

“Would I run the pub if I won the Lottery? No.” : A study on how ordinary people are constructed and described in British supplement magazines

Master's thesis

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June 2012



## JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Faculty Humanistinen tiedekunta	Laitos – Department Kielten laitos
Tekijä – Author Meri Marttinen	
Työn nimi – Title “Would I run the pub if I won the Lottery? No.” : A study on how ordinary people are constructed and described in British supplement magazines	
Oppiaine – Subject Englanti	Työn laji – Level Pro gradu -tutkielma
Aika – Month and year Kesäkuu 2012	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 82
Tiivistelmä – Abstract Tavallisten ihmisten rooli ja näkyvyys mediassa on lisääntynyt teknologiavälitteisen ja sosiaalisen median myötä nyky-yhteiskunnassa. Tavallisten ihmisten rooli on muuttunut sosiaalisessa mediassa yleisöstä esiintyjäksi, kun taas perinteisessä lehtijournalismissa he edelleen kuuluvat vähemmistöön.  Tämän tutkielman tavoitteena on selvittää, minkälaisia human interest -tarinoita tavallisista ihmisistä kerrotaan ja minkä takia ne ovat valittu julkaistavaksi. Lisäksi tavoitteena on tutkia hyödyntäen Bellin (1991) uutisteksteille suunnattua rakennemallia, miten ja mistä osista tarinat rakentuvat narratiivisesti. Samalla kartoitetaan, mitä tyypillisiä aihealueita tavallisten ihmisten tarinoissa tuodaan esille. Siten tutkimus selvittää, mitä asioita ja piirteitä tavallisen ihmisen elämässä pidetään mielenkiintoisina mediassa, mikä puolestaan voi heijastaa nyky-yhteiskunnan arvoja ja kulttuuria. Näin ollen tutkimus on tärkeä ja sivuaa myös mediakriittisyyttä tuomalla esiin edellämainittuja asioita. Tutkimuksen aineisto koostuu kahden brittiläislehden viikonloppuliitteinä ilmestyvistä aikakauslehdistä, <i>The Herald Magazine</i> sta ja <i>The Observer Magazine</i> sta. Aineisto kerättiin neljän kuukauden ajalta.  Tutkimustulosten mukaan voidaan todeta, että tavallisista ihmisistä kertovia human interest -artikkeleita julkaistaan työn, sairauksien ja ongelmien, sosiaalisten ilmiöiden ja elämäntyylin ja harrastusten saralta. Eniten juttuja julkaistaan koskien työtä, erityisesti <i>The Herald Magazine</i> ssa. Toiseksi eniten julkaistaan sairaustarinoita, joita ilmestyi enemmän <i>The Observer Magazine</i> ssa. Tarinat jakautuvat narratiivisesti pääosin 1. persoonan ja 3. persoonan kertomiin tarinoihin. Yleisesti tarinat jakautuvat aloitukseen, leipätekstiin ja lopetukseen, jotka kaikki voidaan jakaa vielä eri alakategorioihin. Tyypillisiä aihealueita ovat esimerkiksi henkilön tausta, muistot, arvioinnit ja kommentit, tämänhetkinen tilanne, perhe, vastoinkäymiset ja haasteet sekä niistä huolimatta kaiken tapahtuneen korvaamattomuus ja yleinen optimistisuus. Yhteenvetona voidaankin sanoa, että tarinat kertovat ihmiselämästä ja korostavat optimistista asennetta siihen.	
Asiasanat – Keywords Ordinary people, human interest stories, supplement magazine, narrative construction, <i>The Herald Magazine</i> , <i>The Observer Magazine</i>	
Säilytyspaikka – Depository Kielten laitos	
Muita tietoja – Additional information	

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

When browsing a magazine, one often comes across with stories and articles about politicians, singers, authors, actors or the recent celebrities. These stories are quite dominant in today's print media, since the public is interested in extraordinary people's lives and ways of living. These people need the media and the media need them to come up with selling stories; accordingly, what is achieved is a win-win situation. However, magazines do not always present only well-known people with fancy Porches and professions. They also depict real, ordinary people and their real-life stories, whether they are sensation-seeking or high quality magazines.

Although ordinary people are a minority in print press articles, the present study will focus on them. More specifically, it will examine qualitatively what kinds of stories are told about ordinary people and why and how their stories are constructed. The data will be collected from high quality British supplement magazines. The study will be conducted with the help of Bell's (1991) narrative framework for discourse structure in news text.

The human interest articles will be investigated by paying attention to their narrative mode, organisation and contents, in other words, the topics that are presented. Accordingly, the study draws attention to the issues in an ordinary person's life that are emphasised and depicted by the media. It will be interesting to find out what aspects of an ordinary person's life are considered to be interesting and worth publishing, which, in turn, may reveal something about the values of the contemporary British culture and society. In fact, it is important to remember that the articles about ordinary people are written by journalists who have the possibility to emphasise some issues and exclude others and, thus, affect what will be published. Yet, the journalists are also affected by the readers' demands who expect certain kind of stories.

Ordinary people may be given voice in various sections in magazines, such as question-answer columns and vox-pops. However, this study will particularly

concentrate on the genre of human interest stories. This is because human interest stories deal with people's problems and lives in an emotional way, and they have always attracted readers. They raise not only people's interest in each other's lives, opinions and privacy, but also their need to identify with others. In fact, a possibility to identify with the persons, their lives, survivals of diseases and everyday problems depicted in the press may also help readers to find comfort, a deeper understanding of life and its misfortunes and solutions to problems in their own daily life. These kinds of stories may also show sympathy towards people with misfortunes and help the reader to gain confidence. In some cases they may also show what is acceptable and normal, since the media have a role in shaping the public's opinions and views (Fairclough 1995). Finally, real people bring about some ordinariness to the magazine, and their personal stories balance the constant stream of factual and celebrity news.

Technologically mediated communication, social media and reality TV-programs have changed the position of an ordinary person from an audience member to an agent in the society. The new media, for instance, social media, have made ordinary people more prominent in a new way. Because of the changes in it, it is worth examining how ordinary people are depicted in the traditional print press and find out whether their role has still stayed the same. Supplement magazines offer a good source of data for studying human interest stories of ordinary people, since they are delivered with the broadsheet to subscribers every weekend and, hence, have a wide readership. All in all, these arguments make the traditional print press a suitable data for this study.

Furthermore, ordinary people and how they are depicted on television programs, radio talk shows, in social media, blogs and advertisements have been much studied recently. In addition, different sections in magazines, such as editorials and question-answer columns, have also been investigated. Ordinary people's survival stories, where they fight against illnesses and misfortunes have been studied while human interest stories about ordinary people or even generally have gained very little attention. This provides the present study with a purpose and a gap to fill. Indeed, by studying human interest stories about ordinary people and their lives in British quality weekend supplement magazines, the present study may offer new



information, for instance, on what is told about ordinary people and what is considered to be interesting about them.

The present study starts by first presenting the theoretical and methodological framework which will help to understand the field and the background of the present study. Before the analysis I will represent the present study in a nutshell, by explaining the aims, research questions, data and the methods of the study. Then, the analysis phase includes a detailed investigation of the data, and aims at answering the research questions with the help of the methods selected. The final section of the thesis consists of a discussion of the main findings of the study.

## **2 THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter will describe the background of the present study by defining its key concepts, terms and by discussing previous research on the subject. I will first define what an ordinary private person means in this paper and then go on to explain what kind of journalistic ethics and norms protect a private person in the UK. These norms and ethics serve as a basis for understanding why ordinary people are treated differently from celebrities and public persons in the media. The norms may also affect the journalist's writing process where s/he decides on what to include and what to exclude in the article. After setting the basic terms for the present study, some relevant theory and previous research on the matter will be presented and discussed. This part will also serve as a basis for the analysis and discussion section at the end of this thesis.

### **2.1 The Ordinary Person**

The definition of a regular or ordinary person is not a straightforward task. Here, when offering a definition of an ordinary person, my aim is not to separate people from each other and create inequality. The aim is rather to identify the kind of people who are not visible in the media regularly, or at all. In other words, the definition of an ordinary person builds on the idea that s/he does not or has not attracted the attention of media by his or her fame, profession or opinions. On the other hand, ordinary people are also expected to have privacy, according to national regulations and norms of journalism. Indeed, Olli (2011: 29 as cited in Näre 2005: 18) points out that usually the media coverage and publicity occur together. Karvonen (as cited in Markkola 2009) and Ilvonen (2000: 25, 27) also observe that if one allows the media to access one's private matters or tells the media things about oneself, one becomes public and open "game" for the media.

Hence, the data of this study consist only of articles on ordinary people who are presented in the media because of their stories, and not because they are somehow well known or otherwise attract media attention.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, an ordinary person is specified as:

“Of people: typical of the population or a particular group; average; without exceptional experience, knowledge, etc.; normal”

This definition refers to a person who does not have any specific knowledge or experience. Although this definition gives a preliminary idea of an ordinary person being an average worker, having average work, and not being specifically talented in anything, it also leads to another question: what is ‘exceptional experience’ or ‘exceptional knowledge’? Hence, the definition is not a straightforward one and it would demand more research to find out what the ‘exceptional experience or knowledge’. In any case, it seems clear that an ordinary person is one who presents an average or typical British man or a woman.

Keeping the OED’s definition in mind, an ordinary person is easier to define by its opposite, a ‘well-known’ or ‘famous’ person. In fact, in the present study the term ‘ordinary person’ refers to someone who is usually not depicted in the media. However, also this definition is a difficult and vague one. Sometimes people have their own website telling about themselves or their companies or they have published a book but they are not in a public occupations or the public media does not follow them and, thus, included in the analysis. The definition of an ordinary person is made by the abovementioned criteria. In addition, in order to decide whether a person is ‘ordinary’, I will use Google as an aid to find out whether a person has been covered in media lately, since Google consists of an enormous amount of information.

It has also been suggested by L.H. Christensen (2008) that nowadays it is possible for ordinary people to become media persons easily by themselves, because of the internet. By this Christensen (2008: 10-11) means all the possibilities offered by such media as blogs, personal homepages and other social networks. Via them, ordinary people can be followed and monitored by the public (Christensen 2008: 11). Christensen (2008: 12) also points out that because of the grown popularity and interest in reality-TV, monitoring and observing people has even “become acceptable and a trust building practice”. Christensen (2008: 12) concludes that the “pleasures of

surveillance” create a possibility by offering means for ordinary people to become noted in the media or society.

Finally, Julkunen (1995 cited in Olli 2011) has made interesting observations considering the difference of privacy between men and women. She suggests that women have more privacy in life than men and therefore it is more acceptable and presumed to let women have their privacy (Julkunen 1995: 23 as cited in Olli 2011: 32). However, she argues that women are expected to open their lives, for example, their wardrobe and secret receipts. Although Julkunen’s argument seems interesting, the difference between women and men may not be as categorised as he claims: the differences are not only dependent on a person’s gender but also on a person’s personal features and cultural differences.

### **2.1.1. Norms protecting ordinary people’s privacy in the media**

Since the present study deals with ordinary people in magazines, it is worth clarifying the ethics and rules behind professional British journalism to know the norms that protect ordinary people’s privacy. Moreover, these norms guide the processes of writing and publishing, and illuminate the difference between private and public persons. Since the media and journalism law is a very broad field and changes quickly (Adams 2009: 188), only the most important and relevant points of the current time will be presented next.

Firstly, according to McKay (2000: 240), UK has no statute protecting privacy, and because of the lack of it, there are different regulations that aim to protect it. For instance, the Human Rights Act (1998) summarizes an important right that is incorporated in UK law (Adams 2009: 149, UK Legislation):

**“Right to respect for private and family life**

1. Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence”

The norm above is very similar to a regulation formed by Press Complaints Commission that will be discussed later in this chapter. Accordingly, even though

there is no statute legislation, self-regulation of journalism is present (McKay 2000: 240).

In addition, Adams (2009: 190) argues that journalists must pay attention to accuracy and fairness when writing their articles, since misleading claims can become libellous. Statements that are defamatory or have double meaning should be avoided, since the meaning of text is always formed by the audience who cannot know what the journalist has had in mind. Accordingly, the person who publishes this kind of article is responsible for it. (Adams 2009: 190). Adams (2009: 190) mentions that defamatory statements of persons can be recognised by their consequences, which are often some of the following:

- “ - expose them to hatred, ridicule or contempt;
- cause them to be shunned or avoided;
- lower them in the estimation of right-thinking members of society generally;
- disparage them in their business, trade, office or profession.”

Moreover, The Press Complaints Commission (PCC) sets standards for journalists in the United Kingdom. According to PCC, the press has to have high professional standards and they have to consider both the individual's privacy as well as the public's need to know. For instance, PCC obliges journalists to be especially accurate and avoid misleading statements, respect people's privacy, to be discreet and sympathetic in cases of grief and shock as well as avoid being prejudiced and treat people equally despite their colour, religion or illness, etc. Adams (2009: 172-174) also notes that understanding and being sympathetic is important when interviewing people who are vulnerable and/or suffering from different conditions, such as disabilities or traumas.

Secondly, the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) also supervises journalists who are in the union. The NUJ's Code of Conduct includes similar points as PCC. For instance, journalists must be honest, accurate and remember that the public has the right to know. Moreover, they must not to intrude into people's private lives. (NUJ, Code of Conduct). PCC's regulations seem clearer and more organised, but NUJ also has precise guidelines even for writing about different people. This guideline has

been formed since the way in which groups are presented in the media affects how people think about them (NUJ, Reporting disability). For example, when writing about disabled people, one should not write about “the deaf” or “the blind”, but rather deaf people and blind people or “visually impaired people”. Furthermore, NUJ suggests that people suffering from autism or the Asperger syndrome should not be referred to as “antisocial” or as “having behavioural problems”. One should not talk about “the disabled”, since they are not a generic group, or about people “suffering from” something but rather “having impairment”. Lastly, “crippled”, “handicapped” and “invalid” should be changed to be “disabled”. To sum up, people with disabilities should be treated in the same way as everyone else.

To summarize, the regulations and ethics presented above highlight the importance of accuracy in journalism; journalists should not be misleading or write anything that was not said by the interviewees or people involved. Moreover, people’s privacy should be respected, and they ought to be treated equally and neutrally. These are all features of high quality journalism, since tabloids do not generally obey them. As an exception here are celebrities and everyone who are seeking their way to media, since they are public persons. Also if something should be known by the public, it can be written about and published, and that is the difference between ordinary people and celebrities.

## **2.2 Human interest stories as a genre**

Human interest stories are basically stories that deal with people and their lives. More specifically, human interest stories are a subcategory of feature stories (Marshall 2007, McKay 2000). As suggested by Marshall (2007), human interest stories do not usually deliver news but are rather meant “to humanize, to add colour, to educate, to entertain, to illuminate”. In addition, they focus on “individual people and the effects of issues or events on them”, as defined by Ingram (2008). He (2008) also adds that human interest stories may cover issues in people’s lives that are not significant to the whole society:

“Examples might be a child going abroad for surgery; a pilot recovering from injuries received in an air crash and determined to fly again; or a man with a collection of a million picture postcards” - *Ingram, 2008*

A slightly different definition is given by De Ruiter et al. (2008). They have the same starting points, but they define human interest stories as showing “-- the personal story behind a larger story affecting many people.” Hence, they have a different view of the stories’ significance to the society. This is perhaps because the manual written by De Ruiter et al. (2008) is supported by American Red Cross, Catholic Relief Services and USAID and written for private voluntary organizations (PVOs), who use human interest stories “for a variety of purposes, including results reporting, evaluations, and fundraising.” Therefore, PVOs aims are different and they try to make the audience sympathise the people in stories.

Indeed, since the purpose of human interest stories is different from the purpose of news texts’, they are also written differently. General characteristics of the feature articles and of its sub-category human interest stories include, firstly, according to Wheeler (2009: 3), different ways to write them since there does not exist any fixed structure. McKay (2000: 94) also suggests that human interest stories do not have a clear, formulaic structure like news texts, and if they had, the stories would be considered to be less interesting. Secondly, Wheeler (*ibid.*) and McKay (2000: 82) describe all feature stories, including human interest stories, as having the emphasis on the individual style of the journalist and tone of the text. Similarly, they (Wheeler, *ibid.*; McKay 2000: 82, 85) agree that the writer’s voice, personal thoughts and perceptions can be seen in feature articles. In addition, Wheeler (*ibid.*) mentions that feature stories are longer than news stories and include more background information than news. Moreover, they contain substantial amount of dialogue and quotes as well as have a less pressing deadline. In fact, Ljung (2000) categorises feature articles, including human interest articles as non-scheduled events which mean that the journalists at work can decide when they are published. In other words, there is no pressure that the stories should be published quickly. This emphasises the light nature of the human interest articles. By contrast, catastrophes, such as fires are defined as unscheduled events that should be reported quickly and upcoming events or debates are called prescheduled events that are reported as planned (*ibid.*). In the

same way, McKay (2000: 81) points out that feature stories are less attached to time when compared to news. Yet, she adds that this is not always true (ibid.).

