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Apologies and the police

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Abstract

This thesis describes how the police apologise, primarily through lexical and syntactic analysis of explicit apology language in letters written by the Scottish police. The unique contribution of this thesis is the identification of two distinct speech acts using apology language; one is an act of payment for an evidenced failing and another is an act of validation of another person's perspective. This thesis suggests that these two acts may have developed in police use of apology language to manage conflicting pressures on the police, such as to be polite to the multiple audiences for their apologies.

Discursive approaches to politeness research often focus on immediate recipient responses as evidence that language is evaluated as (im)polite. This approach is not well suited to written language, where the recipient(s) may be at a distance in both time and space. I amend Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based analysis, taking insights from scholarship on writing, to develop the application of politeness research to written language.

I collected letters written by the Scottish police containing their final decision on complaints made about the police by members of the public. The first stage of my analysis, to detail the production of these letters, establishes that evaluation and opportunities for editing take place among the many writers involved in producing the letters; repetition of particular linguistic forms in particular contexts may be taken therefore as a police institutional understanding that such forms are a polite use of language in particular situations.

My analysis of the letters identifies first that the police use apology language where they have been acquitted of wrongdoing, in contrast to public perceptions that the police do not apologise. They distinguish in linguistic form between such situations and where there is evidence of failings, leading me to delineate one act of validation of an addressee's claim to respect and another in ritual payment for an evidenced failing. The form and function distinctions of these acts lead me to suggest that 'apology' needs to be reconsidered as a concept, not a single speech act but a cluster of related acts.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is of my own composition, and that it contains no material previously submitted for the award of any other degree. The work reported in this thesis has been executed by myself, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.

Ruth Friskney

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1. Introduction

On 5 July 2013 Sir Christopher Holland reported his findings of the inquiry of the police fatal shooting of Azelle Rodney in 2005, concluding “I have to find that there was no lawful justification for shooting Azelle Rodney so as to kill him" (Holland, 2013, p.87). The BBC reporting of his findings quoted Azelle Rodney’s Mother as responding: “The police owe me an apology for the unlawful killing of my son" (BBC News, 2013). That in such tragic circumstances an apology is sought emphasises the importance that apologising has in modern public life.

This is only one example of many where apologies have been demanded of the police. On 5 August 2013 the Metropolitan Police issued a press release with the title “Public Statement and Deputy Assistant Commissioner de Brunner’s apology to the Tomlinson family" (Metropolitan Police, 2013). This announcement took place on the day an out of court settlement was reached on the death of Ian Tomlinson during the G20 protests in London in 2009 (A police officer, identified as striking Ian Tomlinson during the protests, had prior to this been acquitted of his manslaughter (Glass, 2012)). Julia Tomlinson, his widow, responded to the announcement by saying "Today’s apology and admission by the Metropolitan Police that their officer unlawfully killed Ian marks the end of our campaign and legal case." (Tomlinson, 2013). Duncan Campbell, former crime correspondent for the Guardian, in an article titled “Tomlinson apology: has the Met learned to say sorry sooner?" contrasted the Metropolitan Police action in this case with the 31 years between the death of Blair Peach and an apology, although financial compensation was paid nine years after Blair Peach’s death (Campbell, 2013) (Blair Peach died of a head injury sustained at a demonstration in 1979; 14 witness statements reported that he had been hit by a police officer (The Metropolitan Police, 2010)). The Tomlinson family campaign referred to ‘apology’ before ‘admission’; where financial compensation was paid for the death of Blair Peach the demands for apology continued. Police apologies appear to be important.

It is not only following fatalities and major incidents that police apologies are sought. For more everyday complaints about police behaviour, about for example police rudeness, May et al. (2007) found that what most people wanted when they made a complaint was an apology, but also that how the police produced apologies could be a source of dissatisfaction. John McNeill, former Police Complaints Commissioner for

Scotland (PCCS) with oversight of how the Scottish police handle complaints, has found police apologies on particular cases to be inadequate and advised police forces to reissue apologies in particular terms, such as “a final, unreserved, apology" (McNeill, 2010, p.1). Police apologies may be important, but it seems they are not always being done well.

Little is known about police apologies, despite their importance and difficulties suggested above. Linguistic politeness research has drawn attention to the proliferation of public apologies in modern life (e.g. Davies, 2011), but it is often single, large scale event apologies that are under consideration. Rarer is the attempt to understand how public apologies may be functioning day-to-day, such as in the interaction between a public service and the public being served. The goal of this thesis therefore is to provide some understanding of everyday police apologies, to consider whether the police apologise and, if they do, in what manner. This thesis therefore presents an analysis of explicit apology expressions in a corpus of Scottish police letters written in final response to public complaints about incivility.

There are four particular areas of existing research which this thesis contributes to. My first area of interest is the description of apologies. Apologies have long been a field of interest to linguists and beyond the field of linguistics, described for example as a “mysteriously potent, symbolic act" (Tavuchis, 1991, p.2). Early studies largely investigated apology in interpersonal contexts, with many researchers also contributing to a comparison of apology strategies across different languages (e.g. Olshtain and Cohen, 1983; Coulmas, 1981; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989a). Discursive work has often considered public apology, using as primary data media evaluations of apology, rather than starting from the linguistic form of apology (e.g. Jeffries, 2007; Ancarno, 2011). This thesis draws on aspects of both of these approaches. I have considered public apology, in the sense of considering apologies from a public institution, but I have taken everyday public apologies, not single media event apologies. This allowed me to gather more examples of explicit apology language than can often be analysed in public apology studies, to compare linguistic strategies in a public forum to the earlier studies of interpersonal linguistic strategies, and further from these to consider what repeated linguistic use says about writers’ evaluations of apology. It should be noted that as a whole my corpus is small (approximately 33,000 words), meaning that the absolute number of explicit apology expressions is also relatively small. I collected a small corpus partly for practical reasons, to be sure that I could obtain data from the police, and partly because there was no previous research to confirm that apology language would even be present in this context. Notwithstanding the small size of the corpus, a quantitative approach, motivated by the regular presence of explicit apology expressions in the corpus, proved fruitful. The unique contribution of this thesis comes in the identification and description of different

linguistic forms of apology used by the police (in particular, the difference between *apologise* used with an *if*-clause or a prepositional phrase headed *for*). I found that these different linguistic forms were regularly used in particular, different, contexts. I suggest that they may therefore be forms of different speech acts, with particular aims relevant in those different situations: an act of payment for an evidenced failing and a related act of validation of an addressee's experience.

This thesis also develops current methodological approaches to studying politeness. The medium that the Scottish police use to carry out these everyday apologies is a letter. Discursive approaches to politeness research have rarely been applied to written language. In this thesis I therefore consider some developments in politeness research alongside approaches to researching writing, to draw out areas of similarity suggesting how written politeness may be approached. My main analytical tool is an amended version of Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based approach, identified and adapted through this consideration of writing and politeness research together. Terkourafi, researching politeness, challenges how participant evaluations of politeness are understood in discursive research; she considers the relevance of linguistic forms that are regularly used in particular situations (frames) without being disputed as impolite, in contrast to much early discursive work which looks for explicit hearer response disputing that an utterance was polite, e.g. Watts (2003) (Terkourafi describes frames as the categorisation of the real world situation on the basis of the identity of the speaker and addressee, their relationship, and the setting). I consider how evaluation in Terkourafi's sense of acceptance might be enacted in a written setting, through a description of the production of the letters comprising the dataset for this thesis (understanding texts in relation to their producers being an aspect of research into writing, e.g. Barton and Papen (2010)). I use my consideration of evaluation in a written setting to amend Terkourafi's model and apply it to my dataset; this approach was was operationally successful, identifying, as noted above, a particular regularity between linguistic form of apology and contextual frame of usage.

Furthermore, Terkourafi's (2005) approach enables a focus on politeness at a mid-level of analysis, at the level of culture, rather than the micro-analytic focus of many discursive approaches to politeness as disputed in a particular interaction, or Brown and Levinson-type approaches, which she describes as providing analysis at the level of the overarching system. Terkourafi is able to describe politeness in the use of pronouns at the level of a contrast between languages or cultures (in this instance, a contrast between Standard Greek and Cypriot Greek, in that many more contextual frames accommodate the polite use of second person plural forms in Standard Greek). Many early discursive approaches to politeness would look in detail at understanding particular utterances and how they were understood as polite, or not, by the participants; a Brown and Levinson approach might look at a system level at the

potential politeness of second person plural forms. Using a modified version of Terkourafi's frame-based approach therefore enables me to explore apologies at the level of Scottish police culture, to look at the particular regular linguistic expressions of this institutional, cultural group in contrast to other findings about apologies among English language speakers. Although Terkourafi's empirical findings, e.g. around pronouns in varieties of Greek, are not relevant to this thesis, and therefore not further discussed, her frame-based approach is the basis of my main analysis, through which my main empirical finding was discovered, but also through which I am contributing to understandings of methodological approaches to studying politeness.

My analysis extends description of police language in an understudied category of interaction. Many studies of police language consider how the police interact with criminal suspects (e.g. Stokoe and Edwards, 2008; Heydon, 2011). Reiner (2010) describes a common misconception, among police and everyone else, that what the police spend their time on is catching criminals when only about half of police contacts are about crime. In this thesis I am specifically looking at how the police use language in interaction with members of the public rather than criminal suspects.

My fourth, related, interest is understanding power in language. Howard-Hassman and Gibney (2008, p.2) state of the public apology phenomenon generally that "perhaps its most remarkable aspect is that powerful actors and institutions are apologizing to the relatively powerless". Public apology is also described as having the potential to humiliate the powerful; Tavuchis (1991) describes US President Nixon understanding demands for him to apologise as attempts to humiliate him when he had already resigned. I find that the police use apologetic language in interaction with members of the public, even when the complaints process has not evidenced police wrongdoing. My findings contrast with previous linguistic research from a police-suspect interactional context, which show the police using language to reinforce their powerful position (e.g. Stokoe and Edwards, 2008). I draw on procedural justice understandings of the police relationship with the public to reconsider the power dimensions of this type of police interaction, to explain why the police might apologise where there does not appear to be anything to apologise for.

1.1 Structure of the thesis

In chapter 2 I briefly summarise the history of politeness research. My particular interest in the developments from the early dominance of Brown and Levinson (1987) to its critique in discursive approaches (e.g. Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003) is in how written politeness may be examined under discursive understandings, where these use explicit hearer evaluations of utterances as polite or impolite. I therefore focus on

two particular developments in discursive politeness research, those of Kádár and Haugh (2013) and Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based approach. These two works have in common that they problematise the concept of evaluation in politeness studies. Terkourafi (2005), as noted above, considers implicit evaluation of politeness through acceptance or silence, not only explicit dispute of an utterance as impolite. Kádár and Haugh (2013) consider how evaluation of an utterance as polite or impolite may vary for different audiences, or in relation to a person's participation status, or over time; this modelling of politeness as requiring consideration of the different perspectives parallels discussion of researching writing, which consider for example how a written text may be understood differently at different times (e.g. Tusting (2000); Bakhtin (1981)). I focus therefore in particular on these two approaches in politeness research to consider how written politeness may be researched. I then turn to look at work on public apologies specifically, relevant to my collection of data from a public service institution; I finally briefly summarise speech act theory, which has remained important through different approaches to politeness, and consider its particular implications for public apology. I conclude with my methodological approach for this thesis, which draws together elements of these literatures to provide a model for describing written apologies.

In chapter 3 I focus in on the expression of apologies. This regrounding in the linguistic form of apology, where much discursive research focuses on the reception of the apology, is an important part of my analytic framework, which investigates regularities in the co-occurrence of particular linguistic forms and particular contextual frames.

Chapter 4 describes my data collection. The primary data for this thesis is a corpus of letters written by Scottish police in response to public complaints. Some secondary data, in the form of two focus groups with people in the police forces responsible for writing such letters, was used to clarify aspects of how these letters were produced and also to provide insight into how the writers describe how they apologise. This chapter details the negotiation with Scottish police institutions to obtain this data and particular aspects of working with police data, such as data protection, anonymisation and issues with informed consent in a disciplined service. I also consider in this chapter the influence of my previous work in police complaints policy on my research.

In chapter 5 I start my analysis by looking in detail at the production and participation framework of the letters. This chapter provides support for my methodological approach, by demonstrating the requirements during the writing process for the apology language to be evaluated and edited, such that what finally appears in the letter constitutes a police understanding of a polite apology in this context. This chapter

also provides detail of conflicting pressures on the police writer(s), who must produce a letter which satisfies multiple audiences; this detail will later be used as a possible explanation for police linguistic choices for apology.

I begin chapter 6 by establishing that explicit apology expressions are present in the primary data of the collection of letters, and then consider aspects of the lexical and syntactic variation in the linguistic forms of apology. The original contribution of this thesis comes from closer analysis of when this variation occurs, where I describe a clear pattern of co-occurence between different linguistic forms of apology expression and different decisions on the outcome of the complaint. I propose a reconsideration of the concept of apology, to distinguish between a speech act of a payment responding to a wrong and a related act which validates an offended, though there may not be an offender.

Chapter 7 briefly considers the issue of sincerity criteria for apology, which, while arguably not relevant to public apologies, remain part of public discourse. I discuss two particular examples from my corpus which problematise the application of sincerity criteria. This leads back to Kádár and Haugh (2013), who argue for a reframing of questions of whether or not something is polite to questions of for whom, at what point in time, and in what particular situation something is polite. I suggest that more specific sincerity criteria - what must an apology be sincere about? - may relate to the different speech acts, of payment and validation, proposed in chapter 6.

I summarise my findings in the conclusion, chapter 8, and identify how these impact on existing literature in relation to the four areas noted above: description of apology, methodological developments, police language and language and power. I also consider how my research might be practically applied, given the important and difficult nature of police apologies discussed at the beginning of this introduction.

1.2 A note on the data

The primary data for this thesis is a collection of letters written by the Scottish police to members of the public who had made complaints about police officers being uncivil. These are real letters, which were written for and sent to real people, in the relatively recent past. To protect those individuals some contents of the letters has been anonymised, including names, dates, places and pronouns (the class of information removed is indicated in the text). Only short excerpts of data may be published to prevent the identification of individuals from the idiosyncratic detail of longer excerpts. The full dataset has been provided to the examiners in confidence.

Male pronouns are used throughout in reference to police officers, on the basis that the police in Scotland are majority male (71.5% of police officers in Scotland (The Scottish Government, 2013)). Data excerpts are numbered through the thesis: L1 is the first excerpt from the letters; F1 is the first excerpt from focus group transcripts. Typographic errors in the letters are retained; the focus groups were transcribed for content only and have not been reconstituted into full sentences.

2. A history of politeness research

The phenomena of apology has been studied across a range of disciplines such as sociology, criminology and legal theory (e.g. Tavuchis, 1991; Duff, 2001; Howard-Hassman and Gibney, 2008) and, as with this thesis, linguistics. Within linguistics a prominent field of study for apologies is politeness research. This chapter presents a brief history of politeness research and how apologies fit into that field of study.

This chapter begins by providing an overview of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory which is often credited as establishing, and still described as the most influential theory of, politeness research. I then consider discursive, also called post-modern, approaches to politeness research, which in the 2000s started to present a significant challenge to Brown and Levinson. The discursive approach to politeness research does not, yet, provide a coherent alternative model for investigating politeness. I look at the work of Kádár and Haugh (2013) and Marina Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based approach as proposals for moving discursive politeness research forward. I discuss the concept of evaluation as considered by these researchers due to the difficulties evaluation presents in the study of written language: discursive approaches to politeness rely on hearer evaluations of utterances as polite or impolite, and written language does not have hearers.

I move on to look at apology studies in discursive politeness research, which are focused on 'public apologies', such as those made by Governments, businesses or institutions. These studies rarely engage with the complexity of the production of public apologies, which can involve multiple writers, speakers and audiences. I apply the previous discussions of writing research and Kádár and Haugh (2013) to Jeffries' (2007) analysis of an apology by former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair. Finally, I summarise speech act theory, used by politeness researchers in studying apology and consider how speech act criteria may be applied to an act of public apology.

I conclude by drawing together the elements of this chapter into a statement of my methodological approach in this thesis.

2.1 Brown and Levinson

Brown and Levinson dominated the field of politeness research for decades and are arguably still treated as synonymous with the concept of politeness research (Kádár and Haugh, 2013). Several researchers were developing ideas around politeness in the 1970s/80s (e.g. Lakoff, 1973; Leech, 1983), but Brown and Levinson's publication of *Universals in language usage: politeness phenomena* in 1978 is usually viewed as the beginning of politeness research (e.g. Deutschmann, 2003). This essay, reissued in 1987 with a new introduction by Brown and Levinson covering developments and criticisms, is described in terms such as the "seminal work on politeness" (Haugh, 2007, p.295) and is still the main model described in sociolinguistic textbooks under the heading of politeness theory (e.g. Meyerhoff, 2006; Stockwell, 2007).

Brown and Levinson (1987) used politeness as the explanation for utterances which deviated from models of rational and efficient talk (ie using politeness to explain deviations from Grice's (1975) principles). Brown and Levinson (1987, p.58) describe politeness in terms of a Model Person - who they define as being a "fluent speaker of a natural language" with two particular properties "rationality and face" (rationality is understood by Brown and Levinson as "reasoning from ends to the means that will achieve those ends").

Brown and Levinson claim that their definition of face is based on Goffman (1967); they define face as "the public self-image that every member [competent adult member of a society] wants to claim for himself" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.61). Brown and Levinson (1987, p.61) describe face as consisting of two aspects: negative face, "freedom from imposition", the ability to carry out one's actions unimpeded; and positive face, the desire to have one's own wants wanted by others, for the self-image claimed to be "appreciated and approved of" by others. Brown and Levinson's use of the concept of face has been subject to criticism and discussion. One area of criticism is the extent to which they have used or misunderstood Goffman's concept of face, with for example Locher (2004) arguing that they lose Goffman's external dimension of face, that face is constructed between the person and environment, not intrinsic to the individual. Ide (1989), and others, raise concerns about the Western orientation of Brown and Levinson's definition of face and whether it is applicable to a range of cultures. A further area of discussion considers the relationship between the concepts of face and politeness, whether these are more distinct than they are presented in Brown and Levinson (e.g. Spencer-Oatey (2000b); Watts (2003); Kádár and Bargiela-Chiappini (2010)). Face is therefore an extensive area of scholarship in its own right; I will only discuss it further here in terms of its presence in Brown and Levinson's model of politeness.

Much of Brown and Levinson's model deals with what happens where the Model Person is considering uttering a Face Threatening Act (FTA). A FTA is an act which "run[s] contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.65). They proposed a model by which a rational person considering uttering a FTA could calculate the weightiness of that act and then, in order to mitigate the face threat with politeness, select from a hierarchy of politeness strategies depending on the weightiness calculation. The weightiness of the face threatening act (W_x) has three components - the cultural ranking of the severity of the particular act (R_x), the power relationship between the speaker and the hearer (P(H,S)) and the social distance or relationship between the speaker and the hearer (D(S,H)), to give the calculation:

W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.76).

Depending on the outcome of this weightiness calculation, the model person selects from the hierarchy of five politeness strategies (from most to least polite):

- not to do the face threatening act at all,
- to go off record,
- to mitigate the face threat with negative (deferential) politeness,
- to mitigate the face threat with positive (affiliative) politeness, or
- to go ahead with the face threatening act baldly (without mitigation).

Brown and Levinson (1987) classify apologies as a politeness strategy aimed at supporting the hearer's negative face (their desire to be unimpeded), whilst also noting that to give an apology may threaten the speaker's positive face (their desire to be approved of, to have his or her values also valued by others), particularly if the apology includes information, previously unknown to the hearer, about what the person is apologising for. They also describe the potential for an apology to threaten the hearer's negative face, because it may require the hearer to decide whether to accept or reject the apology, thereby limiting their potential actions. In Brown and Levinson's model therefore apologies are complex, with the ability to support and threaten different aspects of hearer and speaker face. In their introduction to the reissue, Brown and Levinson (1987, p.26) describe apologies as "relatively formulaic polite 'routines'", which may suggest that, for all their complexity, there are few, conventionalised, linguistic options for realising apologies.

One reason why Brown and Levinson's work on politeness has been so dominant is that it provides a testable model for empirical studies of politeness. Such studies have challenged aspects of their work; for example, Holmes (1990) and Wolfson et al.

(1989) reevaluate social distance as a factor (rather than operating as a straight line, where a large social distance between the participants contributes a large value for 'D' in the weightiness calculation, Holmes and Wolfson et al. argue for a 'bulge' effect, where it is in fact middling acquaintances, neither friends nor strangers, who make the FTA most weighty). There have also been criticisms of more fundamental aspects of the model, in particular with scholars challenging Brown and Levinson's claim of universality, such as Ide (1989) questioning its application to non-Western societies. Despite such critiques, Haugh (2007, p.295) states that a "coherent challenge" to their dominance of the field of politeness research only really arose within the context of post-modernism in the form of the discursive approach to politeness research.

2.2 The discursive approach to (im)politeness research

The discursive, or post-modern, approach to (im)politeness research encompasses a range of researchers, methodologies and definitions (Kádár and Bargiela-Chiappini, 2010); a collection titled *Discursive approaches to politeness* (Linguistic Politeness Research Group, 2011a) includes a different definition of politeness for each contribution in the volume.[1] The discursive approach is described as "kick-started" by Eelen's (2001) detailed criticism of Brown and Levinson (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.5). However, Kádár and Haugh (2013) have noted that criticisms of Brown and Levinson have not necessarily yet formed a rigorous and fully defined alternative model. This section will highlight key attributes common to many discursive studies of politeness, and identify some of the weaknesses of discursive approaches. I will then present two particular areas within discursive politeness research, Kádár and Haugh's (2013) emphasis on the participation framework and Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based approach, which attempt to combat weaknesses in discursive politeness research.

A key factor distinguishing discursive approaches to politeness from Brown and Levinson is to see politeness as occurring in evaluations by interactants, enacted through talk, as opposed to Brown and Levinson's model of politeness existing in utterances, which can be predicted. The Linguistic Politeness Research Group (2011b, p.2) describes this overarching principle: "politeness as a question of judgements made by participants and negotiated within talk." Brown and Levinson locate politeness in a calculation by the speaker, a rational consideration of what is the polite utterance based on particular factors. In contrast, "post-modern theories are [...] hearer-oriented, in that they locate politeness in hearers' evaluations rather than speakers' intentions" (Terkourafi, 2005, p.241). It is in these evaluations that discursive researchers see disputes and struggles over politeness, where Brown and Levinson's

[1] Discursive approaches may use the term '(im)politeness' to demonstrate that they encompass considerations of rudeness (e.g. Culpeper, 2010).

model person simply reproduces polite utterances, according to their calculation of the correct form (e.g. Arundale, 2006; Watts, 2003). Discursive researchers reject the concept that politeness can be contained in a particular form (although Culpeper (2010), describing himself as a discursive researcher in his contribution to *Discursive approaches to politeness* (Linguistic Politeness Research Group, 2011a), challenges the complete exclusion of a form/politeness link, in looking at conventionalised expressions of rudeness).

Despite the importance of the notion of evaluation to discursive researchers, it is not necessarily well defined (Haugh, 2013). Discursive research often considers the reaction of a hearer to a speaker, seeking evidence of the hearer's evaluation in the sequence of discourse, but this does not state when evaluation may occur (is it for example only an immediate reaction) or what constitutes evaluation (in section 2.2.2 I note Terkourafi's inclusion of silence, or lack of explicit negative evaluation, as evidence that a preceding utterance was understood as polite). Kádár (2011, p.255) has questioned whether the focus on the recipient (Kádár and Haugh (2013) prefer the term 'recipient' to 'hearer', as the former covers language from a variety of mediums including writing) is equally relevant in all contexts:

> "The problem with the notion of evaluation is that there are historical (but also contemporary institutional) contexts in which politeness primarily serves, and is manifested by, ritual display rather than (addressee-oriented) facework in a modern sense".

This thesis deals with a more ritualistic area of language (Brown and Levinson (1987) describe apology as routine, or ritualistic, politeness) in an institutional context of policing; this thesis therefore appears to fit into domains where Kádár is suggesting that evaluation is problematic.

The description of evaluation as difficult to apply to ritualistic behaviour and descriptions of apology as ritualistic cause concerns about the principle taken in many discursive studies of apology, that the judgment of the hearer as to whether an apology has taken place is used as the most important or the only determinant as to whether an apology has occurred (e.g. Jeffries, 2007; Davies et al., 2007). More specific difficulties with relying on only the hearer's judgment of whether an apology took place arise from evidence from a range of disciplines that factors relating to the hearer will affect their judgement. Lakoff (2003) describes situations where the hearer is clear that no apology will ever be satisfactory, arguing therefore that the responsibility for the lack of apology in such situations must lie partly with the hearer; Tavuchis (1991) discussed a particular example of this situation where the hearer's inability to forgive and accept the apology was caused by the context of how long they had battled to receive an apology. Akgun et al. (2010) found generally that a re-

cipient's mood affected their judgment of apology language. Similarly, psychological research into individual differences has suggested that different personality types respond differently to different types of apology (Fehr and Gelfand, 2010). Legal views on apology have raised concerns that a recipient may have instrumental motivations: "the ILC [United Nation's International Law Commission] Commentary makes clear the Commission's distrust of apology as a remedy and its concern that demands for apology may be misused as a means of humiliation" (Bilder, 2008, p.19). The hearer's evaluation of an apology is therefore not an independent judgment on apology, but a judgment from a particular context, affected by the hearer's motivations, personality and mood perhaps. What would be an accepted apology to one person, in the same situation, for the same reason, but to a different person might be unacceptable.

There are also questions about which socio-cultural group the hearer's evaluation of apology provides a perspective on. Watts (2003) describes his discursive model of politeness as looking at how members of a socio-cultural group struggle over the interpretation of something as polite. Ogiermann (2009) notes that this presents difficulties when the interaction is intercultural - because the hearer may not be evaluating the discourse from the same socio-cultural space as the speaker. This matches the perspective of Kádár and Haugh (2013), discussed in the next section, who argue for recognition of potential differences between culturally inside and outside perspectives on politeness. Ogiermann (2009) concludes that a discursive approach to apologies may provide understandings at the level of the individual, but different methodologies may be necessary where understandings are sought about probable understandings of politeness at a level of culture (similar, as will be seen, to Terkourafi's (2005) argument for analysis of politeness at different levels).

Another key aspect of discursive approaches to politeness is the distinction between politeness1, first order or folk understandings of politeness, and politeness2, second order or analysts' understandings of politeness (Watts, 2003). Brown and Levinson is described as a politeness2 model, an academic description of politeness, where discursive researchers often prioritise lay perceptions, with for example Locher and Watts (2005) suggesting that politeness1 is the only legitimate domain of research into politeness. This pre-occupation with politeness1 is not necessarily common to all discursive researchers. Eelen (2001), described previously as the initiator of discursive approaches, suggested more that the distinction between politeness1 and politeness2 needed to be clear than that politeness2 should be disregarded as a subject for linguistic investigation. In the next section I will discuss Kádár and Haugh (2013) who take this principle further, describing different perspectives on politeness from within both first and second order understandings, and the importance of considering a variety of these differing understandings in an examination of politeness.

The focus on politeness1 in discursive politeness research can limit its ability to draw conclusions about the linguistic realisations of politeness. Terkourafi (2005, p.242) has raised concerns that a focus on politeness1 "runs the danger of becoming an exercise in the lexical semantics of the lexeme 'politeness'", limited to considering what lay people understand by the term politeness, but without therefore being able to describe politeness linguistically (or otherwise). Grainger (2011, p.171) concludes of this criticism of discursive politeness research "Arguably, then, for those of us interested in explaining how language mediates human relations, such a preoccupation is not very interesting". Discursive researchers may also find that their focus on lay perceptions of politeness contradicts their fundamental understanding of politeness. Lay perceptions of politeness describe a certain stability (Culpeper, 2010); when asked to describe politeness lay people include reference to particular forms, such as honorifics (Watts, 2003). The discursive description of politeness as unstable, constantly contested and wholly dependent on context rather than form does not therefore entirely suit the lay perception of politeness.

The theoretical underpinnings of discursive approaches to politeness have consequences for the methodologies that may be used. Researchers working within a Brown and Levinson approach could collect data of individual utterances (a particularly popular methodology, the Discourse Completion Task (DCT), where participants were given a context and a conversation and asked to fill in a gap in that conversation, allowed researchers to gather comparable data for similar utterances across several languages (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al., 1989b)). Discursive researchers require longer stretches of discourse (e.g. Grainger, 2011; Mullany, 2011), which allow for the hearer's evaluations to be considered by looking at their reactions, and how these are then contested and recontested between speaker and hearer. Discursive studies of politeness are likely therefore to use data in the form of recordings of naturally occurring discourse, focused on few examples (e.g. Locher, 2004). Haugh (2007) describes a lack of experimental or corpus data in discursive research, and also comments that the focus on lay interpretations of politeness potentially excludes any data which does not include the analyst as a participant (see section 2.2.1 for description of some more recent alternative methodologies used to access insider perspectives on politeness). These limitations severely restrict the scope of human interaction which discursive politeness research can address, as well as losing insights that might come from alternative methodologies.

The methodological limitations of discursive research make certain types of communication difficult to investigate within this paradigm. Kádár (2011) describes discursive approaches as limited in offering insight on historical politeness behaviour as much historical data would appear in the form of writing, e.g. letters. In the exclusion of writing, discursive research "excludes much research work on monologic

genres and devotes unreasonable importance to dialogue (vs. monologue), in spite of the fact that both monologue and dialogue belong to *discourse*" (original emphasis) (Kádár, 2011, p.253-4), although it is also possible to consider writing as a "'mute' dialogue" (Szczyrbak, 2009, p.129). Kádár (2011) further questions the applicability of discursive politeness to more ritualistic behaviour; rituals, Kádár suggests, are still subject to dispute and change but that change takes place over a longer stretch of time than the ways negotiation over politeness may be seen in a particular interaction. Apologies, described by Brown and Levinson (1987) as a more ritualistic type of politeness, may therefore present particular problems for the discursive researcher.

Discursive research presents itself as fundamentally different to the Brown and Levinson approach to politeness research, in situating politeness in participant evaluation rather than production of utterances, in studying stretches of naturalistic discourse rather than individual (constructed) examples, in distinguishing between the analysts' views and those of the participants. However, in opposing Brown and Levinson, discursive approaches to politeness have not always well defined their own concepts, particularly with reference to the notion of evaluation. This concept will be further discussed in this thesis because a discursive understanding of this notion, as a hearer's reaction to a speaker, is problematic with regard to written data, where there is no immediate hearer response. More generally, discursive approaches to politeness have concentrated on particular types of data, leaving for example written or corpus data underused. This appears to make discursive politeness research ill-suited to offer insight into a politeness interaction which happens in written form - such as the data for this thesis, letters written from the police to public recipients who have made complaints. I will therefore go on here to consider developments in politeness research which offers more scope to address this type of data.

2.2.1 Kádár and Haugh

Haugh (2007) describes an interactional alternative to the discursive approach. He suggests that the focus should be on "how (im)politeness1 norms, or more broadly ideologies, are shared or constructed through social life" (p.9). He distinguishes between two legitimate, politeness1, objects of study: "A theory of politeness necessarily involves an understanding of both what people think *should* happen (moral norms) and what people think *is likely to* happen (empirical norms)". Moral norms can be considered through how people talk about politeness; empirical norms can be considered through how people enact politeness including its linguistics realisations, the things they do (repeatedly), but may not be aware of doing. These objects of study open up different methodologies; empirical norms for example might be studied through corpus work, which allows for identification of what people do repeatedly

in similar situations.

In considering how norms are constructed socially, Kádár and Haugh (2013) relate the individual interaction to past and future interactions, how what is done in a particular moment between particular people echoes or challenges what has been, is or will be done by those or other people in other moments. Kádár and Haugh (2013) call for more specification in the questions politeness researchers ask - not whether something is polite in an interaction, but to whom specifically it is polite, at what period in time it is polite (and whether for example that evaluation of politeness might be different 100 years later).

Kádár and Haugh (2013) require the politeness1/politeness2 distinction to be expanded into a full understanding of the different participants and observers, those within a particular culture and outside it. They describe for example a cultural insider who is observing the current interaction (and perhaps therefore evaluating it differently than the active participants), or the cultural insider who is discussing the interaction at a later date (and again perhaps evaluating the interaction differently from participants at the time of the interaction). The active participants could conversely include an outsider, someone who is part of a different cultural group (and may therefore have different moral or empirical norms around politeness), who is also an insider in the sense of being active in the current interaction. A distinction between politeness1 and politeness2 is not enough to describe all of these different perspectives. Kádár and Haugh (2013) draw on Goffman's (1981a) participation framework to provide a model of ratified addressee and side participant, unratified bystander and overhearer, but complicated by further (overlapping) differences between active/metaparticipants, lay/analyst interpretations and emic/etic understandings.[2] Kádár and Haugh (2013) argue that focusing on any particular dimensions of this complexity will necessarily exclude potential understandings of politeness and that the research field should therefore incorporate multiple different approaches.

One particular area where closer consideration of the participation framework might benefit understandings of politeness is in institutional settings, where multiple audiences may be involved. In a (common law) courtroom setting witness questioning would be subject to audiences of, for example, the legal questioner, lay witness, judge, jury, accused, public gallery, future legal professionals (through the written medium of court reports), practitioners' legal training on how to question and even future popular depictions, such as films, of legal questioning. One particular issue for the

[2]Kádár and Haugh (2013) are primarily interested in distinctions in the status of the hearer; in section 2.4 I will also consider Goffman's (1981a) description of the status of different participants involved in the production of language, in reference to the animator, author and principal of a public apology.

politeness analyst in this situation is that only particular audiences in this setting would be licensed to react, and therefore for their immediate evaluations to be accessible. Thus when Harris (2011) describes courtroom behaviour as being understood not as impolite by institutional participants, her conclusions are not based on, for example, the evaluations of the jury, who come from outside the legal cultural context and may have different evaluations of politeness. Kádár and Haugh's (2013) proposals would suggest such an example be understood in relation to different questions - not whether courtroom language itself is polite, but to whom it might be polite, differentiating between cultures and participants who might describe courtroom questioning as aggressive and rude and those who might describe it as professional. In section 2.4 I will apply these distinctions to studies of public apologies.

One issue for the researcher interested in distinguishing and describing emic and etic evaluations of politeness is how to access emic perspectives. As noted above, one criticism of discursive approaches to politeness is that the focus on politeness1 may exclude any data where the analyst is not also a participant. To obtain an emic, politeness1 evaluation on an interaction would therefore require an analyst who was not only participant to the interaction but a cultural insider, making it difficult for example for an academic to study politeness in a business, legal or other institutional setting. More recent discursive researchers have considered alternative mechanisms to obtain insider perspectives, for example first recording interactions and then interviewing participants about their interpretations of politeness in that interaction (e.g. Copland (2011); Chang and Haugh (2011), although Chang and Haugh then followed this up with ethnographic interviews with different participants because the first interviews raised particular interactional issues of politeness which prevented their use as an effective data source for perspectives on politeness in the original recorded interactions). The example of Copland (2011) emphasises the difficulties in meeting early discursive standards for politeness1 research. Copland was previously a member of the institution she was investigating, but at the time of research was no longer an employee; her own view is therefore perhaps privileged, because she knows the institution well, but would still appear not to satisfy the early demands of discursive researchers, as she did not participate in the interactions she was recording except as a researcher. This would however ignore the potential value of her research through its ability to combine and contrast her knowledge, as a historical cultural insider, with the perspectives of current cultural insiders in the form of follow-up discussions, as well as her primary linguistic data collection of institutional interactions.

Kádár and Haugh (2013) include analysis of written language, such as that drawn from letters and internet discussion boards and, as noted above, prefer terminology that accommodates different types of language such as writing ('producer' and 'recipient' rather than 'speaker' and 'hearer'). Nevertheless, there are indications that

spoken language is still the primary source of data, at least for Haugh (2007, p.314, n.3), who mentions written politeness only in terms of etiquette guides, but eliminates these from his field of study as these "cannot be regarded as interactionally achieved as such unless they become the topic of face-to-face discussion".

Kádár and Haugh (2013) therefore provide a framework by which politeness, and particularly institutional politeness, might be more fully understood by identifying the viewpoints of various participants and their differing evaluations; they are part of the 'second-wave' of politeness researchers, the turn away from Brown and Levinson or 'first-wave' politeness theories (Culpeper, 2011b), but also seeking to develop the methodologies and theoretical understandings of those initial, reactive, discursive approaches. I follow their proposals in that I identify different participants who may have perspectives on the interaction I am considering and specify whose view of politeness I am describing; although my analysis is primarily an attempt to provide a police complaints handler perspective on apologising (by identifying repeated patterns in their linguistic usages, thereby providing a description of their linguistic empirical norms), where possible I contrast this with consideration of the evaluations of other participants, including the etic perspective of the public recipient of the letters, and note aspects of usage which suggest change over time.

2.2.2 A frame-based approach

In common with Kádár and Haugh (2013), Terkourafi (2005) comes from the discursive or post-modern tradition, but also critiques many aspects of discursive work (some of which were presented in section 2.2); I will describe both as developments from early, reactive, discursive approaches. This section describes her model of a frame-based analysis, which attempts to combat some of the weaknesses she sees in discursive work, and ultimately, she argues, which should be seen as a complement to both Brown and Levinson and more typical discursive work, in that the three provide insight at different levels of analysis.

Terkourafi (2005, p.244) shares with Haugh the concept of two types of norms: "norms about what one *should* and norms about what one is *likely* to do" (original emphasis); Terkourafi differs slightly from Haugh in describing these as prescriptive/theoretical versus descriptive/empirical norms, where Haugh (2007) uses the terminology moral versus empirical norms. In order to investigate empirical norms, Terkourafi describes a frame-based approach, which considers "regularities of co-occurrence between linguistic expressions and their extra-linguistic contexts of use." (Terkourafi, 2005, p.247). Extra-linguistic settings are described through the concept of frames, contexts specified in terms of descriptions of the speaker and hearer, the

relationship between them and the interactional setting.

The frame-based approach suggests a particular understanding of evaluation, locating evaluation in an understanding of the regularity of the frame: "politeness is a matter [...] of habit. [...] What is regular then gets interpreted as polite" (Terkourafi, 2005, p.250). Terkourafi (2005) draws on evidence that people are aware of statistical frequencies in the language they use to support this argument.

An important contrast between the frame-based approach and many discursive approaches is the relative importance of behaviour that is not disputed. Evaluations of polite behaviour might be most obvious where these involve disputes, for example where the offer of an apology is contested by the recipient as not polite enough for the particular context. Watts (2003) struggles to deal with situations where behaviour, such as paying a compliment to the hostess of a dinner, is not explicitly positively or negatively evaluated but its absence would be negatively evaluated (see Kádár and Haugh (2013) for a discussion of the problems of Watts' distinction between polite and politic behaviour, the latter being such unremarked behaviour). Terkourafi (2005, p.244) incorporates the unremarked into her model, stating that participants' reactions should be taken "at face value", that the analyst should not presume something is not polite where the participant has left it unchallenged. Instead it is the repetition of accepted linguistic behaviour in particular frames which constitutes realising, and thereby restating, a norm of politeness.

By documenting empirical norms the frame-based approach supports a return to prediction, although of probabilities rather than particular utterances. Brown and Levinson claimed the possibility of predicting an individual speaker's choice of politeness strategies based on calculating the weightiness of the face threatening act; discursive approaches suggest the impossibility of predicting politeness, because politeness emerges through evaluation of behaviour in the particular context of the interaction. Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based approach sits in the middle, enabling identification of linguistic forms regularly used in particular contextual frames, and thereby allowing for a probabilistic prediction of politeness (ie the linguistic forms that are frequently accepted in particular circumstances).

