who are important actors in a particular event.

Johnson et al. (1990:216) argue that "though the research on media effects is still in its infancy, the emerging conclusion seems to be that the media can affect general evaluations, like the president's overall popularity." There seems to be some correlation between the coverage of the president in the media and his popularity, but on the basis of this study it cannot be concluded that it is the media that affects the popularity, as Johnson et al. suggest, nor that it is the other way around.

In this study Reagan's popularity was combined with the event that took place at the same time, and, consequently, the Reagan coverage in *Time* magazine was scrutinized through those events. It is, however, possible that the different nature of the events may have affected the outcome of the study. Both the invasion to Grenada and the Iran-contra affair, which served here as examples of Reagan's low popularity ratings, were likely to produce different kinds of news stories than did the recession or the honeymoon period, and thus also the use of citations was likely to be different. This should be taken into consideration before drawing any general conclusions from this study.

All the four Iran-contra scandal news stories selected for this study were written by one person, George J. Church. During the other periods of time quite a many reporters wrote about Reagan, but for some reason or other, the Iran-contra scandal and Reagan's



involvement in it was left entirely to Church. As individual reporters' conventions in the use of news sources significantly affect the outcome of an article, it could be speculated that in this case Church's role and his sourcing conventions may have affected the result of the study too much. On the other hand, however, Church surely represents the line that *Time* magazine has adopted, and as such it does not place too much weight on Church.

The sample of articles for this study was relatively small, and therefore, on the basis of the results no far-reaching conclusions can be drawn. Nevertheless, the results shed light on the use of sources in presidential coverage in relation to presidential popularity. With a greater sample of articles and more periods of time to be studied, more reliable results could be achieved. What also affects the result is that the news stories were chosen within one-month time span around each event, and what follows is that not the whole *Time* magazine coverage of an event was considered in the study. To get an overall picture of the use of sources in *Time* magazine, coverage of Reagan would obviously require a thorough examination of his two terms as president, and not just an analysis of a sample of articles from four periods. What is more, it would be necessary to include more, possibly all, articles published about him in the study. Also, the length and placement of the citation could be taken into account as well. In that way, more reliable and more generalizable results might be obtained.

In this study attention was paid only to the source of citation, not to the actual content of the citation. If this aspect had been considered and taken into account, the result might have been different. After all, not all government sources comment positively on governmental matters and not all private citizens or academics are

critical of government actions, although, it has to be admitted, this very often seems to be the case. Anyway, if the classification of sources were based on the content of the citation, the study might tell more about the range of opinions expressed in the news stories.

The methods in the studies made in the field of news sourcing have proved to be rather efficient and reliable, but as for this study, some modifications had to be made. First, the study had to be more restricted both in regard to the data and its analysis than some large-scale studies made on the mass media. Second, most of the studies on news sourcing use two or three independent coders to achieve reliable results, but for this study such a method was not possible. These modifications were necessary since this study was made by one person and not a group of researchers as is usual.

It would be interesting to compare the treatment that Reagan received in the media to the treatment of other U.S. presidents as for the use of news sources and to see, if there is any difference between them. For example, comparing the news sourcing in news stories of two or more U.S. presidents would reveal if there is some general pattern in presidential reporting, and in that way it would be possible to find out if Reagan was treated differently from other presidents in the mass media.

Although being two totally different newsmagazines, the two national newsmagazines *Time* and *Newsweek* have been coming closer to each other since the 1960s, says Hertsgaard (1988). In 1961 their covers had identical subjects four weeks out of fifty-two, in 1985 their covers were alike sixteen times, which is nearly once in every three issues. An explanation for this is that the journalists deciding on the content of these magazines share the same world view and find the same things worth reporting. Keeping this in mind, it would be

interesting to find out, if the two magazines use also the same sources for reporting events.

To conclude, the reporting of the Grenada invasion as well as the Iran-contra scandal represent the principle of fairness and balance of news reporting allowing different views to be expressed. The same cannot be said of *Time* magazine reporting during the honeymoon or the recession period. Thus, when a president is popular, he is clearly cited more than others, but when his popularity is low, the use of sources is more balanced between the official and other sources. As Berkowitz and Beach (1993:11) state in their study, the effect of this kind of official, "organizationally-linked news is that the information which people take away from their media encounters represents relatively small range of source-defined alternatives."

All in all, the present study has revealed some aspects on presidential news reporting in the 1980s in the United States, but at the same time it has shown how much more studying in the field of media politics is still needed. This study has scrutinized the relations between the media and Ronald Reagan, who was supposedly an expert in handling the media. But, if the same applies to other presidents as well, there is reason to pay more attention to this special relationship with the president and the mass media. By understanding how the media works it is possible to understand the way it affects the public and the political decisions that are made. Furthermore, if the media allow a privileged voice for the president and his administration, the public should be aware of this and draw their conclusions on issues accordingly.

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