Yet another view of the feature story is presented by McKay (2000: 85), when she refers to a definition, given by an American textbook where it is stated that “A good feature story is a creative work of art.” Indeed, a good example of a colourful feature story is provided by Wheeler (2009: 88-89) where she refers to a story about the singer Shane MacGovan, written by Lynn Barber for the Observer (11 March 2001). Wheeler tells that Barber had been waiting for MacGovan for two hours before he showed up.

“So on the one hand I am relieved to see Shane at last. On the other hand, I quite want to bundle him back in the lift and forget him. I was prepared for the teeth, the famous blackened stumps, but the suit is an unanticipated horror show, with its thickening patina of stains down the trousers culminating in big bobby spatters on his shoes. If he has not been sick down his trousers several dozen times, he must have a very good stylist. His skin has the shiny pallor of someone who has never seen daylight. He lurches towards the bar. The photographer tries to head him off, saying he wants to do photographs outside before the daylight fades. Shane says, ‘Ginantonic’ and plonks himself in a chair. I chatter brightly about James Joyce; Shane mumbles unintelligibly; the photographer tears his hair.”

As another variant of human interest stories, some of them can *focus on one aspect* of people’s lives (McKay 2000: 87). According to McKay (2000: 87-88), other categories are, for example, ‘*The triumph-over-tragedy pieces*’, which focus on winning misfortunes, which “at their best -- are uplifting and strengthen one’s faith in human nature” (Hennessy 1997: 71) and *personal columns*, which are nearly fictional narratives telling about a person’s life (McKay 2000: 87-88). Furthermore, Hennessy (1997: 74-83) observes that there are also stories about, for instance, *personal experience, children, employment and relationships*.

To summarize the discussion, human interest articles generally refer to articles that concern few or more people and their lives that may have interesting or unusual aspects which are presented personally and concretely. For example, a human interest story can deal with someone’s occupation or hobby and it can be written in a creative way. The stories differ from formal news stories, since the significance of



human interest stories is to entertain or illustrate matters rather than provide readers with news.

Human interest stories as a genre has not been studied as much as other sections in magazines, such as editorials and so on. Ljung (2000), in fact, observes in his article that while news texts have been studied a great deal, other text categories have been disregarded. Feature articles belong to this group (ibid). This can be also noticed while searching for previous studies about human interest stories; there simply are not many available.

In spite of the lack of research attention to feature stories, McKay (2000: 86) suggests that the most read human interest articles and stories in magazines are “about people who are not in the public eye”, in other words, ordinary people, without a visible career or role in the media. Thus, human interest stories are a lot read. Next, research on ordinary people’s stories in magazines will be presented and discussed.

### **2.3 Ordinary people in the media**

Ordinary people can be depicted in various media nowadays. For instance, they can be interviewed in newspapers and magazines, on television and the internet. The ordinary people can also bring themselves to the public attention by various social media, for example, by tweeting, authoring a blog or discussing on forums. This study will concentrate on magazine journalism where ordinary people are often depicted in human interest stories.

In this chapter, human interest stories in magazines will be investigated and discussed. After this, previous studies on how ordinary people have been present in magazines will be introduced. This section will form a good and relevant background for understanding the present study.

### 2.3.1 Ordinary people in magazines

Ordinary people have been the subject in Olli's (2011) research which studied how Finnish people's survivals of misfortunes have been depicted in the Finnish magazines *Seura*, *Apu*, *Anna* and *MeNaiset*. In the time of two months, she found 32 articles and decided to analyse 11 of them. Olli (2011) categorized the stories into three different groups, ailments, crimes and relationships. In addition, she identified similarities in the plot of articles. In fact, the plot basically consists of three steps in all of the articles, 1) the starting point, 2) change and 3) the ending point (Olli 2011: 49).

According to Olli (2011: 61), the illnesses that people survived were never depicted as non-curable, which gives hope to the readers. Olli (2011: 49) also noticed that there was always a way or resource of surviving that helped people to cope. In addition, all articles were written in a hopeful mood and they emphasised hope rather than bitterness and negativity (2011: 86).

Olli (2011: 84) also commented on the differences between stories about men and women by noting that men's stories were less present in articles, and the majority of articles were about women. This might result from the fact that two of the magazines analysed were clearly women's magazines (ibid.). However, what Olli (ibid.) suggests is that women may experience telling their stories as more therapeutic than men and, hence, there are more women's survival stories available.

Helne (2005: 37) studied how readers and magazine editorial staff viewed a renewed Finnish women's magazine, *Anna*. Here I will only discuss the readers and their views. Helne (ibid.) conveyed her thesis by interviewing 60 readers of *Anna*. She found out that 43 per cent of the interviewees said they read the magazine, because the stories about ordinary people (2005: 44). Only two of the 60 readers read *Anna* for celebrity stories, while 23 per cent preferred both. The interviewees listed identification as the most substantial reason for reading ordinary people's stories. Moreover, they felt that stories depicted women's status in society, which originally was *Anna*'s one socio-political aim. (Ibid.). Other reasons for reading stories of ordinary people were for example, that life is normal, the stories are truthful, they are

useful and offer advice, they fulfil readers' need of peeping and offer role models (Helne 2005: 45).

All in all, Helne (2005: 54) concluded that people prefer reading about ordinary people. According to her the role of an ordinary person in media has grown and the concept of private has moved towards public because of reality-TV. She (ibid.) argues that in sensation magazines this can be seen as publishing everything secret that the journalists will find whereas in *Anna* the view is totally different, rather giving an ordinary person a voice, which it is respected by the readers.

### **2.3.2 Survivor stories and illness narratives**

Human interest stories about ordinary people that deal with survivals of illnesses and other misfortunes in women's magazines have been studied relatively much. In effect, one kind of genre that is substantially studied is a *pathography*, an illness narrative.

McKay and Bonner (2002) studied how illnesses are presented through ordinary people's personal experience in Australian women's magazines. McKay and Bonner observed (2002: 55) that mass-market women's magazines often include health information in many sections in magazine, for instance, to editorials and letter columns to provide readers with information and solutions to their problems. However, according to McKay and Bonner (ibid.), the health information is not only visible on the sections of the magazine but also in ordinary people's personal stories, pathographies, since magazines have always had an interest in them.

The data in McKay and Bonner's study consisted of three Australian women's magazines (four issues per year from years 1980–1999). Out of the 240 issues, McKay and Bonner (2002: 58) found 259 stories about ordinary persons' illnesses and their experience on it, which on average makes a little more than one story per issue.

According to McKay and Bonner (2002: 59) the pathography in magazines can have four different functions:

- re-evaluating family and relationships, acknowledging family support;
- doing something for others;
- restoring self-identity; and
- explaining illness through some teleological process

According to McKay and Bonner (2002: 61) some stories highlight learning from the misfortune, becoming stronger and growing as a person. For example, this could be seen in a story about a paralyzed woman who wanted to learn to walk before her baby did. In addition, in a story where a woman had a rare primary biliary cirrhosis (PBC), McKay and Bonner (ibid.) noticed an emphasis on re-gaining control in life. Pathographies were also seen to strengthen self-identity and the illness was seen as life-changing, or sometimes even god-given (McKay and Bonner 2002: 62–64). It can be concluded, that stories did not contain negative attitudes against illnesses and in the end the illness was seen to help the survivors of it in some way. Here, it is worth mentioning that McKay and Bonner (2002: 56) also point out that the stories about illnesses and aftermaths of accidents were always written by a journalist, by different narrative choices that might have been used to impact the story itself by emphasizing the private, the personal as well as the extreme or dramatic factors of the story. Usually the emphasis was on the experience of suffering the disease that might be life-changing. (Ibid.). This was also noted by Olli (2011: 58) who reminded that the result, in other words the story, is always an outcome of a meeting of two persons, and the journalist might experience the story differently than the interviewee originally did.

To continue with McKay and Bonner (2002: 61), they found out that while stories that reveal extreme experiences inform readers about illnesses, they also have a broader social function. Indeed, they (2002: 65) report that illness narratives are published to re-contextualize the experience and accordingly, to serve hope and inspiration to people. In effect, ordinary people's stories are part of creating a social world where illness can be seen as strengthening, redemptive and heavenly.

Furthermore, the stories indicate the importance of inner strength in winning misfortunes which can inspire those who have not luckily confronted any yet. (McKay and Bonner 2002: 65). To sum up, ordinary people's illness narratives emphasize a comforting and optimistic reading experience.

McKay and Bonner (2002: 65) also mention that the stories can address a wide readership, some of whom might suffer from similar illnesses and also their family and friends, and accordingly, the last-mentioned may find a way to react to the illness of a close person. This was also suggested by Couser (as quoted by McKay and Bonner 2002: 54), who said that stories provide people who know someone with similar condition with possible ways to respond and also help them understand what the ill person goes through.

Furthermore, illness narratives may be published purely out of general interest (McKay and Benner 2002:65). Last but not least, Kleinman (1988) sees the therapeutic value of the stories from the view of the people. In fact, telling about their ongoing or previous misfortunes may help people to process and manage what they have gone through.

Kleinman (1988) views the topic from a different angle than McKay and Bonner. Whereas McKay and Bonner examine the subject from the readers' or the audience's point of view, Kleinman (1988) studied illness stories from the perspective of the ill person as well. For instance, Kleinman (1988: xii) discovered important things of patient care while talking to a young, severely burnt girl who had to undergo a daily swirl pool treatment, which hurt her very much. Kleinman (1988: xi-xii) observed that the girl felt easier in the treatment when telling Kleinman how she experienced it and what she was feeling. By this case he (1988: xii) suggested that even in patient care when talking with ill and anguished people about their illness or suffering and how they experience it, or even witnessing it, can be therapeutic to them. Considering the present study, this is relevant since apparently communicating about sufferings and experience offer relief to patients, or to ordinary people.

In addition, as Kleinman (1988: xiii) points out,

“The study of the process by which meaning is created in illness brings us into the everyday reality of individuals like ourselves, who must deal with exigent life circumstances created by suffering, disability, difficult loss, and the threat of death”

This statement observes how illness stories remind us of human’s vulnerability and the fact that we are all the same and equal, everyone may face misfortunes and accidents at some point of their lives. Moreover, Kleinman (1988: xiii) points out that these narratives help people understand how “life problems are created, controlled, made meaningful”. These quotes by Kleinman (ibid.) could be applied to other difficult life stories found in magazines too, since they have the same idea about how life can suddenly change and humans are vulnerable.

Furthermore, researchers have had similar conclusions on the matter why these stories are published: underlying ideas such as understanding and hope are often highlighted. Couser (1997: 295), who studied pathographies in literature, makes a good point despite the fact his research is not about magazine journalism. He (1997: 295) says that illness stories show the value of our lives:

“Thus, if illness and disability are reminders of our mortality and frailty, narratives of those conditions are testaments to our resilience and vitality. Today especially, narratives of illness and disability are helping us recover our bodies and restory our lives. But there will always be a call for stories of illness and disability; their ultimate value is, after all, to help us understand what it means to be some body.”

Finally Anne Hunsaker Hawkins (1999: 11), who has studied pathographies generally as a genre has indicated,

“For readers who are themselves ill, pathography articulates the hopes, fears, and anxieties so common to sickness, organizing them into a coherent whole and suggesting by example ways of thinking and acting”.

Hunsaker Hawkins (1999: 11) also mentions that these pathographies may serve as guidebooks, suggesting good doctors, possible treatments or help the patient to adapt to the new life after or with sickness. According to her (ibid.),

“For readers who are not themselves sick, pathography serves a preparatory function, so that when they do encounter some life-threatening illness (and most of us eventually will), this experience will inevitably be informed by what they have read”.

Although Hunsaker Hawkins bases her statements on her own research on pathographies as a narrative genre, not as magazine articles, her findings fit into the framework here, since they apply to all pathography stories.

Next, the present study will be presented and argued. The important factors concerning the study will be looked into.

### 3 THE PRESENT STUDY

In this chapter the set-up of the present study will be presented in a nutshell. First I will explain and argue the aims and research questions and then introduce the data and the analytic method by Allan Bell which will be used as a tool for investigating the data.

#### 3.1 Aims and research questions

As already mentioned, in the present study my key aim is to investigate what kinds of stories are published about ordinary people in British quality weekend supplement magazines. In addition, I will examine why these stories are selected to be published how they are *constructed* as narratives, and what kind of general form and contents they have.

The subject is important, because ordinary people are seldom documented in public media, especially in magazines and newspapers. This lack of visibility may be linked to the journalistic norm that media should treat ordinary people with respect, while celebrities and other public people can be freely followed by them. Indeed, as ordinary people may have ailments, suffer from disabilities and traumas, journalists are presumed to be subtle, understand interviewees and take them into account (Adams 2009: 172-174). However, the fact that social media have brought ordinary people more visibility online may have an impact on how they are dealt with in print media as well.

Secondly, media affects people's opinions and views as well as reflects those of the society (Fairclough 1995). Hence, it is important to pay attention to what is talked about in media and in what way in public and in the media, since they both affect each other by reinforcing or shaping them (Richardson 2007: 13) and, hence, creating suppositions, norms and ways of reacting to issues. In sum, it is important to investigate human interest articles about ordinary people from the view of media criticism, and see how the media depicts them. Furthermore, it will be interesting to



see what journalists share about the ordinary people through the articles, since what they share, may offer readers comfort, sympathy and encouragement in their own lives. Indeed, the construction of a person's story is shared by a journalist, which then will be read by the audience that has a demand for certain kind of stories and matters.

More specifically, in order to fulfil my main aim, the study will seek an answer to the following research questions:

1. What kinds of stories are told about ordinary people?
  - 1 a) Why are they selected as the topic of a human interest story?

The first question focuses on investigating the types of articles that are published about ordinary people in general. In addition, the sub-question includes the tasks of categorizing different stories by their topic (work, problems, and ailments etc.) and examining how the topics of stories divide into groups.

2. How are the stories of ordinary people constructed?
  - 2 a) What kinds of narrative points of view are used;
  - 2 b) How are the texts constructed;
  - 2 c) What kind of topics do they have?

The second research question aims at exploring how the articles and the embedded individual mini-stories in them are constructed as far as their form and contents are concerned. Here, Allan Bell's (1991) model for the analysis of the discourse structure for news texts will be employed. Bell's (1991) structure will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. Next, the contents or topics of the stories will be investigated, which in turn will provide with information about what issues are being told about the ordinary people. Finally, conclusions will be drawn on the basis of the results of the two research questions.

### 3.2 Data

The data of the present study consists of human interest magazine articles that tell stories about ordinary people and their lives. The human interest stories about ordinary people have been gathered from British weekend supplement magazines, *The Herald Magazine* and *The Observer Magazine*. The present data were collected from the issues from mid-September to mid-January, within time-period of four months. As both magazines are supplements they are issued every week with the broadsheet and, hence, they address a wide audience, are close to readers and are available to everyone. *The Herald Magazine* is published on Saturdays and *The Observer Magazine* on Sundays. More specifically, the data include 19 issues of both magazines.

One reason for choosing these magazines for this study is that they are both quality magazines that have similar sections. They include columns, a travelling section, a food/drink section and fashion and gardening sections. The second reason for choosing these two magazines is that they are not the bestselling magazines in UK or have the vastest circulation. By contrast, my aim is to see, how ordinary people are presented in different quality magazines with different circulations and readerships around UK. The target of this study is not to compare these two magazines but rather to form a general glimpse of human interest articles about ordinary people in supplement magazines.

The reason for choosing quality magazines over tabloids is that they are not sensationalistic. In addition, high quality journalism possibly offers a more in-depth analysis. Newspapers were excluded from the data as well because magazines are produced within a longer time period, whereas newspaper articles are often produced and written in a short time, sometimes only in an hour or half, since they are issued every morning. Thus, the time for writing an article in a newspaper is limited which sometimes might lead to missing comments from the party concerned and hence, a less in-depth article – just because of the lack of time. In magazines, in contrast, the time schedule is not that hectic and the space for a story is not that limited. Sometimes the reporter can write as long a story she or he wishes to and is able to think about the article more which affects positively to its quality (Kamphuis 2011,

Interviewing-course). Accordingly, magazine articles may provide a fresh, more relaxed reading experience and their purpose is to entertain more than just inform the public of something that has happened.

Most of the data were collected from *PressDisplay*, an online newspaper kiosk and archive which allows users to read magazines and newspapers from all around the world. *PressDisplay* shows publications in a facsimile form: the appearance of the magazines and articles is not different from the actual printed ones. However, since *PressDisplay* shows only two previous issues of *The Observer Magazine*, some former issues had to be retrieved from *The Observer's* website archive.