Terkourafi (2005) suggests that the frame-based view should be seen not as opposing either Brown and Levinson or the discursive approach to politeness research. Rather she suggests that the three approaches may be complementary, operating at different levels of analysis. Brown and Levinson type approaches, she suggests, may offer system level suggestions about politeness, such as the "politeness potential" of a particular feature or contrast, e.g. personal pronouns, in a language (Terkourafi, 2005, p.254). The frame-based view accounts for regular interpretations of the rela-

tionship between particular contexts and particular linguistic expressions. Discursive approaches operate at a third level, and may consider a particular instance of use, such as how and why a regular linguistic expression might be contested in an individual situation.

Terkourafi's frame-based approach will be used as the main analytical tool in this thesis because of the features described above. First, the idea that evidence of utterances evaluated as polite can be taken from repeated, undisputed behaviour may be adapted for use with written language (I will go on to discuss writing research and public apologies below, to consider how this framework should be adapted for written language, before presenting my amended version in section 2.6). Secondly, the level of analysis suggested by Terkourafi, to provide a probabilistic description of particular linguistic forms used in particular contextual frames for analysis at the level of culture, is a level of analysis that suits my aims of describing apology as understood by the police in their day-to-day interactions, not in a particular instance of apology nor subsumed into an overall system of English language apology.

2.2.3 A common interest in power

While discursive approaches to politeness have fundamental differences to Brown and Levinson there are also commonalities between them. In particular, both Brown and Levinson and discursive researchers consider power important in relation to politeness, with power being understood in terms of societal structures and as an interactant's ability to exercise their will at an interpersonal level (Locher, 2004).

Brown and Levinson considered power differentials to be fundamental to the operation of politeness. Power is one of the three key dimensions affecting the person's calculation of the weightiness of a face threatening act in their model, and this has been supported by subsequent empirical research such as Holmes'(1990) corpus of apologies in New Zealand English. They themselves acknowledged however that they had not considered power in broader terms, in relation to powerful groups in society using politeness as a mechanism to maintain that power. Watts (2003, p.42) explicitly considers this aspect of power, describing politeness in similar terms to a Standard language: "Systems of politeness, however, may be part of a discourse that discriminates against and excludes large groups of the population from highly valued symbolic and material resources." In much the same way as Terkourafi suggests that different methodologies offer insight into politeness at different levels of analysis, from the individual interaction to an overall language system, the different approaches to politeness also consider how power operates at different levels, from the individual utterance to societal structures.

Discursive approaches to politeness have come to provide the dominant alternative to Brown and Levinson, but that dominance does not mean they are without criticism. Researchers such as Kádár and Haugh (2013) or Terkourafi (2005) have sought to bring politeness research back to considering linguistic form, in particular with the concept of looking at empirical norms, that which is regularly done and therefore expected as politeness. This thesis will follow their lead in providing a description of the apology linguistic forms regularly used by the police. A consistent thread among Brown and Levinson, early discursive approaches and researchers seeking to move discursive approaches forward such as Kádár, Haugh and Terkourafi, is the importance of power to understanding politeness; arguably another consistent thread is the relative lack of attention given to politeness in written form.

2.3 Writing research

Linguistics often focuses on spoken rather than written language: Biber (1988, p.6) states that "by the early twentieth century, linguists uniformly regarded speech as primary and writing as a secondary form of language derived from speech; thus only speech was considered worth serious linguistic analysis." Discursive approaches to politeness largely follow this trend, perhaps with the additional motivation that written language makes key principles of discursive approaches, such as accessing the hearer's evaluation, difficult to manage. In this section I will consider why written language may be worth researching, and discuss some existing research into written language.

Those researchers who are looking at written language argue for its value as a field of study because it is part, and a large part, of human interaction. For example, Barton and Papen (2010, p.3) describe written language as "omnipresen[t]" in modern life, noting that technological developments are increasing the "textualisation" of social interaction (Barton and Papen, 2010, p.5). Just as Terkourafi (2005) understands spoken utterances to make visible the politeness expectations for different frames, Candlin and Hyland (1999, p.13) suggests that

> "textual regularities derive from the exercise of particular conventions, and that the description of texts offers insights on the purposive and often institutionally grounded constraints and choices which operate on the writer."

Written language can be researched as social action, to be studied with reference to "the users and producers of texts and on the ways they engage with the broader social practices and discourses their actions are part of" (Barton and Papen, 2010,

p.9), much as Kádár and Haugh (2013) propose for politeness. Written language is therefore described as being part of social interaction just as spoken language is; it is valuable as a field of research because otherwise part of human interaction is being excluded from linguistic study.

Furthermore, existing studies may use written data without considering how the particular qualities of this medium affect their conclusions. Davies et al. (2007), for example, presented a study of apologies in emails; the medium of this email data is written, although the effect of this on the findings is not discussed. I will describe in section 2.4 the multi-medium production of many public apologies, e.g. through written and oral versions of a speech. Written data is being used in linguistic research already, and it may be useful therefore to understand what, if any, differences the medium makes to how politeness is understood.

One suggested difference between written and spoken language is that writing is monologue rather than dialogue (see section 2.2.1 for Haugh's (2007) description of etiquette guides as not being interactionally achieved). There are however researchers who conceptualise writing as a dialogue between readers and writers. Hyland (2005, p.173) for example states "written texts embody interactions between writers and readers."; an etiquette guide may be produced with particular readers in mind, considering for example that a twenty-first century reader of a mass-produced guide may rarely need to know formal titles for the aristocracy (Gray, 2006). Nystrand (1986) describes written language as interactionally achieved, the act of reading as a necessary part of constructing the meaning of written language along with the author and the text itself; he also notes that the meaning of a text may be different with different readers or rereadings. Thompson (2001, p.58) describes how writers may "second-guess" the reactions of readers and provide information at particular points to manage the anticipated reader response; Cooper (1982, p.106) describes the writer taking on the reader's viewpoint, reading their text "to test the meanings produced by the interpretive strategies they assume their readers will use." Lecercle (1999) describes a recursive process, whereby the writer constructs a text for an imagined reader, and that imagined reader has an imagined writer (thus the writer may be addressing particular imagined perceptions of him or herself). Written language is therefore produced with consideration for readers and writers and their responses to each other. A key difference may be in the scope of potential audiences for the written rather than spoken word. While the speaker may take into consideration a range of overhearers, eavesdroppers and imagined audiences (Bell, 1984), there is a limitation: "When a word is spoken, all those who happen to be in perceptual range of the event will have some sort of participation status relative to it." (Goffman, 1981b, p.3). The perceptual range of written language, because it remains on record for a period of time, because of its transportability, can be much larger than for spoken

language.

The medium of written language may affect how differences between reader, writer and textual constructions of meanings are uncovered and dealt with - with a spoken interaction the speaker and the hearer can negotiate “immediate adjustment" of meaning (Lecercle, 1999, p.73), whereas readers and writers often exist in different contexts, spaces and times. Wright (1999, p.87) offers the example of a mismatch between readers and writers being uncovered through subsequent perception work; in the particular example, the writers of leaflets about medication side effects understood “seldom" to mean affecting 1% of people, where readers, outside the medical institution, understood this lexical item to mean more than 6%. As Kádár (2011) suggested for more ritualistic language, it appears that there is still the possibility of dispute over meaning in written language but this may happen in different ways, over distance in space and time, compared to spoken language.

A further suggested difference between written and spoken language is the relative permanence of writing, giving it greater functions of evidence and record than spoken language. Halliday (1996, p.353) for example describes written language as being “archival, a form of record keeping". An obvious example is that of a signature, which may be adduced as evidence of an agreement or commitment to a cause (Barton and Hamilton, 2005). Tusting (2000, p.44) describes how written artefacts are constructed around preparation for First Communion, and in this way “Literacy has been used to turn a transient and private event [...] into an enduring and public ‘proof’". The experience of the event may be punctual, but the documents created around it are available and visible for years to come (although with modern sound and visual recording, this is also true, if with less regularity, for spoken language). Foucault (1979, p.189) described the societal power of institutions “that places individuals in a field of surveillance also situates them in a network of writing; it engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them". Writing puts human interaction, events and identity on record.

While the written artefact may last a long time, the interpretation of writing can change. Bakhtin (1981, p.421) described how for literary works “every age re-accentuates in its own way the works of its most immediate past"; the particular context, and ideologies, of societies at different times affect the meanings ascribed to a text as it is read and reread. As one particular example of how the interpretation of a text can change over time Lecercle (1999) offers the example of Derek Bentley. Derek Bentley was a 19 year old hanged in 1953 for joint enterprise in the murder of the police officer (the police officer was shot by the 16 year old Christopher Craig, with whom Derek Bentley had been robbing warehouses). There were a number of concerns about his conviction (including whether or not Bentley had made a monologue

statement or the purported statement was in fact the result of answers to police questions, a matter on which Malcolm Coulthard provided linguistic evidence (Coulthard, 2003)). In 1993 Derek Bentley posthumously received a Royal Pardon; in 1998 the Court of Appeal declared his conviction to have been unsafe (R v. Derek William Bentley (Deceased) [1998] EWCA Crim 2516). One issue discussed in various legal proceedings was the claim that Derek Bentley had shouted "Let him have it Chris" before Christopher Craig shot the police officer. This alleged spoken utterance was produced in statements by (some of the) police officers, discussed and reproduced at various court processes and media outlets, but its meaning has been understood differently over time, as for example 'kill him, Chris' or 'give the gun to him, Chris'. This single utterance, which may or may not have been originally spoken but persists through written record, has at different points in time been part of a construction that Derek Bentley was guilty of the murder of a police officer and that he was not necessarily guilty of the murder of a police officer; those constructions were formed through readings at different times, reflecting for example what other information about the case was known to the reader, or broader social changes over time such as attitudes toward the death penalty (In Bakhtinian terms, the utterance has been re-accentuated, with changes in the surrounding discourses causing previously hidden potential meanings to be uncovered).

A particular issue considered in relation to the construction of meaning with written language is the relative contributions of the author, reader, text and context. Kádár and Haugh (2013, p.90) describe a comment supposedly made at a U2 concert, although never actually uttered, which was evaluated as polite or not polite in subsequent (internet) discussion, stating: "whether or not the incident really happened starts to become immaterial, as metaparticipants start to evaluate the responses of others to the anecdote". In their example the 'author' of the text as a member of U2 was created through the readers of the text. Lecercle (1999) makes the same point about Bentley, who is defined as the author of 'Let him have it Chris' by for example readers of trial material, although he may not have spoken the words at all, and had no control over how they were interpreted. This leads Lecercle (1999, p.74) to emphasise the importance of the text itself, arguing that "the text is logically, if not chronologically prior to its 'author'". Baynham (1995, p.190) also considers the importance of the text in that it "constrains and shapes" the interpretative work of the reader. The text may not be considered in isolation but in relation to the 'web' of other texts which surround it and which affect its production and interpretation, particularly in institutional contexts (Baynham, 1995); for Lecercle (1999, p.153) the text remains at the centre: "The text [...] convokes a whole tradition of texts both before and after it; and it projects around itself a pantomime of authors and readers" (Lecercle does acknowledge a criticism of this thinking, that it potentially turns the authors and readers into no more than 'puppets'). The reminders of the importance

of the text to understanding meaning in written language are reminiscent of debates in discursive approaches to politeness, where early work very much concentrated on hearer evaluations but more recent contributions have re-emphasised the importance of being able to describe how language is used (e.g. Terkourafi, 2005; Grainger, 2011).

Written language may have some different features to spoken language such as a larger range of imagined audiences and the relative permanency of the text, but these differences do not necessarily constitute reasons to exclude written language from the field of politeness research. In fact, there are similarities between developments in politeness research and aspects of writing research, such as consideration of how meaning may be constructed differently over time or through the perspectives of different participants. In section 2.6 I shall draw out some of these similarities and differences in order to define my analytical approach to the primary data for this thesis, which constitutes an approach to studying politeness in written language.

2.4 Public apologies

Discursive approaches to politeness research have paid particular attention to the phenomena of public apologies. In this section I will consider what public apologies are and why they may have been of interest to discursive politeness researchers. One aspect of public apologies that has not been closely considered is the production of these in both written and spoken language and how this may affect understandings of politeness. I will therefore take a particular study, Jeffries' (2007) work on an apology from former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, and discuss this with reference to its multi-medium production and Goffman's (1981a) participation framework.

One area of focus in politeness research, and in other fields such as law, is that of 'public apologies' - such as those between nations, or from a Government to a specific group of people within a state. Landert and Jucker (2010) provide a model for understanding the difference between public and private situations, where public/private constitutes a cline, with dimensions of public accessibility to what is said and public interest in what is said. I will discuss in chapter 4 the application of these dimensions to my corpus of police apologies.

Brooks (1999) is one of many who has suggested we live in an 'age of apology' (and also discusses the phenomena of 'contrition chic'), while Howard-Hassman and Gibney (2008, p.9) describe "the central role apologies have come to play in world events." The proliferation of public apologies in recent times may explain why they have attracted the current interest of politeness researchers, although it may be worth noting that Olshtain (1989) discusses a public apology negotiated between Israeli politicians

in 1985, suggesting public apologies are not a completely new phenomenon. Thompson (2008, p.31) describes a lack of consensus about how public apologies are understood:

> "There is no agreement on what a political apology means, whether it is meaningful at all, when it should be offered, whether it is possible or appropriate to apologize for injustices of the more distant past, whether offering political apologies is an adequate way of dealing with injustices, and what relation they have to reparative justice."

Interest in public apologies may continue because they are plentiful and there is little understanding, academic or lay, of how they work.

Discursive politeness researchers (e.g. Jeffries, 2007; Ancarno, 2011; Davies, 2011) interested in apology may have focused on public apologies because apology data suitable for early discursive approaches is otherwise difficult to access. Olshtain and Cohen (1983) describe apology as an infrequent speech act; it was on the basis of the rarity of apologies that Ogiermann (2009) justified using a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) to study apologies. It might be necessary to record several hours of talk over family dinners or in workplace meetings to obtain even a single instance of an apology speech act in naturally occurring discourse. By contrast, the language and often visual recording of public apologies may be already identified and readily available in the public domain. Moreover, evaluations of public apologies, crucial to the discursive focus on evaluations as being where politeness happens, may also be readily available in the form of media debate.

Jeffries (2007) provides a study of former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair speaking at the UK Labour Party Conference in 2004 where he may or may not have apologised for the UK invasion of Iraq, by stating

> "And the problem is, I can apologise for the information that turned out to be wrong, but I can't, sincerely at least, apologise for removing Saddam.
> The world is a better place with Saddam in prison not in power.
> But at the heart of this, is a belief that the basic judgment I have made since September 11th, including on Iraq, is wrong, that by our actions we have made matters worse not better. " (Blair, 2004a).

Jeffries' analysis of the media response to this speech suggested that it had not been accepted as an apology, including because the use of *apologise* rather than *sorry* was felt to be insincere. In conducting this analysis it appears that Jeffries has accepted Tony Blair as being the speaker and several journalists as being the hearers (Jeffries considers together Tony Blair's speech at the Labour Party Conference and a subsequent appearance in the House of Commons; for simplicity I will define the participants in the Conference speech only). However application of Goffman's (1981a)

participation framework and consideration of the written production of this apology, demonstrate the complexity of this interaction and the potential different interpretations of politeness from different interactants. The questions that need to be asked about this apology may therefore need to be differentiated, as advocated by Kádár and Haugh (2013), to consider less whether this was an apology and rather to whom it did or did not appear apologetic.

Goffman (1981a) redefines the single concept of 'speaker' into the animator, the acoustic producer of language; the author, who selects the particular words; and the principal, to whom the meaning of the words is attributed. In Jeffries' example of a speech by Tony Blair, not all three of these participant statuses can be attributed to Tony Blair, and each may be inhabited by multiple people or identities.

The animator, acoustic producer of the above quotation, would appear to be Tony Blair. However this might be considered shared with audio technology at the Labour Party Conference, and further broadcasting technology when the speech, or edited extracts, were reproduced for television news programmes and in written format for web or print news. It is also likely that the written text of his speech was provided in advance to journalists and key opinion formers; written records of the speech are still available now. Part of the animation of the text is therefore provided in written format. This raises questions about whether all evaluations of the apology are based on the same language. The above quotation from one political speech archive does not entirely match other records of this speech (a version from a different political archive uses different line breaks, which may suggest a different pause structure to the reader (Blair, 2004b)). Recipients may also have been responding to a different mix of audio and written animation - listening to the speech after reading it for example, if listening to it at all. Deutschmann (2003) argues that the delivery of an apology, including its intonation and tone, have a significant impact on how an apology is understood. Evaluations may differ therefore depending on whether they are responses to writing or speaking or both.

The author, the participant who selected the language used, is also complex for this public apology. Tony Blair may have chosen the words himself for such an important moment, but it is likely that speechwriter(s) were involved in the production of the speech, and potential others such as senior politicians, various political advisers or civil servants. Linguists have suggested that the matter of giving a public apology may be complicated by the possibility of thereby admitting liability (e.g. Harris et al., 2006; Kampf, 2009); it is plausible that this speech included input from legal advisers (a possibility Davies (2011) specifically considers in relation to a different occasion of public apology by Tony Blair). Evaluations of 'Tony Blair's' apology about Iraq may in fact be evaluations of his legal advice.

The principal in this example could be attributed to more than one of Tony Blair's professional positions. At the time of this potential apology, Tony Blair was the UK Prime Minister, leader of the UK Government, and symbolically responsible therefore for deploying troops to Iraq, perhaps making this an apology for a decision he was professional responsible for - to invade Iraq. However, this potential apology is contained within the speech of the leader of the Labour Party to the Labour Party Conference in 2004, a context which might suggest his political party position was primary. If the principal of this speech is attributed to the leader of the Labour Party, rather than the UK Prime Minister, different aspects of apologeticness may become relevant, for example to apologise for the impact of the invasion of Iraq on Labour party election prospects or Labour party identity. Different understandings of who is the 'speaker' of this apology may affect understandings of what the apology is for.

There are multiple understandings possible for the 'recipient' of a public apology, similar to the multiple understandings possible for 'speaker' described above. In Jeffries' example the speech is being given to the Labour Party Conference. The most obvious ratified recipients of this apology are therefore attending Labour Party members. However Tony Blair, and his media advisers, would be expecting (and perhaps hoping for) broader coverage through media outlets to a wider audience; the ratified recipients of this apology might therefore be considered the UK public as a whole. These different audiences may have different evaluations of the apology, relating to, for example, the different potential purposes of this apology where the principal is Tony Blair as UK Prime Minister or as Labour Party Leader.

The evaluations considered by Jeffries are of a different audience again - the media. Individual journalists, in that they are also members of the public, are part of the ratified recipients suggested above. However journalist's evaluations, as accessible in their written products, are produced through the institutional structures of the media - a journalist's evaluation is likely the work of more than one person, such as the journalist and the editor, and appears therefore to be an evaluation more from an institutional press perspective than the public. Jeffries (2007) notes the various different addressees for a public apology, and that the reception of this apology may differ by addressee. Her analysis of media responses to Blair's speech may therefore answer the question of whether the press understood that he had made an apology, but not whether he, or other authors, was understood to make an apology by other audiences.

One question to consider if focusing on the media evaluation of Blair's apology is the extent to which this constitutes an emic or an etic view of that apology, remembering that Kádár and Haugh (2013) suggest culturally inside and culturally outside

evaluations of politeness may differ. As noted above, potential recipients for Blair's apology include Labour Party Members, members of the public and the media. These audiences are different institutional, or non-institutional in the case of 'the public', contexts to the various professional positions Blair may have as principal; only if his identity as Labour Party leader is primary, and the audience of the Labour Party Conference is deemed pre-eminent, might there be a match between the culture of the principal and that of the recipient evaluations. The reaction of the media to this speech is that of a cultural outsider, and may not therefore reflect for example, the perspective of the Government as to what the norms are for a Government apology.

The media audience is also part of the production of Blair's apology, in that they reproduce parts of the speech in audio or written reporting. Bakhtin (1981, p.330) states that "the object is always entangled in someone else's discourse about it". When producing their evaluations of Blair's apology, the media are also recontextualising it within their own discourses, and considering for example their particular imagined readership (different media outlets may anticipate readers of particular social classes, ages or particular affiliations and may write with those in mind; further, many media outlets are commercial enterprises and may be writing with an imagined audience who have to be convinced to purchase a newspaper). The evaluations used by Jeffries may be affected by the hearer also being involved in repeating, and rewriting, the apology, subject to their surrounding discourses and imagined audiences.

A further aspect Kádár and Haugh (2013) suggest as important to understanding politeness, and which Tusting (2000) similarly argues is important to understanding written language, is time. Davies (2011) considers this factor in one way in her analysis of a 2006 apology by Tony Blair for the slave trade by suggesting that interpretations of that particular apology might relate to his individual history of apologising. An analysis involving time might be particularly interesting for Jeffries' example, as Tony Blair gave evidence to the Iraq Inquiry in 2011, stating:

> "At the conclusion of the last hearing you asked me whether I had any regrets. I took that as a question about the decision to go to war and I answered that I took responsibility. That was taken as my meaning that I had no regrets about the loss of life and that was never my meaning or my intention. I wanted to make that clear that, of course, I regret deeply and profoundly the loss of life, whether from our own armed forces, those of other nations, the civilians who helped people in Iraq or the Iraqis themselves. I just wanted to say that, because I think it is right to say it and it is what I feel." (Blair, 2011, pp.172-3)

This *regret*, itself a response to the response to evidence he had given to the same inquiry in 2010, differs in form to his Labour Party Conference speech (in 2004), em-

phasising his feelings and those lives lost, rather than using the performative verb *apologise* which was criticised in that Labour Party speech. The contrast between these forms of apology may therefore show discursive negotiation of public apology form over time. Whilst it would be important to consider the differences in context between these apologies (in terms of the principal, at the time of this latter apology, Tony Blair was no longer UK Prime Minister), there is the possibility here of identifying the differences and similarities in repeated public apologies.

Jeffries' (2007) finding that *apologise* was deemed insincere, a performance, in the 2004 apology by media commentators who would rather Tony Blair had used *sorry* demonstrates the value suggested by Terkourafi (2005) for different methodologies to provide different levels of analysis. Jeffries' finding contrasts with that of Ancarno (2011) who considered the newspaper commentary around several apologies (in multiple languages). Ancarno (2011, p.38) used this corpus to propose felicity conditions for public apologies, including that public apologies must have an explicit apology expression, and that the apology will be "undermined" if the expression is one of sorrow or regret. Ancarno's findings, while not a frame-based approach, use multiple examples of apology evaluation to describe repeated expectations for apology expression. Jeffries' study takes a particular example, and her contrary findings may be explained in reference to, for example, the apology or other history of the particular individual compared to expectations of public apology as a norm.

Understanding fully the complicated concepts of 'speaker' and 'hearer' with regard to public apologies may be important to understanding their power dynamics. Howard-Hassman and Gibney (2008, p.2) suggest that public apologies challenge our understanding of power, by showing those with power unable to act according to their own will: "The apology phenomenon directly challenges this thesis [that the strong have the power to do what they wish]". Where public apologies are viewed solely in terms of the reaction of the media, arguably itself a powerful institution, this can only provide limited understanding of the scope of public apologies in restructuring societal relationships (see chapter 7 for a description of public apology as redefining history).

Jeffries (2007, p.63) concludes that there is a "fairly strong line" from the liberal press that Blair did not apologise for the Iraq invasion; how he apologised was not judged to be an apology on this occasion. This is however only one perspective, the media perspective, and does not necessarily tell us what the general public would expect from a prime ministerial apology, nor what political party members might expect from their leader in an apology, nor what Tony Blair might expect from his own apology. I will in this thesis draw out the different perspectives relating to a police apology (see chapter 5) and then focus, in contrast to many discursive studies, not

on the media response to apology but on the institutional perspective, by looking at repeated linguistic usages over many instances of police apology. My findings therefore provide one of the alternative politeness evaluations missing from Jeffries' (2007).

2.5 Speech Act Theory and Politeness Research

Speech Act Theory, most associated with Austin (1975) and Searle (1969), investigates how individual utterances work as actions (Lakoff, 1990). In its focus on small segments of isolated language, the "basic or minimal units of linguistic communication" (Searle, 1969, p.16), it might seem ill suited to discursive approaches which consider negotiation of politeness over stretches of discourse. Many discursive researchers nevertheless use speech act concepts (e.g. Jeffries, 2007; Davies, 2011); accepting the label 'apology' as a coherent topic capable of scrutiny in some ways accepts the idea of speech acts. This section will provide a brief summary of speech act theory in reference to apology, and particularly its relevance to discursive work on public apology.

Speech acts are "the acts we perform when we speak: giving reports, giving advice, agreeing, complaining, apologizing." (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983, p.19). As such, a speech act produces a force, not a message (Lecercle, 1999). A Sheriff (Scottish mid-level judge) stating 'guilty' or 'not guilty/not proven' convicts or acquits the person on trial, their utterance has that particular force, but it does not necessarily contain any information about whether or not that individual 'really' committed a crime (see McBarnet (1981) for a discussion of truth versus legal judgment). Because what is at stake is action and not information, repeating the utterance does not (necessarily) repeat the act - an individual in the public gallery at a trial may re-enact the moment of the verdict, they can even change the utterance, but they cannot change the verdict and its outcome.

Austin (1975, p.14-15) defined the conditions necessary for a speech act to be felicitous, and without which the act is not performed or void.

- "(A.1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,
- (A.2) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.
- (B.1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and
- (B.2) completely."

In relation to public apologies, I discussed the possibility that several individuals would be involved in producing the actual words uttered, or that one individual might have several professional positions. One question that may be asked about the example of Blair's apology considered by Jeffries (2007), is whether the UK Prime Minister speaking at the Labour Party Conference, where perhaps his party political leadership identity is primary, might be the appropriate person but in inappropriate circumstances to enact an apology for the decisions of the UK Prime Minister (and whether his giving evidence to the Iraq Inquiry as the former UK Prime Minister was more appropriate for that speech act). The questions of appropriate persons and circumstances are complex in institutional and public situations.

Austin (1975, p.15) provided two further conditions for particular speech acts:

- "(Γ.1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further
- (Γ.2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently."

These conditions apply to speech acts such as promises. Thus an individual might perform the correct conventional procedure to make a promise but with no intention to carry out the actions of that promise; in such an instance the speech act of promising would still have taken place, but it would an "abuse of the procedure", it would be "hollow" or "insincere" (Austin, 1975, p.16).

It appears in discussion about public apologies that these final two conditions are applied, for example Jeffries (2007) reports media discussion about whether Blair's apology was sincere. It is not clear however that these conditions can or should be applied to apology. Austin (1975, p.84) noted that "Purely polite conventional ritual phrases [...] [are] not called upon to be sincere". As previously noted, Brown and Levinson (1987) described apology as a ritualistic aspect of politeness. Furthermore, as I will describe in chapter 3, studies of the linguistic form for apologies have found a limited range of forms are available for apologising, suggesting that this act may be ritualised, and these last criteria perhaps less applicable to apology than popular opinion suggests.

It is difficult to apply speech act conditions for sincerity to public apologies which are uttered on behalf of organisations or institutions. Tavuchis (1991, p.43) describes organisations as "sociopathic", incapable of emotions (although people may ascribe emotions to them as a collective of people). Austin's condition states that it applies

where a procedure 'is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings'. It is unclear how this would apply to an organisation which is incapable of feelings - should the person having those thoughts and feelings be the individual making the utterance on behalf of the organisation, or should it be every individual who is part of the collective organisation? This is further complicated by the discussion above about the multiplicity of individuals involved in the production of an apology such as Tony Blair's - is he alone required to be sincere in his apology, or also his speechwriter(s), lawyer(s), political adviser(s) and other(s) who participated in the drafting? I will return to the question of sincerity in public apologies, using data from my corpus of police apologies, in chapter 7.

Public apologies are described as analogous to private apologies, for example: "Public apologies are one of the most prominent examples of migration of a speech act from the private to the public sphere" (Ancarno, 2011, p.38). However, the difficulty in applying the third group of Austin's speech act conditions to public apology, understood as the question of sincerity, is one reason why researchers have questioned whether in fact public apologies should be considered a separate speech act to private apologies (e.g. Tavuchis, 1991; Howard-Hassman and Gibney, 2008). As discussed in section 2.4, there can be a constellation of individuals involved as 'speaker' and 'hearer' when it comes to a public apology; these may affect the reliable transfer of conditions A.1 and A.2 from the private to the public sphere. If the paradigm form of apology is binary (Tavuchis, 1991) or between intimates (Lakoff, 2003), public apologies are far from the paradigm. My analysis of apologetic language in a particular context of police apologies will suggest that the category of the speech act of 'apology' needs to be reconsidered, not only however to differentiate between public and private, but also for the possibility that different concepts of apology construct different acts related to apology (see chapter 3 for a discussion of concepts of apology and chapter 6 for their realisation in my data).

2.6 Methodological approach for this thesis

Politeness research, and particularly the study of politeness in institutions or between cultures, is multidisciplinary. Researchers in the field have suggested the need for insights from disciplines such as social psychology, sociology, anthropology and management studies (e.g. Arundale (2010); Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009)). In terms of linguistic disciplines, Harris (2010) defines politeness research as primarily drawing on the fields of pragmatics and sociolinguistics. This thesis is therefore also multidisciplinary, incorporating in the foregoing chapter literature from psychology and sociology. This thesis is specifically situated within linguistics, marrying insights from pragmatics research into apologies and politeness with in particular work on

language and the law, and criminological and sociological material about policing. The value of this approach is that I am able to shed light from other disciplines on areas where there is perhaps relatively little material from a linguistics perspective, for example in section 5.3.1 I take two existing studies which look at police politeness and expand their findings through consideration of the current dominant sociological theory, Procedural Justice Theory, as to how the police interact.

Researchers from the discursive turn in politeness research (see section 2.2) are further calling not only for multidisciplinary approaches but "multimethod" work, to gather different types of empirical material for analysis using a variety of tools (e.g.Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (2006, p.25)). This relates to concerns, discussed in section 2.2 above, that early discursive politeness research allowed limited types of data and few analytic tools to be used, inhibiting both the insights that may be gained about politeness and the scope of human interaction that may be investigated (see e.g. Haugh (2007)). More recently therefore, researchers have turned to a wider range of data including corpora based studies (e.g. Terkourafi (2005); Culpeper (2010)). One particular model for research is mixing analysis of primary data of an interaction with secondary data providing participant perspectives or the ethnographic context (e.g. Spencer-Oatey (2013); Chang and Haugh (2011)); this approach enables the interaction to be considered with reference to participants' perspectives on the culture and context in which they are interacting. This thesis follows this model, providing an analysis of a corpus of primary data grounded in an understanding, informed by focus group recordings, of the cultural context of the police participants. In order to analyse the primary data I have followed Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based model, looking for regularities in the linguistic formulae used around apologising as those relate to particular aspects of the social context; my use of this framework is set out in further detail below. As noted above, the value of Terkourafi's frame-based model is that it enables me to comment on the linguistic constructions regularly used in relation to politeness, in this case in relation to apologies, at a level of a culture, in this case the police (where early discursive approaches are more likely to operate at the level of how politeness is negotiated in a particular interaction). This thesis therefore sits with the body of linguistic research into politeness which is attempting to develop the discursive approach to politeness with exploration of what 'evaluation' may mean and how politeness evaluations from different participants may be researched.

The first stage in my analysis is to describe the production and participation framework of the letters which comprise my dataset (chapter 5), giving particular consideration to the participation status of writers and readers, the interactants most similar to speakers and hearers for my written data. Kádár and Haugh (2013) state that politeness needs to be considered not as an absolute, 'what is polite?', but in specific

reference to people, times and situations, 'what is polite to whom?' for example. My analysis of the production of the letters helps identify which interactants may provide an emic police understanding of politeness, and how there may be different understandings of politeness within the police. Terkourafi (2005) defines the constituents of the frame as the speaker, hearer (for my written data, writers and readers), their relationship and the interactional setting. My initial analysis of the production of the texts provides a detailed understanding therefore of these aspects of frame, both as they apply generally to the corpus of data and aspects that may vary between letters; this supports the later identification of which aspects of the frame regularly co-vary with linguistic form.

The second stage in my analysis is to focus on the text. This accords with both Terkourafi's (2005) data-driven approach and also, as discussed in section 2.3, the importance of the text as well as the reader and writer to the construction of meaning. I start by identifying if explicit expressions of apology appear in my data and then describing variation in their linguistic form; I compare my findings of how the police construct apology language in my particular dataset with previous studies of English language apology (I will describe such studies in chapter 3). I then consider whether particular linguistic forms regularly co-occur with particular contextual frames. I relate the patterns of linguistic usage by the police writers to my analysis of the texts' production, to consider how the institutional context shapes an understanding of what is polite.

The question of what is polite in relation to apology corresponds with the question of what an apology is. Brown and Levinson (1987, p.235) described the "ritual formulae" of conventionalised routines such as apologies as being a core part of how social groups construct their notions of what politeness is. To apologise when apology is required is to be polite; a contested apology, perhaps an apology that is not considered 'real' or 'sincere' when an apology is desired, is impolite.

An important concern of discursive researchers is the view of politeness not as inherent in any particular linguistic formulae, but struggled over by participants in interaction. Discursive research therefore focuses on the reactions of hearers, looking for example at where a particular utterance is contested as impolite. Terkourafi (2005) uses the reactions of hearers as evidence that a regularity in linguistic form and frame is deemed polite, taking note of silence, or where an utterance is uncontested, as much as explicit acceptance or negative evaluation. Written language may appear to exclude such consideration - there are no immediate hearers to contest or accept an utterance. This does not mean however that evaluation does not take place. Whilst not explicitly addressing these issues in relation to a written text, Davies (2011, p.199) notes the effect of working with planned (written) speeches rather than spon-

taneous speech, in that they are "*more* amenable to analysis as they should represent what their authors considered to be the best choice in that particular circumstance." (original emphasis). Kádár and Bax (2013) similarly comment on the value of written language, emails, to identify ritual due to the authors' opportunity to edit. My analysis of the production of my dataset finds evidence that evaluation is built into the institutional production of the texts. Where therefore there is repeated use in these letters of particular linguistic forms in particular contexts this is deemed polite by those producing the texts - forms deemed impolite could have been re-negotiated, and removed, during the writing. There are of course separate questions about how people outside the production of the letters, from different cultural and institutional contexts, might evaluate the politeness of the letters but my focus in this thesis is on the emic, police, understanding of politeness (as a counter-balance to previous studies which have considered cultural outsider, e.g. media, evaluations of institutional apologies).

My background is in public policy, including policy around the handling of police complaints. I began this thesis with examples of apologies in a police complaints contexts because it was the policy problems around apologies in this context which first brought me to this linguistics research and on which basis this thesis was funded. A further aspect of this thesis is therefore its awareness of the policy context; I intend this thesis to contain material relevant to both policy and research, among those interested in both the police and apologies.

2.7 Conclusion

Brown and Levinson, while not the only research published on politeness in the 1970s, opened up the realm of politeness research. While their research has never lacked critique, it is only relatively recently that it has been fundamentally challenged by discursive approaches to politeness research. Discursive approaches use naturally occurring data in order to examine politeness as it is negotiated, over stretches of talk, and looks for evaluations of politeness in hearer reactions. While these attributes of discursive research may appear to exclude its application to written language, in fact there are similarities between understandings of written language and developments in approaches to discursive research advocated by Terkourafi (2005) and Kádár and Haugh (2013).

Discursive politeness research into apologies has considered the phenomenon of public apologies. While the public apology may appear to be simply the private speech act moved into the public sphere, consideration of the range of participants involved in speaking and hearing a public apology suggest that there may be more funda-

mental differences between these acts and how they may be successfully achieved. My methodological approach, in common with more recent discursive work on politeness, is a multimethod approach, using focus group material to gain additional insights into participants' perspectives to supplement my linguistic analysis of primary data, in this instance using Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based model. This model enables consideration of the linguistic form of a corpus of public apologies, plotting the empirical norms of repeated language use, which I will use to consider the similarities between these police apologies and previous studies of both interpersonal and public apologies, suggesting that there may be more than one speech act relating to the concept of apology.

3. Apology and linguistic form

In this chapter I describe previous findings about the linguistic form of apology in English. I will draw on the research summarised in this chapter to identify relevant aspects of the linguistic form of apology for analysis.

Linguistic realisations of apology have been primarily researched within a Brown and Levinson paradigm, including a large group of studies under the aegis of the 'Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns' (CCSARP) (such as those in the volume introduced by Blum-Kulka et al., 1989b). These studies consider how different languages produce various speech acts. Researchers have also drawn attention to the idea that politeness might vary within a language, for example Mills and Kádár (2011, p.30) consider regional variation in politeness norms across the UK, with specific reference to their ongoing work on Yorkshire politeness, describing for example that in Yorkshire speaking bluntly might be viewed as a matter of pride, but in some other areas might be considered impolite. Culpeper defines the existence of specific politeness cultures: "social groups who share similar politeness attitudes, that is, they share a politeness ideology." (Linguistic Politeness Research Group, 2011b, p.3). Part of the work of this thesis is to consider whether and how Scottish police linguistic norms for politeness differ from those found elsewhere for the English language, with the potential that they constitute a specific politeness culture. In this chapter I will therefore set out previous research on linguistic form of apology in English, to provide a basis for comparison.

3.1 Linguistic forms of apology in English

Blum-Kulka et al. (1989b) describe two mechanisms for apologising: an explicit apology (an Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID) involving a formulaic expression such as *(be) sorry, apologise* - see section 3.1.1 for a description and discussion of IFIDs); or an expression containing particular semantic content required to apologise. Four semantic categories of apology have been identified, giving overall five linguistic forms of apology:

- "1. An expression of an apology

- 2. An explanation or account of the situation
- 3. An acknowledgment of responsibility
- 4. An offer of repair
- 5. A promise of forbearance" (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983, p.22).

These five strategies form the basis for previous empirical studies of apology language in English, although often with some variation, for example Holmes (1990) included the 'offer of repair' as part of an 'acknowledgement of responsibility', while Suszczyńska (1999, p.1056) added an expression of "concern for the hearer" (Blum-Kulka et al. (1989a) describe an expression of 'concern for the hearer' as an intensifier, rather than a separate apology strategy). Olshtain and Cohen (1983) included in their discussion of apologies those situations where a person rejects the need to apologise, suggesting additional strategies for these situations: a person might not react at all to a request for apology, deny the need to apologise or deny responsibility for the act to be apologised for.

Of the five linguistic strategies of apology specified above, the most common in English is the explicit expression of apology or IFID (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (Meier, 1998). Holmes (1990) considered a corpus of New Zealand English apologies, collected through self-reporting; in her study 88.3% of apologies contained an explicit expression of apology, either alone or in combination with other strategies. The explicit expression of apology was the only strategy in Holmes' study that could regularly appear alone, although there were four (out of 183) examples where an 'explanation' was used in isolation. Holmes' findings may however be affected by the mode of data collection; explicit expressions of apology may have been more readily identified, and therefore reported, by her participants. Nevertheless, studies of apology language in English often focus on variation in the 'expression of apology'. This may relate to descriptions of the importance of the IFID; for example Olshtain (1989, p.167) states that by uttering an 'expression of apology' or IFID "the speaker accepts the need to apologize and assumes the cost to do so." while Vollmer and Olshtain (1989, p.207) find that "the most explicit realization of an apology, in any language, is clearly effected through the use of an IFID." Both from the volume of explicit apology expressions in apology and such descriptions of IFIDs, there appears to be a strong association made between explicit apology language and the act of apologising; IFIDs will therefore be discussed specifically in section 3.1.1 below.