The selection of human interest articles about ordinary people was done manually: I read the magazines and selected the ones that met the following criteria. Firstly, the articles must tell about ordinary people as defined in Chapter 2.1. Secondly, the articles must be human interest stories. In other words, stories that are constructed on some topic, social phenomenon or a problem that relate to an ordinary person(s) are selected only if the emphasis of the story is on the people themselves, rather than in the topic, phenomenon or problem itself.

Despite these criteria, sometimes the selection process was difficult and I had to look for help outside the articles. In this kind of cases some journalistic investigation was done to pin down whether the people reported on had gained media attention somewhere else. For example, *The Herald Magazine* has a section called “Lifelines” which focuses on people who do something unusual. Since “Lifelines” occurs every week, it provided a great deal of material for the present study. To make sure that, the weekend features editor was asked by email about the series, for example, how interviewees are found and selected to ensure the series’ suitability to this study. The features editor Garry Scott answered in a following way:

“Hello Meri

What we aim for is an ordinary person who does something unusual. At their best they are people we come across in our working and personal lives and who are not seeking publicity but have a passion. One of my favourites recently was a car enthusiast who loved his Ford Escort.

I've attached it. Sometimes, though, they are driven by PR and people trying to get publicity, and they are not so good ie fashion designers etc.

Hope this all helps

Garry Scott

Group Weekend Features Editor

Herald and Times"

Here, the editor, Garry Scott explains that "Lifelines" tells about "ordinary person who does something unusual." He also mentions that some of the interviewees are after publicity. Keeping this in mind, if the person's 'ordinariness' was unclear, I googled the person's name to find out whether s/he was 'ordinary'. Since the internet includes a substantial number of news and many magazines indeed publish their stories online, the search results could reveal whether the person has been covered in the media lately. Moreover, it was rather easy to decipher whether the person is ordinary or public by investigating other websites, such as *Wikipedia*, and what they might tell about them. Yet, it had to be borne in mind that sites such as *Wikipedia* can be modified by anyone and, thus, decisions on a person's ordinariness should not be concluded only by them.

### **3.3 Methods of analysis**

The present study is a qualitative one with some quantitative features. The qualitative part of the study will be conducted by using Allan Bell's (1991) framework for analysing the discourse structure of news texts. The quantitative part will provide the study with figures that will help in deciphering how substantially different stories on ordinary persons are covered in magazines. The quantitative statistics also help in investigating what kinds of stories are selected to be published the most. Indeed, the quantitative analysis helps to draw conclusions and offers support to the analysis.

In the qualitative part of the present study the human interest stories about ordinary people are analysed by examining them systematically one by one, by the same pattern. Firstly, to get a general overview of the data, the texts are read thoroughly to determine what kind of human interest articles they represent. The human interest

articles found are then arranged into categories according to their topic, in other words, to the reasons why the stories are published. These categories will provide with an answer to the first research question.

Next, to find out an answer to the second research question which aims at seeing how stories are constructed, Bell's (1991, 1998) model for the analysis of the discourse structure for news text will be employed. Bell's approach (1991, 1998) has been developed on the basis of the narrative schema by Labov and Waletzky (1967) and the framework for analysing news discourse by van Dijk (1988b). Since Labov and Waletzky's schema is rather generalized but still functional, Bell used it as a starting point but added new matters in it. According to Labov and Waletzky (1967: 32-40), the structure of a narrative includes five different categories:

- 1) Orientation, which establishes place, time, person and situation
- 2) Complicating action, which is the main body of the text, series of events. It answers the question "then what happened?"
- 3) Evaluation, which brings significance and reveals the attitude of the interviewee to the narrative. It can be expressed by irrealis clauses or alternative endings, for instance, "I would not be here if..." (Labov 1997)
- 4) Resolution, which is the result of the narrative, answering the question "so what?". When evaluation occurs last, resolution is usually merged with it. It may not always be clear, and it can even be the most reportable event that comes in the end (Labov 1997)
- 5) Coda, which brings the events to the present day

Although Labov and Waletzky's (1967) narrative schema was originally used only for studying oral narratives, it has been widely used to study other narratives as well. For instance, also Fakri (1991) has used it to study narratives in journalism and law, while Coupland & Coupland (1998) have employed it to study elderly patients who talk about their health (McKay and Benner 2002: 57). McKay and Benner (ibid.) also mention that Labov and Waletzky's schema can be applied when studying pathographies in magazines.

Bell's (1991) framework for analysing the discourse structure of news texts is an ideal method for the present study, since it is simple, developed for print press and it examines texts and their construction accurately. It pays attention to the events, comments, background information and other factors in the story and separates them from each other.

However, after setting the background of narrative analysis, next the basis for Bell's narrative outline for news texts will be presented. Bell's (1998: 65) approach to news as narratives consists of a main question, "*What does this story actually say happened?*" Indeed, Bell (1998: 66) focuses on basic storytelling and seeks for an event structure in news narratives. He argues (ibid.) that news stories are not usually telling us what we think they tell; they rather set up ambiguity and obscurity and are not simple as may be thought.

According to Bell (1998: 67), a story usually "consists of attribution, an abstract, and the story proper." Firstly, the *attribution* refers to the source of the story that can be a news agency or a journalist but it cannot always be clearly traced. If the attribution is not traceable, one can assume that it was written by a staff reporter (Bell 1998: 84). Secondly, the *lead* consists of the headline and lead sentence, which functions as an introduction to the story and summarizes the main point. According to Bell (1991) personal narratives may have double abstracts. The third component of a news text is the *story* itself, which presents episodes that comprise of events. Episodes consist of events that are set in the same location or share the same actors, and events in turn express action, actors and often also time and place (ibid.). Bell (1998: 67-69) also mentions that there are more factors that concern the events:

"There are three additional categories of material in a news story: background, commentary and follow-up. These represent the past, the (non-action) present, and the future of the events described in the main action of the story."

Bell (1998: 67) explains that the *background* signifies events that have happened before the present time, and those happenings that take place farther in past are classified as *history*. Moreover, he (ibid.) observes that the narrative may have a *commentary* which offers the actor's or the journalist's comments, evaluation or

provide with context. The commentary is, thus, similar to Labov and Waletzky's (1967) evaluation. Bell (1991: 152) also points out, that "In a personal narrative, evaluative devices may occur throughout the narrative but are typically concentrated near the end, just before the resolution of the events. In the news story, evaluation focuses in the lead." Lastly, the *follow-up* is a sort of resolution for the events of the story, which suggests or reveals the consequences or reactions awakened by the story (Bell 1998: 67-69). Bell (1991: 153) points out that personal narratives usually end up to a resolution, where "the fight is won, the accident survived." Moreover, the follow-ups usually occur after the main events (Bell 1998: 67-69).

In addition, Bell (1991: 154) defines a coda as an ending to a story. The term coda was originally defined by Labov and Waletzky (1967), and it refers to the conclusion of a story, which for instance, can set an optional closure to the story or return the tense from the past to the present. However, Bell (1991: 154) points out that codas do not usually occur in news texts since none of the formerly mentioned functions are necessary in news "where the floor is not open" and "the next contribution is another story."

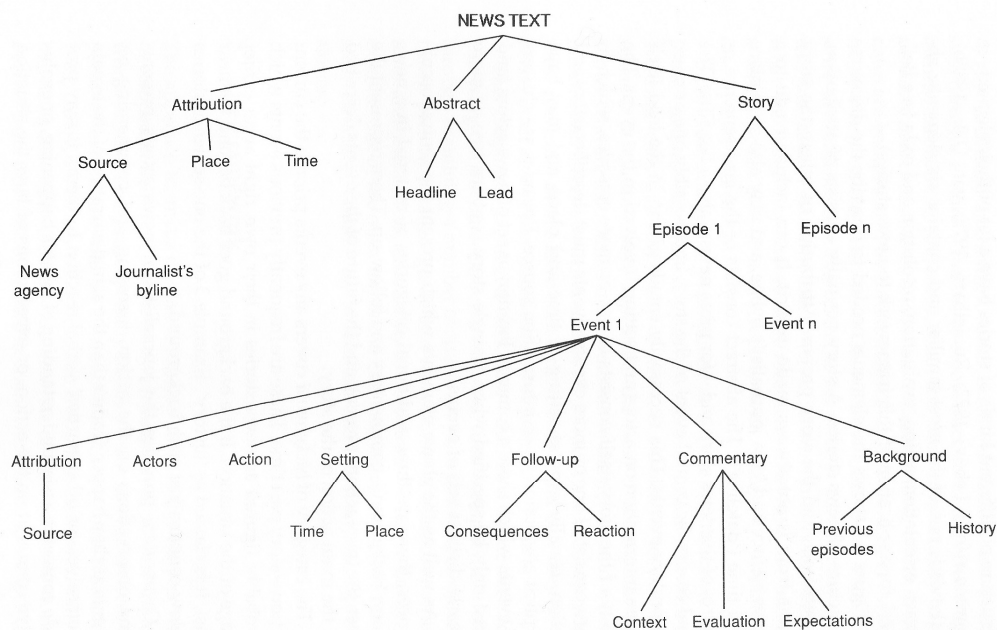


Figure 1. Bell's (1991: 171) framework for investigating discourse structure of news texts

In the present study, the aim is not to analyse the texts strictly according to Bell's (1991) discourse structure but rather to use it as a medium to categorize and illustrate the structures that can be found in the stories. Moreover, although Bell (1998: 78, 85-87, 93-97) discusses place and time as part of his discourse structure, those will not be analysed separately here. However, time and place will be discussed together with the events if they are relevant from the point of setting. Furthermore, since Bell's model structure is originally used to study news texts, in human interest articles different structures are presumed to occur at the clause level. Nevertheless, studying human interest articles at the clause level is not a good idea, since the stories are longer and, thus, the analysis would become too long. This means that the analysis will not concentrate on every word but rather on the sentences and the meanings they create.

To answer the research question on how stories are constructed, the structure of the articles will be examined carefully. First, the human interest stories' narrative form will be investigated and discussed. Next, the actual construction of the articles will be examined by dividing the stories into openings, main bodies and closures. Each part of the stories will be read and scrutinized thoroughly. Based on this careful reading, they are then categorized into different types and themes that seem to occur regularly. However, since the body of the text, in other words, events and evaluations, forms a greater amount of data than openings or closures, I will focus on the most typical aspects in the texts that are told about ordinary people's lives in the format of human interest story. Moreover, if there are any differences between the magazines and the styles their journalists use in the articles, these will be paid attention to and reported. In addition, all possible exceptions from the most typical occurrences will be presented.



## 4 ANALYSIS

After setting up the theory and clarifying the composition of the present study, I will now move on to the results of the present study. I will answer the research questions one by one. First, a general overview of the selected articles will be given, and after that they will be organised into different thematic categories. Finally, the narrative mode and the overall construction of the texts and their typical aspects will be investigated.

### 4.1 Stories about work, ailments and social phenomena

The British supplement magazines *The Herald Magazine* and *The Observer Magazine* include human interest stories of ordinary people. These are variably present in their issues, as evinced by the data of the present study. For instance, *The Herald Magazine* has a regular section called “Lifelines”, which tells about ordinary people and their professions and “Real lives” that tells about their lives. The stories vary in length, for instance, the “Lifelines” are usually short, about 400-500 words while “Real lives” can be three times longer. In addition, both magazines publish other human interest articles about ordinary people. Typically these are relatively long articles. For example, one of these human interest articles, “Autism’s early child” (*The Observer Magazine*, 13 Nov 2011) consists of as many as 3600 words.

To give an idea of what kinds of human interest stories there are, what follows is a brief overview of these in the two magazines. *The Herald Magazine* published a story about three families, where a child is suffering from Down’s Syndrome “Shock guilt grief joy” (15 Oct 2011) and “When I came here I thought: ‘I have to get a job, I don’t want to stay at home on benefits’” (29 Oct 2011), a reportage about refugees and how they struggle with their new life. *The Observer Magazine* has also published stories that deal with ailments and problems, for example, “Autism’s early child” (13 Nov 2011), telling about one of the first children diagnosed autistic, a woman’s story “Therapy stole my boyfriend” (4 Dec 2011) and a story about losing a child “The child I lost” (22 Jan 2012). These kinds of stories are categorised as ailments and

social problems and phenomena. Moreover, *The Observer Magazine* published a story about a father and daughter, “Separated by 1,000 miles: the young ballet star and her father” (6 Nov 2011). Hence, the articles can be categorized by their topics into different categories:

- Ailments, disabilities, personal loss
- Work, occupation
- Social problems and phenomena
- Hobbies, lifestyle

Consequently, the stories in the supplement magazines have been selected to be published because of their above-mentioned topics that concern many people in different phases of their lives. As previous studies and the data of the present study have suggested, one reoccurring topic in the magazines is pathographies, in other words, stories about ailments. In addition, work and occupation stories are substantially presented in the data. Social problems and phenomena in ordinary people’s lives form one category, as well as hobbies and lifestyle. The division of categories in both magazines added together can be seen in figure below.

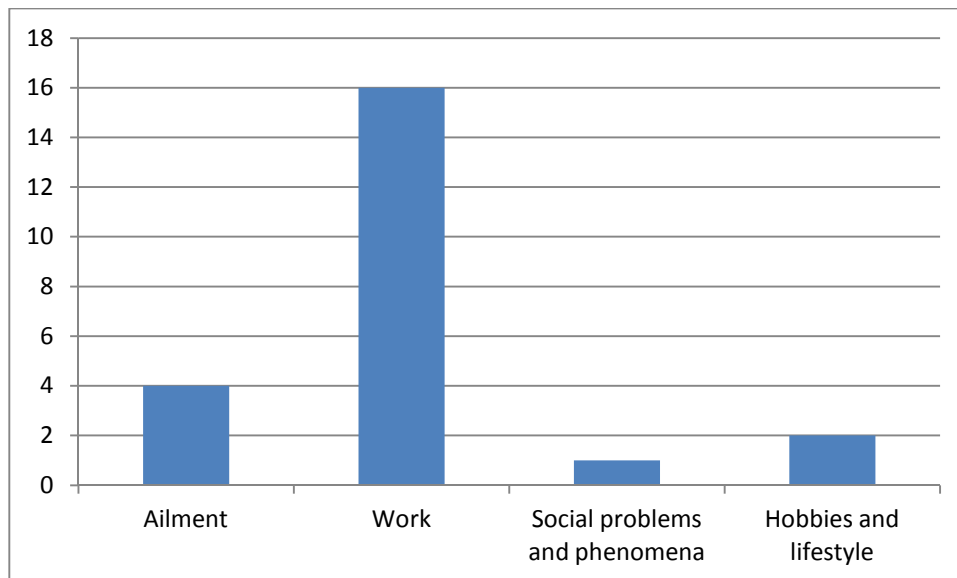


Figure 2. All articles divided into categories according to their topic

Figure 2 shows that ordinary people are described the most in the human interest articles that deal with their work. The second major category is ailment, then the hobbies and lifestyle. Finally, it seems that stories about ordinary people rarely deal with social problems and phenomena that may concern them.

However, when investigating the results more closely in Table 1 and Table 2 below, one notices that a substantial number of articles about work occur in *The Herald Magazine*'s "Lifelines"-series which is issued every week. The "Lifelines" stories are typically short articles, approximately one page. This explains the high number of work related articles in the data of the present study. *The Observer Magazine*, in turn, has published only one human interest article ordinary people and work. Yet, it is interesting that *The Observer Magazine* has published over half of their few stories about ailments, whereas *The Herald Magazine* has published only one such article.

Table 1. Articles on ordinary people in *The Herald Magazine*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Category</b>
17.9.11	"Lifelines: Master brewer"	WORK
24.9.11	"Lifelines: Ford Escort enthusiast"	HOBBIES, LIFESTYLE
15.10.11	"Lifelines: Cook"	WORK
15.10.11	"Real Lives series: Fare's fair"	WORK
15.10.11	"Shock guilt grief joy"	AILMENT
22.10.11	"Lifelines: Shiatsu practitioner"	WORK
29.10.11	"Lifelines: Entrepreneur"	WORK
29.10.11	"When I came here I thought: 'I have to get a job, I don't want to stay at home on benefits'"	SOCIAL PHENOMENON
5.11.11	"Lifelines: Fireworks retailer"	WORK

12.11.11	“Lifelines: Busker”	WORK
26.11.11	“Lifelines: Lecturer and climber”	WORK
3.12.11	“Lifelines: Christmas tree seller”	WORK
10.12.11	“Lifelines: Saddle fitter”	WORK
17.12.11	“Lifelines: Sweet shop owner”	WORK
24.12.11	“Lifelines: Caterer”	WORK
31.12.11	“Lifelines: Piper”	WORK
7.1.2012	“Lifelines: Pub owner”	WORK
14.1.12	“Lifelines: Teacher”	WORK
In sum	19 articles in 19 issues	

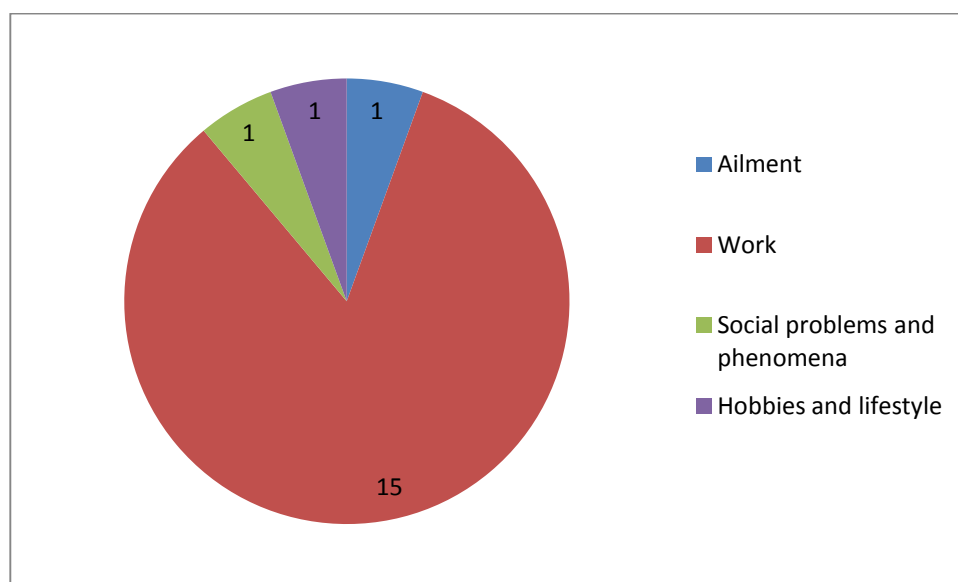


Figure 3. The number of articles divided into categories according to topic in *The Herald Magazine*

It thus seems that ordinary people do have a role in British quality magazines. However, this role is not a major one, since their stories are published quite rarely. When comparing *The Herald Magazine's* and *The Observer Magazine's* articles, it can also be observed that *The Herald Magazine* has published substantially more human interest stories about ordinary people in the time of four months. The high number of human interest articles in *The Herald Magazine*, nevertheless, results from their “Lifelines”-series, which is published every week and, hence, increases the

number of articles that tell about ordinary people. *The Observer Magazine*, in turn, does not have an equivalent section in it.

Table 2. Articles on ordinary people in *The Observer Magazine*

Date	Title	Category
6.11.11	Separated by 1,000 miles: the young ballet star and her father	HOBBIES, LIFESTYLE
13.11.11	Autism's early child	AILMENT
4.12.11	Therapy stole my boyfriend	AILMENT
11.12.11	Life is sweet	WORK
22.1.12	The child I lost	AILMENT
In sum	Five articles in 19 issues	

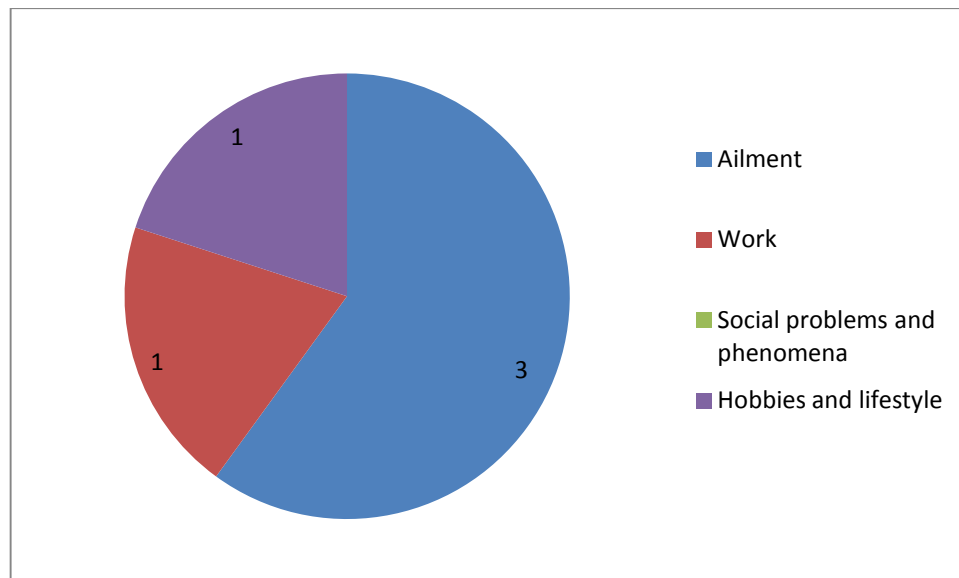


Figure 4. Articles divided into categories according to topic in *The Observer Magazine*

Some articles were also excluded from the data, because they did not fulfil the requirements concerning data of the present study. Both magazines included many stories where ordinary people were present and the stories dealt with some event or phenomenon. However, in these stories the stress was sometimes put on the event or

phenomenon, rather than on the person and for that they were excluded from the analysis. These kinds of stories were, for example, “Empty Promises” (*The Herald Magazine*, 10 Dec 2011), about a place called Assynt estate, which includes ordinary people’s voices in the story and “Red or Dead” (*The Herald Magazine*, 1 Oct 2011), a story on protecting natural biodiversity by culling grey squirrels in Scotland so that the original red squirrel would survive. An article about fox hunting, “Who let the dogs out?” (*The Observer Magazine*, 16 Oct 2011) also involves ordinary people with their opinions (some of whom had already gained, for instance, the animal activists’ attention online) but mainly focused on the phenomenon of fox hunting and, thus, was excluded from the analysis.

In addition, an article about Hackney’s young drug dealers, which had originally been made for the TV show “Top Boy” (*The Observer Magazine*, 9 Oct 2011) was excluded, since the article seemed to have an emphasis on drug dealing as a social problem rather than on the persons. Moreover, the persons interviewed had already been on TV because of the “Top Boy”, which presumably has made them less ordinary.

Articles dealing with people who have already gained media attention because of what they do (see Chapter 2.1.) were also excluded, based on the definition made earlier. These kinds of persons and their stories included people who had been interviewed for *The Herald Magazine*’s “Lifelines”, for instance, a fashion designer and DJ. Furthermore, “Why we’re watching” -series from *The Observer Magazine* was not accepted as part of the data, since it told about young people who are already famous to some extent, for instance, people like Laura Hunter, a scriptwriter who became famous for writing for the TV-programme *Skins*. In addition, it seems that these people have sought media attention or media has sought them, because of what they do, and they already have a public job or reputation in society.

## **4.2 Construction of the stories**

Here, the categories introduced in 4.1 will be discussed one by one to investigate the way in which the actual texts are constructed as stories. This will be done by utilizing

the model for the analysis of discourse structure of news (Bell 1991, 1998), as previously explained. In this way, the present study provides the readers with a general overview of how stories are presented and constructed and how they differ from each other.

More specifically, in this chapter I will carefully examine the structure of the articles by investigating their narrative form and how they are constructed by different parts that can be divided into categories: openings, main bodies and closures as well as the typical topics that come up. Examples of each category will be presented, which will also show the typical themes that occur in them. In addition, differences between magazines will be discussed, if there are any.

#### **4.2.1 Narrative Form**

According to the data of the present study, the narrative form of the human interest stories can be divided into two main categories, first and third person narratives. First of all, four fifths of the articles are written by using the first person narrator and as ‘free flow’ monologues which also means that the topics of each paragraph occur arbitrary, so that one topic does not lead to another. This way, the paragraphs do not have clear themes, but they rather change naturally like thoughts in one’s head. Hence, different issues come up even in one paragraph. This is certainly a stylistic feature that aims at presenting the text as speech, but that also makes the text a firm and informative unity. In the data, the monologues are rather short stories. Here it is important to remember that it is the journalist who makes the decisions on what to include or exclude, and how to present matters in the article. Hence, the monologue is constructed by the journalist and not the interviewee him/herself, although it is based on what the interviewee has told.

Secondly, there are also a few articles written by using the first person narrator, but they are not monologues by their genre. Instead, they resemble prose. In effect, they are longer articles told in the first person that include more information and evaluation than the monologues. These stories are “The Child I lost” (22 Jan 2011) and “Therapy stole my boyfriend” (4 Dec 2011), published in *The Observer*

*Magazine*. They make one third of the long articles and nine per cent of all the articles in the data.

Thirdly, the last fourth of the human interest articles are written by using the third person narrator and they are told by the journalist. In addition to the omniscient third person narrator, the stories include indirect and direct quotes from the actor or protagonist in the story. The third person narratives in the data of the present study are long articles. Two thirds of all the long articles are written in the third person narrative.

Sometimes also the journalist presents his/her own experiences in the article. One example of this can be found in *The Observer Magazine*'s article "Autism's early child" (13 Nov 2011) where the journalist adds his own experience to the text; his son is also autistic. Furthermore, the story "Separated by 1,000 miles: the young ballet star and her father" (*The Observer Magazine*, 6 Nov 2011) is written by the journalist, who appears to be the father in the story as well. Accordingly, his views on his daughter's ballet are revealed. The daughter's side of her story covers the half of the article, which separated the story from being a column and made it a human interest story, suitable for the present study. Next, the stories and their construction will be discussed from the view of Bell's (1991) discourse structure model for news texts.

Table 3. The narrative modes of the articles

1 <sup>st</sup> person narrative	3 <sup>rd</sup> person narrative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Lifelines: Master brewer"</li> <li>• "Lifelines: Ford Escort enthusiast"</li> <li>• "Lifelines: Cook"</li> <li>• "Real Lives series: Fare's fair"</li> <li>• "Lifelines: Shiatsu practitioner"</li> <li>• "Lifelines: Entrepreneur"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Shock guilt grief joy"</li> <li>• "When I came here I thought: 'I have to get a job, I don't want to stay at home on benefits'"</li> <li>• "Autism's early child"</li> <li>• "Life is sweet"</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Lifelines: Fireworks retailer”</li> <li>• “Lifelines: Busker”</li> <li>• “Lifelines: Lecturer and climber”</li> <li>• “Lifelines: Christmas tree seller”</li> <li>• “Lifelines: Saddle fitter”</li> <li>• “Lifelines: Sweet shop owner”</li> <li>• “Lifelines: Caterer”</li> <li>• “Lifelines: Piper”</li> <li>• “Lifelines: Pub owner”</li> <li>• “Lifelines: Teacher”</li> <li>• “Separated by 1,000 miles: the young ballet star and her father”</li> <li>• “Therapy stole my boyfriend” (not a monologue)</li> <li>• “The child I lost” (not a monologue)</li> </ul>	
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#### 4.2.2 Openings

According to Bell’s (1991, 1998) model, news texts consist mainly of attribution, which Bell says cannot always be defined, abstract and a story. In the present study, the human interest articles generally consist of an attribution, abstract and a story. The attribution of stories can be traced to the journalist in 90 per cent of the stories, while the author was unmarked only in two stories in the data. The abstract comprehends a headline and a lead which introduces the story to the readers. Headline occurs in all stories, but a longer lead is sometimes missing. For example, the headline in “Lifelines”-series is always included, but the lead, which only

includes the person's age and occupation or hobby, is very short as can be seen in the next examples:

1. "**Angela Bradley**, 41, pub manager"
2. "**Derek Mathie**, 50, Ford Escort enthusiast"

There are also longer leads found in the data, since the lead of "Lifelines"-series is basically the style used in the series. In other articles, the lead seems to be longer:

3. "**Fare's fair**

Glasgow Taxis, which has 1400 cars and 2100 drivers, was named the city's favourite business at the Glasgow Business Awards last week, and yet taxi drivers get a bad rap. But with rising fuel costs and the increase in private hire vehicles, being a Hackney driver is harder than ever. And that's not taking into account the passengers who vomit in the back seat or do a runner. We ask three cabbies what life on road is really like" – *Fare's fair, The Herald Magazine, 15 Oct 2011*

4. "**Therapy stole my boyfriend**

'Elizabeth Leighton encouraged her partner to go into analysis. Five years and two babies later he still has five sessions a week. Now she feels sidelined and doesn't know where to turn...'" – *Therapy stole my boyfriend, The Observer Magazine, 4 Dec 2011*

All articles and stories begin with a kind of orientation that is about one paragraph long. There are different kinds of openings that can be divided into six categories, based on the most typical kinds of openings that were found in the data. These openings include topics such as 1) *background*, 2) *the present: how are things now*, 3) *memories*, 4) *evaluations* and 5) *the setting*.

### ***Background***

One type of opening presents the person's *background* and answers the question "how did it all began?" In other words, the means and events that led the person to the present are depicted. It is also described how a person started his/her business or ended up in a specific job, how s/he was feeling or what s/he was doing before. Many articles of the "Lifelines"-series began in this way. More specifically, this category includes 12 stories that deal with work and one of the three personal mini-

stories that are embedded in the article “When I came here I thought: “I have to get a job, I don’t want to stay at home on benefits” (*The Herald Magazine*, 29 Oct 2011). All the stories that presented background in the opening were published in *The Herald Magazine*:

5. “After I left school I was a catering manager for 10 years until I was made redundant, so I went travelling. I meant to go to America but I never got that far because I loved Australia so much. I’ve had quite a few jobs since – I’ve worked at Scotrail, Glasgow Airport and as a park ranger in the Botanic Gardens.” – *Lifelines: Angela Bradley, pub owner, The Herald Magazine, 7 Jan 2012*

6. “I set up a letting agency and estate agency with my brother but thought I would try something different, giving fireworks a try and seeing how it went.” – *Lifelines: Nicholas Short, fireworks retailer, The Herald Magazine, 5 Nov 2011*

7. “Reza Naghizadeh, an Iranian aeronautical engineer, is an example of this. The 59-year-old former manager of the Iranian Helicopter Company came to Glasgow from Tehran in 2007. He had fled Iran after the authorities began persecuting him for converting from Islam to Christianity. (Reza would like to work in aeronautical engineering but has been unable to get a job since being told he could stay – and work – in Britain last January. Like all asylum seekers and refugees in the UK, he was unable to do paid work while awaiting a decision on his status. Instead, like many others in his position, he involved himself heavily in volunteer work).” – *When I came here I thought: “I have to get a job, I don’t want to stay at home on benefits” , The Herald Magazine, 29 Nov 2011*

8. “I had been utterly bored and uninspired in my job as a research chemist running a high-tech piece of equipment inside a cupboard with no windows, inside a lab with no windows, inside a building with no windows.” – *Lifelines: Mark Edwards, entrepreneur, The Herald Magazine, 29 Oct 2011*

9. “During the day I work as a double-glazing installer and fixer for CR Smith. I’ve worked there for 26 years, starting off in the factory and gradually working my way up. I had a shot at other jobs like management but it wasn’t for me, so I went back to the tools.” – *Lifelines: Derek Mathie, Ford Escort enthusiast, The Herald Magazine, 24 Sept 2011*

All the above-mentioned examples present person’s background, but the last example represents also the persons’ present situation. Similarly, the lecturer and climber Paul Schweizer’s story (*The Herald Magazine*, 26 Nov 2011) begins by telling about his

background, “I am from California and have been an avid climber since I started 38 years ago”, and right after that continues by revealing the present in the same paragraph, “I’ve been invited to a reception at Buckingham Palace to ‘recognize the accomplishments of those involved in exploration and adventure’.”

### *Present*

Indeed, the second possibility in an opening is to seek an answer to the question “*how are things now?*” This type of opening was the second popular among the data and was found in four Lifelines stories and in one ailment story, “Therapy stole my boyfriend” (*The Observer Magazine*, 4 Dec 2012), which will be discussed on the next page.

10. “I drink beer every morning as a part of my job, which lot of people would say is the best in the world. Around six Tennent’s employees, including me, attend the daily tasting. We sample the beer at various stages, including at the end of fermentation; after it’s matured and conditioned; before it’s packaged; and 24 hours after it’s packaged, all to make sure it’s 100% on the mark.” – *Lifelines: Keith Lughton, master brewer, The Herald Magazine, 17 Sept 2011*

In the latter example, Keith Lughton also starts to share his daily routines at work, telling everything in the present tense and referring to what he does on a daily basis, at the present time. In the next excerpt, number (13), Tracy Chisholm shares her present situation, although the first sentence could also be defined as evaluation. The example number (14) is clearly focused on the present and even to the future.