Production studies have identified patterns of usage for the categories of apology strategies in English. Holmes (1990) found that an 'expression of apology' alone was presented after minor incidents, but more serious problems resulted in an utterance

combining strategies, most commonly an 'expression of apology' and an 'explanation'. She described 'promise of forbearance' as the highest ranked strategy, used to apologise for the most serious problems. Suszczyńska (1999) found a relative lack of strategies categorised as 'an acknowledgement of responsibility' in English (compared to Polish and Hungarian), although she argued this aspect of apology was implicit in other strategies used in her English language data. Olshtain and Cohen (1983) suggest that only the expression of an apology and the acknowledgement of responsibility are always available to the apologiser, the other three strategies are only possible in particular situations: the 'offer of repair' for example may be used where there is physical or other damage which has the potential to be fixed or reimbursed. They describe a situation of apologising for taking the wrong umbrella as one where native speakers would not consider an explanation possible or necessary, although non-native speakers of English often proffered an explanation.

The patterns attested in production studies do not necessarily correspond with findings about hearer evaluations. Jansen and Janssen (2010) conducted an experimental perception study by constructing letters with varying numbers of politeness strategies, and asking participants to rate their satisfaction with the overall letters. Although the letters were not specifically testing apology strategies (and did not include explicit apology language) the politeness strategies used (explanation, concern for the reader) and the overall context of the letters (rejecting the reader's insurance claim) are relevant to the study of apologies. Jansen and Janssen (2010) found that a greater number of politeness strategies did not improve the reader's rating of the letters: more politeness strategies are not necessarily understood to be more polite. This finding about how politeness is understood contrasts with, for example, one of Holmes' (1990) findings about the production of apology strategies; Holmes recorded that speakers were using increasing numbers of apology strategies in situations where they were trying to increase the politeness of an apology (whereas Jansen and Janssen's (2010) study suggests that the use of more apology strategies would not necessarily be understood as increasing politeness). There are also however areas where production and perception studies are more similar. Jansen and Janssen (2010) found that giving reasons was the most effective strategy for increasing readers' positive perceptions of the letters, corresponding with the relatively high production of 'explanations' in Holmes' (1990) study.

3.1.1 Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs)

Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) show "how the proposition is to be taken, or to put it another way, what illocutionary force the utterance is to have" (Searle, 1969, p.30). In general (across all speech acts), Searle (1969, p.30) states that

IFIDs can include for example word order, stress, mood and "the so-called performative verbs". In apology research, IFID has been used to refer to conventionalised expressions of apology (not only performative verbs, but also *sorry*) (e.g. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Salgado, 2011).

Researchers have commented on the restricted range (e.g. Aijmer, 1995), or "limited repertoire of routine formulae" for apologising in English (Deutschmann, 2003, p.36). Olshtain and Cohen (1983, p.22) define three categories of apology IFID:

- "a. An expression of regret, e.g., 'I'm sorry.'
- b. An offer of apology, e.g., 'I apologize.'
- c. A request for forgiveness, e.g., 'Excuse me', 'Please forgive me', or 'Pardon me.'"

The limited set of explicit apology expressions in English may mean that these linguistic forms are easily, perhaps overly, associated with the act of apologising. Aijmer (1995) suggests that earlier findings that women are more likely to apologise than men relate to classification of *sorry* as being used to apologise when it was being used in fact with an alternative illocutionary force.

The English linguistic forms able to carry the apology IFID function differ slightly between studies. Blum-Kulka et al. (1989a, p.290) identify seven possible forms: *sorry, excuse, apologise, forgive, pardon, regret, afraid*; this list is described as the "hierarchy" of apology forms in English. Olshtain and Cohen (1983, p.22) do not include the final two forms *regret* and *afraid* as "apology verbs", a decision Deutschmann (2003) explains with regard to *afraid* as because this can function, as with the adverb *regrettably*, to express an attitude toward a situation rather than an apology. No explanation is suggested however for Olshtain and Cohen's omission of *regret*; in chapter 6 I will discuss the explicit apology expressions present in my corpus of police letters, which include the form *regret*.

Expressions of explicit apology language have been described in terms of a cline where "at one end, apologies border and gradually merge into expressions of sympathy" (Coulmas, 1981, p.76). Vollmer and Olshtain (1989, p.198) suggest a range "from truly sincere expressions of regret on the apologizer's part, which would make a 'strong' apology to a mere expression of sympathy for the apologizee"; at the strong end of the spectrum are the "more sincere/genuine performative verbs". While Searle (1969) identified *apologise* as an English verb capable of marking an illocutionary act, he also noted that performative verbs are not unambiguous, with *promise* capable not only of promising, but also undertaking other acts such as threatening (as in 'I

promise you'll be sorry').

Overwhelmingly, *sorry* has been claimed to be the most common form of apology in English (e.g. Aijmer, 1995; Olshtain and Cohen, 1983; Meier, 1998; Deutschmann, 2003). However, it has also been suggested that the choice of IFID might vary in particular speech settings: "only in very formal speech events would one prefer to use expressions like 'I request...' or 'I apologize...' as opposed to expressions like 'Please give me...' or 'I'm sorry...'." (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983, p.19). In chapter 6 I will describe IFID selection by Scottish police writing to people who have made complaints about the police, and consider what aspects of this specific context motivate the particular patterns of explicit expressions of apology found in my data.

3.1.2 The sequence of apologies

Apologies have been described as the second in a three-part sequence comprising offence, apology, response (Coulmas, 1981; Robinson, 2004). While this is described as the typical sequence Coulmas (1981, p.78) also notes that "Not infrequently we make apologies that do not call for any reaction at all." Robinson (2004) describes a particular example of a two part apology sequence, where the first part of the sequence is a complaint and the second an apology, without this conditioning a response. These descriptions of the sequence of apology as normally but not always being followed by a response present a challenge to discursive approaches to apology which rely on the evaluation of the recipient, and would only deem an apology to have taken place where the recipient accepts it as such (although see discussion in section 2.6 of Terkourafi's (2005) contention that silence should be taken as an evaluation that an utterance was polite, in that it was not contested).

There are also descriptions of apology as the second in a sequence, in terms of it being a reaction to previous, if not always verbal, acts (Coulmas, 1981); apologising is often described as following "some kind of offence or violation of social norms" (Spencer-Oatey, 2000b, p.18). Lazare (2004, p.75) implies that an apology cannot exist without an offence, because acknowledging the offence is integral to apologising, without which "the apology process cannot even begin." Studies of apologising which consider how apology language varies in relation to different types of offences (e.g. Holmes, 1990; Deutschmann, 2003) assume through the model of analysis that an apology is related to offence. Olshtain and Cohen (1983, p.20) do not tie the act of apologising as intrinsically to an offence as Lazare, instead stating that "only if the person who caused the infraction perceives him/herself as an apologizer do we get the act of apologizing." However, here again there is reference to something that precedes the act of apologising, in this case an "infraction". There appears therefore

to be a strong claim in existing literature for a relationship between an apology and an 'offence', a breach of social norms, although Hatipoğlu (2004) does raise the possibility that apology in British English includes the situation where nothing has been done wrong. In chapter 6 I will discuss the appearance in my corpus of police use of explicit apology expressions where there is not sufficient evidence to substantiate a claim that the police have committed an 'offence'.

3.2 Varying concepts of apology

The idea that an apology follows an 'offence' or wrongdoing accords with one key concept of what an apology is: an action to "set things right" (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983, p.20). An apology can be described as making a payment for the offence, with the act depicted in financial terms, such as "a transaction in which the balance-sheet recording the ups and downs in the relationship [...] is equalled" (Aijmer, 1995, p.59) or "In the commercial world, costs lead to debts if the bills are not paid. In the world of social interaction, there is also a sense of indebtedness and a need for book balancing." (Spencer-Oatey, 2000b, p.36). Duff (2004) describes apology as functioning in a communicative system of punishment as the moral realisation of (financial) reparations. Not all descriptions of apology are in such explicitly financial terms, but still reflect the idea that apology's function is to restore what has gone wrong: "The speech act of apologizing [...] aims to restore equilibrium between speaker and hearer" (Vollmer and Olshtain, 1989, p.197).

The functions of apology do not necessarily only relate to the particular interactants. In Davies et al.'s (2007) study, students used apologising as a site for identity construction, showing that they knew certain behaviours were expected of a 'good student' by apologising for behaviours which did not suit that identity. Tavuchis (1991, p.128n) also describes how apologising can be used to affirm the position of the apologiser as a member of society: "To apologize is thus to conform to a rule stating that, under certain conditions, an apology is in order". The apology demonstrates that the individual understands a society's conventions around how to behave and is committing to those conventions by apologising for a breach. Brown and Levinson (1987, p.238) use the financial image in "An apology is a debt that must be paid and cannot simply be annulled by a generous creditor"; the idea that the apology debt cannot be cancelled by the apologisee suggests that the apology payment is required by society, not only by the individual subject to the offence.

Some concepts of apology do not require an offence, and focus instead on the role of an apology in acknowledging the victim. Duff (2001, p.94) explicitly rules out the presence of an offence in some cases, describing apologies which:

> "do not always presuppose wrongdoing. I may apologize to another for some harm that I inadvertently and nonculpably, or intentionally but justifiably, did to her. Such apologies express my regretful recognition of the harm she suffered at my hands, and thus also of the claims she has on my concern and respect."

In Duff's example there is harm, but not fault; the apology acknowledges the experience but not an offence. Govier and Verwoerd (2002, p.140) state that this is the effect of apology that makes public apologies valuable: "The power and importance of apology lie in its potential to offer to victims a *moral recognition or acknowledgement* of their human worth and dignity." (original emphasis). Verdeja (2010) similarly describes the most important function of public apologies being the public affirmation of victims. There is therefore for public apologies in particular an alternative concept of apology to validate the victim without necessarily the presence of, or accepting responsibility for, a wrong. In chapter 2 I noted that studies of public apologies have questioned whether these must be considered a separate speech act from an interpersonal apology (e.g. Jeffries, 2007; Tavuchis, 1991). It may be that speech acts of public and interpersonal apology are distinguished by function, where one seeks mainly to acknowledge the victim and another to make payment for a wrong. If public and interpersonal apology are distinguished by function, they may also be distinguished by form, displaying perhaps different regularities in the use of IFIDs or semantic apology strategies.

In this chapter I have reviewed work on the linguistic form of apology. This provides a grounding for a data-driven approach to analysing apology in Scottish police letters, a description of linguistic strategies for apologising which may be identified in my corpus, and a basis for comparison between my police data and previous evidence of how people apologise in English. I have concluded this chapter by considering varying concepts of apology. The idea that an apology is payment for a previous offence, an idea which follows linguistic findings around for example the sequence of apology, is not the only concept of apology, and appears perhaps not well suited to public apologies in particular. It may be that through understanding more about the linguistic form of public apology that varying concepts of apology may be disambiguated. After presenting my linguistic findings of regularities in the police use of apology expressions, I will suggest that these regularities differentiate two particular acts related to apology: a payment (using apology language) where there is evidence of a failing and a validation (using apology language) of the recipient's experience.

4. Data collection

The motivation for this research, as explained in chapter 1, is to develop understanding about an area of language which had been identified as problematic in public life and about which little is known: police use of apology language. In this chapter I will present the data I collected for analysis to address this aim.

The primary data collected for this thesis comprises letters written by the Scottish police to members of the public in response to complaints. I will first introduce the Scottish police complaints context, leaving more detailed presentation of this context through a description of the readers and writers for chapter 5. I will then describe the data I have collected and discuss why this data was suitable for my particular research aims. Finally, I will present the institutional procedures necessary to collect the data and consider ethical issues, primarily those of data protection.

4.1 The Scottish police and police complaints context

Scotland is covered by a single Police Service of Scotland, styled Police Scotland. The single force became operational on 1 April 2013, set up by the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012. The data for this thesis was collected in 2011; at that time Scotland was served by eight geographical police organisations or 'legacy forces' (see map at figure 4.1), defined by the Police (Scotland) Act 1967 as:

- Central Scotland Police
- Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary
- Fife Constabulary
- Grampian Police
- Lothian and Borders Police
- Northern Constabulary
- Strathclyde Police
- Tayside Police.

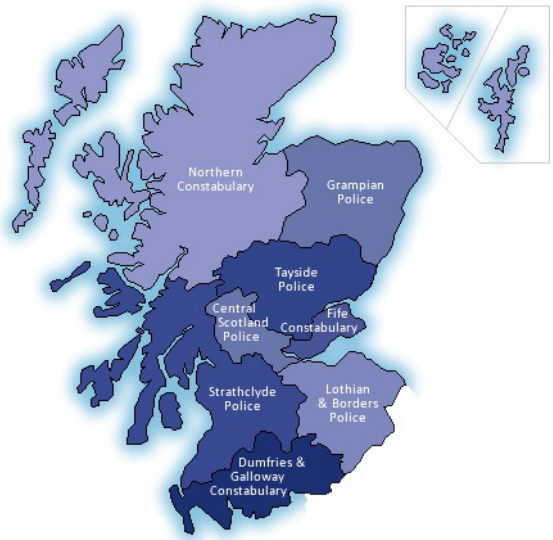

Figure 4.1: The eight former Scottish police forces

Further policing functions are provided in Scotland by organisations such as the British Transport Police or the Health and Safety Executive. There are approximately 17,000 police officers in Scotland (17,244 at 31 March 2014 (Official Statistics for Scotland, 2014)), making Police Scotland by number of officers the second largest police force in the UK (after the Metropolitan Police in England, which serves most of the Greater London area).

There is legislative provision for people to make complaints about the police in Scotland. A complaint is defined as "a written statement expressing dissatisfaction about an act or omission" (s.34(2), Police, Public Order and Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2006). The complaints system includes requirements for police in Scotland to record that a complaint has been made, to investigate its merit, to decide whether there are grounds for disciplinary procedures against individual officers and to maintain communication with the person who made the complaint, the complainer. Details of these procedures are set out in Police Scotland's Standard Operating Procedure for police complaints (Police Scotland, 2013a), and were previously set down individually by the legacy forces. Police complaints fall within the Professional Standards area of policing. In 2007 an independent organisation was set up to have oversight of the police complaints system in Scotland - the Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland (PCCS); in 2013, after data collection, this became the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner for Scotland (PIRC). The Commissioner's position includes conducting Complaint Handling Reviews, where a complainer may appeal to the Commissioner for consideration of whether his or her complaint was managed satisfactorily, and producing statutory guidance for the handling of police complaints. The first Statutory Guidance for Police Complaints in Scotland, *From sanctions to so-*

lutions, was published in March 2011 (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2011), with draft guidance opened to formal consultation in November 2010. During the data collection for this thesis, this guidance was therefore being developed and implemented.

One required element of the police complaints system in Scotland is communication of the final determination of a complaint to the complainer, normally in the form of a letter. For example, Central Scotland Police guidance from 2010 describes a final letter containing any decision about and action taken on the complaint (Central Scotland Police, 2010). The Statutory Guidance confirmed that a final letter should be provided to the complainer including clarification on the outcomes for all aspects of the complaint (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2011). A corpus of these final letters were collected for this thesis and comprise the primary data.

Before describing these letters, I will first here explain the context in terms of the possible determinations on complaints at the time of data collection; in chapter 6 I will discuss my empirical findings, which include a relationship between the different determinations and the police use of apology language. Complaint outcomes are collected for Scottish police complaints statistics under the following headings:

1. Resolved by explanation to complainer
2. Unsubstantiated by available evidence
3. Leading to no proceedings by procurator fiscal
4. Resulting in advice
5. Withdrawn by complainer
6. Resulting in misconduct procedures
7. Abandoned due to lack of co-operation of complainer
8. Leading to criminal proceedings
9. Leading to criminal convictions
   (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2013).

Before the 2011 Statutory Guidance, the determination of a complaint allegation was whether it was substantiated or not substantiated (although this is only explicitly referenced in category 2 above). This terminology frequently appears explicitly in the letters collected for this thesis. A determination of substantiated was defined as “any complaint allegation which led directly to a finding of guilt in criminal or conduct proceedings, or to the giving of corrective advice directly related to the original complaint" (PCCS, FOI Request). It should be noted however that PCCS did not

appear to have a public definition of substantiated; this definition was provided in a Freedom of Information Request and PCCS were unable to state what the source of this definition was. It appears that this definition predates the complaint system brought in under the PCCS as the definition is present in a 2004 review of the police complaints system in Scotland (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland, 2004). It is further not clear that the police complaints handlers were working from this definition - one letter (Ltr. 18) explicitly states that four allegations are substantiated and that a misconduct hearing will be convened, thereby making the judgment on the complaint before the outcome of the misconduct hearing is known. It is possible therefore that, despite the existence of a legislative framework, practitioners were working within an informal, community understanding of how to decide the final outcome of a complaint. It may seem surprising that PCCS did not have a definition of the decision for a complaint allegation. The 2011 Statutory Guidance changes the decision on a complaint to one of upheld or not upheld and includes a definition of the former.

There is similarly no public definition of “Unsubstantiated". As can be seen from the complaint allegation outcome categories above, this term is related to the available evidence about an allegation. In the corpus of letters for this thesis, a statement that a complaint is ’unsubstantiated’ is relatively rare, although what may be found is that the writer(s) states they are “unable to substantiate" or that “there is insufficient evidence to substantiate" the allegation (the term Not Substantiated is therefore used throughout this thesis). The Strathclyde Complaints Procedures state that the standard of proof to be used in relation to non-criminal complaint allegations is balance of probabilities; they provide examples of how this works in that if the complainer provides a version of events and the officers involved do not provide another then the complaint outcome will be in favour of the complainer, but if the officers provide a statement which “addresses the complaints" that this will have a different outcome (Strathclyde Police, 2008, p.52). There also does not readily appear to be a definition of the post 2011 outcome of “not upheld", although Fife’s complaint handling policy describes ‘not upheld’ as the “opposite" of the definition of upheld (Fife Constabulary, 2012, p.15). Not substantiated is therefore being understood in this thesis as a judgment that there is not a balance of available evidence in favour of the complaint allegation, and substantiated as a judgment that there is a balance of available evidence in favour of the complaint allegation.

The outcome “Resolved by explanation to the complainer" is somewhat different. This outcome relates to complaints at a lower level of seriousness, which are assessed as not requiring the full complaints inquiry process, where for example a statement of complaint is not necessarily taken from the complainer; in particular, this outcome does not include a decision as to whether complaint allegations are substantiated

or unsubstantiated (or now, whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld) (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2011). Other terminology, including "conciliation", may also be used by the police in relation to this type of complaint handling (Strathclyde Police, 2008, p.25). The 2011 Statutory Guidance states that this approach may include "a suitable response such as an explanation, apology or assurance." (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2011, p.11). Resolved is therefore being understood in this thesis as a way of handling complaints that is focused on explanation and which does not include an inquiry or a weighing up of the complainer's statement of events compared to the officer's statement of events leading to a judgment on the balance of probabilities.

Despite the lack of clarity about the precise definition of the complaint outcome, it can still be seen from the classification of outcomes that these relate to police misconduct and criminality and not, other perhaps than the 'Resolved' outcome, to the experience of the complainer. This contrasts with the new decision standard: "A decision to uphold a complaint is a judgement on the service provided to the complainer.' (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2011, p.28). The institutional framework of the complaints system at the time of data collection appears therefore to view the outcome of the complaint as related to the institution, in that outcomes are classified in relation to what happens to the police officer; there may however be a change in progress, whereby the structures of the complaint system is shifting to see complaint outcomes as relating to the experience of the complainer, as defined in the definition of the new standard for determining complaints.

4.2 The data

Two types of data were collected for this thesis. The primary data for this study comprises 58 letters written by the Scottish legacy forces (on average, seven per force). This corpus totals over 33,000 words, excluding letter headings (written and image) but including salutations. Individual letters varied in length from a few hundred words to several thousand. As previously noted, this is a relatively small corpus due to the practicalities of obtaining these letters from the police and the absence of previous research to suggest that a large corpus quantitative approach would be appropriate. The letters were received redacted (anonymised) by the police, ie with all personal, identifying information removed; data protection issues are discussed in section 4.4.2. Most of the letters were written in 2010 or the beginning of 2011 (I received the letters at the end of March 2011).

The secondary data for this study comprises two focus groups conducted with police writers of the type of letters collected for the primary data, carried out in Novem-

ber/December 2011. The focus groups lasted 145 minutes together, resulting in approximately 26,500 word transcripts. Excerpts of the data presented in this thesis are marked either 'L' for letter or 'F' for focus group.

4.2.1 The primary data: letters written by police in response to public complaints

The letters collected for this thesis are final responses written by the police to people who have made complaints about police incivility, or similar (non-criminal) matters. These letters are the final notification to complainers, explaining what enquiries have been made into their complaint and the decisions that have been made on the basis of those enquiries (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2011). These letters are therefore the police conclusion to the complaint, although they also contain details of appeal mechanisms if the complainer wishes to challenge aspects of the response. The reasons for collecting this particular type of data are presented in section 4.3.

The letters were signed by individuals from the legacy police forces in Scotland. Procedures for handling complaints varied across the different police organisations (as noted above, individual forces produced their own Standard Operating Procedures for handling complaints, although key aspects are uniformly governed by the legislation). Variation is visible in that, for example, the letters are signed by police officers with a range of ranks, from Sergeant to Deputy Chief Constable (DCC), and produced by differing parts of the police organisations, from local area commanders to specialised and centralised complaint handling officers in Professional Standards Departments. 'Police writers' will be used in this thesis to refer to the various police individuals involved in drafting these and similar letters. Names were normally redacted by the police before I received the letters and it is not therefore possible to provide more detail about the specific signatories.

Redaction by the police of the addressee's details similarly prevents any descriptions of characteristics of the complainer for consideration of e.g. recipient design effects (although see section 6.3.6 for a discussion of possible recipient design local to the police cultural context). Police complaints statistics for Scotland also do not provide information on complainers, preventing any description of the complainers as a group. Statistics on complainants from England and Wales show the typical complainant to be male, white and aged 40 to 49 (Independent Police Complaints Commission, 2012).

Some police forces had redacted the date of the letter. Where possible this information was requested from the police force. This was not possible for one force, but five

of the seven letters from that force were signed by an individual who took up the particular post in January 2010, on which basis these letters are believed to have been written between then and my receiving the data in March 2011. The vast majority of the letters (51 out of 58) are recorded as being written in 2010 or the beginning of 2011. A further five letters were written in 2009. The date of the final two letters is unknown but, based on the signatory and when he held the particular rank, are believed to have been written in 2009 or earlier. The dated letters were written at a time of transition for police complaints in Scotland, after the fundamental change in 2007 of establishing an independent oversight body (the Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland) but before this new organisation's oversight function could be realised in the publication and embedding of its Statutory Guidance. Since the time of data collection, further major changes have taken place with the creation of the single police force for Scotland in 2013, and changes to the powers, and name, of the Commissioner at the same time.

The police, and police complaints systems, tend towards continuous reform (Donnelly and Scott, 2005; Police Monitoring and Research Group, 1987). Any research undertaken into policing, or police complaints, will represent policing at a particular time, perhaps here particularly because there is a long term drive to change police cultural attitudes toward police complaints (described in the title of PCCS Statutory Guidance, *From sanctions to solutions*, and discussed further in chapter 5). Kádár and Haugh (2013) emphasise the nature of politeness as subject to the passage of time generally, even without such specific institutional developments, with things that were once considered polite becoming strange or even rude. The passing of time and reform to policing could therefore mean change to any police 'politeness culture'. It is likely therefore that repeating this research using the same type of letters but from different times would result in different findings. This is not necessarily a weakness of this research, rather it suggests diachronic comparison would be a valuable future direction. A useful comparison would be letters from before 2007, when oversight of police complaints fell within the remit of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) rather than an independent complaints body, to those written after the Statutory Guidance had embedded, probably after the creation of Police Scotland. Such a comparison would be able to specifically address questions of whether a police politeness culture had changed in relation to the desired police attitudinal shift with regard to complaints.

4.2.2 The secondary data: focus groups with police writers

In addition to building a corpus of letters written by the police in response to complaints, two focus groups were conducted with individuals from police forces who

are involved in writing such letters. The primary purpose of these focus groups was to collect information about the procedures and mechanisms forces had in place for producing these letters and around apologising (Bloor et al. (2001) describe focus groups as a mechanism to understand social context without the full resource commitment of ethnography). Much of this information is therefore used in chapter 5 to describe the writers and readers of the letters and aspects of how politeness is described in the institutional structures. This follows the approach of for example Spencer-Oatey (2013) of conducting secondly data collection to provide participant perspectives to enhance primary linguistic analysis of interactions.

Focus groups were conducted with two of the legacy forces in Scotland. Initial plans to conduct a focus group in all eight forces were abandoned for practical reasons, although, as there is no intention in this thesis to compare forces, this was not considered critical to data collection. Forces were asked to select individuals with experience of writing final letters to complainers, resulting in one focus group of three and one of four participants:

- Focus group 1, lasting 68 minutes, approximately 13,000 word transcript, participants A-C;
- Focus group 2, lasting 77 minutes, approximately 13,500 word transcript, participants D-G.

In both focus groups 'R' refers to contributions from me, the researcher.

These participants are a mix of police officers, and one member of police staff, from the specialist professional standards function and divisional operational officers with responsibility for locally handling complaints (including those who had moved between these two functions). A senior member of the professional standards function was present in both focus groups.

The two focus groups took place on police premises, at the force central Headquarters, facilitated and recorded by me. Focus group participants received a description of the research in advance, and signed consent forms agreeing to the recording of the focus groups and the use of their data in anonymised form (see appendix C). The focus groups took the form of semi-structured discussions, starting with general questions from me about the complaints process and context (including asking what the participants considered an apology to be) and ending with specific discussion of grouped examples of primary data (see appendix D for my prompt sheet and the data examples used). Focus groups were transcribed verbatim for content only.

Bugge and Jones (2007) describe the benefits and disadvantages of different methods of data collection, arguing that while collection of natural language may be valuable

as data of what happened, it does not provide insight into what people thought was happening, and that focus groups can provide this alternative perspective. Collecting the supplementary data of focus groups with police writers has also therefore enabled me to provide a counterpoint in the form of writer perceptions to my analysis of the letters, which addresses production: a contrast between the empirical norms and the moral norms. Focus groups with seven participants in total provide however only limited representation of the perceptions of Scottish police writers of complaints letters; this data cannot be considered authoritative data on the moral norms around politeness in this context. This small dataset functions rather as an indication of the value of this approach, neither focus groups nor often perceptions of the producers being common in politeness research to date, and is therefore considered supplementary data, rather than the main data for analysis.

Focus groups have also been described as a valuable site for analysis because they may make visible the construction of group norms (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999). This is less apparent in my data. In particular, talk was often directed at responding to my questions rather than participants jointly constructing and disputing ideas. This may be a result of the small size of both groups (Bloor et al. (2001) suggest larger groups encourage more group interaction). There was also an effect of police hierarchy - in both focus groups the most senior individual spoke the most (for example participant G, the most senior officer in the second focus group, made 111 contributions to the second focus group, compared to D's 75, E's 45 and F's 24). There was further an awareness in both groups of my presence, particularly the second group who explicitly commented on the recording during the group and raised a perception that my purpose was to judge their proficiency in English. This awareness of an outsider's presence may mean that the positions espoused by focus group participants are closer to ratified institutional lines, rather than to negotiating norms of the particular group in the room. While on the one hand this makes these focus groups, though with few participants, a reasonable reflection of police institutional attitudes, it does not make them a good site for considering for example how communities within the police institution construct politeness norms. Future research using focus groups to access police language norms should conduct not only more focus groups, but also bigger groups, and consider different arrangements for facilitating groups to change the effect of the researcher and manage the particular hierarchical context of policing.

4.3 Why this data?

The value of collecting the particular data for this thesis is that it manages disadvantages of two main data collection methodologies in politeness research. Earlier work in the field of linguistic politeness often used Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs),

which collect contrived rather than naturalistic data. The letters collected as primary data for this thesis are what was written by the police writers at the time; the only impact of the researcher is on personal details that were anonymised, and in only being able to obtain a sample of the letters which were actually sent (see discussion in section 4.2.2 on the researcher impact on the focus group material). Later discursive approaches which use naturalistic data may struggle to obtain quantities of specific, and perhaps rare, activities such as apologising. Discursive studies of apologies often therefore focus on single examples (e.g. Jeffries, 2007; Davies, 2011). The context of police complaints was chosen because public discussion and policy literature suggested apologies were relevant to the handling of complaints and therefore that this speech act might be present, and indeed I found examples of explicit apologetic language in this corpus (described in chapter 6). These explicit apology expressions were extracted and analysed for this thesis. Collecting letters written by the police in response to public complaints therefore allowed me to collect naturalistic and multiple examples of police apologetic language.

While this data contains multiple examples of explicit apology expressions, this is still a relatively low number (56) compared to previous studies (e.g. 174 for Holmes's (1990) self-reporting study). One advantage of collecting a specialist corpus however is that, having identified where explicit apology language often occurs in the letters, I am also able to consider where explicit apology language does not appear. My analysis includes therefore some consideration of absence as well as presence of explicit apology language, which is not always possible in other approaches.

The relatively small number of explicit apology expressions, and the additional instances of absence of apology language, forms a small set of data amenable to a frame-based analysis. As will be seen in chapter 6, even in this relatively small corpus there is (statistically significant) evidence of a co-regularity between linguistic form and contextual frame. Terkourafi (2005) suggested that rather than viewing differing approaches in politeness research as adversaries, they should be viewed as complementary, working at different levels of detail, from the global to the fine grained. My findings, as hers, fit in the middle ground offering the potential to draw conclusions about language form and politeness in a particular time and place, based on repeated use (as a contrast, consider Deutschmann (2003), working with a much larger set of naturalistic data from the British National Corpus and able therefore to present findings about overall use of apologetic language in English, but only able to consider the limited details of context available in that corpus and therefore unable to consider in depth how that variety related to specific local circumstances). Whilst my findings are specifically applicable to the particular domain of police complaints in Scotland, by detailing how the letters are produced and the cultural background to their production, I am able to suggest understandings of my findings based on a

close understanding of that context, allowing consideration therefore of how my findings may provide principles that can be applied more broadly. While a larger corpus would be preferable for further quantitative analysis (and in particular, I will discuss in chapter 6 how my corpus is not large enough to effectively consider multiple aspects of the contextual frame which may vary with variation in apology language), this must be balanced against the pressures of collecting data from the police institution, such as the need for police resources to redact the material before I received it.

The explicit apology expressions only comprise a small amount of the full corpus of letters, and the analysis in this thesis is therefore only of a small part of the corpus (although aspects of the letters as a whole, both in terms of their production and in using the information they provide about context, are referred to in order to carry out the analysis of the explicit apology expressions). There are many other linguistic aspects of these letters of potential interest to linguistics, and which arguably would have provided a greater volume of data for analysis. One potential area of interest is the move structure of the letters (Swales, 1990) (see section 6.1 for an outline of regular elements present in the letters). As noted at the beginning of this thesis, it is only possible and permitted to publish short extracts of data from the letters for ethical reasons (discussed further below), making any analysis which required larger sections of data problematic. Another area of police language that has been of interest to linguists is 'policespeak' or police register (Eades, 2010); policespeak was also an aspect of their own language spontaneously raised by focus group participants. An early study by Fox (1993), based on written police statements, suggested elements of policespeak could include frequent use of the passive, specificity of dates, times and places and formal, legalistic vocabulary. Again, this might be problematic given the ethical constraints of the data, e.g. the pre-redaction of dates, times and places. Moreover, I will discuss in chapter 6 some of the difficulties with the concept of 'formal' in relation to whether the police use of explicit apology expressions in this corpus is affected by the formality of the interaction. Focusing specifically on apologies allows me to discuss issues of formality and the legal institutional context of policing from a different angle, using the grounding of apology research. My findings are therefore still relevant to issues of policespeak, but also develop the understudied area of police apologies. More importantly, areas of language such as the passive voice are not as relevant as apologies to the police as a public service institution, to the police relationship with the public, and may be less able to develop understanding of police use of language as a public service (see chapter 5 for a discussion of competing pressures on the police to be an enforcement and a public service institution).

This thesis differs from many other apology studies by studying written language. This might be considered a disadvantage, in that it does not allow for consideration of evaluations of politeness, normally obtained by looking at recipient reactions,

which are a core element of the discursive approach to politeness research. However, as discussed in chapter 2, written language is not necessarily the same as spoken language, and evaluation may take place differently, and therefore be accessible to the researcher in different ways, than with spoken language. In chapter 5 I will describe the process of writing the letters, considering how evaluation may be part of the production of written language. This thesis therefore contributes to developing the methodology of discursive politeness research, by applying its principles to the relatively understudied area of written language.

This research has been situated, through the discussion in chapter 2, in the field of politeness research, and specifically in relation to considerations of 'public apology'. However, the contents of these letters, including any apology, addressed to a single individual, may not appear 'public' at first glance. They are nevertheless public in terms of the two criteria of public interest and accessibility suggested by Landert and Jucker (2010). The contents of the letters is a matter of public interest because the police are a public service, paid for by the public purse, and as such the public have an interest in what they are doing. The letters are also accessible to more than that single addressee. Copies of the letter will be retained on the institutional record (available to, for example, appeal investigations by other agencies as well as various police officers within the author organisation). Furthermore, the addressee may, and research into vicarious perceptions of police confidence (Rosenbaum et al., 2005) suggests will, discuss the contents of the letter with other 'members of the public', even perhaps passing the letter physically on for others to read. While the apology language in these letters may not be as obviously publicly accessible as an apology given with press in attendance, it is still accessible to a range of people beyond the particular addressee. Both in terms of being in the public interest and in being accessible to a broad audience, the apology language in these letters may be considered 'public', and the findings of this thesis therefore used to complement for example the fine grained studies of specific event public apologies, such as Jeffries' (2007) work, described in section 2.4.

4.4 Process and ethics

Collecting data from the police institution presented particular challenges in terms of negotiating institutional processes, and managing data protection and other ethical issues.

4.4.1 The process of data collection

The letters were collated for me by the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS), who formally endorsed this research project. ACPOS was the collective organisation of individuals holding ranks of Assistant Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable and Chief Constable in the eight Scottish legacy forces; it ceased to exist with the creation of Police Scotland. ACPOS' function was to develop policy on and provide a voice for Scottish policing. The initial approach was made through University of Edinburgh School of Law contacts, who contacted on my behalf the ACPOS professional standards lead (ie the police officer responsible for professional standards policy, including complaints, in Scotland).

An initial discussion with the professional standards lead clarified what was and was not possible from a police perspective. My professional experience in police complaints policy gave me an awareness of some of the key issues that would make particular types of data difficult to collect. It was hoped that it would be possible to have some face-to-face contact with individual complainers, either through the police contacting people who had made previous complaints or through accompanying (and recording) spoken interactions between the police and the complainers during the process of handling a complaint. Neither of these were considered possible given the resource constraints of the Scottish police service at the time of data collection. Further routes for accessing recipient reactions were eventually discarded in order to focus on an emic police understanding of apologising.

Following the initial conversation I drew up a research proposal requesting a small set of final letters (Appendix B), submitted to ACPOS in February 2011. Letters were requested for complaints relating to incivility or similar matters, in other words that were unlikely to involve ongoing criminal proceedings. Some letters contain allegations of other matters, and in some cases these had been submitted to the Procurator Fiscal for consideration of criminal allegations although none were proceeded with. This was not considered problematic; the request for letters responding to complaints of incivility was made on the basis that these were considered the easiest for police forces to provide, rather than for analytic purposes. However, a future research consideration may be whether different types of allegations about the police relate to differences in apology form. The letters were redacted by the police forces so that they did not involve security clearance for me, or resources made available for me to be on site. Permission was also requested to conduct focus groups in Scottish police forces with individuals involved in the writing of such letters. I received confirmation that the project had been endorsed by ACPOS on 25 February 2011 and that they would be supporting data collection as requested; I received the letters on 21 March 2011.

A concern about the data is that it is not clear what criteria was used by the individual police forces to select which particular letters I received, beyond the classification of complaint type. It is apparent that some forces selected the most recent letters to meet the complaint type criteria, but the longer spread of dates for some forces suggests this was not universal. There is a possibility therefore that police forces selected letters that they considered displayed particular characteristics, e.g. were perceived as 'good' letters, potentially skewing my analysis. However, the request from ACPOS to forces for collating the letters specified only that I was looking at "the use of language and the closure of the complaints". Therefore, whatever criteria different forces used to select the data, this does not necessarily skew the data in relation to the focus of my analysis on apology language. Although it would be preferable to know how precisely the police forces selected the letters used for analysis, I do not believe therefore that the process forces used to select the letters would affect the validity of my findings relating to apology.

4.4.2 Data protection

The letters were received from the police with most personal information redacted. I conducted an initial check, and removed some missed details to ensure anonymity. I further anonymised elements which I considered idiosyncratic enough to potentially make people identifiable. Because I carried out some of the anonymisation myself, on occasion I was aware of information which could not be published but which was relevant to, and therefore affected, my analysis. Throughout the research process, all original data was stored in encrypted form. This thesis, as with conference papers, contains only excerpts of data (as agreed with ACPOS); the full letters have been reproduced in a confidential annex for the examiners only.

I consulted the University Data Protection Officer and Records Management team early in the research process about my approach. Although the data analysed for this research does not meet the definition of personal (or sensitive personal) data under the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA), I decided to approach this data with the caution described because it refers to real individuals. All personal information was removed from these letters before they were received but the circumstances described in the letters are individual, and as such a person could potentially recognise themselves from the detail in a full letter or lengthy extract. Furthermore, much of that detail related to matters defined as sensitive personal data under the DPA, for example a complaint about whether someone had received appropriate medical care from the police might contain indications of medical information. Given these factors, I considered it good practice to work with this data on the basis of the above

safeguards.

There were also data protection issues in reference to the police participants. I anonymised names of the police signatories of the letters where this had not been done by the individual forces. The focus group discussions were transcribed anonymously, with names removed and individuals referred to only by position in the police. Some of these positions would only be occupied by one person in a particular police force, e.g. Head of Professional Standards Department, and therefore the two forces with whom focus groups were conducted have not been identified in this thesis. In addition, the complaints function of the two forces has been referred to as the Professional Standards Department, regardless of its precise designation in the particular force, to ensure that the particular terminology does not provide a means to identify the individuals.

4.4.3 Ethical issues

Beyond the core issue of data protection, there were two further main ethical considerations arising during this research.

First, I was concerned about the potential police attitude towards my research and how it could be used. MacCoun (2005, p.190) raises concerns about the failure of Procedural Justice Theory (see chapter 5) research to consider "the darker side of the fair process phenomenon"; that people might be manipulated by fair process to accept outcomes that are not fair. This criticism could also be raised about my research, that researching how police writers linguistically manage communicating decisions about complaints might allow the police writers to make unfair decisions, as long as they communicated this in a procedurally fair way. ACPOS was clear from the start that handling a complaint meant managing that complaint effectively, and doing what was needed to be done, as well as communicating with the complainer.

A second concern was how to obtain consent for participation in the focus groups when police officers are members of a 'disciplined service', e.g. hierarchically organised. Informed consent was requested from the individual police officers and staff involved. However, original permission to conduct focus groups was gained through ACPOS, and thus passed down the chain of command to the particular individuals who took part, selected by the individual police force. It is therefore impossible to deem participation to be entirely voluntary. I emphasised to the contacts arranging the focus groups the importance from my perspective of having participants who were confident as individuals in taking part. I anonymised all their contributions, and any individual details of cases, such that they cannot be identified from this research. Any material that had arisen during the focus groups that was sensitive would have

been discussed with that individual and extracted from the data, although this did not prove necessary. No officer expressed concern about participating nor expressed concern in relation to any particular area of questioning (some did express enthusiasm to take part). No area of questioning was approached that could be considered personal or in any way dangerous. This data collection therefore complies with ethics principles.

4.5 Who am I?

One advantage of analysing previously produced written language is that this is not affected by the researcher; the letters are as were authentically produced by the police (subject to effects of selection and anonymisation). The presence of the researcher during recording for example is not a relevant issue here other than in relation to the supplementary focus groups. There are however other issues about my impact as a researcher to reflect upon.