11. “Life doesn’t get much busier than it has been in the run-up to this Christmas. I am a mum to my two own children and four stepchildren – Mathew, 20, Patrick, 18, Georgina, 16, Justin, 15, Joe, 14, and 11-year-old Eddie – and I run The Really Delicious Food Company.” – *Lifelines: Tracy Chisholm, caterer, The Herald Magazine, 24 Dec 2011*

12. “I will be taking part in the 2011/12 Clipper round-the-world yacht race. The leg I’m joining is from Qingdao, China, across the Pacific to San Francisco – more than 5600 miles. It’s going to be an amazing experience.” – *Lifelines: Alan Stewart, teacher, The Herald Magazine, 14 Jan 2012*

Moreover, the data include a few openings which are a mixture of the two first opening types. For instance, “Therapy stole my boyfriend” (*The Observer Magazine*, 4 Dec 2011), a story which is categorized as an ailment starts by representing the present situation: “There are three of us in my relationship. Me. My partner. And my partner’s psychoanalyst.” However, in the second paragraph, the opening continues by setting the background and telling “how it all began”:

13. “It started soon after we met. We were both newly separated – I was a single parent – and we had fallen in love with indecent haste. He was attractive, emotionally articulate and excruciatingly funny – but sometimes he had a dead look behind the eyes. He’d had a hard, complicated upbringing and seemed to be suffering from serious depression.” – *Therapy stole my boyfriend, The Observer Magazine, 4 Dec 2011*

Equally, also the third story of the “Shock guilt grief joy” (*The Herald Magazine*, 15 Oct 2011) telling about Eve consists of a similar opening that starts with a description of the present. Yet, then it moves on to the first category opening which tells the background of the setting or what had happened before:

14. “Watching Eve Crawford sit happily watching *Balamory*, and dunking bread sticks into soft cheese, it is difficult to imagine the upheaval that accompanied her arrival into the world. The year after she was born, her mother Lesley Moffat faced a rollercoaster of emotional, financial and practical problems that would have floored most people but says the pleasure of having Eve kept her going through one ordeal after another.” – *Shock guilt grief joy, Eve’s story, The Herald Magazine, 15 Oct 2011*

Nevertheless, here the first category which presents background switches to the third category, which presents memories from the past. The two categories both focus on the past and, thus, are similar to each other. The third type of opening begins with *a memory* from the past.

### ***Memories***

The openings which focus on memories can be divided into two subcategories, where the first one includes openings which describe neutral or happy memories, and the second one includes more negative tone memories which have *changed everything*.

The latter can be confused with background sometimes, since it usually consists of explanation of setting and how things proceeded.

The first subcategory, good memories, can clearly be seen in the few first paragraphs of an article about a retiring sweet shop owner, Christine Gillan (*The Observer Magazine*, 11 Dec 2011). Her story is written from her daughter's point of view, using the third person narrator voice in relation to Christine Gillan. The daughter begins the article by reminiscing:

15. "Polly Pan Drops, Soor Plooms, Chocolate Italian Creams, Rich Butter Treacle, Cinnamon Balls, Liquorice Comfits. The names of the sweets reel off my tongue, taking me back to summers spent in my mum's car, when I 'helped' as she sold boilings, toffees, chocolates and fudges to the corner shops and cafés of the west of Scotland.

I was five years old when my mother, Christine, became a 'sweetie lady', selling twinkling jars of sugared delights for Buchanan's, a traditional confectionery company then most famous for its waxpaper-wrapped toffees the size of an old penny. Each day she'd get up at dawn, meticulously apply her make-up and put on an immaculate suit and high heels. She ate a good breakfast, then, picking up her order book and applying a last coat of lipstick, she's head out of our Glasgow cul de sac in her company car." – *Life is sweet, The Observer Magazine, 11 Dec 2011*

Good memories are also shared in *The Herald Magazine's* article, where the saddle fitter Louise Smith-Kibaris (10 Dec 2011) is reported on telling her background in the opening in the form of memories: "Working with horses is something my business partner Alene and I always wanted to do. But working as a horse groom didn't pay the bills. We didn't plan to become saddle fitters – it just happened." Moreover, Ian Mayes, who wrote a story about himself and his daughter, who moved to Russia for ballet, starts his story by a memory (*The Observer Magazine*, 6 Nov 2011). Indeed, the article consists of two separate stories, the father's and the daughter's accounts on their lives. While the father, Ian Mayes, begins his section by memorizing, his daughter starts hers by evaluating "how things are now", and then moves on to reminiscing:

16. Ian: "Isabella was just 16 when she went to Russia. She was 19 in August, For me she was, in Laurie Lee's expression, 'a late fall': I was 56 when she was born, The two things people

tend to say when they learn I have a teenage daughter studying ballet in Russia are: ‘You must be very proud,’ and ‘How could you let her go?’

17. Isabella: “I guess my life is very different to the average teenager’s life. I don’t party, I don’t have time for boyfriends and I’m very focused on my future. I started like any other little girl – I was two, going to baby ballet – it wasn’t serious, we just twirled ribbons and that sort of thing. Then, when I was seven, I met a Russian ballet teacher and she gave me my first lesson. I didn’t enjoy it at all – I cried and told my parents I didn’t want any more lessons. A few days later I did an about-turn, and said I wanted to ‘see the Russian lady again’. Lessons progressed and I fell in love with ballet.” – *Separated by 1,000 miles: the young ballet star and her father, The Observer Magazine, 6 Nov 2011*

An opening that belongs to the second subcategory of the “life-changing” memories can be found in the article “Shock guilt grief joy” in *The Herald Magazine* (15 Oct 2011). The article tells about three families who have children with Down’s Syndrome. Indeed, the first individual story about Ruby starts with reminiscing and describing the moment that changed everything by sharing a memory:

18. Tracii Smith remembers vividly the day a routine antenatal scan turned her world upside down. Most couples walk away from their ultrasound clutching a blurry photograph of their unborn child but Tracii and Neil Smith were handed ominous news instead. The couple had only just recovered from the shock of finding out they were having twins, when they discovered there was something seriously wrong with one of the babies.” - *Shock guilt grief joy, The Herald Magazine, 15 Oct 2011*

In addition, the ailment story “The child I lost” in *The Observer Magazine* (22 Jan 2012) starts similarly, with *the moment everything changed* in the family’s life. However, the next example could also be included in the first category, which focuses on the background or how it all began, because the mother explains how she became an adult at the age of 38. Yet, the excerpt is here considered to be a memory about the moment that changed everything.

19. “I became an adult at the age of 38 when I held my dead daughter in my arms. Until that moment my husband and I had led a breezy sort of life, taking nothing terribly seriously. We moved to New York, had two children in swift succession and raised them in a loving if chaotic household where nothing was so bad it couldn’t be laughed off with a shrug, a bad joke

or a fatalistic, ‘Oh well, it’ll work out next time’.” – *The Child I lost, The Observer Magazin*, 22 Jan 2012

### ***Evaluation***

The fourth category of openings includes *evaluations* of the topic or the situation. When evaluation occurs, it is usually mentioned in the first sentences of the opening paragraph, but then the article typically moves on to present the background or some memories of the person. Thus, the opening paragraphs are not constructed only by evaluation (underlined). Doing so would probably constitute a confusing beginning, because it does not give enough information about the story. For example, an article on taxi drivers, “Fare’s fair” (*The Herald Magazine*, 15 Oct 2011), offers good examples of this. In this article, there are three embedded stories. The first one, David Hogson’s story starts with an evaluation of him and his career as a taxi driver:

20. “My wife says I couldn’t cope with a real job now – and she’s right. You become set in your own ways – being your own boss and being on your own even though you’ve got people on your back seat. I’m an electrician by trade but I came into taxis for six months and 20 years later, I’m still here. I’m too old to do anything else. I used to earn good money but one day I worked out that after diesel, expenses and tax, it was £3.18 per hour. My daughter started uni this autumn. A lot of taxi drivers’ kids go to university because we want them to have a better life than us. I don’t want my kid working at 5am on a Sunday” – *Fare’s fair, The Herald Magazine*, 15 Oct 2011

In this excerpt, one could state that the first sentence is an evaluation of him as a taxi driver – first by his wife. The second sentence is his own commentary to what his wife says. Another taxi driver who is presented in the second story of the article, Alex Burns, has similar starting paragraph. He also sets his own evaluation in the first sentence stating that he is devoted to his job and then continues to revealing his background and how he became a taxi driver:

21. “If somebody gets in my taxi, I’ll go anywhere. That’s what I’m for – I’m a taxi driver. I’ve been one for 18 years now. I used to own a hamburger van and taxi drivers used to come in for tea and ask me questions from the Glasgow Knowledge – the topographical test – and I could pick them out in the air. I sat the test, passed it the first time and the rest is history” – *Fare’s fair, The Herald Magazine*, 15 Oct 2011



Also Jean McKearney, who is the third driver who is interviewed, starts by McKearney's own evaluation of driving, and continues with her background:

22. “Driving is my hobby as well as my job – I enjoy it. I’m the world’s worst passenger. I’m just not used to sitting on that side of the road. I’ve been driving for about 15 years now. I got into it because I fancied a change. After a year, the manager of my taxi said, “Do you not fancy owning one yourself?” So I bought my own cab. It was a big deal at the time. Now I’m on my third one – a silver cab. It’s four years old but it gets looked after.” – *Fare’s fair, The Herald Magazine, 15 Oct 2011*

Although the article on the caterer Tracy Chisholm (*The Herald Magazine, 24 Dec 2011*) has an opening paragraph, which has already been defined as setting the present and as answering the question “how are things now”, on the other hand the first sentence “Life doesn’t get much busier than it has been in the run-up to this Christmas” could be as well defined as evaluation. This is because Chisholm reveals her attitude or view about the up-coming Christmas. Furthermore, the entrepreneur Mark Edwards’ story (*The Herald Magazine, 29 Oct 2011*) begins with him stating that “I had been utterly bored and uninspired in my job as a research chemist --”, which has already been categorized according to the first category, “how it all began”, but it could as well be seen as an evaluative opening, since he tells how he felt about his job.

### ***The setting***

Finally, the fifth category of openings consists of descriptions of *the setting*. This kind of a beginning includes accurate descriptions of what happens at the moment of the interview, and of what people are doing. It also sets the place and the mood for the story. A good example of this category is found in *The Observer Magazine* (13 Nov 2011) in a story about Michael Edge, “Autism’s early child”:

23. “In a sunlit garden in Dorset, a middle-aged man is looking at photographs of his life. He pauses on a family group beside a caravan, a faded black-and-white snap stained with streaks of tea. And gently touches his forefinger to the face of a woman, pretty but careworn. She is in

her 30s, with her arms around two boys. He says, ‘Mummy.’” – *Autism’s early child, The Observer Magazine, 13 Nov 2011*

The second and the third paragraph of this article continue by describing the setting, with Michael Edge looking at old photographs. In addition, in another article “When I came here I thought: ‘I have to get a job, I don’t want to stay at home on benefits’” (*The Herald Magazine, 29 Oct 2011*), the first embedded story about Deca Ibrahim Osman presents an opening that includes a description of the present setting at Osman’s home, at the time of the interview:

24. “The banter of children in a Glasgow flat nine floors up mixes with the enticing aroma from a frying pan on the hob. After a few minutes the youngest girl, nine-year-old Nadia, appears at the dinner table and places a plateful of food next to a bottle of Scotland’s other national drink. Her mother watches approvingly then pours the Irn-Bru into mugs.” – “*When I came here I thought: ‘I have to get a job, I don’t want to stay at home on benefits’*”, *The Herald Magazine, 29 Oct 2011*

Similar opening which presents an accurate description of the setting is offered by the second story in the article “Shock guilt grief joy” (*The Herald Magazine, 15 Oct 2011*), telling about Cameron:

25. “Cameron Gibson is giving an impromptu dance display in his home in Piperdam near Dundee. ‘I like Michael Jackson,’ he says enthusiastically as he spins to a track on his parents’ iPod. The pleasure on the seven-year-old’s face as he moves his arms and legs in time to the beat is infectious; it’s uplifting just to be in his presence.” – *Shock guilt grief joy, The Herald Magazine, 15 Oct 2011*

### **Conclusion**

All in all, there are different types of openings to be found in the data of the present study. These categories entail 1) *background*, 2) *the present: how are things now*, 3) *memories*, 4) *evaluations* and 5) *the setting*. In addition, there are openings that can be clearly divided into one category but also openings that function as mixtures of two different types. There are also beginnings that could be categorized into two different categories.

Yet, the most popular openings seemed to be ones in which the background to the story is presented. These kinds of openings can only be found in *The Herald Magazine*. In fact, in *The Herald Magazine* there were a substantial number of them. A second popular opening is one in which the present situation is described. In other words, these openings try to answer to the question, “how are things now?” This category was much found in articles of *The Herald Magazine*’s “Lifelines”-series. In contrast, there is only one story, “Therapy stole my boyfriend”, in *The Observer Magazine* (4 Dec 2011) which begins in a similar manner. Although these two openings covered a substantial amount of the data, yet another possible opening was one which presents memories. Yet, three quarters of the stories starting with a memory occur in *The Observer Magazine*. Another opening format can include a description of the setting, which can be seen, for instance, in one long article, “Autism’s early child” (13 Nov 2011) in *The Observer Magazine* and in the first parts of “Shock guilt grief joy” (15 Oct 2011) and “When I came here I thought: ‘I have to get a job, I don’t want to stay at home on benefits’” (29 Oct 2011) in *The Herald Magazine*. Finally, some stories begin with an evaluation or an evaluative sentence, and then go on to tell about the focal person’s background.

To sum up, according to the data of the present study, *The Herald Magazine* seems to prefer openings telling “how it all began?” and “how are things now?”, whereas *The Observer Magazine* often opens its human interest stories by memories.

#### **4.2.3 Topics and issues in the body text**

After discussing the openings of the articles, I will present and discuss the body texts which entail all the events and issues in the text that come up between the opening and the closure. In an article’s body text section, people are reported on sharing their background or past that consist of stories and memories, their evaluations, how they ended up in the present and explanations on how things happened. Moreover, typical issues that people are reported on telling in the body text are their lives, feelings, families, what they like and what they do not like, challenges and problems, bad features and good features in their jobs/ailments/hobbies. Moreover, the body text may include the journalist’s description of the setting at the time of interview. The

body text section is a sort of plot of the story, where the journalist puts the interviewee's story together.

Since the interviewees and their lives are all different, and the data in the present study is quite large, many topics come up in the articles. I will here focus only on the most typical topics that come up in the texts, as already explained in section 3.3. These topics comprehend 1) the interviewees' *memories*, 2) *the past* or *the background* of the people, 2) their *evaluations* of issues and 3) *the present situation*. These topics build the body text, interact together and reflect different issues in the articles. Indeed, these three categories set the basis for the human interest stories while different subjects take place in them. These subjects can be seen in the examples in this sub-chapter, and they are gathered together in the end of this chapter.

The construction of an article affects how different topics can be presented in the body texts of articles. In other words, topics can be discussed briefly or extensively. It depends on the length of the article and also on the topic's importance in the story. As a variant, a topic can be explained in few clauses in a monologue or, on the other hand, it can take a paragraph in a narrative which reminds prose. Indeed, the longer articles in the data naturally have more text and, consequently, more topics can be dealt with. Long articles present topics and events that take place rather chronologically which makes the story flow naturally from one point to another, eventually leading to the conclusion. These stories include a great deal of evaluation as well. Moreover, since the story flows chronologically, turning points of the story are easily spotted. In turn, the shorter articles that mainly consist of monologues jump from a matter to another, as already explained in 4.2.1 while discussing the narrative form of the articles.

### ***Memories***

In this section I will introduce and focus on analysing the memories that can be found in the articles. Memories are one of the most typical topics that come up in the human interest stories, since they are one major factor which forms the plot.