I have previously worked in policy around police complaints; then, as now, there were attempts to change police culture around handling complaints and apologising. I have described such matters where there are documented sources to support my own experiences, but it should be noted that this background has an impact on my analysis, for example affecting the explanations for police language use that I find compelling.

A further impact of my experience working with the police is that I have seen some of the challenges faced by the police and also some of their most serious mistakes and failures. I have striven in this research to be neutral in my attitude toward the police. This approach perhaps contrasts with some forensic linguistic studies which may start from the basis that the linguist's function is to uncover abuse of power through language, such that the main question to be asked of police use of language is "How can police officers ask questions in a way which presents a suspect in the most legally damaging light?" (Eades, 2010, p.11). Locher (2004) describes the use of power as not necessarily good or bad; I have tried to follow this in my research.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the data collected for this thesis, briefly outlined the police complaints context and discussed the particular procedural and ethical issues which arose in collecting this data. I also discussed the value of collecting this particular data, which offers the validity of naturally occurring apology language as well as multiple examples of explicit apology forms (a small absolute number, but amenable

to a frame-based analysis to identify empirical norms). In chapter 6 I will present my findings of a regular co-occurrence between syntactic variation in apology language and a particular local frame, that of the decision made on a complaint, relevant to my data. In order to understand this finding, I will first in chapter 5 describe the production of these letters, paying particular attention to the writers, readers and institutional context.

5. Writers, readers, institution

This chapter analyses the participants involved in the production and reception of the letters, written by the Scottish police in final response to public complaints, which form the primary data for this thesis. This chapter draws on documentation about the Scottish police and police complaints system, academic research about policing and police culture and focus group discussions with police writers of the type of letters collected as primary data.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a close understanding of the participation and production frameworks of these letters; this will enable questions to be asked about apologetic language in these letters which consider not only whether there is apology but who may be apologising to whom, and whose cultural norms of apologising are being described. This follows Kádár and Haugh's (2013) argument, discussed in chapter 2, that there may be multiple understandings of the politeness in one interaction, differing for example according to whether the perspective is culturally inside or outside. The analysis of the production of the letters will also identify whether and how evaluation takes place in their production, as evidence for the applicability of a frame-based model of analysis to written language.

I will begin with the writer, identifying who the police construct as the principal (in Goffman's (1981a) terminology: whose views the letters present) and then the multiple people involved in physically producing these letters. This section also considers who is the appropriate person to voice a police apology, in reference to Austin's (1975) conditions for speech acts. I then move on to consider the readers, focusing on two main participants: the addressee and the subject of the complaint. I describe the context of police complaints as constituting primarily an apology triad of writer(s), addressee and subject, and note the issues this may bring for the writer(s) in producing an apology that is polite for two main audiences. Finally I describe aspects of the institutional context relating to apologies: first, how politeness may be understood in Scottish policing following a dominant theory of police-public relationships and secondly, how the police complaints system describes apologising.

5.1 The writer

In chapter 2 I described Kádár and Haugh's (2013) approach to politeness, where analysis of the participation framework of an interaction enables closer consideration of the different understandings of politeness held by various participants to single interaction. I described complexity in the concepts of both 'hearer' and 'speaker' in a public apology, using Jeffries' (2007) analysis of an apology by former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair. In this chapter I will conduct a participation analysis of my primary data of letters written by the Scottish police in final response to public complaints, starting with their production.

5.1.1 The institutionally constructed writer

Both focus groups stated that letters written to people who had made a complaint about the police came from the police force, for example:

F 1 A: it's a complaint against an officer from the X(force)X so it's X(force)X you're responding on behalf of X(force)X (ll. 252-3);

F 2 G: it's from the force (l. 1157).

An officer in the second focus group went on to explain that the letter that went out, and specifically any apology in it, came from the force and not from any of the individuals involved in writing it:

F 3 F: All be it that the complainer will have had contact personal contact with the enquiry officer or the investigating officer during the course of the enquiry all be it there's a degree of autonomy with the final letter that goes out and the apology would be from the force as opposed to from the individual officer (ll. 1165-8).

Police officers involved in writing the types of letters forming the primary data for this thesis constructed the response and the apology as coming from the police force, not from any individuals involved in physically producing the letter.

In the police complaints context from the police perspective it is the collective institution, the police force, which holds the status of principal, ie "whose position is established by the words that are spoken" (Goffman, 1981a, p.144). This may be problematic for Austin's (1975, p.14) speech act conditions, which specify a conventional procedure involving the uttering of words by "certain persons", rather than institutional entities.

5.1.2 The physical writers

The writer may be constructed as the police force, an organisation, but physically there must be a human involved. Focus group participants, complaints procedures and the letters themselves suggest that more than one individual is involved in the writing of a single letter, not only in the sense that perhaps one person chose the words and another typed up the letters (the difference between Goffman's (1981a) animator and author for written language), but that multiple individuals were involved in the authorship, selection and evaluation of the language to go into the letters.

Focus group discussions suggested that the final letter was the product of two primary authors: one who drafted the letter and one who signed it off:

F 4 G: the divisional superintendent would often sign off be the author of the letter all be it in practical terms the person who has dealt with the enquiry often writes it (ll. 1109-10).

In the first focus group, speaker C described his own experience of writing letters where that sign off could be hands on even at a senior level:

F 5 C: working closely with the deputy chief constable who would have a say too because he would probably have the final say on letters (ll.39-40).

The signatory has an evaluative or quality control function in the writing, requesting changes in drafting before signing off individual letters:

F 6 E: They review all the work that's been done into that complaint they will review and then they will either sign off the letter or ask for amendments to be made or other work to be done so they basically they quality control the divisional complaints (ll. 1120-2).

This focus group also described the importance of the individual signing off the letter understanding each individual letter (see discussion around F38), as opposed to receiving a bundle of letters and using an electronic signature. The idea of an individual specifically signing off letters, asking for amendments where necessary or finalising a letter suggests that they are part reader, evaluating something that has already been written, and part author, contributing to the final letter that is sent out, and standing as its official signatory. The processes of reading and writing do not appear therefore entirely separate, and there is evidence of evaluation taking place before the letter is sent, as part of the authorisation and signing of the letter.

On a practical level, the rank of the person who signs off the letters denotes that this is a person with a senior management function, suggesting that their role in the production of the letters would involve evaluation of another's work rather than initial

Rank	**Approx % Scottish police (Oag, 2011)**	**No. of letters in corpus**
Constable	77	0
Sergeant	14	1
Inspector/ Chief Inspector	7	14
Superintendent/ Chief Superintendent	1	32
Assistant Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable, Chief Constable	< 1	8

Table 5.1: Scottish police ranks and letter signatories

drafting. Most of the letters in this corpus are signed by Superintendents or Inspectors and those from one particular force by the DCC (see table 5.1).[1] Superintendents and Chief Superintendents earn approximately £60-80,000 in Scotland (Police Scotland, 2013b); Chief Superintendent is the usual rank for divisional commanders who are responsible for one of the 14 areas of Police Scotland (e.g. Greater Glasgow, Fife). These are therefore senior individuals at a rank expected to provide leadership, not those at the level of direct service delivery nor even at a level of first line management (which would be Sergeants). The rank of the signatories therefore suggests that the letters are finalised at a level of management and review rather than first response. The instititutional rank of the signatories therefore confirms the focus group information that there is likely more than one physical writer involved, because the signatory is at a rank unlikely to be doing initial drafting, and suggests that the writing process will include evaluation, because the signatory is at a rank with a management and oversight function.

The authority for complaints handling, and therefore responsibility for the contents of the letter, is set down in legislation as resting with the Deputy Chief Constable (DCC) (as referenced in example F5), the second most senior individual in a police force (there are four DCCs for Police Scotland but only one of these, the designated deputy, holds the authority for complaints handling). The DCC may devolve this power within the force, as described by letter writers:

L 1 As Area Commander, I am authorised by the Deputy Chief Constable of X(force)X Police to supervise certain complaints against the police in this Force, made by members of the public, provided the complaint involves only misconduct issues and can be resolved at a local level. (Ltr. 1).

[1]Three letters do not have the rank of the signatory, although two of these designate them as from Divisional Commanders. This table reports who the letter states as its signatory, and not for example where it is signed “pp" on someone’s behalf.

Although the letter is conceived by the writers as coming from the force, this is enacted in the police context by responsibility for this function being allocated to the DCC, who may then devolve this responsibility to other individuals. The principal is thus the individual signatory who is authorised through police procedures to speak on behalf of the police force (although the signatory is also part of the author, in reviewing and selecting the final language used). Goffman (1981a, p.145) describes the principal as being less an individual and more a person representing a social identity (e.g. identifying themselves as the holder of a particular office or as having a place in a particular relationship), and therefore speaking as "'we' including more than the self" (although see 6.2.2 for discussion of the majority first person singular apology expressions in this corpus); the police institutional framework manages this in having a particular individual sign the letter on behalf of the police force.

There may be a conflict between the understanding of the police and the understanding of the public as to who is appropriate to apologise in a police complaints context. As noted above, a particular position in the police force is designated by law with responsibility for handling complaints, which may then be delegated to others on a day-to-day basis, including to sign final letters. Complaints handling generally and final letters specifically are described in guidance as a place for apology (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2011), and the examples in this corpus regularly contain apologetic language (see section 6.1). The responsibility for complaints handling appears therefore to include a responsibility for apologising in response to complaints. The presence of a legislative framework of responsibility for police complaints contrasts with some situations of public apologies, for example those for historical offences, where there are questions about whether a current Government is in a position to utter an apology for actions they were not responsible for (e.g. Verdeja, 2010). However, research into complainant satisfaction with the police complaints process suggests that complainants want the person they complained about to be the speaker (the principal at least, if not the animator) of any apology. May et al. (2007) found that most people who had made low level complaints against the police in England and Wales wanted as an outcome from the complaints process an apology. However, people who received an apology from the force (rather than the individual officer they had complained about) expressed dissatisfaction with that apology. Although the law assigns responsibility through the chain of command (and, as law, it is produced through Parliament and therefore through public representatives), this contrasts with the public perspective (as recipient to the apology) stated in such research, which seeks a response from an interactant with direct rather than symbolic (or delegated) responsibility. The conditions for the speech act of apology as understood within the police institution appear to differ from the conditions from other perspectives.

In contrast to public requests for a response from the individual offender, focus group participants saw value in the separation of the apologiser. They described part of the assurance to complainers that their complaints had been dealt with rigorously as being the distance of the complaints handlers from the officer complained about, because this ensured their independence and objectivity:

F 7 C: I think it's important for the unit and I can say this because I've seen I think it's important for the unit the independence of it to be to have that as B says that objectivity because sometimes they might see something going back and say not so sure that we've actually done enough here with this complainer (ll. 122-5).

The value of independence described by these particular focus group participants accords with overarching discussions about how police complaints systems should function, where the primary discussion (not just in Scotland but in other jurisdictions) is about having an independent service of investigators at a distance from the officers subject to complaint (Reiner, 2010). The second focus group discussed difficulties of having complaints resolved closer to where the incident occurred:

F 8 E: they are out there as a team sergeant you're there with your team [...] you've got this team working for you so so it's natural for you to defend them [...] so you might acknowledge that they could have done that better but really they were doing it for the right reasons [...]
D: Sergeants are generally very protective of their teams (ll. 1592-8, 1872).

The police writers understood separating the complaints handling from the individual complained about, and even the immediate line manager, as important to be fair to the complainer - the police understanding of who is the appropriate person to respond to a complaint appears therefore partly based on consideration of the recipient, as well as the legislative framework. These institutional considerations of independence mean that the officer complained about is very unlikely to be physically involved in producing the final letter (although they will be interviewed or give a statement on the complaint, thereby contributing to its production); no letter in this corpus was signed by the officer(s) complained about.

Specifically, there are restrictions in the complaints system on an apology being offered on behalf of the officer complained about, unless he consents. Focus group participants suggested that the police service could not require an individual to apologise through the complaints system, the officer had to agree to apologise:

F 9 A: I mean you could ask the officer are you willing to apologise in person to that individual and then we will do that (l. 549-550).

In England and Wales there has historically been an explicit requirement against an apology being given on behalf of the accused officer unless he consents to the apology

(Police Monitoring and Research Group, 1987). There are similar indications in the Scottish complaints system such as the requirement on an officer to agree to restorative justice approaches which would potentially include offering a personal apology, as well as to an officer subject to complaint offering an apology himself where he is "willing" to do so (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2011, p.35). A letter written by an independent person in final response to a complaint is unlikely therefore to offer an apology on behalf of the individual officer, unless that officer has expressed a willingness to provide this personal apology.

The focus group discussions suggested that the people involved in producing the final letter, e.g. an inquiry and/or investigating officer who might first write the letter and a separate individual who signs it off (see example F4 above), may also have been involved in communication with the complainer, and apologising to the complainer, before the final letter is produced. It appears that the final letter does not only itself involve several different authors, but it is part of a communicative process involving many people, for example:

F 10 D: I mean quite often they'll have had a verbal apology from the inquiry officer a second one from the investigating officer and then they'll get a third one in the final letter (ll. 1170-2).

Participant C similarly described the letter, and his evaluation of the contents of that letter, as reflecting previous work that has been done between the police complaints handlers and the complainer (ll. 814-9). In the second focus group, the letter was described as the formal record of the complaints handling process:

F 11 E: the letter itself is more a way of formalising what has probably already gone on verbally anyway [...] it also gives the complainer something physical in their hand which tells them where they now stand (ll. 1054-9).

Any apology which appears in the final letter therefore may be particularly oriented toward putting that apology on record, and perhaps less oriented toward the relationship between police and complainer, which may have been developed in the preceding interaction.

The people involved in the particular complaint inquiry are not necessarily the only people involved in its authorship, in evaluating and selecting the language that goes in the letter. Both focus groups suggested mechanisms by which writers could gain advice from other writers - one focus group referenced an intranet collection of letters deemed to be good examples, while the other suggested they worked with each other on particular letters:

F 12 B: we bounce a lot of ideas off each other in terms of the final letters going out to see whether we're hitting the mark that we want to hit in terms of language (ll. 22-3).

There appears therefore to be a specific, institutional evaluation function for the signatory but also evaluation processes within the community of letter writers, be that evaluation against previous examples or of the specific letter with colleagues. The final letter that is produced may appear therefore not only as the author(s)' "best choice" (Davies, 2011, p.199, discussed in section 2.6) but as the best choice of a community of writers. Example F12 also raises the possibility that colleagues within the police service will not only be writing these letters, but will also be potential readers.

The focus group writers discussed part of their individual evaluation of the letter as being to view it from the reader's perspective:

F 13 C: you've really got to try to put yourself in that position about if it's you or your family would they understand that or for example see would your mother understand it or something you know because I don't think my mother
B: If my mother got that letter (ll. 654-7).

This example suggests that part of the process of producing these letters is to evaluate them as from the perspective of a constructed reader, a member of the author's family. In section 5.2 I will further discuss how the reader may be being imagined in the production of these letters.

It is not only the authors within the police institution who may participate in both reading and writing, there are further individuals outside the police institution who will play a part in the production and reception of these letters. As described in chapter 1, the then Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland (PCCS) has recommended revisions to the final communication to complainers, including revision of the wording of apologies. Focus group participants suggested they were very aware of the work of the PCCS:

F 14 G: the PCCS will look very closely at what points we have covered in the letter to ensure that what we've provided is does cover all aspects (ll. 1066-7).

As well as PCCS seeking changes to the letters in specific instances, the focus group participants referred to PCCS stipulating particular elements of letters (e.g. the reference to the complainer's right to appeal to the PCCS) and general standards, such as the need for final letters to contain more detailed information:

F 15 A: because letters they've evolved over time since the PCCS have come into being I think it would be fair to say that all police forces have examined the content of final letters and are now far more expansive (ll. 76-8).

The PCCS therefore influences the selection of the language which goes in the letters both as part of the author, by explicitly instructing police as to the content of the letters and on occasion as to the linguistic form of an apology, and affects the production of the letters as one of the anticipated readers, making part of the evaluation of the letters during their production to consider how the PCCS would view its contents and expression.[2] One consequence of the involvement of the PCCS, as both author and reader, is that the production of the letters does not only reflect the 'best choice' of apology language from the police institution, it also reflects what the PCCS requires, and what the police authors construct the PCCS to require. Even though these letters are signed by police officers, and produced on their understanding that they come from the police force, in a sense they still do not entirely reflect an emic police perspective on apologising, because they incorporate understandings from external organisations.

The 'police' understanding of polite language to use in final letters can also not necessarily be constructed as a single view. The first focus group included a member of the Professional Standards Department who is police staff, not a police officer, and this was referenced as providing an alternative view on the letters:

F 16 A: that's where B's experience and different perspective obviously works with the police but not a police officer you know in terms of making you look at things differently (ll. 110-2).

The evaluations that take place during the production of the letters are not necessarily all from a homogenous 'police' institution, but can reflect different communities within the police (I will discuss further below the differences between a police culture and a police complaints handler culture).

In this section I have considered some of the various writers involved in producing these letters, drawing two main conclusions. Firstly, the principal for these police apologies is the police organisation, but this is achieved through a signatory, designated in law, to write on the police force's behalf. While this understanding is set out in law it does not necessarily accord with a public recipient's view of who is appropriate to carry out the speech act of apology in this context. There is the possibility therefore that the conditions for a speech act of police apology are different depending on whether they are seen from inside or outside the police organisation. Secondly, the author, the individual who selects the language which is used in the final letters, is not an individual but multiple people (and therefore 'writer(s)' will

[2] A further potential reader and contributor to the production of police complaints letters is the Procurator Fiscal (the prosecution service in Scotland). Allegations of criminality by police must be referred to the Procurator Fiscal (PF) but their functions have not been discussed in this thesis as these would normally come into play before the final letter, and not for the type of complaints, incivility, requested in my data collection.

be used in this thesis to refer to the multiple producers of a single letter). The signatory of the letter is required to have an evaluative function in the final letter and others, both within and outside the police institution, may be part of reflecting on the language to be used. By the time the final letter is sent therefore the language used will have been evaluated and what is printed includes the judgments of the police authors on what is polite, whether and how to apologise in this context.

5.2 The reader

The 'reader' may appear as the most likely written equivalent to 'hearer'; as with 'writer' however the reader of these letters is not necessarily one individual. In section 5.1 I identified people in the production process who participated in both reading and writing, such as the Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland (PCCS) but also the authors, engaged in evaluating their own and colleagues' work as it was being produced. These broader readers will not however be considered in detail here, for in this section I will focus on perhaps the two main readers of the letters. First, the addressee, in being the individual a letter is written to (marked by the letter's opening salutation), thereby receiving perhaps the written equivalent of the visual cues that denote Goffman's (1981a) addressee in spoken language. Secondly I will consider the subject of the complaint, the police officer whose actions may or may not be apologised for. This officer is a ratified participant (for example, some forces would give the officer a copy of the letter (Strathclyde Police, 2008)) but not directly addressed by the letter; their participation however appears crucial, for example in the paradigm sequencing of apology involving offence-apology-response (see section 3.1.2) this individual has been responsible for the first stage, the offence, in the sequence.

For both of these readers I will consider not only their participation in the interaction but how they may be imagined by the writer(s), following the discussion in section 2.3 about the dialogic nature of writing, of writers producing texts with readers in mind. One aspect of the study of writing in institutions is to consider how the social context of the particular institution may "generate and shape" the writing that is produced (Barton and Papen, 2010, p.9). Clark and Ivanič (1997, p.67-8) include "values, beliefs, constructions of reality, possible social roles and relationships" as just some of the aspects of the institution which may "condition the choices" made by writers; they offer the example of a writer in a healthcare setting producing language around heart surgery, being affected by the dominant beliefs of the British Medical Association, at the time of writing, about the ethics of heart surgery. In this section I identify some of the dominant beliefs in the police institutional context which may affect how the writer(s) perceives the different readers, and which may therefore shape the choices

they make in writing these letters and particularly in formulating apology language.

5.2.1 The addressee

The letters which form the data for this thesis are final letters to people who have made complaints about the police. As such they are normally addressed to the complainer (with particular exceptions, e.g. one referring to 'your client' during a letter is likely addressed to the lawyer of the person who made a complaint, discussed in section 6.3.4). This can be established from the content of the letters, which may begin with for example 'I write in response to your complaint about the police'. This person is perhaps the closest to the paradigm recipient of an apology, in that they are directly addressed and a person who perceives themself to have been offended against (in that they made a complaint).

In chapter 2 above I discussed with reference to written texts the presence of an imagined reader, constructed by the writer; in this institutional context the imagined reader is partly constructed by law. The Police, Public Order and Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2006, s.34, defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction from ''a member of the public" and excludes those from persons serving with the police. The addressee, as the person who made the complaint, is therefore defined in law to belong to a particular category, public, and not to another, police; to the police writer(s) this may also set up an opposition between the complainer as a member of the public, and other categories of individuals with whom the police interact, such as suspected criminals.

This categorisation may have particular consequences for the construction of the imagined reader in a policing context. Van Maanen (2005) suggested that the (US) police conceptualise non-police people in three groups. The first are the criminals (to be treated professionally, in accordance with the procedural requirements of the justice system); the second are the vast mass of the good and law-abiding public, ignorant of what the police do and lacking understanding of the pressures of policing. The last group are 'assholes' (Van Maanen, 2005, p.285), those individuals who challenge the police, and by doing so "profan[e] [...] the social and legal system itself" (similar perhaps to the description of an offence of "contempt of cop" in UK policing culture, where the "rude demeanour" or behaviour of a person toward the police may result in an arrest or other outcome (Reiner, 2010, p.161)). Given the legislative categorisation of the addressee, the addressee may be imagined by the police writer, using Van Maanen's descriptions, as good but ignorant, or an 'asshole'; if a complaint is viewed as challenging the police, the 'asshole' construction may be more likely. It is possible that constituting the addressee as an 'asshole' would affect how polite the writer(s)

wanted to be and how worthy they considered the addressee of an apology.

There were suggestions in the focus groups of a perception of the complainers as Van Maanen's middle category, as 'good but know nothings', for example:

F 17 G: it's major to the complainer because if they've had occasion to phone the police on the one occasion this year for the last ten years and they don't get a good service that's a big thing to them and it's a big thing in their life whereas to us it's maybe well that's another youth call [e.g. report of anti-social behaviour by young people] or it's another whatever (ll. 1922-6).

This focus group participant shows consideration for the point of view of the complainer but also differentiates it from the police perspective - specifically with police jargon (a "youth" call). In section 6.3.4 I will discuss an example from this corpus of letters where a complainer is described as 'goading' the police officer complained about, and which contains unusual apology language; that example may suggest that in the main, complainers are understood as 'good but know nothings', but particular individuals may be more like the 'assholes' (and the police writer(s) language changes to reflect that different construction of the addressee).

The definition of the complainer as a 'member of the public' does not however necessarily clearly distinguish them from the police. The British policing construct of 'policing by consent' defines the police not as an oppressive force against the public but as conducting policing with the community (e.g Donnelly and Scott, 2005; Reiner, 2010).[3] The distinctions between the police and the public become somewhat fuzzy, not necessarily separate but somehow different, as 'citizens in uniform', or on the edge as 'the thin blue line'. As a consequence, the police writer(s) may be constructing the addressee to be like themselves, as in example F13 above where the focus groups participants suggested imagining the reader as a member of their own family; the police writer(s) appears to be identifying with the public complainer to an extent. There are problems with the construction of 'policing by consent'; Waddington (1999) describes policing with the community as oxymoronic, in the sense that if policing is done with the entire community there would no longer be anyone left to police. The idea of the addressee-writer relationship being one of public-police may invoke ambiguous constructs of public-police identities.

[3]There is limited research looking specifically at Scottish, rather than British, policing and police identity. Donnelly and Scott (2005, p.4) describe Scottish police as being united with UK policing in sharing "an adherence to the guiding principle of 'policing by consent'", and the few attempts to define what is specifically Scottish about Scottish policing have highlighted the importance of policing by consent (Gorringe and Rosie, 2010; Dinsmor and Goldsmith, 2005). In the specific Scottish context of data collection for this thesis, it is possible therefore that the considerations of 'policing by consent' are yet more important to the police writers than British research would suggest.

The institutional context also defines the actions open to the addressee in the interaction, in that the addressee is not given the option to respond directly to the writer(s). The statutory guidance for complaints describes the final letter:

> "Notification to complainers - Communication is crucial to good complaint handling and final outcomes must be explained clearly and impartially, providing sufficient detail to explain how the facts have informed the conclusions. An apology should be provided where appropriate." (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2011, p.3)

This description of notification (in itself a term suggesting there is no scope for negotiation) references 'final outcomes' and 'conclusions'; including apology in the same description therefore implies that apology accompanies the outcome decision, to be notified but not discussed. Focus group participants understood the letters as an end in the complaints process, a matter of record rather than relationship, as in example F11 above or:

F 18 C: at the end of the day what we're trying to oversee is a function that means it's finished (l. 42).

This has implications for how the letters are constructed, for example:

F 19 C: I never liked putting a letter back to someone where you hadnae actually done if you're going to say that that you'll arrange local corrective measures that I would have preferred it to have been done (ll. 753-5).

The participant in this last example (F19) is discussing what action is being taken as a response to a complaint, arguing that letters should report what has been done, not what may be done in the future. This suggests a perception that the addressee is not in a position to negotiate over this action at this stage. Some letters do contain instructions for how the addressee should respond to the letter, but these included instructions for the addressee to contact someone other than the letter's signatory - for example a letter signed off by a Superintendent stating at the top "if telephoning" to ask for a particular Inspector. Some forces offered an initial review on a complaint decision, without going immediately to the PCCS, but this is usually directed to a different part of the force. The writer(s) does not appear therefore to view the addressee as someone they will be having ongoing contact with, and not someone therefore who is able to directly negotiate the terms of the letter, and the politeness of the apology. This contrasts with the discussion in chapter 3 of previous studies into apology defining the apology as the penultimate action in a sequence which ended with a response to the apology. Further, the addressee does not have a place in the institutional structure to express their evaluation of the letter to the writer(s) (in contrast to the writer(s), whose opportunities for evaluation were described in the previous section); the notion of hearer evaluation of apologies, often used as the

judgment of apology politeness by discursive researchers, is therefore problematic to apply to the addressee in these police apologies.

On the other hand, the institutional context also requires the writer(s) to offer the reader(s) the opportunity to respond elsewhere than to the writer(s), even where this might not seem necessary on the basis of the particular relationship between the writer(s) and the individual addressee. The second focus group discussed the requirement to include notification of the right of appeal in the letters on this basis:

F 20 G: but it looked bloody silly when you write to someone saying I understand you're happy with everything we've provided an explanation everything's great but by the way if you still want to complain about us (ll. 1807-10).

Regardless of the circumstances of the particular interaction, and whether the writer(s) views the complainer as individually content with the interaction to date, the system requires particular actions, such as notification of the addressee's appeal rights. Rock (2007) discussed a similar clash between institutional and individual requirements with regard to the police caution in England and Wales, which must be stated word for word regardless of whether this is someone in the cells for the first time, with no understanding of the legal consequences of the caution, or a frequent presence in the cells. Regardless of who the writer(s) understands the addressee to be, some aspects of the final letter may be largely determined by institutional procedure.

There are further ways in which the institutional framework may drive the writer(s) to shaping their response more toward institutional needs than toward their relationship with the addressee. For example, an individual makes a complaint, but this complaint is then described by the police institution as one or more allegations under particular headings:

- assault
- excessive force
- incivility (defined as "occurring when a member of a police force is uncivil in manner of speech, language or demeanour but not to the extent that it constitutes a crime of breach of the peace." (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2013, p.8))
- neglect of duty
- irregularity in procedure
- traffic irregularity
- oppressive conduct/harassment

- unlawful/unnecessary arrest or detention
- discriminatory behaviour
- corrupt practice
- other - criminal
- other - non-criminal (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2013).

The response to the complaint will often detail each individual allegation and an individual response on each, resulting in a letter where:

F 21 G: the emphasis is more on ensuring that the information is there rather than producing a nice flowing letter I mean some of the letters can be very sort of stilted in so far as you know your first alleg- you allege that
D: like a bullet list (ll. 1217-1220).

The complainer's experience, and the way they expressed their complaint, is repackaged into individual allegations, allowing for a determination of whether there is evidence to support each allegation and, for example, for the production of statistics on complaints by the PCCS. (Although the new statutory guidance for police complaints defines the outcome decision to be whether or not a complaint is upheld, it also states that a complaint investigation should "make clear whether each allegation has been upheld" (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2011, p.26), suggesting that the decision will continue to address the complaint through allegation categories). The letter writer(s) is therefore restricted by the complaints system from responding to the complainer in the terms that the complainer conceptualised his or her experience; instead, the letter has to relate to other complaints system texts by conforming to a system of complaint allegation categories. I described above the apology sequence in these letters to be different from interpersonal apologies in that, as final letters, the ability of the complainer to respond directly, and therefore to negotiate the apology directly, was limited. There is also a sense in which the institutional framework distances the apology in the final letter from the complaint (which may be a form of request for apology, or the first part in a three-part apology sequence) by reframing the complaint into allegation categories. The institutional structures of the complaints system appear therefore to constrain the sequence of an apology interaction and the activities of the writer(s) and addressee in that interaction.

Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based approach includes description of the hearer as part of the frame. In this section I have identified the main, legal, description of the addressee as a member of the public and considered how that category may be understood from a police perspective, what police cultural considerations may be invoked by this category of addressee. I also considered how aspects of the institutional framework may

limit how the addressee is understood as an interactant by the police. In particular, the addressee may not directly negotiate the politeness, or otherwise, of the letter with the writer(s), causing difficulties in identifying their evaluations for a public recipient perspective on politeness. It should be noted however that the addressee is not powerless. The complainer can appeal, feeding back into the production of other letters through the Commissioner, as described in section 5.1. It appears therefore that evaluation and negotiation of politeness still happen with written language, but they may happen through different interactions and in a different timescale to the immediate response of an interpersonal dyad.

5.2.2 The subject

A further key individual in any police complaint is the police officer, or several officers, who have been complained about, referred to here as the subject. Focus group participants noted that the complaints process as a whole would consider the subject officer(s) as well as the complainer:

F 22 G: we also have to a certain extent a duty to the officers as well (l. 1337).

This consideration extended to making them aware of the contents of the final letter:

F 23 A: we're not going to tell the officer one thing and then put something else into a letter same we're not going to tell the complainer one thing and then tell the officer something different (ll. 352-355).

Some force procedures at the time of data collection were explicit that the subject would be given a copy of the final letter to read (e.g. Strathclyde Police, 2008); the current statutory guidance requires that the subject be kept informed (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2011). While not directly addressed by the letter, the subject appears therefore to be a ratified participant.

The subject(s) of complaint was not perceived as a less important participant than the addressee. Focus group participants expressed a sense of duty toward the subject in example F22 or:

F 24 A: it's important the officers don't feel they are being singled out for some action which isn't wanted because they've actually just done everything that would be expected of them (ll. 306-8);

F 25 A: you've also got to be fair to the officers (l. 530).

These examples reiterate one of the differences between these apologies and the conventional paradigm for interpersonal apologies. In these letters the writer(s) will not be the person who (is alleged to have) committed the offending act (although there

will be a discussion of failures in the handling of complaints, as opposed to complaint allegations, in section 6.3.2). Instead of a speaker/hearer dyad, there is at minimum a crucial trio, where the person being apologised for as well as the addressee has claims on the writer(s). Part of the evaluation that takes place during the production of these letters may be evaluating the relative claims of the addressee and the subject as to what would be a polite apology in their potentially different understandings.

I described in the previous section research into police culture which suggests that a 'public' addressee may be understood in particular ways in a police context. There is also research into police culture which suggests a police understanding of the 'police' subject may be underpinned by particular ideas. Reiner (2010, p.xiii) describes a police perception of the police: "The police stand as romantic symbols of order and morality, 'knights errant' ever ready to protect against threats." The police writer(s) may start with an understanding of their colleague, subject of the complaint, as an honourable knight, with an important function to protect society. Part of the writer(s)' consideration of the subject officer is also to protect police institutional authority in future interactions with the complainer:

F 26 G: you don't want to [...] put the officers on the back foot the next time they have to deal with them. (ll. 1347-9)

Part of the writer(s) construction of the subject may therefore be as someone who requires his authority to be protected, for the important job of defending the public against future criminality.

The triadic interaction of writer(s)-addressee-subject may also challenge concepts of police identity. On the one hand, the police writer(s) might expect to identify with the police subject: they are both part of the same institution. However, part of the function of the complaint handler is to stand apart, to be independent (as described in section 5.1). The writer(s) is not only required to stand apart from police subject, they are required to pass judgment on them, which may be a challenge to the subject's police identity. One particular characteristic of police identity is the individual discretion in decision-making of even the most junior officer, with the effect that individual decisions made by brand new police constables out on the beat, in deciding who to arrest and who to let off with a warning, effectively determine the limits of the law (e.g. Reiner, 2010; Goldstein, 1960). The individual responsibility of police officers is ingrained in that all officers declare to discharge faithfully the office of constable (Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, s.10); all police officers take the oath as constable, and thus the most senior officer in a police force is the Chief of the Constables. The police writer(s) is required to challenge the decision-making of another officer, to challenge their discretion, which requires them to challenge the subject's policing identity.

The letters, responses to complaints against the police, which form the primary data for this thesis have a basic triadic participation framework. In addition to the writer(s) and addressee there is a subject, responsible for the act being potentially apologised for. This section has considered understandings of the addressee and the subject from a police perspective, noting that both may put pressure on the police identity of the writer(s), to be part of and separate from the public, to be in solidarity with and pronounce judgment on another police officer. The police writer(s) in producing these letters may be evaluating linguistic strategies to negotiate the competing claims of the addressee and the subject, but also of the conflicts created by their own understanding of these participants.

5.3 Institutional understandings of politeness

Concepts of politeness are embedded in the institutional framework of policing, in that for example there is a category for 'incivility' complaints against the police and the inclusion of "being courteous" in police training (Anderson et al., 2002, p.4). In this section I will consider some of the values and beliefs about politeness and apology; if, as suggested by Clark and Ivanič (1997), aspects of an institution's values and beliefs shape the production of language in institutions, then this may be a particularly important area of values affecting the production of apology language in an institution.

At the time of writing, there is no systematic or detailed ethnographic or documentary analysis of the Scottish police complaints system, its ideologies and culture (indeed, there is relatively little research into Scottish police). This material must therefore be partial. I will begin by setting the scene as to how the relationship with the public fits into the police institutional framework. This brings me to a dominant social theory about police-public relationships, procedural justice theory, which has also become the dominant approach in the Scottish policing institution toward police-public relationships. Procedural Justice Theory is an extensive, and empirically tested model of police-public relationships, including an understanding of police power in relation to the public. This theory identifies communication between police and public, and specifically police politeness, as a key factor affecting police authority. I will therefore summarise the procedural justice model here, primarily for consideration of how this model, as a dominant understanding of the relationship between police and public in Scotland, may affect the processes and production of writing in the complaints system. I will also consider more broadly how procedural justice theory may be relevant to studies of police politeness. I will then move on to discuss specifically how apology is portrayed in the Scottish police complaints system.

Halliday (1996, p.362) noted that the context in which a text is produced may be a context which “embodies internal contradictions and conflicts”, leading to texts which present a “discordant mix of multiple voices". I shall draw attention in this discussion of some of the understandings of politeness in Scottish policing to aspects which conflict or contradict each other. Such contradictions may suggest that not only does the police writer(s), in constructing apology language in these letters, have in mind the potentially conflicting politeness evaluations of different readers, but also may be affected by conflicting institutional understandings of politeness and apology.

5.3.1 Police-public relationships: procedural justice theory and politeness

‘Police Scotland’ removes the term ‘Service’ from the name it was set up with in legislation (’The Police Service of Scotland’). Reiner (2010) describes an ongoing tension in police identity between being a as a public service organisation (including managing public complaints) and as an enforcement agency (ie crime fighting). The restyling of the name of the police in Scotland may demonstrate that the enforcement identity is the priority. This is further supported by the purpose of policing in Scotland - the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 states that the main purpose of policing in Scotland is “to improve the safety and well-being of persons, localities and communities in Scotland" (s.32). In this section it is ‘safety’, part of the enforcement side of policing, that precedes the broader public service identity of the police in supporting the well-being of Scottish people. There is not however consistent promotion of an enforcement over a service identity. The ways in which the Scottish police are to improve safety and well-being in Scotland is firstly through being accessible and engaged with communities (s.32 (1)) and secondly through preventing “crime, harm and disorder" (s.32(2)) - working with communities comes before preventing crime. This reflects in law the principle of ‘policing by consent’. The relationship between police and public appears therefore sometimes to be prioritised but sometimes to come second to enforcement.

The Scottish police are measured and reported on their performance in relation to the public. The Scottish Policing Performance Framework contains 38 measures of police performance, including the number of complaints made about the police (taken as a measure of user dissatisfaction), user satisfaction surveys and public confidence measures as collected in the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (The Scottish Government, 2013). Scotland’s justice strategy includes as one of its eight justice outcomes “We have high levels of confidence in justice institutions and processes" (The Scottish Government, 2012a, p.2). In setting this priority, the Scottish Government draw on academic research into the theory of procedural justice. Gilling (2012, p.42-43) called

the introduction of public perception into police performance management: “the triumph of the democratic idea that the public needed to be reconnected with criminal justice in ways that made the latter more legitimate" (the concept of legitimacy and policing is further discussed below). The public service function of the police appears therefore to be embedded in Scottish policing in terms of what they are measured and assessed on.

The Scottish Government explicitly identify “meaningful communication" with the public as something that drives increased public confidence (The Scottish Government, 2012b, p.70). There may therefore be motivators from the overarching Scottish policing institutional framework which prioritise meaningful communication with the public addressee of complaints letters, conflicting perhaps with other aspects of the institution context, described above, which prioritise the institutional reader. However, the Scottish Government definition of “meaningful communication" as “newsletters, emails, etc" may suggest they have not fully developed an understanding of what this should look like (The Scottish Government, 2012b, p.70). I will describe below how there is also a lack of detail about what communication looks like in procedural justice theory as a whole, from which the Scottish Government document draws ideas.

Procedural Justice Theory, as noted above, forms an explicit part of the current institutional framework for policing in Scotland. This model, predominantly associated with Tom Tyler, finds that where people deem organisations to be legitimate they voluntarily obey the law, and conversely that low perceptions of the legitimacy of organisations predict high levels of crimes (e.g. Tyler, 1990). Tyler (1990, p.26) argues that legitimacy functions like a “reservoir of loyalty”, such that where an organisation is deemed legitimate, it can issue decisions and people will, on the basis of that loyalty, follow those decisions. This is described by Jackson et al. (2010, p.5):

> “Legitimacy is the widespread belief among members of the public (and inmates) that the police, the courts, the prisons and the legal system are authorities entitled to make decisions and who should be deferred to in matters of criminal justice."

Procedural Justice Theory originally developed to explain situations where people obeyed the law where there was little or no chance of their being punished - a situation which cannot be explained by deterrence theory. Procedural Justice Theory therefore has instrumental ends - arguably, policy reliance on procedural justice theory is motivated by the idea that gaining a public grant of legitimacy results in greater voluntary compliance with the law (presenting possible cost savings of £4.9billion a year (The Scottish Government, 2012b)). This may explain why the purpose of the police as defined in legislation seems to switch back and forth between service and

enforcement; the service side of policing which, as I will describe below, is critical to achieving the procedural justice which results in a public grant of legitimacy is seen as instrumental in achieving the (more important) law enforcement function.

Procedural Justice Theory operates on a five stage model from individual experience through to compliance with the law:

> - "the treatment people receive at the hand of the police and justice officials;
> - the resultant trust that people have in institutions of justice;
> - the legitimacy people confer, as a consequence of this trust, on institutions of justice;
> - the authority that these institutions can then command when they are regarded as legitimate; and
> - people's consequent preparedness to obey the police, comply with the law, and cooperate with justice."
>
> (Hough et al., 2010, p.204).

The promotion of this model by the Scottish Government suggest a culture where the police, in an individual interaction with a member of the public, should seek to treat that person respectfully, as this will have wider impacts on the overall legitimacy of the police in Scotland.

The repeated finding of empirical procedural justice studies is that legitimacy is granted where the experience of treatment is one of fair process; specifically it is more important that the process is deemed fair, than that the outcome meets their expectations (Bradford and Jackson, 2009). There is a high level of empirical evidence for this finding. It has been possible to test this finding, as one example, where the outcome can be measured in financial terms; in an arbitration context people reported more satisfaction with the judgment, and more inclination to accept it, where they considered the process to have been fair than where the financial award was larger (MacCoun, 2005). Four component parts have been identified to procedurally just treatment:

- giving the lay participant 'voice';
- perceived neutrality of decision-making;
- treating people with respect and dignity; and
- belief that the motives of the institution are trustworthy (Jackson and Sunshine, 2007).

These elements can be seen being introduced structurally into the criminal justice system, for example the development of Victim Impact Statements, and were reflected in focus group understandings of complainer's perspectives (such as wanting to be listened to).

The element of 'treating people with respect and dignity' is one of these four that may be particularly interesting to linguistics, as it is often understood in procedural justice studies with reference to politeness. For example in survey research the question "Were the authorities polite to you?" is used (Tyler and Huo, 2002, p.80). In experimental research by Mazerolle et al. (2012, p.352) treating people with dignity and respect was specified as using "polite words", and specifically involved thanking the person at the end of their encounter and saying something positive about their behaviour (e.g. thanking them for making sure the children were wearing seatbelts). Mazerolle et al. (2012) therefore is operationalising the notion of police politeness for use in a procedural justice study. However, there was no further detail in this study of what the 'polite words' should comprise beyond 'thank you'. Procedural Justice Theory underpins current Scottish institutional framework of police-public relations, and includes thereby an understanding of the importance of communication between police and public. It has not however specified what might be important about that communication, suggesting a need for linguistic expertise.

Procedural Justice Theory is not only relevant to linguistics in that it is a dominant theory for police-public relations, in Scotland and elsewhere, which is underspecified in terms of linguistic detail, but also because it may support understanding of existing findings about police language. Limberg (2008) investigated police impoliteness, arguing that the police were given institutional sanction to be impolite in a way that the lay person was not; specifically, he demonstrated that the police were allowed by their institution to use threats in the pursuit of the institutional goal of achieving compliance, such as a threat to seize music equipment if the volume was not lowered. (This accords with analyses of court room language which suggest that a cross-examining lawyer is institutionally sanctioned to use language that would in other situations be understood as impolite). However, Limberg's analysis suggested that the freedom to be impolite was not unlimited. In one particular incident, a police officer required an individual to accompany the police to a police station; the individual wished to move his motorcycle to a safer spot before coming with them. The police officer ordered the motorcycle to be left where it was, but the individual resisted this order. The police officer's response was to repeat the same wording of the same order, several times, and not to escalate into more threatening language. To explain this Limberg (2008, p.171) suggested that:

> "Repeating the same order seems to be an attempt to achieve cooper-

> ation from the target without overstepping the boundaries of what is institutionally-sanctioned as well as legally acceptable in these circumstances."

With reference to procedural justice theory, it is also possible to consider that giving an order might be considered a procedurally just way to achieve an objective, but for example shouting or swearing at a person to achieve this might not be. The idea of the police being institutionally sanctioned to be impolite but that sanction being limited may relate to the necessity of their actions appearing procedurally just.

Procedural Justice Theory is also useful in considering a study including police language by Harris (2003). In one example from this study a police reception person is talking to someone reporting for their bail. In this scenario the police participant makes a mistake about the bail reporting requirements and then makes what Harris (2003, p.35) describes as an “indirect apology", in that she makes a joke, accepted by the non-police interactant who extends the joke and laughs along. Harris highlights the interpersonal nature of this exchange (which concludes with an informal goodbye from the officer: “cheerio") and the deferential politeness strategies used by the institutionally powerful participant. In another example the police participant is responding to a, unreasonable, request from someone for the police to watch his house as he has lost the key and the person with the spare is at work. Rather than baldly stating that the public request is not police business, the police speaker takes several turns to suggest alternative forms of action, offering an explanation for the police being elsewhere, all in hedged formulations (“wouldn’t it be advisable", "I’m afraid", p.38-9). Again the institutionally powerful police participant is using deferential politeness strategies, and notably here without even the rationale of having made a mistake to be recompensed. In contrast to Heydon (2011) or Stokoe and Edwards (2008) whose work shows the exercise of police power, here we appear to see the police participant mitigating the imposition of power. To explain the powerful institutional speaker’s deference, Harris (2003) questions whether the notion of power needs to be considered with the concept of legitimacy. Procedural Justice Theory explains the link between behaviour in the individual interaction and the overall grant of legitimacy to the institution. Although in the second example the public request is clearly unreasonable, procedural justice theory suggests that people would be more affected by that decision being made in an impolite way than the actual quality of the decision-making - thus although the police officer might appear to be on very firm ground, that decision would still be expressed in a polite way to consider the institutional constraints of appealing to public confidence. In the first example it is noteworthy that the police person has made a mistake over bail reporting requirements; the consequence of the police officer’s mistake, were it not rectified, could be the individual being arrested and taken to prison, presumably an undesirable out-

come, and for, from the bail reportee's perspective, arbitrary reasons (they had, after all, reported when and where they were supposed to). The use by the police participant of a fairly extensive politeness strategy may be an attempt to rectify the mistake with one of the core elements procedural justice theory suggests contribute to trust, and therefore to legitimacy: politeness. While the purpose of discussing procedural justice theory here is as the prominent explanation for the police-public relationship culture in Scotland, this area of research may also be valuable to linguists working in the field of police language and specifically police politeness.

There is some ambiguity over the principles of police-public relations in Scottish policing - at some points a law enforcement identity for the police is prioritised, but at the same time public confidence is deemed important enough to measure. This ambiguity may relate to the procedural justice theory underpinnings of Scottish policing; in procedural justice the public service function of the police is crucial in an instrumental sense, to achieve law enforcement aims. Understandings of police politeness, described as an important component in procedurally just interactions, may share some of this ambiguity. Further, there is fruitful space for procedural justice research and linguistic politeness research to integrate - procedural justice theory helps explain some previous findings about police language, but provides only minimal detail itself on what police politeness looks like.

5.3.2 Apology in the police complaints system

The 2011 Statutory Guidance promotes apologising as a resolution for complaints. The guidance states for example that "often an apology is the best way to defuse a situation and allow a satisfactory resolution" (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2011, p.35). Similarly, the current complaints leaflet alerts complainers to the possibility that the outcome of their complaint may be an apology (Police Investigations & Review Commissioner, 2013). This explicit recognition of the value of apology in the complaints system may reflect the wider importance placed on procedural justice understandings of the relationship between police and public: that politeness in individual interactions between police and public leads to public trust, which leads in turn to the grant of legitimacy that results in voluntary compliance with the law.

This promotion of the value of apology appears to be relatively new. Earlier versions of the police complaints leaflet did not suggest the possibility of apologising, and appear slanted toward the concept of an underinformed public requiring and receiving an explanation: "Experience has shown that many people are unaware of the extent of police functions and responsibilities and that an explanation provided by

a senior officer may help to clarify the position" (The Scottish Executive, 2003, p.2). This appears to suggest an understanding of the public in line with Van Maanen's (2005) description of 'good but know nothings'. The promotion of apologising as part of complaints resolution may demonstrate a shift in police complaints culture and its politeness ideology, perhaps relating to the more recent embedding of procedural justice concepts in Scottish policy document such as the 2012 Justice Strategy (The Scottish Government, 2012a). Further evidence of the attempts to change police culture in police complaints documentation include the change in title of the police complaints leaflet, from "Complaints *against* the police" (The Scottish Executive, 2003) to "A guide for complaints *about* the police" (Police Investigations & Review Commissioner, 2013) (both my emphases).

The shift from providing an explanation in response to a complaint to providing an apology suggests that the police cultural understanding of apologies does not entirely accord with academic descriptions. As described in chapter 2, descriptions of the apology speech act set include explicit expressions of apology and four semantic formulae, including 'explanation'. Documentation around the police complaints system appears to distinguish between apology and explanation, rather than view the latter as a mechanism of achieving the former. This sense of a difference between apology and explanation was maintained in the letters collected as primary data:

L 2 I would like to thank you for taking the time to make contact and enable us the opportunity to apologise where necessary and provide explanations for our actions. (Ltr. 57).

The conjunction in this example of an apology if necessary and an explanation suggests that these are two different acts. Focus group participants also discussed apologising and explaining:

F 27 B: It's quite interesting sometimes in our explanations trying to acknowledge the complainer's perception you know and say to them we acknowledge that you know from your point of view it may seem as if but from our point of view and from the evidence we've gathered this is how it is for us and that's part of that conciliation process that explanation process if you like (ll. 460-464).

In this example Participant B relates an explanation to a situation where there is a lack of evidence to support the complainer, but the writer(s) wishes to acknowledge the complainer's perspective. In both focus groups there was a sense that they understood complaints letters to be a communication of explanation where apologising appears separately, and only if necessary:

F 28 G: I say it's a primary explanation of our actions ... it's to apologise if we need to apologise (ll. 1047-9).

There may therefore be a contrast between politeness1 and politeness2 understandings of apology in a police complaints context - the police writers discuss apologising and explanation as separate acts, where the academic description views explanation as one way to achieve an apology.

The more recent promotion of apology in the police complaints system may be part of a desired shift in police attitudes toward complaints, described by both focus groups, in for example:

F 29 A: it's traditionally been one [culture] of sanction and blame and such like whereas they're trying to change it to a culture one of learning (ll. 291-301).

Such a change in attitudes is not necessary embedded in the values of the police writer(s); both focus groups also discussed the possibility of people making complaints about the police that were not made in good faith:

F 30 F: it is a national sport complaining about the police (l. 1480).

A possible direction for future research would be to consider whether these attempts to change police culture around complaints affects the use of apology in this context. The change in the decision outcome on a complaint (described above as a shift from a decision on police misconduct to one on the complainer's experience) may be particularly important because, as I will show in chapter 6 there is evidence in this corpus that the police differentiate their apology language in relation to the complaint outcome.

Several apology studies suggest that a reason why public institutions may be reluctant to apologise is the possibility of apology being used as evidence of liability in civil proceedings or other legal action (e.g. Lakoff, 2003; Kampf, 2009). There was some evidence in the letters that complainers and police may be using apologies as evidence of the wrongdoing. In one letter the writer(s) describes the contents of the complaint as including:

L 3 You question why the officer apologised for issuing a ticket to you (Ltr. 22).

In this letter the complainer believes he or she was stopped due to mistaken identity, and appears to be using the fact that the officer apologised for issuing a ticket as evidence of this, proceeding from the assumption that if he or she had been stopped due to a genuine traffic infraction there would be no reason to apologise for issuing the ticket. Similarly the police appear to be including as evidence that a complainer accepted responsibility for the incident they are now complaining about:

L 4 at which point you were warned regarding your conduct and you apologised to the officer concerned (Ltr. 58).

Public and police conceptions of apology may accord with academic discussion that apologies can be used as evidence of wrongdoing; I shall show in chapter 6 however that this does not necessarily match how the police use apology language themselves.

In contrast to the academic description of a link between apology and legal action, focus group participants seemed relaxed about the prospect that an apology could be used against them as evidence for a civil claim:

F 31 A: if that leads to a claim that leads to a claim there's another process to go through (l. 426).

The idea of a relationship between legal action and an apology was described as an attitude that belonged to the past, and not to Scotland:

F 32 C: there was a thing in the police a few years ago more so I think in England and Wales and Northern Ireland about if you apologise you automatically set yourself up for a [civil] claim [...] I think even in my time we were always encouraged that if we had got something wrong irrespective of how that was then going to follow if it probably on the minor side but if we had got something wrong procedurally then we would say sorry (ll. 385-7).

In both focus group therefore participants suggested that a civil claim was something that needed to be handled, but the decision to offer an apology should not take that into consideration. It is not clear that an apology would be admissible as evidence in relation to a civil claim in Scotland. A private member's bill with the aim of precluding apologies from providing evidence for a civil claim (and thereby promoting the use of apologies by private and public bodies) was proposed in 2012, consulted upon and a final proposal lodged in April 2014 (The Scottish Parliament, 2014). The Faculty of Advocates responded to the consultation, stating that the purpose of such legislation appeared to be "to counter alleged widespread misapprehension as to what the current law is" (Faculty of Advocates, 2012, p.5); in their view, such a law was unnecessary and would not change the current legal position. They also suggested that it is an explanation and expression of responsibility, rather than an apology, which is normally desired by people experiencing a problem with public bodies, suggesting that the Faculty of Advocates, like the police, do not understand apology in the same way as academic descriptions which incorporate explanation and acknowledgement of responsibility as strategies for apologising.

The position of apologies as evidence in criminal proceedings is not necessarily the same as for civil proceedings. Apologies may form part of the evidence in a criminal case (Faculty of Advocates, 2012). Focus group participants also displayed wariness about the consequences of complaint handling for criminal proceedings:

F 33 E: you've more or less admitted that we have done something else so you've got to be on your guard as well (ll. 1606-7).

The understanding of apology as evidence of wrongdoing, which appears to contradict the explicit denial of the relevance of apology to civil claims, may reflect the possibility of apology having consequences in a criminal law context. This concern was however only relevant where criminal matters had not been identified upfront; where they were, the complaint would be separated out to be dealt with through separate criminal processes, and therefore the question of the police force managing the complaint resolution, and potentially apologising, was not relevant. The current complaints leaflet supports a distinction between criminal allegations and other complaints against the police in terms of apologising: the leaflet does not suggest that an apology may take place where the complaint against the police is criminal (Police Investigations & Review Commissioner, 2013). It appears therefore that potential legal consequences of apologising are largely disregarded by police complaints handlers in Scotland, as these are either not present in the legal system (for civil proceedings) or will mostly be dealt with separately (for criminal proceedings). Academic descriptions of instituitonal requirements on apology being affected by their legal consequences do not appear relevant in this particular Scottish context.

Aspects of the police complaints system explicitly promote apologising, perhaps relating to procedural justice ideals of police-public relations in Scotland. There is also denial of the risk, both in documents and by the police complaints handlers, that apology could be used as evidence against the police in legal proceedings, either in that this is deemed irrelevant for civil cases or that criminal allegations would be dealt with separately. What is stated explicitly in police complaints system documents does not entirely accord with police and public perceptions of apology, as there is some indication that apology is understood as evidence of wrongdoing by the police. This may reflect an ongoing cultural shift in police complaints handling, which includes a new understanding of apology, perhaps understood in principle by police complaints handlers but not yet embedded in their work. There is also indication from both documentation around the police complaints system and the focus group participants of a difference between police and academic understandings of the acts of apology and explanation, whereby the latter is understood as a separate act (and perhaps the main focus of complaints handling from a police perspective). While this supports the distinction drawn by discursive researchers between politeness1 and politeness2, there were also differences within politeness1, between what the police said about the consequences of apology and what they do, as visible in the letters, to be described in chapter 6. This suggests that further distinctions must be drawn between the empirical norms of what people regularly do and the moral norms of what people say should be done (Haugh, 2007; Terkourafi, 2005).

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have analysed the production and reception of the primary data for this thesis, letters written by Scottish police in response to public complaints. I identified multiple writers involved in the production of these texts, and that they may be involved in both reading and writing, with evaluation of the language taking place throughout the production of the letters. I described two main readers: the addressee and the subject of the complaint. I described the relationship of participants in these police apologies as primarily a triad, where the writer(s) is apologising in relation to actions of another individual, the subject of the complaint, to the addressee (in contrast to a prototypical dyadic structure where the apologiser is speaking about actions he or she is directly responsible for to an addressee). I described the difficulties for the writer(s) in producing a text for both of these readers, suggesting that part of the negotiation of politeness which takes place during production is the writer(s) considering the needs of these different readers. I also highlighted aspects of police culture and institution which may affect how the writer(s) understands and interacts with these readers.

Finally I considered some aspects of the institutional structure around the Scottish police and police complaints system which may affect how politeness and apology are understood by the police writer(s). I considered how police-public relations were understood in Scotland, presenting the model of procedural justice theory, which appears in key documents. Procedural justice theory places the relationship between police and public as central to a law-abiding society, and includes communication, and specifically politeness, as the mechanisms by which the police should manage this relationship. Perhaps related to the prominence of procedural justice theory, apologising is promoted in the institutional framework of the police complaints system.

This chapter contributes to understanding apologies in a police context by providing the detail of how this example of an institutional or collective apology is produced. Specifically in relation to speech act conditions, and the question of who is authorised to apologise, I discussed what appears to be the clarity provided by a legislative framework as to who can legitimately apologise for something they did not themselves do. Although the authority to apologise on behalf of the police emanates from legislation, which is agreed by public representatives and therefore should represent the public view, there is evidence that the public view on the appropriate police authority to apologise does not coincide with the institutional framework. Lecercle (1999) suggested that the institutional framework provided that the jury in the origi-

nal Derek Bentley trial were, at that time, the authorised person(s) to determine what his alleged utterance 'Let him have it, Chris' meant, but that interpretation was contested, and re-evaluated over time. The institutional framework of police complaints is also contested, with the public not convinced by the institutional understanding of the authorised person to offer an apology. This supports Kádár and Haugh's (2013) contention that politeness must be considered as multiple understanding(s) from different perspectives, for even when there appears to be a clear definition of what constitutes politeness from one participant, this may be challenged by others. Unlike the immediate negotiation of politeness seen in a face-to-face interaction, a public challenge to who is deemed the appropriate person to utter a police apology might take place for example in a parliamentary debate over new police legislation.

This chapter contributes to methodological development of politeness research. I noted in chapter 2 that discursive approaches may struggle to manage written language because in this medium there is no obvious access to the 'hearer's' evaluations of whether language is polite or not. I identified here that the process of writing these letters explicitly builds in evaluation of the language through the multiple writers involved. The language of the final letter therefore itself is the product of evaluation, and provides evidence of the emic police perspective on a polite apology in this context. This supports my proposal in section 2.6 to use a frame-based model to access police politeness norms of apology, by looking for regular co-occurrence of apology form and contextual frames in these letters.

This chapter also introduced procedural justice theory as an important part of the institutional context of policing in Scotland; I also considered the relevance of procedural justice theory to previous studies of police language. In particular, this model provides a mechanism for understanding power relations between police and public not as one between the powerful and the powerless, but where power is subject to the demands of legitimacy. I used this model as an explanation for previous studies which had found the police using deferential politeness strategies (Harris, 2003) or demonstrated limitations on police sanctions to be impolite (Limberg, 2008). I suggested not only that linguistic researchers may be able to make important contributions to this model of police-public relations, in providing detail of what police-public politeness looks like, but also that this may be valuable theory for researchers working with institutional language and power.

6. Do the police apologise?

This chapter presents my analysis of the text of the letters, focusing on lexical and syntactic variation of explicit apology expressions. I will go on in chapter 7 to address the difficulties of considering sincerity in relation to a police apology. These two chapters together, drawing on my analysis of how the letters are produced in chapter 5, present the argument that the police writers, understood from their own perspective, are producing two different speech acts related to apology, an act of payment and an act of validation.

My analysis considers the presence and variation in explicit apology expressions or Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs). This focus on explicit apology language, such as *sorry* and *apologise*, is justified because explicit expressions have been found to be the major linguistic means of expressing apology in English (as noted in chapter 3, Holmes (1990) found nearly 90% of her apology corpus included an explicit apology expression). Folk understanding of apology also relates to these explicit expressions (as I will show later in this chapter, the police focus group participants describe an apology as 'saying sorry'). From an academic and a lay perspective therefore, explicit apology language is important to apologising.

My analysis starts with the question of whether any explicit apology expressions are present in this corpus. I found three: *sorry, apologise* and *regret* (see section 6.1). I discuss the presence of these forms as, from the police perspective, a strong indicator that they are apologising when responding to complaints. I also consider, and exclude, the possibility that all the letters were constructed using, and therefore that the apology language is present because of, some kind of template or form.

I move on to consider the lexical and syntactic variation around these explicit apology expressions. While, as previously noted, this is a small corpus and therefore the absolute numbers of these explicit forms is relatively low for considering variation, there is only one less example of *apologise* and more of *regret* than Deutschmann (2003) found in his large scale British National Corpus study. Jeffries (2007) suggested aspects of apology which might vary in English, and which variants constitute a prototypical apology. I contrast the variation in this corpus with hers and other studies, focusing on three aspects:

- Lexical variation in the explicit apology expression;
- Person; and
- Complements.

I relate the linguistic variation found in this corpus to aspects of the police context and the production of the letters, as described in chapter 5.

Finally I describe when the police use different variants of lexical form and complement. I identify a particular frame, relevant to the police complaints context: the decision on the complaint, whether there is a weight of evidence to support the complainer. This frame initially suggests that the police overuse apologetic language, in the sense that apology forms are present when the outcome from the complaints system is that the police have done nothing wrong, that there is nothing to apologise for. This contrasts with the approach of apology studies which consider variation in apology language as related to variation in the offence being apologised for (e.g. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Holmes, 1990; Deutschmann, 2003); such an approach seems to assume that there can only be apology where there is an offence. I find instead that the police distinguish syntactically in the apology complement between situations where there is an evidenced failing to apologise for, and those where there is not, but use apology language in both.

This finding of two syntactically different apology expressions is the unique contribution of this thesis. I suggest that the two linguistic forms represent two different speech acts: first, a payment for an offence; secondly, an act of validation, an acknowledgement of the complainer's perspective. The latter act uses particular expressions of apology, but only in certain constructions, in particular *apologise* with an *if*-clause. I argue that this distinction is valuable to the police writers; from their perspective it manages obligations to different readers - the addressee and the subject described in chapter 5. To the police writers, without making any claim about the views of the various readers, these two acts constitute what is polite in two distinct contexts, evidenced by the regular co-occurrence of the different linguistic forms and the contextual frames, in a situation where opportunities for evaluating that language were available during its production.

6.1 Do the police use explicit apology expressions?

This corpus of letters written by the Scottish police in response to public complaints contains 56 instances of explicit apology expressions (see table 6.1).[1] Given the relatively small size of this corpus (c. 30,000 words) this gives a higher apology rate than Deutschmann (2003, p.51) found in his subset of the British National Corpus (he calculated a rate of 59.7 explicit apology expression per 100,000 words); apologising is therefore a more common feature of this specialised corpus of police letters responding to complaints than his general corpus. There was at least one explicit apology expression in over half of the letters, although 18 out of 58 letters did not contain any explicit expression of apology.

Sorry	*Regret*	*Apologise*
4	17	35

Table 6.1: Explicit apologetic language by lexeme

Three explicit apology forms were found in this corpus: *sorry, regret* and *apologise*. No other forms of explicit apology language (*excuse, forgive, pardon* or *afraid*) were present. In section 6.2.1 I will discuss the particular lexemes used by the police and how this compares to previous research.

This finding that explicit apology forms are used by the police in this context, and used frequently, matches the perception of writers. Participants in both focus groups suggested that apologising was normal when responding to complaints, as previously seen in example F10 or:

F 34 A: I think if we've done something wrong I think we're quite quick to go that's horrendous sorry (ll. 302-3).

This perception from the writers that they apologise, and their regular use of explicit apology expressions, also fits with the current documents from the police complaints system which promote apologising (see section 5.3).

The presence of explicit apology expressions are strong indicators of the act of apology. Searle (1969, p.30) gives "I apologize" as an example of an Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID), which he defines as showing "what illocutionary force the

[1] These totals do not include reported uses of these forms, e.g. police writers discussing whether a complainer had been instructed to apologise. These figures also do not include two adverb forms of *regret*, one instance of *regretfully* and one of *regrettably*. Deutschmann (2003) argues that adverbial forms are not apologies but rather descriptions of the speaker's attitude. Nevertheless, these examples will be briefly discussed in sections 6.3.4 and 6.3.6, given their similarity in use to some non-adverbial form of *regret*, although they have not been included in any of the table counts.

utterance is to have": the presence of *I apologise* is one way to indicate that an utterance has the illocutionary force of an apology. Of the three forms found in this corpus one, *apologise*, is the "canonical" apology form (Davies, 2011, p.191); another, *sorry*, is the "overwhelming favorite" expression of apology in English (Meier, 1998, p.216). The apology expressions present in this corpus include therefore core linguistic strategies for expressing apology in English.

Presence of a specific word alone does not constitute the act of apology. Austin's criteria for speech acts fall into two sets, those relating to the performance of the act and those relating to the sincerity of the act (see chapter 3). The sincerity criteria for a person to have certain thoughts and feelings for particular speech acts will be discussed in chapter 7. I considered the difficulties around defining the appropriate person to carry out a police apology, the likely difference between the police and public assessment of who is appropriate, in chapter 5. In this chapter I will consider what might constitute a conventional linguistic procedure for a police apology, by looking at what constructions of apology expressions appear regularly in this corpus, and how these compare to previous studies. Austin specified however not only that a conventional procedure be carried out, but that one exists. The 1800 Glasgow Police Act set up the first Scottish police force, and there have been many changes to Scottish policing in the subsequent 200 years. It is possible that a procedure for a specific act of police apology is not yet conventionalised, and subject to ongoing change.

While Austin's criteria for speech acts require more than the presence of an explicit apology expression, I also noted in chapter 2 that his criteria were not perhaps directly transferable to situations of public apology. Lay perception of public apology may place greater importance on the presence of apology language than on other criteria. For example one focus group participant described apologising:

F 35 A: an apology would be where we're normally saying the word sorry somewhere in there you know (ll.417-8).

In this example the participant specifies that it is the utterance of specific apology language which makes the apology - and that it is not crucial how that word is uttered, in that it is "somewhere in there". It may be that the presence of explicit apology expression is more critical to the definition of public apology than to other types of apology, and therefore that if, as has been found here, the police are repeatedly using *apologise*, then they are repeatedly apologising.

Identification of template letters

An initial concern in collecting this data was that the letters would have been produced using some type of template or form, the same content with spaces for the individual dates, names and locations. The use of such forms would make this data of little use in considering apologetic language, as the template might simply contain a version of apology language, repeated in identical form throughout a force or the corpus as a whole.

The letters in this corpus do not appear to have been constructed using templates or forms. There are similarities in the elements contained in the letters. Many letters contain some explanation about who the signatory is, a description of the complaint, a description of what had been done to consider the complaint, a description of the evidence found and a statement of findings. Many letters had almost identical language providing contact details for the complainer to appeal to the Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland (PCCS). These similarities do not however mean that the letters are constructed using a form, but rather that requirements for the letters to contain such elements are detailed in police complaints guidance, e.g. the current Statutory Guidance (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2011). While there are repeated phrasings across letters (particularly in opening and closing paragraphs within a force), in the main the letters contain unique details of, and language about, for example what the specific complaint was about and what was found when looking into it. This matches with Rock's (2007) finding that police in England and Wales had individual ways of explaining the police caution, although they were all based on the required words of the caution in England and Wales. I do not judge therefore that there is significant risk that my findings are the result of strict templates for police complaints letters in the Scottish police.

One Scottish police force did use very similar language in all its letters (Letters 31-37). Their letters contain few details of what complaints were about or how they were investigated, but mostly simply confirm that the complainer and the police have been in communication about the complaint and agreed a resolution, with a statement such as:

L 5 I note from his report that following discussion of the specific issues involved an informal resolution was achieved. (Ltr. 31).

The apologetic language in these letters is also virtually identical:

L 6 I apologise/regret that on this occasion in your dealings with X(force)X you felt the need to complain. (Letters 31-37).

Other than the alternation between *apologise* (four from seven) and *regret* (three from seven) each letter from this force contains the same sentence. This is striking be-

cause the construction *apologise that* is otherwise rare in this corpus (appearing only a further two times). *Apologise that* also appears rare in previous studies of apology language in English. Although Deutschmann (2003, p.53) found that the construction "Apology +(*that*) + S[entence]" was one of the more common syntactically complex apology structures, this still makes up a small proportion of his corpus because complex structures were themselves relatively rare ("Apology +(*that*) + S[entence]" making up 2.6%, or 79 examples, within the 8.3%, or 256 examples, of syntactically complex apology structures, from the total 3070 apology tokens in his British National Corpus study). Deutschmann does not distinguish within this construction how often it is used with different explicit apology forms; the figures for the construction "Apology +(*that*) + S[entence]" include therefore for example 'I'm sorry that' or 'I regret that' and Deutschmann does not attest an actual example with *apologise that* in his corpus. *Apologise that* was likely therefore to provide not all, if any, of the 79 examples in this category, suggesting that it is not a common construction for English language apologies. The letters from this particular force thus display an unusual formulation of apology language and minimal variation in both this and other aspects of the letters. Letter 35 does contain more unique detail about the complaint. It is the only letter from this force which deals with a complaint which was not resolved (differences in language relating to the outcome of the complaint are discussed in section 6.3.2). Letters 31-37 have been treated with caution and largely excluded from further analysis, as they are more likely than other letters in this corpus to have been produced by template (these letters are not relevant to the main complement variation found in this data, between *apologise for* and *apologise if*).

While the possibility that these letters have been produced by templates reduces their usefulness to my empirical analysis of the apology linguistic forms used, they may nevertheless provide insight into the relevance of looking at language change over time. Focus group participants suggested that writing final complaint letters with little detail was an older aspect of the complaints system and something from which:

F 36 G: I like to think we've moved on considerably (l. 1072).

They suggested that procedures had changed because the detail of current letters was considered important to the complainer's confidence:

F 37 B: you hope that the explanation and the detail of it gives them assurance of the process it's been through it can give some reassurance that the complaint has been looked at carefully and objectively (ll. 826-8).

The likely template letters include some of the oldest in the corpus (two from 2009 or earlier) and the brevity of these letters may therefore reflect old complaints handling procedures. The difference between these letters and the majority of this corpus both generally and in their particular expression of apology language perhaps therefore

demonstrates the value of contrasting letters from different time periods (as advocated by e.g. Tusting (2000) in terms of writing, and by Kádár and Haugh (2013) with reference to how evaluations of politeness may differ with time).

This possibility of a change in complaints handling policy may relate not only to a change in how the letters are written, but to a change in police understandings of what was important in handling a complaint and who is the appropriate person to apologise. Letters 31-37 were all signed by the force Deputy Chief Constable, the most senior individual in a police force with responsibility for police complaints. Only one other letter in the corpus was signed by an officer of this rank. The focus group participants suggested that it was specifically the detailed understanding of the contents of the letters which was likely to be lost when the signatory was of such a high rank:

F 38 G: given the sheer volume of [letters] it would probably be unrealistic to expect a member of the force executive to sign all of them off and understand what they were signing off (ll. 1184-6).

A change in overall linguistic appearance of the letters over time may be a parallel change to one of police complaints handling policy, a move from an idea that having a senior person signing a letter would give a complainer confidence to one where that confidence is believed to be built through a detailed response (the latter reflecting procedural justice principles, in that it would contain greater explanation of how the decision was reached). Through this change, there appears also to be a change in the police understanding of the appropriate person to offer an apology; in the older letters it is the Deputy Chief Constable who signs the apology whereas in the more recent letters a variety of ranks are found. In a different corpus of letters, selected to compare time periods, it may be possible to see relationships between changes in police complaints handling policy, changes in police understandings of apology and changes in language used by the police over time.

6.2 What apologetic language do the police use?

Any public perception that the police “never apologise" (Orr, 2012) is challenged by the finding that the police use apologetic language in this dataset. However, the presence of explicit apology forms is only part of the potential convention for a specific police apology. In this section I explore aspects of the lexical and syntactic variation of and around the explicit apology language used by the police in responding to complaints.

I focus on three aspects of lexical and syntactic variation:

- Lexical variation of explicit apology expression;
- Person; and
- Complements.

These are three aspects from Jeffries' (2007) schema for features of prototypical English apologies (Jeffries actually refers to 'following text' where I am specifically considering the basic syntactic structure of the complement). Where possible, the findings in this corpus have been compared to previous studies reporting on these aspects of apologies in English. Other potential aspects of syntactic variation, e.g. tense and modality, are not discussed because there is no variation, in terms of tense, or too few and disparate examples, in relation to modality, to identify a pattern.

I will show that the distribution of explicit apology expressions is different in this police context to that found in most apology studies, and identify the various aspects of the police complaints context which may motivate this difference. In relation to person, this corpus shows an overwhelming dominance of the first person singular form *I apologise/am sorry/regret*; I relate this finding to discussions in chapter 5 about who the writer(s) are and their authority for apologising in this context.

Consideration of complement variation is unusual in apology studies, and possible here because the corpus contains several examples of the apology form *apologise*. It is with this form that a distinction is found between two main alternatives: an *if*-clause or a prepositional phrase headed *for*. I relate these two linguistic forms to competing pressures on the police writers. I suggest that the two forms may represent two different speech acts, motivated by those pressures. This is an idea I return to in section 6.3.2, where I am able to show that the different linguistic forms are used almost exclusively in different contexts.

6.2.1 Lexical Variation of explicit apology expression

The police use different explicit apology expressions when writing final letters to complainers to those found for English speakers in previous studies (for a summary see Meier (1998)), both in that particular expressions of apology are completely absent in this dataset and that the relative frequency of the remaining expressions is different.

This corpus of letters written by the police in final response to public complaints contains many examples of explicit apology language but none of the expressions *excuse, forgive, pardon* and *afraid*, which have been previously identified as explicit apology language in English (e.g. Deutschmann, 2003). The absence of these forms

may reflect that this is a small corpus (c.30,000 words compared to over 5 million in Deutschmann's subset of the British National Corpus, although that subset was, unlike my data, not designed to be a sample of language where apologies were more likely to occur). *Forgive* and *afraid* are relatively rare in even his large corpus (although both appear more than *regret*) and were therefore perhaps always unlikely to appear in this small dataset.

The absence of particular apology forms may also reflect the mode and particular context of this data. Deutschmann (2003) describes *pardon* as a form frequently used for repair in speech when an individual has not heard what was previously said. This is therefore unsurprisingly absent from this corpus of written language. He further describes *excuse* as having a common function irrelevant to a written context, that of getting attention, as an apology for disturbing the other person. Holmes (1990) also found that the forms *pardon* and *excuse* were almost exclusively used in spoken language.

A further feature of the forms *pardon, excuse* and *forgive* is that these frequently appear in a construction where the object is the self (ie *excuse me*, *pardon me*, *forgive me*). As discussed in chapter 5, one of the differences between the context for apologies in my letters and in other studies is the sequence of interaction. I chapter 3 I discussed findings around the sequence of apologies, including that they have been described as part of a two or three part sequence, to be followed by a response to the apology containing its possible acceptance (e.g. Robinson, 2004). My letters do not anticipate a response: these letters are final responses to complaints, they are placing on record matters which may have previously been discussed verbally and direct response is rarely envisaged, with any subsequent communication usually directed to appeals mechanisms. The specific sequencing of these letters, as the final point in the interaction between the initial complaint handler(s) and complainer, may limit the use of forms such as *excuse me*, which appear as a request relating to the writer(s). Yet there are examples of apology constructions in this dataset which are framed as requests (see section 6.2.2). Sequencing may not be the only aspect of the context which limits the use of these apology forms.

The apology forms *pardon, excuse* and *forgive* may be missing from this corpus less because they are requests than because they conflate the writer(s) and the object of the apology - the *me* to be excused in *excuse me* would be read as the signatory to the letter, although it is a separate police officer who committed the act being apologised for. As discussed in chapter 5, perhaps the only individual in the police organisation who will definitely not be involved in the writing of these letters are those police officer(s) or staff who have been complained about. A significant difference between this context for apologies and interpersonal situations is the involvement, at a minimum,

of three interactants: the writer(s), addressee and subject. The absence of forms such as *forgive me*, at least partially motivated by this difference in the participant relationships, demonstrates the importance of understanding the participation framework of an apology in considering its linguistic form, as advocated by Kádár and Haugh (2013).

Police use of apology lexemes in this dataset differs not only in the absence of, some common and some rare, linguistic expressions of apology, but in showing different patterns of use of the forms that are present. In this dataset the police writers overwhelmingly use *apologise*, with *regret* used regularly and a very few examples of *sorry*. This contrasts with previous studies of apology which found *sorry* to be "by far the most widespread expression of apology" in English (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983, p.33). *Apologise* on the other hand has been described as rare (Aijmer, 1995). Deutschmann (2003, p.51) found that *sorry* appeared as 59.2% of explicit apology lexemes, *apologise* as 1.2%, and *regret* only as a single token in a five million word subset of the British National Corpus. I will first consider the differences between *apologise* and *sorry*, and the reasons why this particular policing context might motivate use of the former over usual patterns found in English language, before looking at the use of *regret* and *sorry* in this corpus.

A key difference between the explicit apology forms *sorry* and *apologise* is that the former has the potential to express other matters than apology, where *apologise* tolerates less ambiguity (e.g. Robinson, 2004). Aijmer (1995) describes *sorry* as only indirectly expressing apology, and ambiguous - also capable of expressing sympathy. Austin (1975, p.83) differentiated between *sorry* and *apologise* describing *apologise* as an explicit performative verb and *sorry* as "not pure (half descriptive)", naming the state of sorrow experienced by the utterer rather than the act being performed. The status of *apologise* as the performative verb associated with the act of apologising does not however mean that it is entirely unambiguous; as described in chapter 3 Searle (1969) notes that *promise*, while the performative verb for promising, can also carry out other actions.

One explanation why police complaint handlers might have different patterns of usage of linguistic apology strategies to those found in previous studies of English language apologies is that there may be distinct politeness cultures within the English language for subcultures of policing, or police complaints (see section 5.3 for a discussion of some of the institutional influences on a police (complaints) politeness culture). Cross cultural research into apologies has found that, although the same overarching apology strategies may be present for different cultures, relative frequencies of Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices differ. In Persian for example Shariati and Chamani (2010) found that a request for forgiveness was a more common IFID

than an expression of regret (the category for apology IFIDs including *sorry*), and also found that Persian needed a new category for an expression of shame; they suggest that differences between apology language usage reflect different cultural norms. Culture is being understood here with as

> "a fuzzy set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioural conventions, and basic assumptions and values that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each member's behaviour and each member's interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour"(Spencer-Oatey, 2000a, p.4);

'group' is being understood not only as those defined by national or linguistic boundaries, but as cultures within those larger sets (Culpeper, 2011a).

The police may constitute a specific politeness culture, and have therefore specific cultural norms reflected in language. One particular aspect of a policing culture is that the police are related to legal institutions (and in focus groups, police writers suggested that for example the repeated production of legal documents such as statements affected their language use; see chapter 4 for a description of 'policespeak'). Rock (2007, p.211) suggests that in legal cultures the "limits of acceptable ambiguity are narrow". In the letters themselves, police writers suggested an understanding of a difference between an expression of sympathy and an expression of apology.

L 7 both [officers] say they sympathised with you but did not apologise. (Ltr. 22).

The predominance of *apologise* as an apology form in this dataset may reflect police culture, in particular their operation within a legal culture, which might find more ambiguous forms of apology less acceptable.

The written medium of the data analysed for this study may also motivate the increased frequency of *apologise*. Many existing apology studies consider spoken language (including those which collect data using Discourse Completion Tasks as a representation of spoken language). Holmes (1990) received a small amount of written apologies as part of her self-reporting New Zealand corpus, half of which used *apologise*. She suggested that *apologise* was restricted to written apologies, and even amongst written interactions to relatively formal ones, her examples specifically occurring "between those who knew each other but who were not close friends." (Holmes, 1990, p.173). Lakoff (1990) describes the difference between written and spoken language as including the former's lower tolerance for ambiguity, which in speaking may be clarified by the immediate repair and extra-linguistic cues such as gesture and intonation; such a difference between writing and speaking could motivate the use of a less ambiguous form of apology, ie *apologise*. However, Akgun et al. (2010) in a study of apologetic language in a computing context, in written medium, found that *apologise* was not a usual form, which may suggest that it is the specific

context, not the mode of writing in and of itself, which motivates the use of *apologise*. Indeed, Biber (1988, p.24) has challenged views that an "absolute spoken/written distinction" can be made, suggesting that the distinctions must be more finely drawn across medium, function and context.