To begin with memories from the youth, fireworks retailer Nicholas Short (5 Nov 2011), teacher Alan Stewart (14 Jan 2012) and busker Matthew Clark (12 Nov 2011) look back to their youth in a slightly different way in the second paragraph of their stories (*The Herald Magazine*). All these three excerpts are *memories* from the past and, hence, are a bit different excerpts when compared to the previous ones. Clark's memorizing also functions as a commentary and evaluation of street players' sovereignty, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

26. "Growing up, I always enjoyed Guy Fawkes Night. We made it a family event by getting everyone round to my parents' house and putting on a fantastic display." – *Lifelines: Nicholas Short, fireworks retailer, The Herald Magazine, 5 Nov 2011*

27. "I had some musical education in my teens, and found a lot of Gypsy and percussion players on the street were second-to-none in terms of musicianship." – *Lifelines: Matthew Clark, busker, The Herald Magazine 12 Nov 2011*

28. "When I was young my father, brother and I built a wee sailing dinghy and we sailed it up Loch Lomond, but my interest in sailing died away after I moved away from the family home in Govan." – *Lifelines: Alan Stewart, teacher, The Herald Magazine, 14 Jan 2012*

Moreover, in *The Observer Magazine's* article "Life is sweet" (11 Dec 2011) Christine Gillan's daughter reminisces to her childhood and how she always watched her mother preparing for work, as can be seen in the example (29):

29. "I was five years old when my mother, Christine, became a 'sweetie lady', selling twinkling jars of sugared delights for Buchanan's, --. Each day she's get up at dawn, meticulously apply her make-up and put on an immaculate suit and high heels. She ate a good breakfast, then, picking up her order book and applying a last coat of lipstick, she'd head out of our Glasgow cul de sac in her company car." – *Life is sweet, The Observer Magazine, 11 Dec 2011*

In what follows, the narrative stays in the past tense and moves on to describe the work Christine Gillan did and how she did it, by relying on personal contact and hand written orders, without computers or emails. In one memory it is stated that "It was a life marked in six-week cycles that took in seaside towns as well as bleak

housing estates. Trough it my mom built her own community --.” In the next paragraph, the time goes back to history again and the daughter recalls that she accompanied her mum in her work in early days, because of “the lack of childcare.” Furthermore, Gillan also shares a memory from the past with her daughter as they arrive at Swan’s Sweet Shop on their journey:

30. “My mum looks in her rear-view mirror at the passing traffic and tells me of the time when she was parked on the same spot and a heavy-goods driver shunted her car along the street just as she was getting some samples out –. She ended up in the back with the sweeties while a man shouted ‘Haw, stop, there’s a wummin hinging oot that boot!’” – *Life is sweet, The Observer Magazine, 11 Dec 2011*

In a similar manner, a Shiatsu practitioner Elaine Liechti (*The Herald Magazine, 22 Oct 2011*) memorises one occasion she faced in her class. Her memories consist of an event of what happened and what happened next, and ends with a consequence similarly than the previous example.

31. “I once started a class about lower back pain by making up a story about a woman who’d had a back pain since her son – who I called Rudi – had been born 12 years previously. Someone in the class put her hand up and said the symptoms were as I described, but that her son Rudi had been born 20 years ago and not 12. So I tested her out and sure enough I found the problem I had been referring to, and we sorted it out for her.” – *Lifelines: Elaine Liechti, shiatsu practitioner, The Herald Magazine, 22 Oct 2011*

In *The Herald Magazine’s* another article, “Fare’s fair” (15 Oct 2011), the taxi drivers share a great deal of memories, which often include commentary or follow-up, which are discussed later in this chapter. Alex Burns tells two memories, and in the first excerpt (35) the consequence is that the woman disappeared and did not pay.

32. “The best one I’ve ever had is when I picked up an old lady from London Road and took her to King’s Park. ‘I’ll go in and get some money, son,’ she said, before disappearing off the face of the earth. I chapped her door, but according to the guy who answered, no old woman stayed there. My taxi senses weren’t working that day.” – *Fare’s fair: Alex Burns, The Herald Magazine, 15 Oct 2011*

In another example (33), Burns shares a memory about how he sang to a depressed looking bride and as a consequence or the bride's reaction he got £ 20 for tip. Moreover, Jean McKearney shares a couple of memories of being bothered, but other taxis always came to help. For instance, she is reported on telling about one threatening situation, as seen in example (34). The example (35), in turn, presents the sweet shop owner Katrine Rubenstein's (*The Herald Magazine*, 17 Dec 2011) memory about a story she once heard.

33. "Sometimes I sing to my customers. You get tips then – but I don't do it for that. I was driving a bride to her wedding last year and she looked depressed, so I started singing to her. She made her new husband give me a £20 tip." – *Fare's fair: Alex Burns, The Herald Magazine*, 15 Oct 2011

34. "Once, a guy was fighting his wife in my taxi and he turned on me. He put his hand right through the barrier onto my shoulder and I just stopped and said, 'Get your hands off me now or you're going to jail.' I radioed in and three minutes later I was surrounded by taxis. That's what they do – come and assist." – *Fare's Fair: Jean McKearney, The Herald Magazine*, 15 Oct 2011

35. "The best thing is the stories you hear. One woman came in and said when she was little she and her friends used to buy midget gems, lick the back of them and stick them all over their faces, which she did in the middle of the shop." – *Lifelines: Katrine Rubenstein, sweet shop owner, The Herald Magazine*, 17 Dec 2011

The last example of memories can be found in *The Herald Magazine's* article "When I came here I thought: 'I have to get a job, I don't want to stay at home on benefits'" (29 Oct 2011), where the first embedded story tells about Deca Ibrahim. Ibrahim is reported on telling about her horrifying past and escape from Somalia. The events that take place in past dominate the article and are explicit, as can be seen in the next excerpt (36) taken from Deca Ibrahim's story:

36. "She [Ibrahim] begins by describing the night of her father's murder. 'My father was killed in 2000 at home,' she says, explaining the whole family were there. She describes the intruders as 'boys'.

'The boys came to our house - 30 men. We were not rich but we are educated and my mum's a doctor - we are middle class. The gunfire came and they wanted money and... ladies.' The last word, so politely pronounced, hangs in the air ominously."

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“‘My sister was young and ran away,’ says Deca. ‘They took me and I said, ‘Dad, it's alright.’ He said, ‘No, they kill me first.’ And they did.’” – Deca Ibrahim, “When I came here I thought: ‘I have to get a job, I don't want to stay at home on benefits’”, *The Herald Magazine*, 29 Oct 2011

### *The past and the background*

Next, I will presents one of the most typical topics, *the past and the background*, which often come up in the body texts of human interest stories. Pasts and backgrounds reveal how people ended up to their present situation. In other words, they tell how people got into a specific post or job, how they found out of their ailments and how they managed to end up where they are now despite all the challenges, problems and cruelties they have faced. As previously explained, sometimes the interviewees' backgrounds can be represented already in the opening of the text. Yet, not all stories start by telling the person's background, but they may still include it in the text. The interviewees' backgrounds also remind memories, since most stories from the past have changed into memories, and recalled as them. Here, they go hand in hand, since here the background is a wide term.

Long articles usually explain the interviewees' past widely in the present study. Sometimes the story's emphasis is on the person's past, which constantly moves on towards the present time. In the present study, these kinds of stories are usually told in the third person voice and the interviewees' backgrounds are often presented chronologically. The interviewees' backgrounds vary concerning whether the article tells about work, life or ailment. A person's working background can be summarized in few sentences, as can be seen later on when discussing the “Lifelines”-series, but ailment's or life's background needs more words to be told. In fact, ailments and life stories can be thought to be less unambiguous than work stories, since life often consists of different multidimensional phases.

For instance, in the stories “Shock guilt grief joy” (*The Herald Magazine*, 15 Oct 2011), “Therapy stole my boyfriend” (*The Observer Magazine*, 4 Dec 2011), “When I came here I thought: ‘I have to get a job, I don't want to stay at home on benefits’”



(*The Herald Magazine*, 29 Oct 2011), “Autism’s early child” (*The Observer Magazine* 13 Nov 2011) and “The child I lost” (*The Observer Magazine*, 22 Jan 2012) tell about events in more or less chronological order. The stories also describe how things first started and how they developed. Here, narrating about the past consists of how the parents found out about the Down's Syndrome of their child, what they thought about it and how the situation developed and how it was finally resolved with the parents’ acceptance and joy. Moreover, “The Child I lost” in *The Observer Magazine* (11 Jan 2012) follows the mother’s grieving process and life after stillbirth. The article is narrated in a chronological order after the beginning. The mother, Sarah Hughes, shares the agony she went through stage by stage, tells how she felt and how her family reacted to it. Moreover, she recognises and reveals the turning points in her grieving process and creates hope for the readers who may have experienced stillbirth. She points out that one of the turning points was when she realised the help of others who had experienced stillbirth, by reading websites and blogs: “For all their compassion [her mother, father, etc.] I craved the anonymity of strangers.” Finally, she found people who understood her and noticed that the pain changed, as one woman had told her. “The child I lost” is a survival story, consisting of events that describe Sarah Hughes’ life, feelings and healing process.

Similarly, the other third person narratives follow the same formula. The article in *The Observer Magazine* (4 Dec 2011), “Therapy stole my boyfriend” describes various stages, for instance, births of children that has brought the couple to the present situation. In the same way, “When I came here I thought: ‘I have to get a job, I don't want to stay at home on benefits’” in *The Herald Magazine* (29 Oct 2011), is formed accordingly. It includes three mini-stories of refugees. Each of the stories represents the refugees’ past and their background, as well as their journey to UK from various countries where they witnessed horrors, as well as their present situation in UK. Indeed, Reza Naghizadeh who is an aeronautical engineer from Iran and Bikindja Biteo, a nurse who fled from Republic of Congo share their past horrors and experiences. Their present situation is also revealed in the stories. Naghizadeh tells that “‘I had a problem with the government because I converted from Islam to Christianity,’ he says. ‘In a country like Iran, if you convert from Islam to Christianity they will kill you.’” Biteo reveals that his father was told to go back to

Rwanda because they belonged to a minority tribe that was being persecuted in Congo. Nevertheless, he did not want to leave Congo and was killed in 1996:

37. “‘He was killed by soldiers who came to arrest him in the house,’ she says. ‘A lot of of people were going missing.’”

In *The Observer Magazine* (13 Nov 2011) “Autism’s early child” also presents the autistic man’s, Michael Edge’s past and childhood. It is told that when other children went to school, Edge was taken by his parents to a psychiatrist. In another article in *The Herald Magazine* (14 Jan 2012), the teacher Alan Stewart’s background in sailing goes back to his youth. However, the turning point of the hobby is presented in the middle of his story. It took place in a hospital, where he was taken because of kidney failure presented. His doctor saw his sailing book and “He asked if I’d be interested in joining him on the Clipper yacht and it took about three seconds before I could get my reply out.” In *The Herald Magazine* (24 Dec 2011), Tracy Chisholm’s background is also shared in the middle part of the text, in the fifth paragraph as can be seen in excerpt (38). Similarly, the master brewer Keith Lughton’s background (*The Herald Magazine*, 17 Sept 2011) in brewing industry is shared only in the fourth paragraph which is presented in the example (39).

38. “I sometimes wonder how I juggle work and family, but before I set up my catering firm then took over The Really Delicious Food Company 18 months ago, I was a nurse for 12 years before working in pharmaceutical sales. I found that much harder as I was constantly travelling on the red eye and always exhausted.” – *Lifelines: Tracy Chisholm, caterer, The Herald Magazine, 24 Dec 2011*

39. “I’ve worked in the brewing industry for Tennent’s for 34 years. When I left school at 18, I started working in the quality control laboratories in Edinburgh. At the same time, I studied for a degree in microbiology, which the company funded. My job was to look for sources of contamination, so I had to know the science behind how and where these organisms would grow so I could put hygiene processes in place.” – *Lifelines: Keith Lughton, master brewer, The Herald Magazine, 17 Sept 2011*

In addition, the saddle fitter Louise Smith-Kibaris tells in *The Herald Magazine* (10 Dec 2011) that she and her business partner and friend were on the first courses of the Society of Master Saddlers, while sweet shop owner Katrine Rubenstein (*The*

*Herald Magazine*, 17 Dec 2011) tells that “I met Naomi Hare at my daughter’s school and we started talking about how we’d both like to open an art gallery.” In *The Herald Magazine* (26 Nov 2011), Paul Schweizer, a lecturer and a climber, also continues explaining the background why he does what he does: “The main catalysts for the accolade were probably two big climbs I did in Alaska with Simon Yates of Touching The Void fame.” Alisdair McLaren, a piper, shares his story and tells what kind of tasks he has faced and how he got to the present day (*The Herald Magazine*, 31 Dec 2011). The story is constructed substantially about his career’s development and he shares his previous work experience: “I got a job with McCallum Bagpipes in Kilmarnock. My main job was making the chanters.” Interestingly, although a Lifelines story would have started by past, 70 per cent of the stories represented more or further background or justification on how they ended up to the present day after the opening, in the second paragraph. Finally, in *The Observer Magazine*’s article “Life is sweet” (11 Dec 2011) the third paragraph the story indicates the fact that the sweet shop owner, Christine Gillan is retiring and, hence, it also functions as a background for the story, as hinted in example All in all, the three first paragraphs of the article answer question, when, who, what and where and cover the story’s background well.

40. “After 38 years on the road, Mum handed over her car keys and put down her paperwork for the last time.”

### ***Commentary***

Next, after looking into the past and memories, I will continue with the third typical aspect that is brought up in the stories is *commentary*, which entails person’s attitudes, opinions and evaluations on various matters. As can be seen in the previous examples, commentaries occur in the background as well. Yet, now they are examined and discussed more inclusively. Similarly to Bell (1991, 1998), commentaries are here divided into three subcategories, 1) *contexts*, 2) *evaluations* and 3) *expectations*. Commentaries can be made by the ordinary people in the story and sometimes by the author of the text him/herself.

Again, there is a great deal of commentary in the data which primarily consists of evaluation. In the lengthy human interest articles the amount of evaluation is greater than in shorter ones, since they aim at getting deeper opinions and feelings of the interviewees than the shorter stories. Here, the commentary covers many issues in the story, since they usually occurs with various issues. For instance, one can comment on and evaluate one's memories, as previously noticed, good and bad experiences as well as aspects in one's job and life as well as many other issues that are highlighted in the articles.

As an example, the people in ailment stories comment widely on the issues that have occurred, as can be seen in the next excerpts. In the examples (13) and (14) the mothers of Down's Syndrome children evaluate their experience (*The Herald Magazine*, 15 Oct 2011), while in the excerpt (16) Sarah Hughes, who went through a stillbirth has reached a turning point in her grieving process and, hence, has taken one step further in it (*The Observer Magazine*, 22 Jan 2012). In addition, the teacher Alan Stewart evaluates his kidney disease by saying that it changed his whole life.

41. "The first few days after diagnosis were overwhelming. 'I was completely shellshocked,' remembers Sarah. 'I felt guilty. I felt very upset Cameron had Down's Syndrome, and then I felt very upset that I was upset, because I had been given this baby, and why am I mourning the fact I have this beautiful baby?'" – *Shock guilt grief joy, The Herald Magazine, 15 Oct 2011*

42. "Despite all the obstacles she has faced, she has no regrets about the way things have turned out. 'I look at Eve and thank God I have her. I think if I had been younger and I'd had tests, it would have been a dilemma. But Eve has taught me so much about life, about values, about what's important.' Eve, now three, has brought her extended family closer together and she has given Lesley a completely different outlook on disability." – *Shock guilt grief joy, The Herald Magazine, 15 Oct 2011*

43. "And suddenly the world seemed a little less frozen. It wasn't as difficult as going to a therapy group, but the result was the same." – *The child I lost, The Observer Magazine, 22 Jan 2012*

Indeed, ailment stories include much commentary on previous happenings as well as their inner feelings. Yet, evaluations can be found in other stories too, since they are a crucial part of human interest stories and make the stories personal. A great deal of

evaluation can be found in the article “Fare’s fair” in *The Herald Magazine* (15 Oct 2011), as already hinted. In effect, the good aspects of the job are evaluated as, according to Hogson, that he has made friends for life and that “the wind-ups are phenomenal. The customers like to have a laugh, too”.

McKearney also reveals she enjoys some issues in her job, for instance, in the beginning of her story she comments on it. She first tells about her attitude to the job and also to being as a passenger in the second sentence, “Driving is my hobby as well as my job – I enjoy it. I’m the world’s worst passenger. I’m just not used to sitting on that side of the road.” McKearney also enjoys the freedom and talking to the customers. Burns, evaluates his taxi senses after sharing a memory where an old lady was a runner and he did not expect that, by admitting that “my taxi senses weren’t working that day.” In turn, he finds many good aspects in being a taxi driver. First, he says that “the good thing about the job is meeting people” and he also tells he is involved in Glasgow Taxi Outing fund, which is a charitable fund for children with special education needs that takes them to Troon for a day, and “if you see it, it brings tears to your eyes”. Burns has also been chosen as the best dressing taxi driver for eight times, which shows his love for the job. He also loves tourists and cheers customers up by singing. Yet, in addition to positive evaluations, Hogson also adds his commentary to the fact that the press has written negatively about them. His commentary is rather straightforward and evaluative, and it may even set context or presume people’s expectations:

44. “Taxi drivers get bad press. I don’t know why people don’t like us. Maybe they think our driving ability is questionable. The older generation of drivers are obnoxious, but the guys of my generation are great.” – *Fare’s fair: Davie Hogson, The Herald Magazine, 15 Oct 2011*

Moreover, McKearney also comments on one negative feature of their job, the runners. She tells she’s gone to the police about them, and adds a commentary, “--sometimes it’s more bother than it’s worth.”

To move on to shorter stories, a busker Matthew Clark (*The Herald Magazine*, 12 Nov 2011) explains about his repertoire on the fourth paragraph, and adds a commentary by giving context by saying “my repertoire depends on a day” and evaluation on his choices by saying for that blues is the most popular.