The position of these letters as being on record, a type of public apology (the dimensions of 'public' language were discussed in chapter 4), may also affect usage of English expression of apology. Ancarno (2011) analysed media responses to a set of English language apologies, finding that the performative verb *apologise* was deemed the polite language for a public apology. This may again relate to the greater ambiguity of *sorry*; Kampf (2009) describes *sorry* being used tactically in public apologies, as a mechanism for minimising responsibility by the speaker, through exploiting its multiple meanings. Tavuchis (1991, p.71) suggests that eliminating ambiguity is central to public apologies: "sorrow gives way, is overshadowed and subverted by the apparent compulsion to generate unambiguous speech." However, there is not necessarily consensus on the polite expression to use in a public apology. As previously discussed, Jeffries (2007) found that Tony Blair was criticised for the use of *apologise*, which was deemed by the media to be an act, where *sorry* would have been sincere.

The contextual effects on language of (police) institution, written medium and being 'on record' are not always considered separately, and often understood together with 'formal'. As described above, Holmes (1990) suggested *apologise* as a more usual form for written apologies, but defined these as written and formal interactions. Meier (1998), in his review of apology studies, suggested *apologise* was more likely to be used in institutional, written and formal situations. Meanwhile, Deutschmann (2003, p.16) in contrast with the results from this corpus, and these previous studies, argues that professional contexts contain "perfunctory" apologies, aimed at managing discourse (Deutschmann describes both formal contexts and these professional contexts as examples of transactional talk, suggesting there is some overlap for him between professional and formal). This conclusion appears to be based on two particular professional contexts, telephone polling interviews and shop transactions, which only provides limited representation of institutional and formal apology language. Deutschmann (2003) further states the *sorry* is more common in formal than informal texts. This appears however to be a consequence of the reduction in *pardon* and *excuse* in his formal contexts, rather than increased use of *sorry*, although this still shows that *sorry* is not prohibited in formal contexts. There are of course problems in defining 'formality' (see for example Biber, 1988). Differences in findings amongst researchers may reflect overlapping or different definitions, and varying contributions from different elements of written, formal, institutional and professional contexts. The dominance of *apologise* in these police complaints letters may reflect how these elements combine in this specific context, and suggest the need for future work to

disentangle these factors.

There is a contrast between the usage found in these letters, to use *apologise* rather than *sorry*, and how the police writers described what they were doing. This perhaps reflects a difference between their moral norms, what they believe should be done in terms of apology language, and their empirical norms, what they are likely to do in terms of apology language (the latter being described here through identification of regularities in police use of apology language). The empirical norm in these letters for explicit apology expressions appears to be the form *apologise*, used far more frequently than the form *sorry*. In contrast to the apology language that is found in the letters, participants in both focus groups explicitly described apologising as being put into letters in the form *sorry*, as previously in F35 or:

F 39 F: if an apology is put in a letter it's not just we're sorry we'll give an explanation as to why we're sorry as well (ll. 1284-5);

This explicit association of the linguistic form *sorry* with the act of apologising may suggest that the moral norm, what these police focus group participants think should be done, is use *sorry* (remembering that these focus groups provide limited data to evidence a moral norm for e.g. Scottish police complaints handlers as a whole); the moral norm for police apologies may therefore be *sorry*, whereas the empirical norm, the form they are likely to use, is *apologise*.

The difference between police description of apology language and their use of language may help disentangle the different contributions of police culture, written medium, formality and public (on record) apology. The focus groups took place on police premises, the participants were 'on the job', suggested by their presence in uniform or work clothing. While participating in a focus group would not necessarily be part of their daily routine, the participants referenced discussions they would have among themselves about their communication during complaints and specifically in writing the final complaints letters; participating in these focus groups was not outside their work experience. This discussion of apologising could therefore be said to take place within the police institution; it is an emic perspective on what constitutes apologising. Although the focus group was being recorded, it was not going on public record in the same sense as a letter to a complainer. Although participants signed consent forms saying that excerpts could be used in academic publications, and there was therefore some sense of people being able to access at least some of the material, the focus group recordings would not be constructed by the officers as 'in the public interest' in the way that the complaint letters would be (see chapter 4 for a discussion of public accessibility and public interest in relation to these letters). The difference between the explicit apology forms described by focus groups and those regularly used in the letters may suggest therefore that the motivation for the dominant use of

the *apologise* form lies more in the written medium and the way that the letters are public than in the policing context.

Another explanation of the difference between focus group description of the language of apologies and the language found in the letters is that 'saying sorry' is the folk way of talking about apologising rather than a description of the language used. One participant was described an actual letter written with an apology in it, saying:

F 40 C: I can't remember the exact terminology but to basically say we were sorry (l. 432).

This participant describes the act being undertaken in the letter as to 'say we were sorry', having stated that saying sorry is not a reference to the linguistic expression (the terminology) used; this participant appears to be referring to 'saying sorry' not as a description of the language used but as the term for the speech act. An element in discursive politeness studies (e.g. Watts, 2003) is to distinguish between Politeness1, the lay person's understanding, and Politeness2, the academic understanding. This excerpt from the focus groups suggests that the area of study around 'apology' may itself be a Politeness2 approach, because this is perhaps not the lay person's term for the speech act; a Politeness1 approach might require the study of an act of 'saying sorry', not using the academic category of 'apology'. This is of course only one small excerpt, from a specific police context, which appears to describe 'saying sorry' as an act rather than as a description of language used. However, it may suggest that further investigation of how and whether 'apology' is a regularly used lay description of a speech act would be important to discursive researchers seeking a Politeness1 understanding in this area; such a study would complement my further discussion here of whether there is a single act of apology, or perhaps multiple, related acts such as of payment and validation.

Apologise is the most used explicit apology expression in this corpus, rather than *sorry*, contrasting with previous findings about apologies in English. The dominance of *apologise* does not mean police writers in this situation cannot use *sorry*; as I will describe below, *sorry* does occur four times in this corpus. *Apologise* appears to be a less ambiguous verb form for the speech act of apology, and that lack of ambiguity may be more acceptable to the specific cultural context of policing, the written medium of these letters and the public on record status of this interaction. It may however be difficult to untangle the different contributions of these contextual factors, which are often conflated, along with the difficult to define notion of 'formality'. The contrast between writer perception and the evidence of how apology language is actually used may suggest that it is mostly the written medium or the public nature of the interaction which motivate the increased usage of *apologise*.

Sorry

While *apologise* is the most frequently found explicit apology form in this corpus, this does not mean that *sorry* is completely absent. There are four instances of *sorry* in this dataset as used by the police writers (there are some instances where *sorry* is mentioned, in discussion of whether a police officer or another person has uttered this on another occasion); only one police force used *sorry*. This contrasts with previous studies of apologies in English language; in my data *sorry* is rare (because this is a small corpus, the four examples technically give a rate of 12 tokens per 100,000 words, but this is still less than half of Deutschmann's (2003) finding of over 35 tokens of *sorry* per 100,000 words in his subset of the British National Corpus). The presence of this form is however crucial in that it shows that police writers in responding to public complaints can use *sorry*, its use does not appear to be prohibited.

In three of the four examples *sorry* is used in relation to the judgment of the complainer on their interaction - that the addressee feels he or she did not receive the appropriate quality of service or officer conduct:

L 8 I am sorry that you feel that you have not received a quality of service from X(force)X on this occasion. (Ltr. 56);

L 9 We expect the highest standards from our officers and I am sorry that you feel that this did not happen on this occasion. (Ltr. 57);

L 10 I am sorry you feel that the conduct of the officer did not meet your expectations on this occasion. (Ltr. 58).

This reference to the addressee's judgment is also found in some, though not all, of the examples of explicit apology language in this corpus which are structured with *apologise* and an *if*-clause (in section 6.2.3 I note Dancygier and Sweetser's (2000) contention that an *if*-clause may be used in such situations because it limits the speaker's presumption over the internal state of the hearer, which the speaker may not authoritatively pronounce upon). It may be that there is a relationship between apology in relation to a complainer's experience and the linguistic forms of *sorry* and *apologise if*.

One example of the form *sorry* relates to a more objective judgment - that the interaction between addressee and police has not been satisfactory. It is not specified in this example whether the interaction was unsatisfactory from the perspective of the addressee, the police, or both:

L 11 I am sorry that on this occasion your interaction with X(force)X has been unsatisfactory (Ltr. 52).

One difference between this example of *sorry* and the three above is the outcome of this complaint - in L11 the complaint has been resolved, whereas the three previous

examples all refer to allegations which have been found not substantiated (see chapter 4 for a description of possible complaint outcomes). It is possible that the lack of a distinction between the complainer and police perspective in this example reflects the less adversarial nature of a resolved complaint; a resolved complaint does not require the complaint handler to make a judgment on whether or not the complainer's perspective is supported by evidence, perhaps establishing a different relationship between complainer and police complaints handler. While there are too few examples of *sorry* in this corpus to establish such a difference around apology in relation to complaint outcome, this example is important in that it highlights the possible relevance in the local context of the complaint outcome to how apology language is presented (further explored in section 6.3.2).

There are similarities in the language around the four examples of *sorry*, raising some concern that the letters including *sorry* are further examples of letters produced by template (as discussed in section 6.1). There are repeated uses of the same phrases in these letters, for example 'it is always disappointing':

L 12 It is always disappointing when a member of the public feels that the performance of our officers and staff does not reach our normal high standard. (Ltr. 58);

L 13 It is always disappointing when someone is dissatisfied by the performance of our officers or the procedures followed by staff (Ltr. 56).

However, it should be noted that both what is disappointing, and what the force is *sorry* about are not identical (in contrast to the 7 apology phrases in letters 31-7, which differ only in an alternation between *apologise* and *regret*). There are further examples of alternative apology forms in addition to *sorry* by this force, including "apologies in respect of" (Ltr. 54), which appears only once in this corpus. The letters from this force do not therefore appear wholly written from templates.

An alternative explanation for the similarities between these letters, and their unusual use of the form *sorry* is the existence of a particular culture to this police force which might be reflected in language use. I noted above that culture may be used to describe smaller groups than those defined by nation or language, such as police; in chapter 5 I discussed aspects of police culture that have been described academically, and that some of these, such as 'policing by consent' might be particularly relevant to policing in Scotland. It is further possible that police cultures may exists at the level of particular police organisations, as for example the eight geographical police forces which preceded the creation of Police Scotland, which had for example individual cultural artefacts such as logos and, in some cases, Pipe Bands. A cultural group could even exist within the individual police forces; in chapter 5 I also considered some of the

differences between different parts of the police, such as the separation of those conducting complaints handling. The particular functions of these complaint handling officers, including making independent judgments on other officers' discretion and in leading the attitudinal shift toward complaints, constitute joint enterprise. Police officers engaged in managing complaints would be a small number of individuals; all seven letters gathered from this force were written by the same rank of police officer, a Superintendent, a relatively senior rank and therefore not held by many people. There was also evidence from the focus group that complaints handlers had direct engagement with each other through sharing training and discussing language for complaints letters. The criteria for a Community of Practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) in terms of joint enterprise, mutual engagement and specific repertoire appear therefore to be met with regard to this particular force. The use of *sorry* in the letters from this force may represent a specific local norm developed in a complaints handling community of practice.

One particular phrase repeated with all four examples of *sorry* is "on this occasion"; this phrase appears regularly throughout the examples of apology language in this corpus, with other explicit apology expressions and from other police forces. In chapter 3 I referenced Davies et al.'s (2007) study, which argued that apologies could be used as a site for positive identity construction, in that students' apologised for inacceptable behaviour (e.g. turning in an essay late) while describing this behaviour as exceptional, thereby committing to the norm (e.g. turning in work on time) in the future. The police use of 'on this occasion' may be an example of a similar linguistic strategy, because it implies that on other occasions police officers and staff would carry out their duties to the highest standards and meet the addressee's expectations. This phrase may be particularly important to constructions of policing held within police institutions; Reiner (2010) describes the police historically understanding police wrongdoing within a framework of 'bad apple(s)' (where bad behaviour is not the norm, nor related to the institution) and of a police struggle to maintain this narrative. The repeated occurrence of 'on this occasion' with apology language may be an attempt by the police to maintain a narrative of policing as a generally healthy barrel of apples, where particular incidents that fail to live up to policing standards are isolated and apologised for.

Regret

Although an apology has been described as involving an 'expression of regret' (e.g. Davies, 2011; Olshtain and Cohen, 1983; Tavuchis, 1991), the use of the linguistic form *regret* is rarely discussed in apology studies, perhaps because it rarely appears. Blum-Kulka et al. (1989a), on the basis of a bank of Discourse Completion Task apol-

ogy studies, described a hierarchy of apology IFIDs in English in which *regret* is the second to least likely form, only more frequent than *afraid* (as in I'm afraid that...) which, as discussed in chapter 3, is not always understood by researchers as an apology expression. In Deutschmann's (2003) large scale corpus study, *regret* appeared only once.

While my small corpus (approximately 33,000 words) may not seem like an apposite comparison to Deutschmann, it is worth noting that despite the small size of my corpus, *regret* appears more than in his study; in this small corpus *regret* occurs 17 times, compared to Deutschmann's one token. One explanation for the difference may be that mine is a corpus collected due to the likelihood of apology language appearing, whereas his subset of the British National Corpus may contain larger amounts of data with no explicit apology expressions (as noted above, the rate of explicit apology language in my corpus is over twice that of his larger study). However, there are also more tokens of *regret* found in my study than for example Holmes' (1990) targeted apology study (where she also found only one example of *regret* in 174 explicit apology expressions, from a corpus of 183 apologies); Holmes' (1990) example of *regret* was from one of her few written apologies. Another explanation for the greater use of *regret* in my dataset compared to previous studies may therefore be aspects of the context of data, such as its written medium, or also the institutional context of my data or its quality of being 'on record'. Deutschmann's (2003) subset of the British National Corpus (BNC) comprised only spoken dialogue where the gender and age of the speaker were known. He distinguishes between 'formal' and 'informal' parts of the data (which he categorises by the setting of the dialogue, e.g. home versus professional, and whether the data is coded in the BNC as having high or low spontaneity). It appears that less of his data comes from formal settings (although he does not describe how his corpus is constituted between these two, he reports fewer than half of the number of explicit apology expressions coming from formal settings as informal, but that formal settings have a higher apology rate than informal (Deutschmann, 2003, p.143, p.139)). Deutschmann does include public conversation in his corpus (he describes for example an apology in a public council meeting); he does not describe anything specifically from the police. The differences between the type of data collected in my corpus, such as its written medium or the 'on record' nature of the communication, may explain why my corpus contains more examples of *regret* than studies with larger corpora.

There are indications from previous literature and this corpus that *regret* may be viewed as more similar to the expression *sorry* than *apologise*. The classification of IFIDs (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983, p.22) distinguishes between "an offer of apology" such as *I apologise*, and an "expression of regret", such as *I am sorry*. While Olshtain and Cohen do not give *regret* as an example of an IFID, the presence of the explicit

apology expression in the category description “expression of regret" makes it seem likely that *regret* itself would fall into this group, which also contains *sorry* . Zhang (2001, p.385) describes a letter from the United States to China which contained an expression phrased “sincere regret" which was translated into Chinese as an expression of sorrow rather than apology; this may suggest that *regret*, as Aijmer (1995) describes for *sorry*, is capable of expressing empathy or sympathy as well as apology (Villadsen (2013) explicitly describes *regret* as having similar multiple functions to *sorry*, but it should be noted that she was working with Danish language data). Further Searle and Vanderveken (1985, p.15) appear to separate *regret* from *apologise*, in stating that expressing *regret* has a “lesser degree of strength" than to *apologise*. Previous literature may therefore lean toward viewing *regret* as more like *sorry* than *apologise*.

While my corpus contains more examples of *regret* than previous works, there are still too few instances (17) from which to draw conclusions about this expression of apology. There may be some support for the indications from previous literature that *regret* is more like *sorry* than *apologise*, or at least less like *apologise for*; in section 6.3.2 I discuss when different explicit apology expressions are used in this corpus and find that *regret* patterns in similar way to *sorry* and *apologise if* (possible interpretations of *apologise if* are discussion in section 6.2.3 below). Another feature of *regret* in this corpus is that it appears in some unusual situations in this dataset, for example *regret* occurs with the only instance of third person apologies (discussed in section 6.2.2) and the only use of emphatic *do* (discussed in chapter 7). In discussing these exceptional uses of *regret* I suggest that my small corpus has not enabled considerable of all the aspects of the contextual frame which may vary with differences in explicit apology expression. In particular, I draw attention to questions of whether use of *regret* relates to variation in aspects of the relationship between the writer(s) and the reader(s) and what is being apologised for. The differences between my corpus and previous studies may suggest that collection of a larger corpus of e.g. written apologies, on record apologies (noting for example that in section 2.4 I reported a use of *regret* at the Iraq Inquiry by Tony Blair), would allow these first impressions of how *regret* may be used to be more fully explored in future work.

Letters written by the police in final response to public complaints demonstrate different patterns in usage of explicit apology expressions than those previously found in studies of English apologies. Apologies in spoken English are not necessarily the same as those in written, those from a policing subculture not necessarily the same as those from a global English language culture and those from a private, interpersonal situation not necessarily the same as those which are on public record and in the public interest, although it is not always possible to disentangle which of these factors is most important. The police writers choose to use *apologise* and *regret* although they

are able to write *sorry*; the difference in use are not forced therefore by an inability to use *sorry*, but may suggest instead that the writer(s) are evaluating *apologise* and *regret* as the usually polite forms in the particular context of my data.

6.2.2 Person

Overwhelmingly in this corpus apologetic language is presented in the first person singular: *I apologise*, *I regret* or *I am sorry*. There are two examples, from the same letter, where the third person plural is used. There are two apparent impersonal constructions. There are no examples of first person plural expressions of apology. I will briefly look at the two impersonal constructions before focusing on why first person apologies would be the dominant usage in this policing context. Finally I will discuss in detail the two exceptional instances of third person plural forms 'they regret' with reference to the institutional structures which might normally prohibit this usage. The explicit apology forms *regret* and *apologise* also appear in this thesis in offer and request forms, such as 'May I apologise'. There is not space in this thesis, nor a large enough dataset, to consider this aspect of syntactic variation, nor as previously mentioned the use of modal verbs, systematically.

There are two apparent examples of impersonal apologies in this corpus:

L 14 Your client's conduct was inexcusable, however, police officers are expected to maintain high standards of discipline at all times and it is a matter of regret to me that the officer concerned failed to remain professional throughout his dealings with your client. (Ltr. 49);

L 15 It is a matter of regret that on this occasion you felt the attitude of the officer fell below the high standard which is expected of X(force)X, and for this I sincerely apologise." (Ltr. 46).

In both of these examples, the impersonal form is nevertheless related to the writer(s) - in the first by the prepositional phrase 'to me' and in the second by the close proximity to a first person 'I apologise'. These two examples therefore do not seem strong counter-examples to a general principle that in a police complaints context, first person singular forms of apologies are the empirical norm.

These two examples may suggest an alternative understanding of impersonal construction of apology than previously suggested. Kampf (2009, p.2258) suggests that impersonal forms are used by speakers as "tactics that manipulate the form of apology in order to minimize the offender's responsibility". This does not seem to be the most likely explanation for the impersonal constructions in these examples as, in both cases, the writer(s) still links what has happened back to himself (in the second

example, following the impersonal construction with “I sincerely apologise", which does not appear to distance himself from the apology). Secondly, as previously discussed in chapter 5, in this particular context the police writer(s) is not the individual who committed the act being apologised for - there is no need to minimize his (direct) responsibility for the offence. The example from Letter 46 is curious in several ways, and will be discussed fully in section 6.3.4. The first example from Letter 49 presents a possible alternative explanation for the impersonal construction, in that perhaps this form limits the extent to which the apology is directed at the recipient. In this example, the writer(s) describes the complainer as “goading" an officer, with an “extreme level of abuse", and this “eventually leads" the officer to be rude (Ltr. 49). The writer(s) is critical therefore of the actions of the complainer. This letter may therefore present a situation where the complainer is identified by the police writer(s) as an ‘asshole’ in Van Maanen’s (2005) schema. The differences between the linguistic construction of apology in this letter (the relationship between apology form and the outcome of the complaint is also unusual, see section 6.3.4) and the remainder of the corpus may suggest that this complainer is being constructed as an ‘asshole’, when the majority of complainers are classified as ‘good but know nothings’. The unusual impersonal construction in this letter could be understood to mean that the letter writer(s) is not particularly apologetic about the impact of the officer’s inappropriate comments on the complainer, but may find regretful that the officer gave in to the “provocation" (Ltr. 49). (This incident took place in the context of an arrest; the writer(s) may particularly regret the possibility that the complainer will use this incident to challenge the arrest.) Rather than minimising the writer(s) responsibility for an offence (not possible in this context where the writer did not commit the offence), the impersonal construction may allow the police writer(s) to express regret directed inwardly at the police service rather than toward the addressee.

With the exception of the above two impersonal examples, and two instances of “they regret" which will be discussed below, all of the other explicit apology forms in this corpus take first person singular pronouns. Jeffries (2007) describes the first person singular as the prototypical apology form, suggesting perhaps this is simply the police conforming to an overarching norm (and that this norm has more weight than the English language norm of *sorry* as the most used explicit apology expression rather than *apologise*, a norm which is not maintained by the police). However, Jeffries’ schema for a prototypical apology also requires that the speaker of the apology has direct responsibility for the action being apologised for and, although she does not specify this, it is possible that the first person singular form may be partly motivated by an individual personally taking responsibility for what is being apologised for - these two elements of a prototypical apology may be related. However, in this corpus of police apologies, the apology writer(s) is always separate from the officer being complained about. The linguistic form in this case may be typical for many

English language apologies, in contrast to the previous finding about lexical choice, but the circumstances that motivate that form may be very different.

There are aspects of the police complaints context where the apology language appears to originate from more than one person, a meaning which might appear to be more easily reflected in a syntacticly plural expression. The focus group participants describe any apology responding to a complaint as coming from the force, the collective police institution; they also describe the production of the letters as practically involving several people (such as the person who initially investigated the complaint and the person writing the letter, see chapter 5). There might also be an influence of police culture, such as its "marked internal solidarity" (Reiner, 2010, p.122), which would motivate an understanding, and linguistic description, of a shared response from the institution. These circumstances might be expected to be matched with a syntacticly plural form, a collective apology, *we apologise*.

There are constructions of the police force as a collective institution using the first person plural form *we*, both in focus groups and elsewhere in the letters. Focus group participants commonly used the first person plural form to describe their responses to complaints (owning, in a hypothetical situation at least, another police officer's mistake), for example:

F 41 A: if they [people] make mistakes we'll accept we've made mistakes (ll. 441-442).

When discussing specific examples from the texts, presented to them as first person singular statements, the focus group participants even reframed them into the plural:

F 42 B: it's probably fairly straightforward to say we unreservedly apologise for our failure to deal with this matter in a reasonable time (ll. 679-80).

In the letters themselves, the writers also referred to the force at times using the plural:

L 16 As a Force, we pride ourselves in providing a high level quality of service to the public (Ltr. 20);

and with plural verb agreement:

L 17 X(force)X take pride in providing a professional police service to the communities we serve across X(place)X (Ltr. 02).

It seems clear therefore that the police can and do refer to the force using the plural *we* but in this corpus they never use this form with apology language; as with lexical choice, there is some disconnect between how police writers talk about apologising

and the forms that they use.

The cultural and practical pressures for apologising as a collective may be less important than aspects of individual police identity when dealing with the decision and apology in responding to a complaint. In chapter 5 I described the importance of individual police discretion to police identity, the idea that each individual who takes the office of constable may make decisions on a day-to-day basis which in effect define the reach of the law (Goldstein, 1960). This aspect of police identity may be prioritised when reporting the writer(s) decision on the allegation outcome (where the first person singular is used):

L 18 From the information available to me, I find insufficient evidence to support your assertion (Ltr. 20).

In contrast, where aspects of the collective police identity are more important (as in example F16 above) the police perhaps shift to the first person plural form. In chapter 5 I described the importance focus group participants placed on the independence of their identity as police complaints handlers, e.g.:

F 43 B: I think it's important for the [police complaints] unit the independence of it (l. 122-3).

It may be this need for independent decision-making which motivates aspects of police identity relating to discretion to become pre-eminent when describing the allegation outcome. In section 6.3.2 I will suggest that the particular form of apology language used is related to the decision made on the complaint. Any apology may therefore remain with a primary identity of the individual decision-maker, reflected in the consistent use of first person singular pronouns.

Focus group participants showed an awareness of the relevance of the individual aspect of decision making to the complaints handling process, for example:

F 44 D: we're all aware of how much more accountable we are as individuals for what we're actually signing of (ll. 1201-3)

This accountability rests with the individual, not the institution. As described in chapter 5, authorisation for handling complaints is delegated to the Deputy Chief Constable of a police force, who may then devolve this power. The authorisation to apologise, as part of the response to a complaint, is delegated to an individual on behalf of the force. The individual, the first person singular *I*, has the power to speak for the force, the organisation constituted as the origin of any apology by the focus group participants (as opposed to in making general statements about the force services, as in examples L16 and L17 above).

The predominance of first person forms may also reflect the power relationship between police and public. Chung and Pennebaker (2007) found consistently that an interactant who used less *I* was of higher status (and delineate different relationships between former US President Nixon and his close colleagues with reference to pronoun usage). This must be treated with caution, as their research was based on dyadic interactions and, as previously discussed, the interaction around these letters involves a multiplicity of actors (although their research is more similar in being based on written exchanges). Nevertheless this does reflect discussions in chapter 5 about the Scottish policing concept of 'policing by consent'; rather than a force apart and above the public, they are instead a service, policing with the community. Rather than presenting themselves as a powerful institution, the first person singular positions the writer(s) as "accessible, personal and human" (Lakoff, 1990, p.193), an individual in interaction capable of (re)establishing the trust that may lead to a grant of legitimacy. The use of the first person singular, and the convention for police apology that it manifests, may portray the relationship between police and public a particular way.

Jeffries (2007) describes the first person singular as the prototypical linguistic form for person in an apology. Although the police use this form consistently, they are not necessarily using it in a prototypical way - the police are not using this form to express the speaker's direct responsibility for the act being apologised for. Instead, police majority use of a first person singular apology perhaps shows where different aspects of police identity, and of the identity of specific positions within the police, may be important at different moments. The appropriate person to make an apology is, from the police perspective, an individual, taking responsibility for his decision on the outcome of a complaint, making that decision independently from the solidarity of the police institution; as such the apology is stated *I apologise*, although on behalf of a collective. It should be remembered however that this assessment of who is appropriate to apologise does not necessarily match the view from outside the police force; as mentioned in chapter 5, public complainants are often dissatisfied with apologies which come from the force rather than the individual they complained about. Although these police apologies might be judged on this one dimension of person to be typical, it does not reflect the typical relationship between apologiser and responsibility for the offending act, and may not provide the direct responsibility sought by the complainer in an apology.

Regret on behalf of another

There is one letter in which apologetic language is presented as coming from an individual other than the writer, using the third person plural form 'they'. In this

letter (Ltr. 44) there are two examples of explicit apology language:

L 19 I have since been provided with operational statements by the officers concerned and it is fair to say they regret that you felt aggrieved by the manner in which they went about their business. (Ltr. 44);

L 20 In conclusion both officers acknowledge all the comments that you have made in your correspondence and regret that you felt the way you did whilst they were in your company. (Ltr. 44).

These two, together with the two impersonal forms described above, are the only examples of third person apologies in this corpus. This letter is therefore unusual; a potential explanation for its surprising content will be discussed in section 6.3.6, which considers the possibility of audience design effects by the police where a complaint arises from traffic policing.

The language used in these two examples raises questions about how an apology could be performatively offered by one person for another. Example 19 does not appear to be performative - the apology expression is encased within the judgment "it is fair to say", appearing therefore to be a description of the officers' state of regret by the writer(s) rather than an act of apology. Example 20 is perhaps closer to other apology expressions in this corpus, effectively reading "Both officers regret", although the subject and the apologetic language are distanced by the intervening acknowledgement. However, this example is also encompassed within the summing up, signaled by "in conclusion", making it unclear whether the officers are apologising or the writer(s) is expressing his sense of his conversation with the officers.

It is also not clear that these uses of apologetic language are being offered by the appropriate person from the police point of view. There is some indication that the officers complained about apologised at the time of the incident:

L 21 Constable X(name and description)X recalls stating to you that he was sorry for delaying your attendance at your meeting. Constable X(name)X whilst not specifically recalling what was said in respect of an apology stated that he recalled PC X(name)X making an apology for delaying you. (Ltr. 44).

This recalls the use of explicit apologetic language at the original incident, and might therefore be closer to providing the act of apology on behalf of another than the examples 19 and 20. Notably, the apology at the time of the incident was more limited in scope (to the delay only) and in person (only the one officer appears to have apologised) than the regret described by the letter writer(s) (on behalf of both officers, with reference to the entirety of the complainer's experience). As described in chapter 5, the institution may not apologise on behalf of the officer without their consent. While there is some indication of apology by at least one of these officers, there is

no clear statement that they are willing to personally apologise; it is not clear from these letters that the writer(s) is in a position to offer an apology on their behalf. It is possible that this lack of authority motivates the language which makes these less performative - for example “it is fair to say" insulates the claim of regret from the officers, ensuring that the writer(s) is not explicitly offering their apology without the authority to do so. An attempt to provide an apology from the officers complained about may therefore result in something that is less like an apology in terms of linguistic form and in terms of the authority of the speaker; it may however be closer to what the complainer wants (an apology from the officers complained about rather than from the force, the finding previously described from May et al. (2007)).

There are formal provisions of institutional structure and aspects of police identity which motivate the use of a singular first person forms of apology in a police complaints context. There are minimal examples of alternative syntactic presentation of person, but these seem to reflect the first person singular norm, in that the impersonal constructions still relate the apology to the letter writer(s). Meanwhile the single attempt to form an apology on another officer’s behalf shows evidence of writer(s) discomfort - the apology expressions are encased within the thought processes of the writer(s). When I considered the lexical choices of explicit apology forms by police complaint handlers, my findings contrasted with previous studies on apology language; in looking at police choice of syntactic person for apology structures, the police stick closely to the prototype. In both cases however their choices appear motivated by specific aspects of the context of writing final letters to people who have made complaints about the police. In chapter 2 I noted studies which have suggested that public apologies should be considered as distinct speech acts from private apologies (e.g. Jeffries, 2007; Tavuchis, 1991). The similarity in form of syntactic person between these police apologies and other apologies, despite the very different nature of what the apologiser is responsible for, acts as a reminder that there may be similarities in the outward appearance of apologies that mask important differences in their internal form. I shall go on to explore the possibility that there could be different speech acts both taking the external linguistic appearance of *apologise*.

6.2.3 Complements

In this section I will consider the different complement structures that appear with *apologise* in this corpus. There are five constructions (described throughout for simplicity with the verb form of *apologise*):

- *apologise for* (15 instances)
- *apologise if* (12 instances)

- *apologise that* (6 instances)
- *apologise should* (1 instance)
- *apologise in respect of* (1 instance)

Four of the six examples of *apologise that* appear in letters discussed in section 6.1 as likely form letters, which are therefore not considered further. I shall briefly discuss the two remaining exceptional items of *apologise that* before considering the difference between the main complement alternatives for *apologise*: a prepositional phrase beginning with *for* or an *if*-clause. I will briefly consider whether the two single examples (*apologise should* and *apologise in respect of*) can be included in either of these larger categories, to give a final distribution count for complement structures to *apologise* in this corpus.

There is little previous research about syntactic variation in complement structures for apologies to compare with the findings from my corpus. This may reflect the context of many previous studies, spoken language, in which the apology verb *sorry* is prevalent, and *apologise* is rare, for it is with *apologise* that most complement variation in this corpus occurs. In section 6.3.2 I will go on to suggest that it is with variation in complement structure, rather than variation in choice of explicit apology expression, that the police writers mark different contextual frames.

Apologise that is a rare complement structure for *apologise* in this particular corpus and more broadly. As mentioned in section 6.1, Deutschmann (2003, p.53) does not attest a single example of *apologise that*, although these may be encompassed within his broader category of "Apology +(that) + S'", as he does not distinguish within this category by apology expression (*regret* and *sorry* appear in my corpus mostly with *that*).

One of the two examples of *apologise that* in this corpus is the repetition of apology language in response to a particular failure, where the first response at the beginning of the letter takes the form *apologise for*. The letter describes an allegation that an incident took six days to respond to, in regard to which the writer(s) states:

L 22 I unreservedly apologise to you for our failure to deal with this matter within a reasonable period of time. (Ltr. 16).

Later the writer(s) describes the complainer as having:

L 23 expressed surprise that the incident was not treated as a priority. (Ltr. 16).

The letter writer(s) relates this aspect of the complaint to the first, continuing:

L 24 The incident should have been responded to within two hours and as I have already indicated, I apologise that we did not achieve that on this occasion. (Ltr. 16).

Although this second use of apologetic language is still presented in present tense, it appears to be referring back ('as I have already indicated') to the first apology. This may suggest that *apologise that* is being used to confirm an existing state of apology rather than to perform the act of apology.

The final instance of *apologise that* is:

L 25 I apologise that your perception of the interaction with my officers was not more positive. (Ltr. 2)

Both focus groups were presented with this example; both laughed. Participant A stated that it was not an apology, although it is impossible to tell from the focus group data whether this reaction specifically relates to the construction of the complement clause or other aspects of the example. The focus group reaction may confirm the above understanding of example L24, that the construction *apologise that* is not understood as carrying out the act of apology. Unlike example L24 however, the instance of *apologise that* in example L25 is not repeating a previous use of apologetic language: if the construction *apologise that* does not perform an apology, then this letter does not have an apology in it. This letter reports the outcome of a complaint with five allegations; the complaint investigation did not find evidence to support any of the complainer's five allegations. In other words, there is no evidence that the police have done anything wrong to apologise for; an absence of apology in this situation seems reasonable. In section 6.3.2 I will discuss why the police might use apologetic language where there is no judgment that they have done anything wrong, and why they might use unusual linguistic constructions of apology, mostly *apologise if* but perhaps here *apologise that*, to distinguish such occasions from those where there is evidence of a police failure.

The use of an *if*-clause as complement to *apologise* has been briefly mentioned in previous literature. Deutschmann (2003, p.56) describes its occurrence (with all apology expressions) as "extremely rare", with nine examples in his 3070 explicit apology tokens. The full British National Corpus tells a similar story, with 18 occurrences of *if* directly on the right of *apologise* (in contrast to 274 occurrences of *for* in this position). The 12 examples of an *if*-clause with *apologise* in this corpus of police response letters to public complaints is therefore different to the complements found for *apologise* in English outside this corpus.

Deutschmann (2003, p.57) describes the use of an *if*-clause in an apology as meaning that "the offensive nature of the act, and/or the victim's right to feel offended, are

questioned in the apology". Smith (2008) suggests a similar interpretation of *apologise if*, that it questions whether the perception of harm is warranted, transferring the blame to the victim, although also noting that in some situations there can be genuine uncertainty about whether or not harm has been caused. The Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman produces specific guidance on how public sector bodies should apologise, giving an *apologise if* example as something that should not be done, because "Your apology should not question whether the person who has made a complaint has been harmed" (Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman, 2011, p.3). The use of *apologise if* therefore is criticised in both the academic and public world.

The academic and public criticism of the construction *apologise if* does not necessarily mean that it will not be accepted by its recipient as an apology. Mullany (2011) describes an apology from former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown, containing many different formulations of apology including what she describes as conditional *if*-clauses with *apologise*, being accepted by the recipient. As described in chapter 2, an important consideration for discursive researchers as to whether or not an apology has taken place is whether the recipient accepts it as an apology (e.g. Davies et al., 2007). Academic perspectives on the workings of the *if*-clause may need re-evaluating if *apologise if* is accepted in interaction as an apology.

Mullany (2011) describes examples of *apologise if* as conditionals, but it is not clear that *apologise if* should be understood as a standard conditional construction. Dancygier and Sweetser (2000, p.114-15) suggest four different types of conditional clause in English, including a standard conditional:

> "If his computer gets repaired, he'll finish the paper by Friday."

and a speech act or discourse conditional

> "If I don't see you before Thursday, have a good Thanksgiving!"

Using mental space theory, they describe the standard conditional as setting up two possibilities, one where the contents of the *if*-clause is fulfiled, and thus, in this example, the paper is finished, but also an alternate space where the *if*-clause is not fulfiled, and, as a consequence, the paper does not get finished. In contrast, the discourse conditional only sets up one space, one where it is relevant to say something about Thanksgiving now. This type of conditional does not set up a contrasting space where the *if*-clause does not hold (ie this example does not set up a possible situation where the speaker does see the hearer again before Thursday and thus hopes they have a bad Thanksgiving).[2]

[2]The further two types of conditional proposed by Dancygier and Sweetser (2000) are metalinguistic conditionals, where the *if*-clause questions the terminology rather than the event, such as 'She is bringing her partner, if that's what we should call him', and epistemic conditionals, where the *if*-clause explains how the speaker reached a conclusion, such as 'If she went to the cinema, she must have finished the paper'.

This model, of different types of conditional clauses including a specific type where the *if* clause functions to describe the relevance of the related clause, is not uncommon. Haegeman (2003, p.317) differentiates between event conditionals, where the *if*-clause defines an event which affects whether the related clause is true (e.g. If it rains we will get wet), and premise conditionals, where the *if*-clause "structures the discourse: it makes manifest a proposition that is the privileged context for the processing of the associated clause". Ferguson (2001, p.66, 68) finds that the latter use of *if*-clauses (using slightly different terminology again, namely 'pragmatic' conditionals, which he describes as "virtually coterminous" with the 'speech act' or discourse category of conditional) is common in doctor-patient consultations, making up 31% of the *if*-clauses in his corpus. Both refer to Austin (1961) identifying this type of conditional, with the particular example "There are biscuits on the sideboard if you want them". Austin (1961, p.158) describes the consequences of this particular *if* example as "we can certainly infer from it that 'There are biscuits on the sideboard whether you want them or not' and that anyway 'There are biscuits on the sideboard'". The existence of, what will be called here, discourse conditionals, is therefore well established; further in a corpus study of the institutional situation of a doctor-patient consultation they appeared as a regular, and not an exceptional, function for an *if*-clause.

One of the examples of *apologise if* from these letters suggests that an alternative interpretation to the standard conditional is necessary:

L 26 I would like to apologise if, as is clear in this case, you felt the officer's actions were not professional. (Ltr. 12).

A standard conditional interpretation of this statement is that the writer(s) is envisaging two possible scenarios. In one scenario, the complainer feels the officer's actions are not professional, in which case the writer(s) would like to apologise. In another scenario, the complainer does not feel that the officer's actions are not professional, in which case the writer(s) does not wish to apologise. However, the intervening clause, 'as is clear in this case' seems to exclude the possibility of the second scenario; a standard conditional reading of this example is therefore difficult. A discourse conditional interpretation does not present this problem. As described by Dancygier and Sweetser (2000), a discourse conditional does not envisage the second scenario, rather the *if*-clause is functioning to explain what the apologetic language relates to. The writer(s) may wish to define the subject of the apology in this example because the complainer has raised several aspects of concern and others are not subject to apology - for example the writer(s) justifies a lengthy search on the basis of crime patterns and that "I would expect Road Policing Officers to be thorough in their inspections of such matters." (I will discuss further reasons why the police writers might find value in a discourse conditional form of apology in section 6.3.2 when I look at when the

writers use the different forms). Police use of *apologise if* may not be use of a standard conditional construction, and may therefore not, from a police writer's perspective, be about questioning whether the complainer was harmed, but rather about defining the relevance of the apology.