45. “My repertoire depends on a day. Today I’ve been playing a lot of ballads and blues. I’ve found blues to be the most popular – Stevie Ray Vaughnan, that kind of thing. I play things like Frank Sinatra’s Fly Me To The Moon, a bit of Django Reinhardt, and I’ve just added The Godfather theme.” – *Lifelines: Matthew Clark, busker, The Herald Magazine, 12 Nov 2011*

The fireworks retailer Nicholas Short in *The Herald Magazine* (5 Nov 2011), in turn, evaluates his whole experience in the fireworks business and values the opportunity he has got, by stating that “It’s been a massive learning experience. I’ve learned this is a new opportunity that I’m going to continue to follow and grow in.” Similarly, the teacher Alan Stewart also reminisces and is grateful about the opportunity he has had.

46. “Looking back, it’s funny that I had the opportunity of undergoing a transplant and getting a whole new life, but out of it I’ve also had the opportunity to do the Clipper Race. Things keep getting better.” – *Lifelines: Alan Stewart, teacher, The Herald Magazine, 5 Nov 2011*

The piper (*The Herald Magazine*, 31 Dec 2011), in turn, considers himself as “lucky to be the director of the youth band because I get to work with all the up-and-coming talent” and says he “never thought his would one day be my full-time job. When I left school I was going to do architecture at university.” Finally, the entrepreneur reveals that “There is no fixed routine, which appeals greatly as I’m not a great one for being tied down”. Hence, according to all evaluations found in texts the people are represented as valuing what they do and as finding positive things in it.

The story about Bethany Leng (*The Herald Magazine*, 3 Dec 2011), who sells Christmas trees as a volunteer, tells a great deal about her volunteer work, her background as a Canadian, her husband and Christmas. She evaluates that it is fun talking to customers and one *can get* a glimpse into people’s lives, which is very positively expressed:

47. “It’s fun talking to people buying their trees. They tell you about their tree last year and how they decorated it. You get little glimpses into their lives, how creative they are with their trees, what they do with their families at Christmas and where they put their trees.” – *Lifelines: Bethany Leng, Christmas tree seller, The Herald Magazine, 3 Dec 2011*

Leng also reveals her commentary, which is more specifically categorised as evaluation when telling that it is important to her that the customers feel that they are

helping someone: “Many [customers] have said: ‘It’s so nice to know that I’m helping somebody.’ That means a lot.”

In *The Herald Magazine* (1 Jan 2012) Angela Bradley, the pub manager, talks about her customers, comprehending the regulars and others and when and why they come in. In addition, she tells that there were two boys recently dressed as Star Wars, which is one event she shares. Similarly to the previous examples, the event is finished by an evaluative clause in the next example (48).

48. “For most of my regulars this is a place to come in after work and have a drink and a moan. On a Saturday afternoon I get the Bookie Boys, a group of about five who watch the horse racing. And there are a lot of students in pub crawls. Recently there were two boys joined together, dressed as something from Star Wars. I was wondering how they’d get to the toilet.”  
– *Lifelines: Angela Bradley, pub manager, The Herald Magazine, 1 Jan 2012*

Generally, the pub manager Angela Bradley’s story includes a substantial amount of commentary. In her story, she shares many ideas that she has, and tells what she likes and does. For instance, “I love my job. I’m not being big-headed but I run a good pub and enjoy it. -- I like ales but I’m not much of a pint drinker: I prefer Southern Comfort and diet Irn-Bru. -- I’m a hands-on manager” and so on.

An example of a subcategory of commentary, an expectation can also be found among data. The master brewer Keith Lughton (*The Herald Magazine*, 17 Sept 2011) describes what he is going to do next weekend in his story’s closure, and ends the paragraph with an expectation. The closure will be discussed later in the next chapter, but the expectation is included also here and serves as an example.

49. “Hopefully they’ll come away realising that Wellpark Brewery is more than just four walls with a big Tennent’s tap in the middle.” – *Lifelines: Keith Lughton, master brewer, The Herald Magazine, 17 Sept 2011*

In the abovementioned examples the commentary is made by the actor in the story, the ordinary person him/herself. However, there are some extracts where the commentary is offered by someone else, for instance, the journalist or a family member. Commentary offered by someone else can be found in Michael Edge’s story, in “The autism’s early child” (*The Observer Magazine*, 13 Nov 2011). For

instance, his mother is reported on evaluating, for instance, Michael's present mood by saying that "'I think he's happy these days,' says Joan. 'He's much more relaxed, because he can do everything in a set order.'" Moreover, the journalist who has written the story discusses Michael Edge's story in reflection to his own situation, since he has an autistic son. Accordingly, he gives significance to the story and evaluates it:

50. "Michael Edge's life is like the prototype for my son's. Like Joan and Cliff [Michael's parents], my wife and I have two sons. Our younger boy, David, is 15, and profoundly autistic. He likes videos instead of vinyl, but the attraction is the same: records and movies never change, by a single note or a frame. They are dependable, unlike real world. Certain noises are unbearable: not dogs, but ambulance sirens. Like Michael, my son can be calmed by a drive in the car, or driven to head-banging frustration if he is misunderstood." – *Autism's early child*, *The Observer Magazine*, 13 Nov 2011

### ***The present***

In this section, I will present and investigate the present situation in the human interest articles. The present situation is one of the most typical topics that come up in the data, because it ties the story to the present and tells "how things are now." Next, some examples will be presented and the most typical cases will be discussed.

The present situation is often also described in the stories but it is not always easy to identify, since present tense can be used to define many things. For an exaggerated instance, "I love my job" (Angela Bradley, *The Herald Magazine*, 7 Jan 2012) is written in the present tense, but it expresses an emotion or opinion while "I'm an early riser, -- I'll take the dog for a walk --" expresses a daily routine. In contrary, the present situation expresses here a present state or a setting in the people's lives.

The present state is often mentioned briefly, in one or two paragraphs. Nevertheless, some articles do not include description of the present. For instance, "Lifelines: Elaine Liechti, 55, shiatsu practitioner" (22 Oct 2011), "Lifelines: Derek Mathie, 50, Ford Escort enthusiast" (24 Sept 2011) in *The Herald Magazine* and "The child I lost" (2 Jan 2012) and "Therapy stole my boyfriend" (4 Dec 2011) in *The Observer Magazine* do not include the present description in the body texts of their stories.



Although the story “Life is sweet” (*The Herald Magazine*, 17 Dec 2011) starts with the past, it is based on the present moment, since the mother and daughter in the story are working the last days for the mother’s sweets business before the mother retires. Yet, the story goes back to the past occasionally. For example, their moves on the road are described in the present tense, which makes the readers feel that the trip takes place as they read: “We pull outside Swan’s Sweet Shop, a small building that’s been in the West Dunbartonshire village of Renton for 56 years.” Yet, later on the story switches from the present to the past, when the daughter describes, for instance, Buchanan’s sweet business. Then, the story comes back to the present,

51. “These days Buchanan’s is part of the Golden Casket group, another family business, which operates out of Greenock, a port town on the Clyde coast once known as Sugaropolis because of the number of refineries that took the cane from ships coming from the Caribbean, Tate & Lyle, Walker’s and the other refineries have all gone now.” – *Life is sweet, The Herald Magazine, 17 Dec 2011*

In another article in *The Herald Magazine* (10 Dec 2011), saddle fitter Louise Smith-Kibaris also tells about her present situation: she and her colleague now have their own company. The busker Matthew Clark (*The Herald Magazine*, 12 Nov 2011) reveals that “Today I’ve been playing a lot of ballads and blues.” Fireworks retailer Nicholas Short sets the date by saying “Today, obviously, is November 5” and ends his story with his present plans, which will be discussed in the next chapter along with other closures (*The Herald Magazine*, 5 Nov 2011).

Michael Edge’s story in *The Observer Magazine* (13 Nov 2011) includes a great deal of description of the present. As stated before, the story switches between the past and the present. The present description enlivens the story, by several examples, similar to the next excerpt:

52. “In the Dorset garden Michael stands up from the photo album and covers his ears with his hands. There are too many people he doesn’t recognise here today, and they are talking too much. He calls out, ‘Dee-Dee’, and stamps along the patio, moving with exaggerated determination. ‘Dee-Dee!’” – *Autism’s early child, The Observer Magazine, 13 Nov 2011*

Indeed, the description of the situation is accurate and explicit. There can also be found description on the people's present state: "Joan is 81 now, and Michael is 53." Yet, the first kind of description of the setting occurs more often.

The present setting is also shared in *The Herald Magazine's* article "Shock guilt grief joy" (15 Oct 2011) as well. Almost halfway in the Ruby's story, the journalist writes that "Today, 15 months on, Ruby and Darby are playing in their flat in Leith, as their mother, her bright red hair scraped back off her face, does her best to keep them entertained, while trying to carry on a conversation." Similar description continues in the opening of the next mini-story about Cameron, as explained in Chapter 4.2.2.

In sum, the present setting is a typical part of human interest articles of the present study. The mode of the story may vary from the past to the present from time to time, since it is a stylistic way of telling a story. Thus, there is no fixed position for it in an article. All in all, it is one of the most typical factors or topics that come up in the human interest articles of the present study.

### ***Other aspects in articles***

Next, other often presented topics in human interest stories in supplement magazines will be represented. The gamut of the topics in the stories is grand and, hence, this section will present the most commonly occurring ones. Although the most typical aspects found in the human interest articles are descriptions of the past, commentary and descriptions of the present, it can be noted that some topics appear often among the body text and the typical aspects. These kinds of topics include family, challenges and problems in life, good and bad aspects in work, life or in ailments. In fact, family is mentioned in articles often and some articles are indeed focused in families and their lives. More specifically, family and family members are brought up in 16 articles and words such as wife, husband, children, family and cousins occur in texts. Moreover, two "Lifelines" stories, the saddle fitter and the lecturer and climber make a reference to "best friends" and "loved ones" while only three Lifelines articles about Shiatsu practitioner, busker and pub manager do not mention family or their circle of acquaintances.

Other topics, such as challenges, problems and positive and negative features or views on job, ailment and so on are also reported in articles. Usually they occur with commentary and evaluations, since they are people's subjective views on matters. About six human interest stories explicitly mention negative and positive features or views of their life/job/ailment, and four of them are monologues. Hence, they may be more focused on people's personal life and, thus, tell more about their views and opinions. At least two articles show only good aspects whereas, in contrary, 13 articles do not reveal either of them.

One good example of the positive features as well as challenges can be found in The Herald Magazine's article "Shock guilt grief joy" (15 Oct 2011). The article is resolved with the parents' acceptance and joy, but the families still have challenges and problems with the children's health. They are summarised by the journalist who reports that "It has not been plain sailing". As an example, one of the children's, Ruby's parents know that one of their future challenge will be the developmental gap between Ruby and her twin sister since it will widen as they grow. In addition, the parents mention that weaning Ruby off her feeding tube will be a big short time challenge for them. Furthermore, in the second embedded story in the article, it is told that another child, Cameron was diagnosed with two holes in his heart and he did not learn to walk until he was four. Moreover, the article also describes how the third child's mother encountered money problems and her and her partner's "--relationship foundered and Lesley's [the mother's] partner moved out, leaving her to cope alone. Then, on top of all that, she had to give up her job in a cafe because it became difficult to keep all of Eve's appointments." However, although these kinds of challenges and problems are accounted in the stories, they all end with joy; none of the Down's Syndrome children's' parents would change a thing they have experienced.

### ***Conclusion***

The body text of the human interest stories can be found between the opening and the closure in an article. This body part is built with various topics and themes. The most

typical topics in the human interest stories' body texts are the past, commentary and the present situation which construct the story. They are generally the key ingredients in the stories. Descriptions of the past and the present often alternate, and the commentary is tightly intertwined with events taking place in both of them. Thus, one can draw a conclusion that all the parts of the body text are dependent on each other. For instance, the topics brought up can be memories, which in turn are evaluated, or the past needs to be explained in order to understand the present situation. Next, the closures will be presented and discussed in the exact same way than the openings.

#### **4.2.4 Closures**

Similarly to openings, the closures of the stories can be categorized into different groups. As already stated in the method section, Bell (1991: 154) argues that codas do not occur in news texts, since the functions of the coda are not necessary. Personal narratives, instead, are presented to have a clear conclusion or coda, which would set an ending to the narrative. Nevertheless, since the stories of the present study consist of different kinds of personal narratives with different narrations, the closures are not fixed. However, there are some typical closures that seem to occur often. These closures can be divided into themes.

The categories found among the data are 1) *commentaries, evaluations*, 2) *future, plans* and 3) *memories*. Furthermore, there are a few exceptions that do not fit in any formerly mentioned categories. They are discussed at the end of this section.

##### ***Commentary***

Firstly, the human interest stories can end by a commentary, which often occurs here as its one subcategory, *evaluation*. These evaluative closures comprehended the last paragraph and in some cases only last sentences or clauses. They are shared by the person in the story, her/his family or the journalist behind the text. Evaluations as closures may regard, for instance, the person's present situation, job, life, memories or thoughts. For instance, an evaluation occurs in the busker Matthew Clark's story

(*The Herald Magazine*, 12 Nov 2011), where he says that “I’ve not been busking long but I enjoy it. Not many people stick with it. I like entertaining people, wherever they are. The street is a good place.” Here, Clark also evaluates his view towards busking. Moreover, the sweet shop owner Katrine Rubenstein’s story in *The Herald Magazine* (17 Dec 2011) ends with an evaluation as her final sentence, as can be noticed in the example (53). In the next examples (53) and (54) the evaluation is made by the person herself:

53. “Most people have a local pub, and this is their place to go for sweets. We have regulars who come in and don’t have to say anything, we know what they want. That absolutely makes a difference; people will want to come back if you remember them.” – Lifelines: Katrine Rubenstein, sweet shop owner, *The Herald Magazine*, 17 Dec 2011

54. “Jess was right when she told me that the pain would change. It has, and with it has come holidays and laughter and the bad jokes of old. Yet throughout it all Iris is still present, and I will not wish her away. For the 35 weeks I carried my second daughter inside me I was gloriously, life-burstingly happy. I can not change her story, but I carry her with me still.” – The child I lost, *The Observer Magazine*, 22 Jan 2012

Moreover, there are evaluations that signify that the person does not regret anything. Despite all the challenges and problems the family or the persons in the story have faced, they are depicted as optimistic and as considering their situation indispensable:

55. “But it’s true, I wouldn’t [change anything], because if Ruby didn’t have Down’s Syndrome then she wouldn’t be Ruby, she would be a different child. And she’s so interesting to get to know in her own right. You’re blessed to have a child like that.” – *Shock guilt grief joy*, *The Herald Magazine*, 15 Oct 2011

56. “As for ‘how could you let her go’? How could you not let your daughter study at arguably the best classical ballet school in the world, in one of the most beautiful cities on earth?” – *Separated by 1,000 miles: the young ballet star and her father*, *The Observer Magazine*, 6 Nov 2011

Evaluation can also occur in another form, such as in *The Observer Magazine* (4 Dec 2011) “Therapy stole my boyfriend”, where the story ends with a conversation between the woman and her boyfriend. The last line ends to a mental win-situation:

“‘Yes!’ I say triumphantly. And perhaps, some way, I have now finally got a word in.” Indeed, this last sentence of the article is a clear sign of closure to the story, signifying the point where the woman at last is able to get herself heard. Additionally, the lecturer and climber Paul Schweizer (*The Herald Magazine*, 26 Nov 2011) ends with to an evaluation, “Being a Californian living in Britain, my visit to London will be interesting from a cultural viewpoint”, and continues the evaluation, “I appreciate the recognition – it is an honour to be asked to visit the Queen.”

In *The Herald Magazine* (15 Oct 2011), Burns, who happily works as a taxi driver reveals at the end of his story that “Sometimes I see myself doing something else -- but I love the banter. --. I do get threatened now and again but I just smile – or start singing.” In the same article, McKearney’s story ends in a similar way in an evaluation and description: “On a quiet night, it can be lonely, but I take my crossword. If I get any serious bother, I’ve got a panic button in the cab. Maybe it’s being female, but I need a back-up. Sometimes just hearing a voice at the other end is enough.”

In the next two excerpts the evaluative commentary is set by someone else than the protagonist in the story. In the first one the evaluation is made by the autistic man’s, Michael Edge’s mother, who says that she would not change anything about him or what has happened (*The Observer Magazine*, 13 Nov 2011). In the second excerpt the journalist who is the daughter of Christine Gillan, the main character in the story, makes an evaluation as well (*The Observer Magazine*, 11 Dec 2011):

57. “He lives in the past, always talking and thinking about things long ago. Those things can’t change, you see. When my husband died, Michael couldn’t understand it at first, but he does talk about Daddy Edge now. Autistic children are quite childlike, but they’re lovely. Michael could be a lot worse. A lot of good things have happened, too. I wouldn’t have missed it for anything, really.” – *Autism’s early child, The Observer Magazine, 13 Nov 2011*

58. “I think back to the factory and my mum staring in wonderment as the sweets popped off the conveyor belt at high speed and into the cooler. She didn’t look like a pensioner then. Her eyes were bright and wide, just like the kids in Tom Swan’s. I caught her reaching out and taking a sweetie from the conveyor belt, popping it in her mouth and chewing. She had broken

her cardinal rule. ‘The toffees just looked so tempting not to take,’ she said. She had such a naughty look on her face.” – *Life is sweet, The Observer Magazine, 11 Dec 2011*

To sum it up, it is interesting that all the human interest stories in *The Observer Magazine* seem to end in evaluation every time while the stories in *The Herald Magazine* have more variation in their closures.