There are elements to the syntactic structure of *if*-clauses which can be tested to consider whether they are standard or discourse conditional clauses; the examples of *apologise if* in this corpus largely correspond with features of discourse conditional structures. Dancygier and Sweetser (2000, p.122) suggest that the standard conditional meaning of for example 'if it rains, we'll get wet' comes about not solely through the conjunction but also through the combination of verb forms - present-tense in the *if*-clause, modal *will* in the main clause; there are examples of apology language preceded by modal forms in this corpus, but none with *will*. They further suggest that a more usual clause order for discourse conditionals is for the *if*-clause to follow the main clause - all but two examples of *apologise if* in this corpus follow therefore a discourse conditional clause ordering. However, Dancygier and Sweetser (2000, p.133-4) also suggest that examples without "comma intonation" are more likely to have standard conditional meaning. While the *apologise if* clauses in this corpus do not in the main have written commas, it does not appear that Dancygier and Sweetser (2000) are referring to written language, only spoken, in that their interest is on the "intonation pattern", and therefore it is not clear that conclusions can be drawn on the meaning of these clauses from the presence or absence of written commas. The syntactic structure of the *apologise if* clauses in this corpus therefore tends toward a discourse conditional rather than a standard conditional reading.

The case for reading the majority of *apologise if* clauses in this corpus as discourse conditionals is strengthened by looking at an example which does not fit all the syntactic tests described above for discourse conditionals:

L 27 I have carefully reviewed the evidence available to me and although I am unable to substantiate your complaint, if it remains your position that incorrect information was provided to you, then I apologise. (Ltr. 47).

Unlike most *apologise if* examples in this corpus, the *if*-clause here precedes the apology language, rather than what Dancygier and Sweetser (2000) claim is the normal clause order for discourse conditionals, for the *if*-clause to follow. A standard conditional reading of this clause is further made possible by the use of *then*, implying a causal reading, and otherwise absent in the *apologise if* examples in my dataset. A standard conditional clause may fit the particular circumstances of this complaint. This complainer is alleging that he or she was informed that the police were attending a particular type of incident, when in fact it was a different type of incident. The writer(s) reports that the incident log matches the complainer's description of

the incident type, and that there is no evidence to suggest it was ever categorised otherwise. A standard conditional might therefore reflect the letter writer(s) being uncertain whether the complainer's concern is that he or she has been recorded as involved in a particular type of incident or that he or she was informed incorrectly about the type of incident. The *if*-clause in example L27 is therefore more like a standard conditional form in aspects of its syntax, which differ from most examples in this corpus, and refers to a particular situation where a standard conditional reading is plausible.

A discourse conditional reading of *apologise if* might appear not to remove the criticism that this form of apology is problematic if it is still understood as doubting the harm experienced by the complainer: Austin (1961, p.159) suggests that discourse *if* conditionals should be understood in relation to "doubt" or "hesitation". However, Dancygier and Sweetser (2000) discuss the difference between *if* and *since*, suggesting that the 'doubt' is in fact a requirement that a speaker may not presume to know what a hearer is thinking. Dancygier and Sweetser (2000, p.131, 129) show that *since* can substitute for *if* in discourse conditionals, giving for example

> "Since you're so smart, when was George Washington born?"

The difference between *since* and *if*, they suggest, has particular relevance to whether a speaker is asserting something he or she knows or is evident, or something that is only within the hearer's power to know. Where the *if*-clause contains material that only the hearer can authoritatively decide upon, such as their own state of mind, *since* may not substitute for *if*, for example:

> "If/#Since you don't mind, could you hold this stack of books for a moment?"

Dancygier and Sweetser (2000) note that the *since* version of this example is only possible where the speaker has already declared that they do not mind, otherwise *since* may not be used, because the speaker may not presume that the hearer does not mind. Many of the *apologise if* examples in this dataset relate to the complainer's perception of the incident, such as:

L 28 I apologise if the approach adopted by this officer left you with a negative impression of X(force)X (Ltr. 03);

or

L 29 I apologise if your experience of the police on this occasion failed to meet your expectations (Ltr. 05).

Rather than reading these examples as standard conditionals, questioning whether the complainer has a negative perception of the experience and making the apology

conditional on that fact, these examples can be read as discourse conditionals, where the function of the *if*-clause is to specify the relevance of the apology, and the particular choice of *if* represents the police writers' inability to presume what attitude exactly the complainer holds towards events.

In contrast to *apologise if*, *apologise for* is a frequent construction for a complement to an apology. The conceptualisation of apology as payment for a fault (e.g. Brown and Levinson, 1987) suggests that a prepositional phrase, containing the details of what that payment is for, would be a reasonable construction to follow an apology. Deutschmann (2003, p.53) found more examples of 'Apology +(for) +NP' than of 'Apology+if' (31 to 9), but also defined a separate category of demonstratives with *about* and *for*, suggesting the difference in frequencies may be larger, although it must be remembered this is not only for the explicit expression *apologise*. A lack of academic commentary or public criticism around the construction *apologise for* may suggest that this is regularly interpreted as a polite way to apologise (Terkourafi (2005) suggests that a regularly uncontested utterance is evidence that a particular form is being accepted as polite in a particular frame).

Apologise if and *apologise for* are the two main complement structures used by the police with *apologise* in this data set. The final two complement types in this data are *apologise should* and *apologise in respect of*:

L 30 I can only offer my apologies should you continue to believe that this X(injury)X was caused by the excessive or unreasonable actions of a police officer. (Ltr. 45);

L 31 Please accept my apologies in respect of the issues highlighted in your e-mail (Ltr. 54).

In the example L31, the possibility of substituting *in respect of* with *for* may suggest that this example may be categorised with *apologise for*, but there is no discussion about this particular form to evidence this. I have categorised the example L30 with *apologise if* based on discussion of *should* as an English conditional form, and specifically that it is able to appear in first position in an *if*-clause where the *if* is not present (Palmer, 1979). There is also one appearance of *apologise for* in this dataset which should be categorised as *apologise if*:

L 32 However, if it is still your perception that the officers conduct was not as professional as you would have expected, I can only apologise for that." (Ltr. 57).

In this example although *apologise* directly collocates with *for*, the demonstrative *that* refers back to the preceding *if* clause.

This section has described the different complement structures used by the police with *apologise*. On the basis of final recategorisations discussed in the preceding paragraph, the volume of different forms is:

- *apologise for* (14 instances)
- *apologise if* (14 instances)
- *apologise that* (2 instances, plus 4 in likely template letters)
- *apologise in respect of* (1 instance).

Patterns of usage for complements to *apologise* are unusual in this police corpus, with an equal split between *apologise for* and *apologise if*, although the latter has been rarely attested in previous studies of apology language in English. The construction of an apology with an *if*-clause has been criticised in both academic studies and public comment as not polite in an apology. This criticism appears predicated on an understanding of the *if*-clause as a standard conditional construction. I have briefly considered here the possibility of an alternative syntactic analysis of *apologise if*, suggesting that the examples in this corpus often fit descriptions of discourse conditional syntax; analysis of a larger corpus, allowing consideration for example of how modal verbs are used in relation to *apologise if* would be valuable to more fully test this theory. It is not the domain of this thesis to provide a syntactic analysis of *apologise if*, however this initial look has suggested that it would be valuable to re-evaluate the dominant academic understanding of *apologise if* with more data. In section 6.3.2 below I will go on to look at where this construction is used, and *apologise for* is not used, and use a discourse conditional reading of *apologise if* to suggest why it may be valuable to the police writers of final complaint letters in those particular situations.

6.3 When do the police apologise?

In this section I consider whether the variation identified in the previous sections (of apology expression and the construction of complements to *apologise*) varies in any regular ways with differences in the circumstances of the letters. First I describe how I have operationalised Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based approach for this particular dataset, and in doing so identify a particular aspect of the contextual frame, the decision on the outcome of a complaint, as a crucial dimension against which apology language may vary. I then look at the overarching patterns of apology language in relation to this frame. The regularities that I find are not necessarily predictable; there is no relationship between the presence and absence of apology language and presence and absence of evidence of a police failing. Instead I find that the police use explicit apology language across both these situations, but they distinguish between

them in syntactic form.

I explore this finding of a form/frame relationship further by looking at single letters which encompass different frames, showing that the relationship between syntactic variation and the outcome of a complaint maintains within a single document. I also discuss exceptions to the overall finding, noting that the exceptions to the suggested pattern often appear where the relationship between interactants is differ from the usual relationships between participants in this corpus.

I consider the different apology constructions used in different circumstances in relation to discussions in chapter 5 about the various audiences to these letters and the conflicting pressures of their different expectations. I suggest that the police may have developed the distinction between apology forms to manage these pressures politely. The result is two different speech acts: an act of repaying a wrong and a validation, or acknowledgement, of the complainer's perspective. Finally, I briefly touch on a particular type of policing, traffic policing, which may affect how police writers view the public addressees, and therefore how they apologise.

6.3.1 Operationalising the frame-based approach

The frame based approach looks for co-regularities of linguistic form and context, taking a repeated, unremarked (as opposed to disputed as impolite) relationship as evidence that a particular form is considered polite in a particular situation: "they are polite *because* they are regular" (original emphasis) (Terkourafi, 2005, p.248). This thesis, which studies written language, uses an amended version of this framework. Because the production of the letters provides opportunities for evaluating and re-evaluating the writing (as described in chapter 5), co-regularities of linguistic form and contextual frame evident in the finished letters has already been subject to dispute and negotiation amongst the writers (although there is still obvious potential for dispute and renegotiation outside that particular culture). In this thesis therefore, regularities of linguistic form and contextual frame are considered to demonstrate what is polite from the police complaint handlers' perspective.

Terkourafi (2005) defines 'frame' with reference to descriptions of the speakers and hearers, the relationship between them, and the interactional setting. She also notes that frames should be data-driven, emerging from the data rather than imposed top down, suggesting consideration of local factors, not only global categories such as gender or age. This idea may seem difficult to apply to these letters written from Scottish police to public complainers; several aspects of the frame are held constant across all the letters, such as the relationship between the writer(s) and the addressee

being one of police/public, while other categories that might be used to describe the participants are largely inaccessible through the requirement for the data to be redacted by the police. Relevant aspects of the interactional setting may also appear constant. In particular, apology research has often considered how the linguistic form of apology language varies in relation to differences in what is being apologised for (e.g. Holmes, 1990; Deutschmann, 2003); this focus has been maintained in discursive work, for example Jeffries (2007) proposes that a prototypical apology would address the most significant wrong between a speaker or hearer, where a failing apology considers a lesser wrong. This aspect of the frame would seem difficult to apply to this corpus of letters, because the letters were supposed to all be addressing complaints of the same fault - incivility.

There is however a particular aspect of the interactional setting, and one which might be crucial to apology language, which does vary within this corpus: the decision as to the outcome of the complaint allegation. At the time of data collection, police complaint allegations were determined to be either substantiated (where the complaint led to corrective advice or a finding of guilt in a misconduct hearing for a police officer) or not substantiated (where there was not a balance of evidence available to substantiate a complaint); separately a complaint might be resolved by explanation, where a finding for or against the complaint is not part of the process (for discussion on these terms, see chapter 4, for the categorisation of each allegation in this corpus, see appendix E).

Police focus group participants suggested that there was a relationship between when they apologised and the determination on a complaint:

F 45 C: there were other aspects that were not you know didn't want an apology because we hadn't actually done anything wrong (l. 433-4);

F 46 G: it's to apologise if we need to apologise (l. 1049);

F 47 A: we shouldn't be offering an apology unless we've determined that there's an apology required (ll. 351-2).

In these examples police complaints handlers relate apologising to having done something wrong and describe it in terms of necessity, not choice; in example F47 the speaker also uses related terminology (determined) to that of the decision on a complaint outcome (determination). This understanding of apologising is not limited to the small group of focus group participants; it is also evident in some letters:

L 33 I would like to thank you for taking the time to make contact and enable us the opportunity to apologise where necessary and provide explanations for our actions. (Ltr. 57).

Both in focus groups and the letters there is therefore a sense that an apology is required in particular circumstances and that those circumstances are where the police have done something wrong, which can be considered in the dataset by defining a frame according to the outcome of the complaint.

Identifying the decision on a complaint allegation in this corpus is not always straightforward. Some letters state that allegations are found substantiated or not substantiated or resolved. Others refer to officers being given corrective advice, or to presence or absence of evidence to support the allegation. In several however there is no obvious statement of the outcome; this is also complicated by the apparent lack of a clear definition for substantiated (as discussed in chapter 5, the Commissioner was unable to provide an authoritative definition). One practical issue arising from this research therefore is the need for the now Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (PIRC) to ensure that complaint outcomes are being communicated to complainers (noting that the Statutory Guidance for police complaints does now contain a definition of the new decision standard, that of whether a complaint is upheld or not upheld). The complaint letters also refer to failings in the handling of the complaint, for example delays; these process matters have been classified as either substantiated or not substantiated, depending on whether a fault is accepted or not, to align them with complaint outcomes. As discussed below however such matters have a different frame in terms of the relationship between participants; failings relating to the process of handling a complaint are directly the responsibility of the letter writer(s), because he is responsible for the complaints process. Appendix E presents the evidence in each letter used to justify the decision classification for this thesis.

Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based approach considers aspects of who the speaker is, who the hearer is, the relationship between them and the setting of the interaction. In this thesis, I am stripping this back to primarily a single aspect of the setting, that of the decision on the outcome of the complaint. While this may appear a very limited application of a frame-based approach, it is also one that is practicable in this relatively small corpus. I will also in this section identify variation in other elements of the frame, particularly the relationship between writer(s) and addressee, when it appears relevant to variation in apology language, as indicators for future research.

6.3.2 Identifying form-frame regularities

The first question in considering whether there is any regular variation in apology linguistic form with reference to the frame distinction of the complaint outcome is whether explicit apology language is present only where a complaint allegation is found substantiated, ie where there is evidence that a police officer has done some-

thing wrong. Table 6.2 shows that explicit apology language is present both when

Frame	Presence	Absence
Not Substantiated	28	15
Substantiated	16	4
Resolved	8	8
Other	4	0
Totals	56	27

Table 6.2: Complaint outcome and presence or absence of apology expressions

there is a substantiated complaint allegation and where there is not.[3] The police appear therefore to be overusing apology, in the sense that they apologise when their institutional structures say that there is nothing to apologise for. Using the concept of an apology as payment for a fault, the police appear to be making a payment where there is no debt. The empirical norm visible in these letters is that the police use explicit apologetic language frequently, regardless of whether the complaints system has found evidence of police wrongdoing; this does not match the moral norm expressed by the police writers (see examples F45, F46, F47, and L33 above), that an apology was required following a failure, but otherwise should not be offered.

This finding that the police use explicit apology language when there appears to be nothing to apologise for contrasts with previous literature. Kampf (2009) describes situations in which the speaker uses the form of the apology to minimise their responsibility for an offence or, as noted in chapter 3, Olshtain and Cohen (1983) describe situations where a person denies the need to apologise. Neither of these seem to consider a situation where apologetic language might be used in the absence of an offence. As described in chapter 3, approaches to studying apology seem to presuppose that an apology only takes place where there is an offence (such as considering variation in apology language in relation to offence type), which does not appear to be the case in this data.

The next question is whether there is any regularity in the distribution of explicit apology expressions with differences in complaint outcomes, which would suggest particular understandings of the different expressions within the police culture. Table 6.3 presents the occurrence of each explicit apology expression, and the absence of any explicit apology language, against whether an allegation was substantiated or

[3]One complaint can encompass several allegations. Where there are multiple unsubstantiated allegations in a single letter with no use of apology language these have been counted once; where there are multiple allegations and one use of apologetic language which refers to all of them, these have been counted once. Where different apology language is used for different allegations within a letter, these are counted separately.

Frame	*Sorry*	*Regret*	*Apologise*	Absence
Not Substantiated	3	9	16	15
Substantiated	0	4	12	4
Resolved	1	2	5	8
Other	0	2	2	0
Totals	4	17	35	27

Table 6.3: Complaint outcome and variation in explicit apology expression

not substantiated, or the complaint was resolved.[4] There does not appear from table 6.3 to be a clear relationship between the different explicit apology forms and whether or not allegations were found substantiated; all different apology forms are used with unsubstantiated allegations. The majority of substantiated allegations do result in some apology language. It does appear that both *sorry* and *regret* are less used when an allegation is substantiated, which may support the suggestion in 6.2.1 that *sorry* and *regret* are similarly ambiguous, able to describe the state of the speaker as well as perform the act of apology. This ambiguity may lead to a police perception that they are a less polite expression of apology where there is a clear finding that the police have done something wrong.

One benefit of this corpus is that it contains an unusually high proportion of *apologise* allowing, as described in 6.2.3, two main syntactic structures to be identified for the complements to this explicit apology expression. Table 6.4 includes this aspect

Frame	*Sorry*	*Regret*	*A + if*	*A + for*	*A*+other	Absence
Not Substantiated	3	9	12	3	1	15
Substantiated	0	4	0	10	2	4
Resolved	1	2	0	1	4	8
Other	0	2	2	0	0	0
Totals	4	17	14	14	7	27

Table 6.4: Complaint outcome and complement variation

of linguistic variation against the outcome of the complaint.[5] This table suggests regularities in the use of explicit apology expressions in the police complaints context:

- most substantiated allegations occur with the explicit apologetic language *apologise for*;

[4]Letter 18 contains six allegations, five of which are substantiated. The letter concludes with a use of *regret* and *apologise*. These have been counted once each as apology language for substantiated allegations, although there is nothing in the letter to suggest that the conclusion does not apply equally to the unsubstantiated allegation. This example is further discussed in section 6.3.3.

[5]The one instance of *apologise should* and the example where *apologise for* is used to refer back to an *if*-clause, discussed in section 6.2.3, have been included in the *apologise if* column. *Apologise* + other therefore includes *Apologise that* and the single instance of *Apologise in respect of*. The four examples of *apologise that* used with resolved allegations are in the letters believed more likely to have been constructed using templates.

- most not substantiated allegations occur without explicit apologetic language or with the forms *apologise if, regret, sorry*;
- most resolved allegations occur without apologetic language (remembering that four of the eight uses of apology language with resolved allegations are *apologise that* in the likely template letters).

The presence of apology expressions with not substantiated allegations has been noted above as unusual, contrasting with findings from previous studies and the moral norms of the writers. The discussion in this thesis will therefore focus on understanding why the use of apology expressions in particular forms, notably *apologise if*, appears to be considered polite by the police in this context of not substantiated allegations.

The two main complements of *apologise* differ starkly in their frames of use. *Apologise if* is used universally with complaint allegations that are not substantiated.[6] *Apologise*

Frame	*Apologise if*	*Apologise for*
Not Substantiated	12	3
Substantiated	0	10

Table 6.5: *Apologise if* and *Apologise for*

for is used mostly with substantiated allegations; the few exceptions will be considered in section 6.3.4 below. While this is a very small dataset, not originally intended for quantitative analysis, the contrast between *Apologise if* and *Apologise for* with regard to this frame of usage is statistically significant (Fisher's Exact Test, $p<0.001$).

This collection of letters written by the police in final response to public complaints displays a regular co-occurrence of particular linguistic forms with a distinction in the contextual frame of whether or not an allegation is substantiated: *Apologise* with a complement in the form of an *if*-clause is regularly used where allegations have not been found substantiated whereas *Apologise* with a prepositional phrase beginning with *for* is regularly used where the allegation is substantiated. It is less likely in this dataset for a substantiated allegation to not result in any explicit apology expression; where a complaint is resolved however this often does not result in any explicit apology language.

[6]The two allegations that have been designated 'other' are one allegation where the officer is on leave and has not yet been spoken to and another where the matter does not appear to be a complaint about police misconduct but rather about allocation of police resources; on the basis that neither of these have been found to be a substantiated allegation of misconduct against police officers, they are closest to the Not Substantiated category.

6.3.3 One letter, two frames

There are letters in this corpus responding to multiple complaint allegations with different outcomes; the key aspect of the contextual frame identified above, whether or not a complaint allegation is substantiated, can therefore change within a single letter. In this section I note examples of letters where there is presence and absence of apologetic language relating to complaint allegations with different outcomes and single letters where different linguistic forms of apology vary consistently with the frame shifts. This demonstrates that the form/frame regularity I have described above cannot be a consequence of individual differences between writers, because the linguistic variation maintains consistency with differences in the allegation outcome where the writer(s) stays the same.

Letter 48 contains one use of *apologise for* following an allegation that is considered substantiated and no apologetic language following allegations that are considered unsubstantiated. Thus after:

L 34 I have carefully reviewed the circumstances in relation to this allegation and find that the officer's remarks were unprofessional and inappropriate particularly at a time when you may have felt vulnerable. (Ltr. 48),

the writer(s) states:

L 35 I am sure the officer will take time to reflect upon the comments made at the time, and I offer an apology to you for any distress caused. (Ltr. 48).

However there is no apologetic language after each of the two unsubstantiated allegations (relating to a further allegation of incivility and an allegation of neglect of duty), each reported with:

L 36 I am therefore, based on the evidence available to me, unable to substantiate your complaint. (Ltr. 48).

It can also be seen in example L35 that the writer(s) relates the apology, through a conjunction, to a previous description of a single officer reflecting on the incivility - it does not appear therefore that this apology relates to multiple officers, such as those responsible for the behaviour of the subsequent allegations. This apology language also appears only to relate to the one specific allegation by virtue of its position in the letter: the first allegation has been described, then its investigation, then its conclusion, followed by the apology language, followed by the beginning of the second allegation (marked by "You also told us that"). This contrasts with letters in this corpus, such as what will be described for letter 18 below, where apology language appears at the very end of the letter, referencing all the allegations. This letter therefore shows the writer(s) distinguishing between using apology language

for a substantiated allegation and using no apology language where allegations are not substantiated; other relevant aspects of the frame such as the writer(s), his responsibility for the alleged failures and the addressee remain constant throughout the letter (although there are at least two different officers subject to complaint).

There are also examples in this corpus where the writer(s) distinguishes between *apologise for* and other forms of apology language in a single letter. Letter 16 contains *apologise for*, three instances of *regret* and *apologise that*. The one instance of *apologise for* is:

L 37 I unreservedly apologise to you for our failure to deal with this matter within a reasonable period of time. (Ltr. 16).

This is a response to the police not having made personal contact for several days with a person who reported an incident; the letter reports a series of ways in which the police could have, but failed to, make contact with the individual. When this failure is reiterated near the end of the letter, as described above in section 6.2.3, the writer(s) uses the form *apologise that*, perhaps reflecting a difference between the first performative use and the later repetition.

The three instances of *regret* in letter 16 are:

L 38 I regret that we did not meet your expectations in this regard. (Ltr. 16);

L 39 I regret any confusion that resulted from your conversation with PC X(name)X. (Ltr. 16);

L 40 I regret if you felt that he was not in possession of the full facts of the case. (Ltr. 16).

In none of these examples do the allegations appear substantiated - the letter reports an alternate viewpoint of the officer complained about without stating that the weight of evidence supports the complainer's account. The letter does suggest that police officers may not have been communicating effectively, but the specific complaint allegations are refuted, for example in L39 the allegation is that a police officer did not raise appropriate issues in questioning an accused, where the response states that the particular line of questioning was followed. There is a reference at the conclusion of this letter to "officers involved" receiving "appropriate advice and guidance" which could apply to more than the officers involved in the *apologise for* allegation; this may suggest that these further allegations should be considered substantiated, although this still would not specify that they had received the misconduct outcome of 'management' advice. In this one letter there is a distinction drawn between the one substantiated allegation, which is followed by an expression of apology in the form *apologise for* and not substantiated allegations where *regret* is used. The regular

pattern of linguistic forms and frame of allegation outcome is therefore maintained within this single letter.

This corpus shows that distinctions are made within single letters not only between apology expressions, but between the complement forms for *apologise*. Letter 22 includes an example of *apologise for* and example of *apologise if*. Near the beginning the writer(s) states:

L 41 Firstly, may I apologise for the length of time it has taken to reply to you as the issues were investigated. (Ltr. 22).

This has been classified as a process matter, a failing in the handling of the complaint itself rather than a complaint allegation. This is followed by discussion of several allegations of complaint. In relation to most the writer(s) reports the reasoning of the officers, stating 'with which I agree' (suggesting therefore that these matters are not substantiated), and uses no apologetic language. One allegation is made about officers' communication, including the use of bad language, to which the writer(s) responds:

L 42 I can only apologise to you if you have misread the officer's intentions, however there is insufficient information for me to progress this further. (Ltr. 22).

The second half of L42 shows that the allegation is unsubstantiated, it cannot be taken further. The use of *apologise if* for this unsubstantiated allegation, and the previous use of *apologise for* for the accepted failing in process, shows the writer(s) using the different complements to *apologise* in accord with the difference in contextual frames. It should also be noted that the difference between a process matter and a complaint allegation changes the relationship between participants. In situations of complaint allegations, the letter writer(s) is not responsible for the action being complained about. With process matters, however the writer(s) is responsible; even if the signatory to the letter was not personally responsible for the process failure, as the person authorised to sign the final response the letter, they have responsibility for the handling of the complaint. The relationship between writer(s) and addressee in a process matter is therefore one where the writer(s) is apologising for something he is directly responsible for, as opposed to a complaint allegation where he is apologising on behalf of the force for another officer's action. It could be argued therefore that it is the difference in the participants' relationship between these two allegations which motivates the difference in complement form, rather than the difference in the decision as to whether there is or is not a police failing.

There is however one letter (Ltr. 51) with two process issues, one of which where the writer(s) accepts the fault and another where the writer(s) disclaims the fault - the former is followed with *apologise for* and the latter with *apologise if*. This suggests

that it is the decision about whether there is a failing, rather than the difference in relationship, which relates to the difference in the complement to *apologise*. In this letter, the police writer(s) first reports that several allegations were incorrectly not submitted to the Procurator Fiscal for consideration as criminal allegations, causing delay, and that:

L 43 I will communicate his findings to you on receipt and meantime apologise for the delay that this error will cause. (Ltr. 51).

Later on in the letter the writer(s) states that the complainer has misunderstood a previous communication of his and uses apology language in the form *apologise if*:

L 44 I apologise if my reference to a 'member of the public' conveyed an erroneous perception to you, but it is a general principle that in correspondence with complainers about the police, individuals, including witnesses and police officers are not referred to by name. (Ltr. 51).

In this instance the writer(s) does not deem his own utterance to be problematic (and indeed suggests that his terminology is important for protection of individual's privacy); the apology relates specifically to the misunderstanding it caused in this particular situation (the application of the apology specified through the *if*-clause). In both of these examples the letter writer(s) is responsible for the failing; the difference in apology language cannot therefore be motivated by a difference in relationship between the writer(s), subject (person responsible for the failing) and addressee. Rather, this difference between *apologise for* and *apologise if* in a single letter conforms with the overall pattern proposed above, where the *apologise for* follows failings accepted by the police institution.

There is one letter in this corpus, and only one, which contains two instances of *apologise for*, one for a process matter and the other for a complaint allegation, both substantiated:

L 45 I apologise for any upset or dissatisfaction caused by the way this matter was handled by the police. (Ltr. 4);

and

L 46 I must also apologise for the time taken to provide you with this formal response, which falls short of the standards we try to deliver. (Ltr. 4).

This contrasts with letters where single apology language is used to cover multiple allegations, for example:

L 47 I must apologise for all the failings detailed above (Ltr.1).

The examples in Letter 4, as with those in Letter 22 (examples L41 and L42 above), comprise one process matter and one complaint response. Both are accepted, and both result in apology language in the form *apologise for*, as suggested by the overarching pattern of regularities found between form and frame. The fact that the apology language is not deemed able to cover both failings, contrasting with other letters in this corpus, could relate to the difference in relationship. As noted above, for a process matter the writer(s) is apologising for actions within his responsibility, but for a complaint allegation those actions are the responsibility of another police officer. This letter may suggest that separate apology language must be articulated where the responsibility for the act shifts from symbolic to direct.

In this section I have detailed several examples in which writers use different linguistic forms of apology within the same letter; the linguistic forms vary depending on whether allegations are substantiated or not substantiated. Distinctions are drawn within a single document not only in terms of the presence or absence of apology language, but also between the different apology expressions and the complement constructions for the expression *apologise*. This therefore further supports my proposal of a regular usage of particular linguistic forms of apology and particular contextual frames, specifically:

- *apologise for* occurs with evidenced or acknowledged failures;
- *apologise if*, *regret* or the absence of apologetic language occur where there is no weight of evidence for a fault.

In addition to a relationship between the decision as to whether a failing is accepted and the apology language, this section has identified an effect of a difference in relationship between the writer(s), subject of the complaint and the addressee. Where the writer(s) is also the subject, because he is responsible for the failing, this may require a separate instance of apology from those relating to the actions of other officers. The overarching relationship between outcome and apology form remains, but one apology cannot be used to cover failures both of the writer(s) and other police officers.

6.3.4 Exceptions

I proposed in section 6.3.2 that there is a relationship between linguistic forms of apology and the outcome of a complaint allegation in this corpus, supported in the previous section by evidence that the relationship maintains where allegations with different outcomes are present in the same letter. There are exceptions to the proposed pattern in this corpus, although there are no instances where *apologise if* is used in response to a substantiated allegation. There are however four examples where *apologise for* is used for not substantiated/resolved matters, four instances

where *regret* appears with a substantiated allegation and four where a substantiated allegation does not result in any apologetic language.

Letter 46 contains an example of *apologise for* with an unsubstantiated allegation:

L 48 It is a matter of regret that on this occasion you felt the attitude of the officer fell below the high standard which is expected of X(force)X, and for this I sincerely apologise. (Ltr. 46).

This is an unusual instance of apologetic language for this corpus because it contains *regret* and *apologise* together, and also contains one of the two impersonal constructions of apology language in this corpus. The apology language also appears before the investigation of the complaint allegation is discussed; in most letters the writer(s) states first the complaint, what has been found and then apology language follows. The use of apology language in this letter is therefore exceptional in several ways. In section 6.3.6 I will discuss the possibility that complaints arising from traffic policing incidents may promote a particular police perception of the addressee, changing therefore an aspect of the contextual frame separate from the complaint outcome. This letter responds to a complaint arising from vehicle stop and fits into this category, perhaps explaining the many exceptions in this letter to the usual presentation of apology language in this corpus. There may however be a simpler explanation for this exception. The *apologise for* refers in this example back to the *regret* statement, in a similar way to the example of *apologise for* discussed in section 6.2.3 which was reclassified as *apologise if* because the prepositional phrase referred back in fact to an *if*-clause. It is possible that this use of explicit apology language should also not be categorised with examples of *apologise for*.

Letters 27 and 38 contain examples of *apologise for*; these appear to refer to complaints that are respectively resolved and not substantiated:

L 49 I believe that the matter is now resolved and I apologise for any distress caused. (Ltr. 27);

L 50 I would like to apologise for any offence caused and reassure you that we have taken due cognisance of the points you have made. (Ltr. 38).

Letter 38 does not contain an explicit statement as to the outcome of the complaint, and has therefore been described as unsubstantiated. It does however refer to the complaint being "concluded" unless the complainer objects, which may suggest it should rather be classified as resolved. Both of these letters are shorter examples in this corpus, there is little detail about what has been complained about (in letter 27 the officer is advised of the complainer's concerns, but no details of the concerns are stated in the letter; letter 38 is somewhat more specific, referring to the officer's attitude and possible failure to introduce himself). Given the lack of detail in these

letters, no explanation can be offered for their exceptionality, although the issue of resolved complaints and apology language will be discussed further in section 6.3.5.

Letter 21 contains the final example of *apologise for* in contravention of the proposed pattern that *apologise for* is the normal apology form for a police letter in final response to a public complainer where a complaint allegation is found substantiated:

L 51 Although I do not fault X(name)X for phoning at that hour, I am receptive to your view it was a relatively late hour and for that I would offer an apology. (Ltr. 21)

This letter is unusual in that the complainer has not been involved in the investigation of the complaint, having not responded to requests to talk to the investigating officer. Focus group participants described the final letter as following work that was done between the complainer and the investigating officer, often involving a verbal apology at a previous stage (described in section 5.1). The use of apology language in this letter may be affected by the lack of any previous discussion with the complainer, requiring perhaps an apology that is more interactional and less about putting on record an apology that matches the status of the complaint.

The example of *apologise for* in letter 21 appears to be attempting to bridge the gap between the perspective of the police and the perspective of the public. In this instance the writer(s) appears to be offering an apology on the basis that, although the police officer in his view did nothing wrong, the differences between police and public work culture had particular consequences for the complainer - the writer(s) also explains how the police shift pattern works. This approach is perhaps closer to that laid down in the 2011 Statutory Guidance, not in force at the time this letter was written, whereby the judgment on an allegation is not whether it is substantiated, but whether it was upheld - and that this “is a judgement on the service provided to the complainer." (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2011, p.28), rather than about police misconduct. This example may therefore represent a shift in apology language, toward a norm for apology expression that suits the cultural shift intended for the handling of police complaints.

Letter 21 is also unusual in this corpus in being particularly long, and containing a range of matters which require “clarification", not always necessarily matters of complaint (reflecting again perhaps the lack of previous engagement with the complainer). There is another aspect to this complaint where the writer(s) acknowledges that there has been a problem with police actions, although he does not seem to be substantiating an allegation of police misconduct. The complainer had originally stated that he or she was told Victim Support would be in contact, and that this did not happen. The writer(s) states that the normal automatic referral to Victim

Support did not go through from the police, and that he believes this is because the complainer had the status both of a victim and of an accused in relation to the one incident. Whilst there is therefore evidence that something went wrong, this is being attributed to a problem with how Victim Support referrals are processed rather than a particular officer's failing. In relation to this matter, the police writer(s) does use an adverbial form of *regret*, one of only two in this corpus, although this may relate to not knowing why the automatic referral was not done rather than to the impact on the complainer.

L 52 On that occasion you were contacted by Victim Support and whilst regretfully I cannot be certain why that same process did not automatically follow on this occasion, I suspect your change in status is the reason. (Ltr. 21).

In fact, the writer(s) seems to discount any impact on the complainer on the grounds that the issue has been rectified - Victim Support have now been put in contact. The question of why the mistake occurred is deemed less important, marked "irrespective", than its remedy. This writer(s) therefore appears to prioritise the impact on the complainer both here and in example F51 above, using the *apologise for* form of apology where he identifies a clear negative impact despite the lack of evidenced failing, while in the example where the harm has been fixed, there is the adverb form of *regret* relative to his inability to determine why exactly a process did not activate as normal.

There are examples of *regret* in this corpus which do not match with the general pattern suggested previously whereby police complaints handlers use *regret* with complaint allegations that are not substantiated. There are two examples in this corpus where *regret* appears with resolved complaints, however these are two of the letters suggested in section 6.1 to be form letters and this use may relate more to a template than to an exceptional usage of explicit apology expression. There are also two examples of *regret* marked against allegations categorised as 'unclear'; these are the two examples of *they regret*, discussed in section 6.2.2.

There are four further examples of *regret* that are considered exceptional against the pattern identified in section 6.3.2, in that *regret* appears with allegations that have been classed as substantiated. One relates to a process failure:

L 53 I do regret that at an early stage you were not given firm guidance as to what could be relevantly listed as a complaint and thereafter investigated (Ltr. 50)

In this example the writer(s) is stating regret that the complainer was not informed at an early stage that some of the matters he or she is raising cannot be dealt with as complaints. This will be discussed fully in chapter 7, looking at whether this regret is directed at the police rather than the complainer, the police having spent time and effort looking into matters that are not complaints.

In letter 46 *regret* is also used with an accepted failure in the process of complaints handling, in this case that the writer(s) is not able to respond to part of the complaint:

L 54 I regret as the matter is 'sub-judice', i.e. subject of judicial proceedings, I am prevented from entering into discussion about this matter (Ltr. 46).

(As mentioned above, this letter also falls into a group of letters arising from traffic policing incidents, which may create differences in the relationship between writer(s) and perceived addressee, discussed in section 6.3.6). Unlike substantiated complaint allegations process failures have not been assessed by a formal process - I have judged an acknowledgement in the letter of a fault such as a delay equivalent to the frame of a substantiated allegation because the letter writer(s) has authority over the complaints handling process and therefore the authority to acknowledge their own failing. The major difference therefore between acknowledged process failings and that of substantiated complaint allegations is the relationship between the letter writer(s) and the fault they are apologising for, whether responsibility is direct or symbolic. In this example from letter 46 however the fault is caused by overarching requirements not to prejudice the outcome of court proceedings; the writer(s) is neither directly nor symbolically in control of this delay, which is caused by the legal process itself. The responsibility for this failing sits outside the police institution entirely. In section 6.3.3 I considered that a shift from symbolic responsibility for another police officer's action to direct responsibility for an action within the complaint handling process might require the writer(s) to create a new space for an apology, but would not alter the overarching pattern with regard to apology expressions. In this example the responsibility appears neither symbolic nor direct, the writer(s) is affected by the legal processes which in turn affect the complainer. It may be that because the locus of responsibility for the act sits outside the police institution entirely (and therefore outside the authority of the writer(s) to speak on behalf of the force), different norms for the use of apology expressions come into play.

Two further examples of *regret* are used in letters with complaint allegations that have been designated as substantiated. The first is:

L 55 Your client's conduct was inexcusable, however, police officers are expected to maintain high standards of discipline at all times and it is a matter of regret to me that the officer concerned failed to remain professional throughout his dealings with your client. (Ltr.49).

This example was discussed in 6.2.2 as it is one of the only two impersonal constructions of apology language in this corpus. As previously suggested, the complainer is described as goading the officer, resulting in the incivility from the officer - this may have had an impact on the linguistic form of the apology, directing the *regret* at the police institution rather than at the complainer (which would perhaps not be

possible with *apologise for*). However, this letter also presents a difference in frame in terms of the relationship between the letter writer(s) and the addressee - the reference to 'your client' suggests that the letter is written to a lawyer rather than directly to the complainer. For letter 46 I suggested that the apology language was outwith the normal pattern because the responsibility for the offence was situated outside the police institution; in this example it is the responsibility to the offended that has been shifted, the apology language is used in interaction with a representative rather than directly to the individual. In both, the basic triadic interaction described for this corpus, of the writer(s) apologising to an addressee for the actions of a subject within the police institution, is altered. *Regret* may be used in this example because the apology expression is not being used directly to the apologisee (noting that *apologise* can, and does in this corpus, appear with explicit direction in the form *I apologise to you*).

The final example of *regret* with a substantiated allegation is in letter 18, which contains both *regret* and *apologise for*:

L 56 In conclusion, I regret the actions of this officer and apologise for the poor service received by your family and you on this occasion. (Ltr. 18).

This letter responds to six allegations. Four allegations were found substantiated with regard to an officer being rude, aggressive and unprofessional; one allegation against this same officer was found not substantiated, although this is partly because the person he was rude to did not wish the allegation to be taken further. One further allegation is found substantiated, though of a more minor nature, in that another officer failed to intervene. This is the only letter in this corpus which makes reference to a misconduct hearing being convened (for the first officer). One explanation for the use of *regret* in this letter is therefore that the matter was so serious, involving multiple substantiated allegations of misconduct, that the police writer(s) deemed it polite to use two expressions of explicit apology.

The example in letter 18 also recalls the discussion in 6.2.2 about police complaints handlers being unable to apologise on behalf of an officer without their permission. The two uses of apologetic language in this example seem to distinguish between the action of the officer and the experience of the complainer - *regret* is used for the former and *apologise for* in relation to the latter. It may be less therefore that it is the seriousness of the complaint that motivates two forms of apology but rather conflicting pressures on the form of apology - firstly, of an apology referring to the specific officer, where the constraints against apologising for another officer require this to take the form *regret*, and secondly of an apology for substantiated allegations, which require the form *apologise for* - which results in both forms being present.