### ***Future***

Next, the second category includes stories that end with the *future* or *future plans*. Bell (1998: 69) states that especially personal narratives may end by a follow-up that brings the story to the present time. However, here such follow-ups were not spotted explicitly. Although the fireworks retailer Nicholas Short’s story (*The Herald Magazine*, 5 Nov 2011) ends by focusing on the present moment, it mainly describes the future or what his plans for the evening will be:

59. “Am I going to a fireworks display tonight? I can’t – I’ll be working. Many people don’t buy fireworks until Guy Fawkes Night, so I’ll be working until 10pm so everyone is able to get fireworks. I’ll make sure, though, that I have my own firework display at my house so I can get my little cousins over for a display they won’t forget.” – *Lifelines: Nicholas Short, fireworks retailer, The Herald Magazine, 5 Nov 2011*

Also, the caterer Tracy Chisholm’s story in *The Herald Magazine* (24 Dec 2011) ends with near future plans. As *The Herald Magazine* issue is published on Christmas Eve, Chisholm shares her commentary on Boxing Day and then moves on to her Christmas holiday plans that end her story:

60. “Boxing day is all about keeping up the festivities while getting back to business, then it’s Justin’s birthday on the 28th. By New Year it’s business as usual. Come January, I’ll be taking some time off. I don’t want to do anything special – be at home, spend time with the children and take the dog for long walks.” – *Lifelines: Tracy Chisholm, caterer, The Herald Magazine, 24 Dec 2011*

Moreover, there are some closures that consist of the two categories, in other words, they can be seen as *mixtures*. In fact, in *The Herald Magazine* (31 Dec 2011) the piper Alisdair McLaren’s story ends by him telling that “I’m getting married soon”,

which sets the narrative to the present-future axis. He tells about his and his fiancée's past together, which, according to Bell's discourse structure (1998: 67), could be defined as history, and then again moves on to the wedding: "The wedding is in June 2012 in St Andrews. We're going to have loads of pipers to choose from for the wedding." Thus, the closure can be categorized as future plans but since it also tells about history or his memory, it is a mixture of two intertwined closures.

An equivalent closure occurs in the pub owner Angela Bradley's story (*The Herald Magazine*, 7 Jan 2012): "We were talking about retirement the other day. I'm not going anywhere", Bradley says and continues by an evaluation of what she would do if she won a lottery, "Would I run the pub if I won the Lottery? No. I'd probably drink it away, or travel."

Some stories have a closure in which the future and evaluation part are intertwined. In *The Herald Magazine*, Christmas tree seller Bethany Leng's (3 Dec 2011), master brewer Keith Lughton's (17 Sept 2011) and teacher Alan Stewart's (14 Jan 2012) stories make good examples. In the closure of Leng's story, she is planning her Christmas, but her story's closure is intertwined with some evaluation. Leng is reported on saying that "For Christmas, my sister-in-law is coming over from Canada. We'll relax and have turkey with all the trimmings." Leng also adds a commentary that Christmas tree is for her "a big thing", since it has been a family tradition, which can be seen as an evaluative commentary. Similarly to Leng's story, Keith Lughton's story reports he will be guiding visitors who visit the Tennent's brewery, in other words, what he is planning to do in near future. In the last sentence, however, he is also reported on sharing his commentary, an expectation about how he hopes the public will react (see figure 1.):

61. "On Sunday I'll be one of the guides taking visitors around the brewery as part of Doors Open Day. We'll walk them through the brewing process from converting the raw materials into a fermentable liquid in the brew house right the way through the packaging and quality control. Hopefully they'll come away realising that Wellpark Brewery is more than just four walls with a big Tennent's tap in the middle." – *Lifelines: Keith Lughton, master brewer, The Herald Magazine, 17 Sept 2011*



Alan Stewart's story, in turn, also first present Stewart's future plans, "My wife Susan and I are thinking of cycling from Land's End to John O' Groates in the summer to raise money for Edinburgh Royal", and right after it a clear, unrealistic clause (see Labov and Waletzky 1967) revealing a clear evaluation, "I'd never been able to do this two years ago."

### *Memories*

Stories may also end with a *memory*. As an example, the Ford Escort enthusiast Derek Mathie's story in *The Herald Magazine* (24 Sept 2011) ends with a past event, in other words, his memory from the Highland tour where Ford Escorts stole the attention of a wedding video shooter who "-- turned round to watch all these Ford Escorts driving past him just as the bride was coming out of the church. We kept going." After this excerpt, the final sentence "I still laugh when I think about it" expresses evaluation of the memory, which again makes the closure a slight mixture of two categories.

In the same way than Mathie, the taxi driver Hogson finishes with a few of his favourite stories heard from other drivers (*The Herald Magazine*, 15 Oct 2011). Here, they are reckoned in memories.

62. "We don't talk taxis at drivers' nights out – but we do hear funny stories. One of my favourites is when a pal fell out of his own taxi turning a corner. My other favourite is a legend. My pal helped a wee woman put her shopping in his taxi at Tesco, shut the door and drove away. He got to the destination and the wee woman wasn't there – just five bags of shopping." – *Fare's fair, The Herald Magazine, 15 Oct 2011*

On addition, there are a few closures that cannot be fitted into the previously mentioned categories. The example (63) depicts what usually happens when the customer is happy:

63. "When we fit a horse and owner with the right saddle, we often get thank-you cards. People say it's helped them win their first competition or we get called back time and again. It can change a horse's nature." – *Lifelines: Louise Smith-Kibaris, saddle fitter, The Herald Magazine, 10 Dec 2011*

The excerpt (64) marks a clear closure of a story, but it does not fit to any categories that have been made up according to results:

64. “Though Bicci doesn’t know it, in a block of flats close by another African mother is harbouring hopes and dreams for her children too.” – *When I came here I thought: ‘I have to get a job, I don’t want to stay at home on benefits’*, *The Herald Magazine*, 29 Oct 2011

All in all, it can be concluded that there are closures that occur repeatedly; these include evaluations, future plans and memories, which often are followed by a short evaluation. An evaluative closure is clearly the most popular among the data. These closures can be thought as a substitute for what Bell (1991) described as a follow-up or what Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) depicted coda. It should be kept in mind, however, that closures are not always explicit and easy to categorize. In effect, they can have different characteristics.

Furthermore, there is slight difference between the closures in the two magazines. According to the results of the present study, the human interest stories in *The Observer Magazine* end in evaluation every time whereas *The Herald Magazine*’s stories end in evaluation, future plans and memories. One fourth of the stories ending in an evaluation were from *The Observer Magazine*. Yet, it should be noticed that the data includes three times more stories from *The Herald Magazine*, which may affect the matter.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the results of the present study will be explained in the light of previous research as well as the definitions made earlier, and some conclusions will be drawn. Moreover, I will present some criticism towards the study and suggest some further topics for research.

The aim of this study was to see how ordinary people are presented in the human interest articles of two weekly British quality supplement magazines, *The Herald Magazine* and *The Observer Magazine*. In other words, the aim was to find out what kinds of stories are selected to be published and how they are constructed, as defined in the research questions.

1. What kinds of stories are told about ordinary people?
  - 1 a) Why are they selected as the topic of a human interest story?
  
2. How are the stories of ordinary people constructed?
  - 2 a) What kinds of narrative points of view are used;
  - 2 b) How are the texts constructed;
  - 2 c) What kind of topics do they have?

The subject of this study is important because the social media has developed substantially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and, therefore, ordinary people have gained more attention. Accordingly, since the media has been and still is in a period of changes, it is important to study how ordinary people are depicted in the traditional print press. Furthermore, the study may implicate something about our values and what is regarded as interesting and, hence, published in articles in the contemporary society and culture. In addition, this study will highlight the importance of media criticism. To continue, studying quality supplement magazines offers a good data for studying how ordinary people are described in print press, since the supplements are delivered to subscribers as an addition at weekends. Hence, supplement magazines are close to ordinary people and available for everyone. This way, their audience is wide.

The data for the study was gathered during four months in the autumn 2011, all in all the data included 19 issues of both magazines. In the four months, *The Herald Magazine* and *The Observer Magazine* published 23 human interest articles about ordinary people in total. When investigating them separately, *The Herald Magazine* published substantially more articles, mainly resulting from the fact that the magazine has a regular section, the “Lifelines”-series which is published every week. The human interest articles found fit into the data well since they all concern “few or more [ordinary] people and their lives that may have interesting or unusual aspects which are presented personally and concretely”, as defined earlier in the Chapter 2.1 and 2.2.1. McKay (2000: 86) reveals that the most read human interest articles and stories in magazines are “about people who are not in the public eye”, in other words, ordinary people, without a visible career or role in the media.

Next, the construction of the stories was investigated by employing the framework for discourse structure of news text, which was developed by Bell (1991) and which has its origins in Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) narrative schema. These two models set the underlying basis for the analysis and suited the aims of the study well, since they approach texts from a descriptive point of view.

In the analysis of the data, it was observed that the human interest articles were generally selected as the topic of a human interest story for four different themes. Indeed, the categories found in the data were *work*, *ailments*, *social problems and phenomena* and *hobbies or lifestyle*. These four categories were easy to spot. The majority of the data deals with work, which clearly shows that ordinary people are described because of their work in the human interest articles. Nevertheless, the great volume of the work articles was due to *The Herald Magazine*’s “Lifelines”-series, which is published weekly. The second greatest category were the ailment stories, which would have been the biggest category if *The Herald Magazine* did not have the “Lifelines”-series. According to the previous studies, ailments stories and pathologies are, indeed, more studied than other human interest stories. *The Observer Magazine* published relatively more ailment stories than *The Herald Magazine*. Articles concerning hobbies and lifestyle were the third published stories. Lastly, it

seems that stories about ordinary people are rarely selected to be published because of social problems and phenomena.

It could be asked why is it that work and ailments make ordinary people interesting and stories about them worth publishing? The results may reflect our culture, since the articles are most likely to be published because of the readers' demands. One possible answer to the question may be that in the British contemporary culture people value work and those who have survived through ailments and misfortunes. In addition, people may search for other people's support who have gone through to survive with own problems. In fact, based on the previous studies, ailment stories also may serve to help readers to structure and understand their own life and problems and help them value their own life and see their own problems as small ones (Couser (1997: 295). In the present study, the human interest stories presented challenges and problems, but usually they ended up positively and the events that have taken place are evaluated as irreplaceable. For instance, the parents of Down's Syndrome children are happy to know their children as they are and they would not change the way things turned out. This further underlines the characteristics of ailment stories and, indeed, this way the stories are seen as empowering and redemptive, or as an inspiration for winning misfortunes (McKay and Bonner 2002: 65).

All in all, the themes of human interest stories of the present study seem to be in parallel with Hennessy's (1997: 74-83) description of typical themes in human interest stories. For instance, he listed stories about personal experience, children, employment and relationships, while McKay (2000: 87-88) revealed that the stories can sometimes focus on one aspect of people's lives. This can be noticed in *The Herald Magazine's* "Lifelines"-series in the present study, where the focus is what people do for work or in their leisure time. Furthermore, some articles were about winning misfortunes (McKay *ibid.*).

The articles were also analysed by their narrative form. It was noticed that the human interest stories can be divided into two main categories, first person and third person narratives. These two narrative forms occurred in three different situations. Firstly, four fifths of the articles were written as "free flow" monologues, by a first person

narrator. Secondly, the first person narrator could also be found in stories that resemble prose. Thirdly, the last fourth of the articles were written by the third person narrator, often the journalist. These articles were all long articles, and they included indirect or direct quotes from the actor of the story. To sum up, the narrative form in human interest stories varies between the first and third person narrator.

The lengths of the articles vary from short one page articles to longer articles. For instance, the longest article in the data is an ailment story, "The autism's early child", and it is about 3600 words long. Work stories, in contrast, are about one page long, in other words, all in all 400-500 words. Articles dealing with work are usually shorter, compared to the articles concerning diseases and disabilities as well as social problems. Indeed, ailment stories are usually very long in-depth articles, which means that they are given a lot of space in magazines.

The human interest articles are constructed in a similar way to news texts (Bell 1991: 171). Indeed, the human interest articles consist of an attribution, abstract and the story. In the present study, the attribution can be traced to the author in 90 per cent of the stories. The abstract is also present in the data and it includes the headline and the lead. Moreover, the stories have a clear opening, body text consisting of events and evaluation and a closure. These parts of stories can be classified to the most typical categories. The ways in which the articles are constructed and the space given for these parts of stories, however, varies. All the articles begin with an opening, which was originally referred to as orientation by Bell (ibid.). The openings were classified as 1) *background*, 2) *the present: how are things now*, 3) *memories*, 4) *evaluations* and 5) *the setting*. According to the results, the most popular opening was the background, which is only found in *The Herald Magazine* where it was substantially used. Another popular opening is the description of the present situation, which was substantially covered in *The Herald Magazine's* "Lifelines"-series. By contrast, *The Observer Magazine* approaches the stories often by starting with memories.

The events and evaluations, in other words, the body of the articles present many kinds of typical features or topics that occur frequently in the human interest articles. These features are 1) *the past or the background of the people*, 2) *their evaluations of*

*issues* and 3) *present situation*. They are stable ingredients that build the body text, interact together and reflect different topics and events in the articles. In addition, they are tightly intertwined with commentary. Yet, other topics that people are reported on telling about are their *own lives and feelings, family, what they like and what they do not like, challenges and problems, negative features and positive features* in their jobs/ailments/hobbies as well as *description of the setting* at the time of interview. The way in which the issues are dealt with in stories varies depending on the construction of the articles, since some matters can be compressed into one sentence in first person narratives while in third person narratives they can be discussed and explained widely, taking a whole paragraph.

Finally, closures can be classified in a similar manner to 1) *commentaries, evaluations*, 2) *future, plans* and 3) *memories* as well as a few exceptions. The most typical closure type was evaluation, which is a subcategory of commentary. Moreover, it seems that both supplement magazines employ evaluations as closures equally.

All in all, on the basis of the results of the present study it can be concluded that the human interest stories follow the characteristics of feature stories that were presented in the background section. Indeed, the human interest stories differ from news texts by their purpose and style, as pointed out by Wheeler (2009: 3) and they do not have a formulaic structure like news texts as observed by McKay (2000:94). Yet, this does not mean that the human interest stories would not have any similarities in their structure, but rather that they do not have any stable, presumable structure, that news texts in news papers have. Indeed, as this study shows, all stories do have an opening, body text and a closure but the way they are presented varies. Hence, it seems that the journalists in *The Herald Magazine* and *The Observer Magazine* have the freedom to make the human interest stories as creative as they wish and present the story starting from the present or vice versa, or jump from one event to another. In other words, the articles are more free-formed and informal than news texts in news papers. Wheeler (ibid.) and McKay (2000: 82) also argue that the journalist's voice, personal thoughts and perceptions are present in feature articles. For instance, in "Autism's early child" and "Life is sweet" the journalists include their own voice to the story. Moreover, McKay (2000: 81) and Ljung (in Ungerer 2000) noticed, the

stories are not attached to a specific time. In effect, all the articles could be published at any time. The data of the present study supports this claim, since none of the topics are scheduled or crucially actual.

Although the results of the present study succeed to give clear and suggestive results about why human interest stories are selected to be published and how they are constructed, one can present criticism towards it. For one, the study is not broad enough to offer generalisations or explicit facts about human interest stories of ordinary people. Indeed, the results can be thought as suggestive, since the data of the present study consisted only of two supplement magazines.

In effect, this study opened new possibilities for further research about human interest articles and ordinary people's presence in the media. Examining supplement magazines or regular commercial magazines with wider circulation might provide with further results about the subject. Moreover, the magazines with a wider circulation could be compared with smaller magazines to see, for example, whether widely distributed magazines write more about ordinary people than politicians, singers, actors and other public persons. The constructions and typical aspects of stories may also reveal different issues that are regarded as valuable in the contemporary society and culture.

It would also be interesting to see whether human interest stories tell more about women or men, or both. In other words, Julkunen (1995: 23 cited in Olli 2011: 32) argues that women are thought to open their lives, for example, their wardrobe and secret receipts. According to Julkunen, this is caused by the fact women are supposed to have more privacy in life than men and therefore it is more acceptable and presumed to let women have their privacy (*ibid.*).



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