I proposed that this dataset suggested a co-regularity where the linguistic form *apol-*

ogise for was deemed by police complaints handlers the polite way to apologise in response to a substantiated complaint allegation. However, *regret* appears several times with substantiated allegations (encompassing within these exceptions the unusual impersonal forms noted in 6.2.2). Several of these exceptions demonstrate a different relationship between the interactants than the main relationship in this corpus of a police writer(s) apologising symbolically on behalf of the police organisation for the actions of another officer. In section 6.3.3 I suggested that the overall form/frame correspondence maintained despite a shift in the relationship where the police writer(s) became directly responsible for his actions in the complaints process. In this section I have suggested that where the responsibility moves outside the police organisation entirely, or where the writer(s) is not communicating directly with the apologisee, that the form/frame correspondence is altered, and *regret* appears to be used rather than *apologise for*, with the possible explanation that *regret* may allow more ambiguity in who the apology expression is directed to. A larger dataset would allow for further differences in the locus of responsibility for the offence to be considered. Notably the main alternative complement structure *apologise if* does not appear to be affected by these other aspects of variation in the frame: *apologise if* does not appear in this dataset in response to a not substantiated allegation. This may suggest that *apologise if* has a particular value in managing not substantiated allegations; I will go on to suggest that this form/frame regularity identifies a separate speech act of validating the addressee.

The final exceptions to the frame/form regularity suggested in section 6.3.2 are the four examples where substantiated allegations occur without any apologetic language.

There are three examples of allegations where there is no apologetic language which have been described as substantiated but there is also evidence in the letters that the police understand the complaint to have been handled by a resolution process. These examples are:

L 57 The officer does accept that his comment was inappropriate and has been counselled regarding his communication style. I understand that Sergeant X(name)X has spoken to you by telephone and that the matter has now been resolved to your satisfaction (Ltr. 26);

L 58 you have also intimated that you did not wish the Officer reprimanded [...] that there is evidence available that you were spoken to inappropriately by one of the Officers. (Ltr. 29);

L 59 The officer has been made aware of your complaint and has received appropriate counselling and advice [...] I can assure you that I take complaints about

the Police seriously and always seek to resolve same to the satisfaction of all concerned. I trust this has been achieved on this occasion. (Ltr. 40).

In all letters there is indication that the officer received advice, although only in letter 29 is the formal designation “management advice" used; letters 26 and 40 refer to an officer being “counselled", sometimes used in focus groups as a term for management advice. These allegations have therefore been categorised as substantiated. However, in letters 26 and 40 there is use of terminology relating to the outcome of a complaint being resolved (although in letter 40 this language may be a regular usage for that force, rather than a marker of the complaint outcome, as similar constructions appear in the closing of other letters from the force, including one with a handwritten note on the copy letter stating “conciliated" (Ltr. 39)); in letter 29 there is mention that the complainer does not wish the officer reprimanded suggesting agreement over, or resolution of, the outcome of the complaint. In terms of the complainer’s position, these allegations may have been handled closer to a resolution process, and resolved complaints do not normally in this corpus result in apologetic language. These letters may suggest that, where a complainer is believed to be satisfied with the outcome of the complaint through the resolution process, that there is less need to put apology language on record with the decision on the allegations.

The final example of a substantiated complaint resulting in no apology language is Letter 10; this letter does not specifically state that any allegation has been substantiated, but does acknowledge a fault in that:

L 60 Force procedure dictates that they should indeed have carried out a breath test irrespective of the lack of smell of alcohol (Ltr. 19).

Although there is no explicit apology language in this letter, there is an explanation as to why the breath test was not carried out - the letter writer(s) defines his response as an explanation:

L 61 I hope that you will find this explanation satisfactory. Please be assured that the Officers concerned will at all times in the future breathalyse the drivers of vehicles involved in crashes. (Ltr. 10).

There is also a promise of change in future behaviour - that breath tests will always be carried out in future. This letter therefore contains two items (explanation, promise of forbearance) recognised as strategies for apologies (e.g. Olshtain and Cohen, 1983; Holmes, 1990). This thesis has focused on explicit apology language in order to consider regularities in linguistic form and contextual frame in a relatively small corpus. This example suggests that there could be further consideration of the relationship between explicit apology language and other apology strategies in this data (although there were also indications in focus group discussions, referenced in chapter 5, that

police writers view 'explanation' as a separate act to 'apology', to be discussed further below). This letter, as with letter 21 discussed above, notes that the complainer has not been involved in the discussions about the complaint (although in that case, *apologise for* was used where there was no substantiated allegation). This letter is also an example of a complaint arising from a traffic incident, to be further discussed in section 6.3.6, as affecting the writer(s) perception of the identity of the complainer. The relationship between writer(s) and addressee in this letter is therefore unusual in various ways to the corpus as a whole.

Another possible explanation for the lack of explicit apology language in letter 19 is that the writer(s) may not conceptualise the fault as harming the complainer. The failure to breathalyse a driver in an accident could harm the driver because he or she would not have any evidence to refute subsequent charges of drink driving. It is apparent from this letter that no such charges have been brought against the driver (otherwise, discussion of this complaint would likely be subjudice). The police writer(s) may therefore, given his perspective from within the police institution, consider this failing to have more serious consequences for the institution, the possibility that police officers are not professionally managing incident scenes with the consequence that criminal offences could not then be prosecuted due to lack of evidence (I also considered for Letter 21, example L52, the possibility that an absence of perceived harm to the complainer might affect the form of apology language). A police perception that the consequences of this failing may be more serious for the institution than the complainer may reduce the requirement to apologise, in the form *apologise for*, where otherwise necessary due to a substantiated failing.

At the beginning of this chapter I described a general pattern in this corpus, whereby *apologise for* is used with substantiated allegations, and *apologise if*, *regret* or no explicit apology language with allegations that are not substantiated. There are several exceptions to this general pattern, which may be considered as evidence against a general conclusion that the police understand particular forms of apology to be polite depending on differences in the contextual frame around the outcomes of a complaint. However, many of the exceptions to the overall pattern also represent letters with exceptions in other aspects of the frame, such as an addressee who is not the complainer, an offence for which the police institution is not responsible or an action which has harmed the police more than the complainer. These exceptions may therefore rather be considered indications of other relevant variation in the frame which may accord with variation in apology language, for investigation in a larger corpus.

6.3.5 Frames: discussion

In this chapter I have identified two main findings about when the police use apologetic language in final responses to public complaints:

1. the police overuse apologetic language, in that where the complaints system has not found a weight of evidence for police failures, there are often still examples of explicit apology expressions; and

2. the police use forms of apology language probabilistically predictably, in that there is a regular co-ocurrence between:

   - the frame of a substantiated allegation and *apologise for*,
   - while *apologise if* only appears where allegations are not substantiated,
   - *regret* occurs mostly where there is no finding in favour of the complaint, ie where allegations are not substantiated or the complaint is resolved, and
   - an absence of apology is similarly likely where the complaint is resolved or where allegations are not substantiated.

I described single letters responding to multiple allegations with different outcomes, noting that the use of apology expressions was consistent with this pattern even within single letters. I also considered the exceptions, finding that *regret* in particular was used against the general pattern where there were differences in the relationships between participants, such as where the apology was not directed from the police institution to the addressee, but instead for example through an intermediary.

The first finding that the police overuse apology language may be explained with reference to the discussion in chapter 5 of the procedural justice model of police-public relations. Procedural justice theory suggests that where individuals experience fair process, such as being treated politely and with respect, in their individual interactions with the police service this will contribute to the development of trust in the institution, leading to a grant of institutional power. It would be particularly important to experience fair process at the hands of people handling your complaint, as the complaint suggests current experiences of the institution are not positive. Focus group participants confirmed that their communication with the complainer was about the complainer's attitude towards the police:

F 48 B: it's very much about confidence in the service and confidence in the complaints process as well (ll. 297-8).

Aijmer (1995, p.59) describes apologising as having the potential to deflect "an emergent conflict". By making a complaint, the complainer is expressing their view that there is a problem in the actions of the police. One likely expectation they may have for fair process at this point is to receive an apology (both academic work (e.g. May

et al., 2007) and the police experience (e.g. Strathclyde Police, 2008) suggest that what a complainer may want in response to a complaint is an apology). To receive an apology at this stage may therefore provide an experience of fair process, supporting their trust in the institution of the police, deflecting the potential of escalating conflict between the public complainer and the police institution.

This description that the police overuse apology language, apologising where there is nothing evidenced to be apologised for, accords with an understanding of police power as tempered by legitimacy. The police are often viewed as a powerful institution in society, reasonably so when considered as "specialist repositories for the state's monopolization of legitimate force" (Reiner, 2010, p.8) - other people are not allowed to physically restrain you in a cell. Police power is apparent in the complaints process, which gives to the police institution the power to make the decision on outcome. The police writers in this dataset do not appear however to rely on that position of institutional power, in that they apologise even where the institutional structures would suggest it was not required (this contrasts with descriptions of police use of language in police-suspect interactions (e.g. Stokoe and Edwards, 2008; Heydon, 2011) where the police use their powerful institutional position as questioner to further develop their position of power through the questions they ask). The model of policing in Scotland as 'policing by consent' requires that policing power is not absolute, but requires a public grant of legitimacy. Procedural justice theory suggests that legitimacy can be granted where individual interactions inspire trust - and one of the ways that this trust is established is through the institution behaving politely. Apologising, which is "quintessentially a politeness strategy" (Holmes, 1990, p.176), offers therefore an obvious mechanism for the police to display politeness, and thereby to offer the complainer a procedurally just interaction that, they may hope, will lead to trust and legitimacy. I suggested that an understanding of police power as tempered by the procedural justice model of legitimacy could explain the finding in Harris (2003) of one ostensibly powerful police person providing an apology. For my own data, I similarly suggest that understanding the police as a powerful institution that seeks to operate with public consent may explain why they would use apologetic language, though there is no evidenced fault to apologise for: the motivation to be found legitimate appears to override the apparent clarity provided by the complaints system process that no apology is necessary.

Understanding why particular forms of apology, *regret* and *apologise if*, appear regularly in these situations of apologising where there is nothing to apologise for, requires returning to previous discussion about what these forms do. In section 6.2.1 I suggested on the basis of previous literature that *regret* had some of the same ambiguity of *sorry*, able to express a state of regret as well as perform an apology. I found in this data that *regret* patterned in exceptional ways - the only apology form to appear

in impersonal constructions, as *they regret*, and appearing against my form/frame co-regularity on several occasions with substantiated allegations. These exceptional uses of *regret* look as if they may occur where the police writers face particular institutional constraints, such as apologising on behalf of a specific officer who has not consented to that apology or apologising where it may seem to the police writer(s) that it is the institution, rather than the public complainer, who has suffered more harm. The particular nature of the ambiguity of *regret* may be around how it directs the apology, allowing the state of regret to relate to and from different participants; this perhaps recalls Deutschmann's (2003) description of adverbial forms such as *regrettably* as communicating the speaker's attitude of sorrow about a situation rather than an apology to a specific person.

To understand why *apologise if* is regularly used in situations where there are no substantiated allegations, I return to my discussion of the possible understanding of this as a discourse conditional, rather than a standard conditional. The *if*-clause in a discourse conditional functions to describe what the main clause, the speech act, is relevant to - in this case, to describe what the apology is about. In these examples, the form *apologise if* allows the writer(s) to define the scope of the apology in relation to the complainer's experience, rather than for example to the complaint allegation which has been found not substantiated. Using this specific linguistic form the writer(s) is able to acknowledge the complainer's perspective with apologetic language, but without offering *apologise for* for a fault that has not been evidenced.

The form *apologise if*, understood as a discourse conditional form thereby making the apology relevant to particular aspects of the complainer's experience, may be useful to the police writer(s) because it provides a linguistic form to manage their responsibilities to different audiences. I suggested above that pressures of being a 'policing by consent' police service would motivate the police to apologise. However, there may also be pressures on a police complaints handler not to apologise when the complaints system found nothing wrong. I described in chapter 5 that the police writers had concerns about how their response to a complaint, and perhaps particularly an apology, could be used by a member of the public against a police officer. The focus group participants also stated that they had to be fair to the officer complained about, who might be aggrieved if an apology is offered where he has been exonerated. These attitudes may explain the conceptualisation of apology among the police focus groups, as previously discussed, that an apology was a requirement when the police had done something wrong, and otherwise should not be offered. *Apologise for*, a more usual syntactic complement for *apologise*, appears to be used in a payment situation, where there is evidence of something being done wrong. Where the complaints system has not resulted in a substantiated allegation the writers are placed in the middle of competing pressures, to apologise because that is what the public

complainer may expect, to try and restore their trust through a polite and procedurally just (to the complainer) interaction but also not to apologise because the officer has not been found to have done anything wrong, and apologising might therefore appear to him to be impolite, and not procedurally just. The *apologise if* construction may be a police development, an unusual construction of *apologise* which, from the police complaint handler's perspective, is polite because it provides a middle ground between the different audiences to their letters. It is something like an apology to offer to the public complainer, but not a payment apology to offer against the police subject.

The police use of this intermediate *apologise if* form may reflect limitations of the complaints system at the time of data collection. Both in letters and focus groups there is references to the difficult situation where the decision on a complaint was that there was no evidence and could therefore be no decision in favour of the complainer (thereby not substantiating the matter), for example:

L 62 In considering this matter I have two differing accounts and cannot judge where the truth of the matter lies. [...] I am unable to substantiate your allegation (Ltr. 45);

F 49 C: that kind of regular one where it's you've got this dilemma [...] there's no evidence ultimately [...] I've seen a few from we have to agree to disagree here you know there's no evidence to let me take this any further you know and it's not that you're saying they're a liar or that they've not telling the truth (ll. 145-154);

F 50 B: in our explanations trying to acknowledge the complainer's perception you know and say to them we acknowledge that you know from your point of view it may seem as if but from our point of view and from the evidence we've gathered this is how it is for us and that's part of that conciliation process that explanation process if you like (ll. 460-3).

The police writer(s) is effectively required by the substantiated/not substantiated distinction to disagree with the complainer's perspective unless there is evidence that a specific officer did something particular wrong (as in a criminal trial where the burden of proof lies with the prosecution to prove guilt, otherwise the defendant is found not guilty). Police use of apology language may be an attempt to mitigate the appearance of disagreeing with the complainer, to demonstrate that the complainer's perspective has been heard, although the system does not allow for a judgment in their favour. This may mean that use of explicit apology expressions by the Scottish police will change as the complaints system embeds the new decision standard of upheld or not upheld, determined on the basis of the service that the complainer receives rather than on whether there is evidence of police misconduct. Zhang (2001)

suggested the possibility of a separate type of speech act of apology where the fault is not admitted. Here is it more that the structures of the complaints system do not permit a complaint to be substantiated without evidence. The form *apologise if* may be unusual in other studies of apology because it is being used for a speech act that is not quite the same as a standard understanding of apology (which, in most studies, is an act relating to an offence).

The idea of conflicting pressures motivating the police writers to find a new form of apology, *apologise if*, does not only operate with regard to the different audiences they are writing for, but also in terms of the different social norms they are aligning with. In chapter 3 I discussed the concept that part of apologising was for the speaker to reaffirm their position in society, to demonstrate that they know when society deems they should apologise: "A person who does not apologise in situations where it is demanded by the social norms runs the risk of being regarded as impolite and rude and as a less competent member of society." (Aijmer, 1995, p.56). This may be particularly important for a police service seeking public trust, as procedural justice has also suggested that trust in institutions relates to individuals believing that the institution shares their norms (Bradford and Jackson, 2009). However, the police writers are members of the public community, citizens in uniform, as well as part of a specific policing community, with ties of solidarity relating to standing together against the threat of criminality (Reiner, 2010). The police complaints handlers may be developing their own norms of apology in an attempt to accommodate the norms of both the wider police and the public communities around them.

The alternative linguistic forms of apology, used in the different contexts of an evidenced failing and an acknowledgement of the complainer without accepting a failing, may be two different speech acts relating to apology. In chapter 3 I discussed concepts of apology around the idea of paying a debt for a fault, but also descriptions of apology, particularly those in a public setting, as having an important function in acknowledging the recipient. Verdeja (2010) describes public apologies as functioning to validate the victims, confirming them as members of society, in that they are worthy of an apology, worthy of the speaker's concern. The discourse conditional form of *apologise if* seems well suited to this alternate type of apology speech act - it allows the speaker to specify that the apology expression is relevant to the experience of the speaker. Aijmer (1995, p.58) states "Human communication is a kind of cooperation between the speaker and hearer, and apologising can be viewed as a language game in which the participants have roles as 'offender' and 'victim'." The *apologise if* acknowledgement defines the role of the victim but not an offender. The police may be using *apologise if* and *apologise for* to perform two different types of speech act, one a payment for harm and one a validation of the complainer. In chapter 2 I noted that researchers have suggested the need to define distinct speech acts for public versus

private apology (e.g. Jeffries, 2007), on grounds such as that a public apology loses the possibility of sincerity (Tavuchis, 1991). This dataset of letters collected from the Scottish police in final response to public complaints suggests rather the need to rethink the question of what the speech act of apology is, that there may in fact be different types of apology or a difference between a speech act providing linguistic payment for harm and a related speech act which serves to validate the recipient.

An alternative way to describe these two differing speech acts might be as an apology and as an explanation. Although previous research into apology has suggested that explanation is a mechanism for achieving apology (e.g. Olshtain and Cohen, 1983), focus group participants distinguished between apologising and explaining (as described in section 5.3). In particular, participant B described an explanation as managing situations where there are differing accounts which do not therefore provide evidence for taking action against the police, although this does not mean that the complainer's account is doubted (example F27); the type of situations described by participant B as requiring explanation are similar to some of those found in this corpus where *apologise if* is used. An act of explaining does not however seem to motivate the use of an expression with such strong associations of apologising as *apologise*. The term validation, incorporating previous literature about this function of public apologies, has therefore been chosen here.

A final regularity noted about the use of apology language in this corpus is that resolved complaints rarely resulted in any apology language. This may seem surprising - the idea of resolving a complaint, rather than formally investigating it and coming to a decision whether there is evidence to substantiate or not, is that the less adversarial mechanism gives the complainer space to express their wishes, that greater communication leads to a more satisfactory outcome. A procedure that prioritises communication might be expected to involve an apology, particularly given evidence that an apology is often what complainants want (May et al., 2007). However, the final letter is only the conclusion to the process of handling a complaint; in focus groups participants suggested there would often have been verbal apologies while dealing with a complaint. The lack of an apology in the final letter of resolved complaints may therefore relate to a lesser need to put an outcome decision (because there is no outcome decision) and the related apology on record, rather than to the lack of an apology during the process. The position of *apologise for* and *apologise if* is perhaps made clearer by the absence of apology in resolved complaints. Where there is a substantiated allegation this is put on record in the final letter and payment, an apology in the form *apologise for*, put on record with it. Where there is a not substantiated allegation this is put on record in the final letter and an apology in the form *apologise if* or *regret* may be used with it, to mitigate the disagreement with the complainer's point of view through putting on record the acknowledgement of the

complainer's viewpoint. Where a complaint is resolved there is no final decision to put on record, no need to provide formal payment in the form *apologise for* but also no need to provide validation in the form *apologise if* because the final letter does not dispute the complainer's allegation. Police complaints handlers appear to have in place a set of empirical norms dealing with the three main possible outcomes to complaints and different possible apologies, not only whether there should be an expression of explicit apology but what form this normally takes.

In this section I have suggested that this dataset displays a regular co-occurrence of particular forms of explicit apology language with a contextual frame distinguished primarily by the outcome of the complaint - whether an allegation is not substantiated, substantiated or resolved. I suggest that where an allegation is not substantiated a range of competing pressures come to bear on the writers of these letters, in terms of the different audiences they are writing for, and their concurrent membership in communities of public, police and police complaints handlers. The police writers appear to have found a neat way to manage these competing pressures, with a linguistic expression of apology, *apologise if*, which is neither a payment apology nor the absence of apology. Instead, it may be a separate speech act, which serves to validate the victim, while not creating a role of offender. This neat solution is only found in terms of the empirical norms of the police writers; they do not appear to recognise this as the moral norm, it is not an understanding of apology they describe in focus groups. Nor is this solution necessarily neat, and polite, to any of the audiences. These findings are of an empirical norm amongst the specific police complaints handlers writing the letters; understandings of politeness in this context from other perspectives may be very different.

6.3.6 A traffic policing frame

Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based analysis defines frames in terms of the speaker, the addressee, the relationship between them and the setting they are in. Many of these aspects are unknown in this data, due to the police redaction of personal details, or held constant due to the data being collected from a particular context of letters from police to public complainer. The preceding analysis has therefore focused on a particular aspect of the setting, that of whether the complaint allegation has been found substantiated or not substantiated; I also noted an effect of differences in the relationship between participants, specifically whether responsibility for the act being apologised for sits between the writer(s) and the addressee. In this section I will briefly consider the identity of the addressee, or at least who the addressee may be perceived to be by the writer(s), using letters where the original complaint arose from traffic policing activities.

Policing research suggests that police officers differentiate between the individuals they encounter in traffic policing and other operational policing activities - in that those subject to traffic policing are conceptualised as law abiding (Girling et al., 2000). One letter describes this:

L 63 Regrettably the nature of the work undertaken by Road Policing Officers is such that members of the public, who would not otherwise do so, come into contact with the police and are unaware of police procedures and practices. (Ltr. 46).

Those stopped for traffic offences are not deemed by the police to be generally criminal and therefore do not normally have contact with the police, whereas those arrested for assault or drugs offences may be classified by the police as their more usual interactants. This police perception is matched by broader societal perceptions: people who conceive themselves as law-abiding conceptualise criminals as 'other', but do not include those committing traffic offences in the 'other' category (Girling et al., 2000). Jackson et al. (2013) suggest that many people do not conceptualise traffic offences as relating to the law, and therefore do not see them as criminal. In chapter 5 I discussed Van Maanen's (2005) description of the police categorising people into three categories: criminals, good but know nothings, and assholes. People stopped for traffic offences are more likely to be perceived by the police as 'good but know nothings' (evident in example L63 where the "member of the public", rather than suspect, stopped by road policing officers is "unaware" of police procedures). The letter writer(s) may therefore imagine the complainer, the normal addressee of the letter, to be a particular type of person where their complaint arises from a traffic policing context.

There is evidence in road traffic letters that the police are indeed categorising the addressees as 'good but know nothings'. For example, several letters make reference to the wider aims of road traffic policing:

L 64 While some people take issue with police enforcement of road traffic legislation, it is a sad fact that more people in X(area)X are killed in road collisions than as a result of criminal acts. (Ltr. 6);

L 65 This [warning of speeding] is owing to the fact that there has recently been a high speed crash near to that location [...], whereby a passenger in the vehicle was killed as a result of the high speed. Sadly that message is sometimes ignored by young drivers, which is always frustrating to both me and my Road Patrol Officers. (Ltr. 13).

These letters contain explanations of the purpose of road traffic policing, perhaps because the addressees are imagined as not knowing, or not accepting, that their being

subject to road policing is a legitimate police activity.

The traffic policing context may provide the police a proxy for the overarching social category of class. Girling et al. (2000, p.126) describe discussion of speeding as a “middle-class crime", and that middle class opposition to policing has often built up around perceptions that the police are spending their time inappropriately monitoring middle class road traffic offences when they ought to be focused on ‘real’ crime. The people stopped for road traffic matters are therefore not only less likely to be classified as criminal, they may be more likely to be classified as middle class. It should also be remembered that the letter signatory does not necessarily know much about the recipient - although they may be able to make an assumption about gender, from the name, and something relating to class from the address perhaps, the signatory is not usually the person who has had contact with the complainer through the investigation. A road traffic related complaint, as a proxy for social class, may be one of the more definite pieces of information that a signatory may consider when evaluating and revising the letter in constructing his impression of the addressee. Reiner (2010, p.123, xiii) describes “the middle-class values of decency that most police revere", but also that the very function of policing may prevent the police ever fully being part of those values: “Policing inherently operates with dirty hands. It uses morally dubious means to achieve the overriding imperative of preserving and reproducing social order." This suggests that the police institution has a complex relationship with ‘middle class’, as something to strive for and yet at the same time something the police may feel shut out from (relating to the idea from Van Maanen as ‘good but know nothings’, almost as if the ‘middle class’ need to be kept ignorant of the dubious police activities done to keep them safe). A complaint arising from a traffic policing context may suggest to the signatory that they are dealing with a middle class individual, activating police cultural understandings of middle class.

Police perception of their addressee may affect their use of language. To an extent the complaints context as a whole represents an unusual interaction for the police, because the complainer is defined in law as ‘a member of the public’, and because part of the purpose of a complaint system is to provide accountability for police enforcement powers (Maguire and Corbett, 1991). In chapter 5 I suggested this might put police identity under particular pressure, by making salient tension between police as a law enforcement organisation and police as a public service. In section 6.3.5 above I noted that the finding that the police overuse apology in the police complaints context contrasts with findings about their use of language when questioning suspects. One reason for that difference may be the police perception of who they are interacting with - a police-public, rather than police-suspect, relationship. Where the complaint arises from a traffic policing context, the police writer(s) may perceive the addressee not only as a member of the public, rather than criminal suspect, but

more specifically as a middle class person. Such an imagined addressee may be both outside their perceived norm of interaction, and a category which creates difficulty for police identity, a category they may revere but perhaps never be part of.

This particular understanding of the addressee's identity in traffic policing letters may explain why many of these letters have previously been discussed in this thesis with reference to exceptional use of apology language. There are nine letters in this corpus where the complaint originated from a traffic policing incident (this does not include one letter referring to a traffic warden, ie not a police officer, or those where the primary activity appears not to be traffic policing, e.g. a drugs search of a car), see appendix E. Letter 10 was discussed in section 6.3.4 because it is one of the few occasions where a substantiated allegation is not followed by any explicit apology language; Letter 44 was discussed in section 6.2.2 because it is the only letter containing the third person form *they regret*; Letter 57 was flagged in 6.2.3 for having an example of *apologise for* which referred back to an *if*-clause, and also is the only letter in this corpus to contain both *sorry* and *apologise*. Example L63 above comes from letter 46, and this example includes one of only two adverbial uses of *regret* in this corpus. It appears possible therefore that the empirical norms for apology language otherwise described for this corpus are often disturbed in letters relating to traffic policing complaints. This disturbance perhaps reflects the disturbance in police categorisation of the addressee, the greater uncertainties around how a police complaints handler relates to a perceived middle class complainer.

There are too few letters in this corpus, and too little information about complainers, to consider variation in linguistic form against addressee characteristics as a dimension of the contextual frame. However, letters where the original incident took place in a traffic policing context often demonstrate apology language that has been described as exceptional against the general patterns found in this corpus. This may reflect differences in the police perception of their addressee in this situation. This suggests that the particular context of traffic policing may be an important context for further research into police language, one where police language may differ from police language norms seen elsewhere. It also suggests that (imagined) categories of addressee may be an important aspect of the frame in relation to variation in police apology language specifically. While this thesis has focused on variation in apology expression relating to the outcome of a complaint, I have also noted that differences in the relationship between participants, and here in the police understanding of their addressee, also relate to variation in apology expression. This suggests that Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based model could be usefully applied to the analysis of apology language beyond the particular issue, of complaint outcomes, focused on here.

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented my main analysis of the text of letters collected from the Scottish police written in final response to public complaints. In chapter 7 this will be supplemented by consideration of the question of sincerity in police apologies. My first finding is that explicit apology expressions are present in this data. Does this constitute apology? While apologising cannot be guaranteed by the simple presence of an explicit apology expression such as *apologise*, this thesis has shown that the police regularly use apology expressions in a context where they have opportunities to evaluate and edit letters. If the police are not in their own view apologising, they could have removed the many instances of *apologise*, a form which is related to the act of apology, and which may therefore create ambiguity that they are attempting to apologise. Taking the police usage at face value, in that they regularly choose to maintain this expression with its strong association of apology, there is evidence that the police understand their linguistic production in these letters to be of apology.

I described variation in the use of explicit apology language in this corpus, focusing on lexical variation and syntactic variation in terms of person and complement form. I noted a contrast between lexical variation, where patterns of police use of explicit apology expressions in this corpus appears very different to previous studies of apology language, and person, where the police writers overwhelmingly use the first person singular, conforming with previous definitions of prototypical apology linguistic form. I suggested however that both the convergence and divergence from previous findings related to aspects of the specific policing context and the pressure on these policing writers to satisfy different audiences with conflicting needs.

I also described how the *apologise* form of explicit apology appears with two main complement structures in this corpus: an *if*-clause and a prepositional phrase beginning *for*. I briefly considered syntactic investigation of *if*-clauses, questioning whether the *if*-clauses in this corpus might be better understood as discourse rather than standard conditional clauses. While the structure *apologise if* has been rarely considered in apology literature, it has been subject to criticism, both from academics and in public debate, as being impolite in an apology. I suggest that a closer investigation of the syntactic structure of *apologise if* may inspire a re-evaluation of this judgment.

Finally I discussed how the variation in the explicit apology expressions in this corpus, lexical and syntactic, corresponds with differences in the contextual frame. While many aspects of the frame are held constant across the corpus of letters, I noted a relevant aspect of the frame to be whether the situation was one substantiated or not substantiated complaint allegations. I noted first that this difference in context was not distinguished by the presence or absence of explicit apology language - the police

write *I apologise* whether there is evidence that they have done something wrong or not. However, they do distinguish between these situations in the linguistic form of the apology. I found a pattern of *apologise for* being used where a particular fault had been identified through the complaints process, and forms *apologise if*, *regret*, *sorry* or the absence of explicit apology language where no fault could be evidenced. I suggested that various pressures on the police writers may have motivated them to use a different kind of speech act to a classic apology. Where the police had not been found by the complaints system to have committed a failing, and therefore no payment in the form of apology is due, the police may nevertheless be motivated as a service seeking public trust to use apology expressions to validate the complainer; such a validation comes for example in the form *apologise if*, where the discourse conditional structure specifies the application of the apology expression to the complainer's experience.

This chapter has contributed to the goal of understanding more about apologies by identifying variation in the forms of complements used with the verb *apologise*; despite the small size of this corpus more instances of *apologise* with an *if*-clause are present than in for example Deutschmann's (2003) British National Corpus based study. These examples of *apologise if* enabled new consideration of this as a syntactic structure and, in its regular co-occurrence with the context of a not substantiated complaint, the possibility that this complement variation distinguishes two different, if related, speech acts, one of payment and one of validation. While this finding comes from a specific context of handling police complaints, the particular pressures identified here as motivating this speech act distinction, such as the differing politeness understandings of multiple addressees, are relevant to other, particularly public, apology situations. This finding of two linguistic forms of explicit apology expressions, corresponding with two different contexts of use, perhaps to be understood as two different speech acts of payment and validation, is the main contribution of this thesis.

Terkourafi (2005) describes her frame-based model as providing a middle ground between Brown and Levinson and early discursive approaches, the opportunity to say something about linguistic form and politeness while retaining discursive precepts of being data-driven. This chapter has applied my analytical framework in the form of an amended version of this model, to take into account the written medium of this data, and the complexities of its production. In doing so I have identified a form/frame co-regularity not previously found in discursive studies of apology; my analytical model appears therefore to be an operational success. I further noted in this chapter other aspects of Terkourafi's concept of the frame, particularly the relationship between the author and the addressee (in terms of the locus of responsibility) and the categorisation of the addressee (at least as perceived by the author)

which appear to relate to variation in linguistic form, although this corpus is not large enough (nor specifically oriented) to consider these dimensions. This thesis not only shows the frame-based approach working with written, apology expressions in a policing context, it suggests where this analytical model might be further applied.

In relation to how the police use language, the idea that the police might overuse apology contrasts with Limberg's (2008) finding that the police might have more recourse to rudeness through their institutional position than the lay person (a similar finding to studies of courtroom language which describe for example lawyer's questioning as not considered rude in the context of a trial (e.g. Harris, 2003)). This contrast may relate to the difference between this police context, where the police are interacting as a service with members of the public, and the policing contexts of other studies, where the police are more likely to be interacting with criminal suspects as an enforcement organisation. My finding that the police may overuse apology, where previous studies have found rudeness, emphasises that 'the police' is not a homogenous institution with a single task, and a single set of linguistic norms, rather there may be different units with different priorities within that institution, and describing 'police language' requires looking at a wide range of those activities.

This discussion of police use of apology further demonstrates that police use of language cannot only be considered in terms of how the exercise of power is exhibited through language, such as in the questioning of suspects. I suggest that one of the motivations for the police to use apology is the requirement for Scottish police to exercise power with public consent. Treating a complainer with respect (through apologising), where the outcome decision on a complaint is going against them, fits the procedural justice model of a fair process supporting public trust even when the outcome is undesirable; apologising in this situation, rather than using the police structural position to impose the complaint decision, may be motivated by the need to seek legitimacy. Whether or not the complainer understands the police as apologising (particularly with the construction *apologise if*), and confers that legitimacy on the police, is not certain.

7. Do the police apologise sincerely?

There is a public perception that "The police never apologise for anything" (David Amess MP, HC Deb, 3 December 2008, col 95). This is hard to uphold in light of the finding in chapter 6 that the police regularly use explicit expressions of apology in the context of responding to complaints. One reason why this view may persist is a perception that the police do not really mean it, they are not apologising sincerely (Deutschmann (2003) classes sincere apologies as real apologies). In particular, existing interpretations of *apologise* with an *if*-clause, that this is a conditional form questioning the victim, could be argued for making *apologise if* an insincere apology, rather than, as I have suggested, a separate speech act of validating the recipient's place in society as a person worthy of concern.

In this chapter I will review the concept of sincerity as it is applied to apologies, both the practical difficulties in judging sincerity and the question of whether it is a concept that can be applied to public apologies; this chapter therefore revisits and extends material from chapter 2 with relevance to sincerity. I suggest that, if sincerity is to be considered at all, the question must be not whether an apology is sincere, but by whom, to whom and about what it is or is not sincere. This follows Kádár and Haugh's (2013) argument that studying politeness must involve looking at understandings of politeness, in that a single interaction might be understood as polite and impolite, because it is understood differently by different participants and meta-participants, or understood differently by someone looking on the interaction from a different time. I look at two particular examples from my corpus of police letters, one which appears as a genuine utterance of regret, although perhaps not an apology to the recipient, and another where there does not appear to be genuine feelings of concern for the complainer, and yet perhaps a sincere apology in the sense of affirming societal norms. Sincerity appears from these examples to be a complex construct, and rather than simply distinguishing speech acts of interpersonal and public apology by its presence or absence, sincerity in relation to different aims may be part of the differences between a range of speech acts relating to apology, such as the acts of payment apology and validation described in the previous chapter.

7.1 Sincerity in apologies

Academic and public descriptions of apology includes a sincerity requirement. Tavuchis (1991, p.36) describes apology as having “two fundamental requirements: the offender has to be sorry and has to say so"; the linguistic performance of the act is not enough, the apologiser must also feel it. The Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (2011, p.2) guidance on apology states gives criteria for a meaningful apology including “Show that you are sincerely sorry." This accords with the third set of Austin’s speech act conditions:

- (Γ.1) “Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further
- (Γ.2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently." (Austin, 1975, p.14-15).

Austin describes the failure to meet these conditions as not voiding the act, an apology still takes place if the speaker does not have the particular thoughts and feelings, but it is insincere.

Some linguistic studies of apology relate sincerity to the linguistic form. As previously noted, Vollmer and Olshtain (1989, p.198) distinguish between “sincere" expressions, which make for “strong" apologies, and those which are a “mere expression of sympathy". In these terms, my description in chapter 6 of similarities between *sorry* and *regret*, and finding that the latter may be used by the police where there is no judgment against the police, may suggest that *regret* is not a particularly sincere expression of regret. Vollmer and Olshtain’s (1989) description of performative verbs as being at the more sincere end of the spectrum would suggest that both *apologise for* and *apologise if* constitute sincere apologies. The difference in complement structures may however affect the judgment of sincerity. While Deutschmann (2003) gives the form ‘I apologise for’ as an example of apologies he classified as sincere, Kampf (2009, p.2262), who describes the judgment of sincerity as the terms in which discursive struggle over apologies are described, uses an example with an *if*-clause to be a “non-apology" (the function of the *if*-clause being to “undermin[e] the existence of the offence"). Based on linguistic form therefore, police use of *apologise for* is a sincere apology and the other main forms (*regret*, *apologise if*) are not, which is compatible with the finding in section 6.2.3 that *apologise for* is primarily used where there is evidence that the police have committed a failing - it would be surprising to find a sincere apology where there was nothing to apologise for.

Discursive approaches to research argue against an inherent relationship between linguistic form and politeness, on the grounds that politeness is struggled over by interactants (e.g. Watts, 2003). Rather than situating sincerity in linguistic form, Jeffries (2007) describes media judgments on whether Tony Blair's apology was sincere (while noting that those judgments included reflections on linguistic form, in this instance that *apologise* was not sincere). As previously discussed, the use of interactants' evaluations as the judgement of sincerity are not straightforward, as there can be multiple interactants with different evaluations, begging the question as to whose evaluation is considered authoritative as to whether or not an apology is sincere.

There may also be an issue in using an evaluation of an apology's sincerity that the evaluation does not consider only the apology. Davies (2011) describes part of a current judgment on an apology as depending on perception of the individual's history of apologising. Davies is describing this issue through the framework of personalist ideology - that we may presume someone is apologising sincerely if we have previous experience of their sincerity (discussed in chapter 2). There are similarities in this to the mechanisms suggested by procedural justice by which institutional legitimacy is established - where previous experiences have been of fair process, we trust the institution, contributing to a reservoir of legitimacy meaning we accept the authority of that institution in other situations. Such influences may be particularly problematic with regard to the police institution as there is evidence that people's opinions of the police take on people's opinions of society broadly; research suggests that, because people view the police as representative of and responsible for upholding the moral state of society, that when society is deemed to be morally declining, people's confidence in the police declines (Bradford et al., 2008; Bradford and Jackson, 2009). Views on whether the police are apologising sincerely may therefore be dependent on whether people have a broader level of trust in their integrity, which may relate to whether or not people think society's moral norms are broken or not (and their views on the sincerity of a particular police apology may therefore change as perceptions of society change). It is clear that the analyst cannot access the apologiser's thoughts in order to assess whether they have feelings of genuine sorrow as they utter an apology, but evaluations of apology, and only apology, are also not easily accessible.

There may be aspects of the complaints context which make the recipient's viewpoint predisposed toward a judgment of insincerity. As discussed in chapter 2, Lecercle (1999) describes writers and readers having recursive constructions of one another, thus the reader understands the written word not only in the context of how he or she constructs the writer, but also how he or she constructs the writer to view the reader. Where the reader has made a complaint and done so because he or she wishes an apology (as May et al. (2007) suggest most low level complainants do) this implies that an apology was not offered spontaneously, suggesting to the reader that the in-

stitution may not view them as worthy of an apology. Tavuchis (1991) describes the importance of timing in apologising, and a particular example of an apology given long after it was originally demanded such that relationships had deteriorated and the apology could not be effective. Having to demand an apology at all may raise questions in the recipient as to why the apology was not already offered.

The effect of these contextual factors may carry greater weight in public apology situations where normal cues for judging sincerity are absent. Deutschmann (2003, p.19) states that prosody and tone are the factors by which an the success of an apology will “largely be decided" in interpersonal situations. In written situations, prosody and tone are lacking; in rehearsed speech situations these factors may operate differently. In public apologies therefore there will be little in terms of the performance of the apology to provide an audience with indicators of the apologiser’s sincerity, making the contribution of their historical perception of the institution or individual more decisive.

Asking questions of whether a public apology is sincere may also be dangerous where such questions lead to a demand for a sincere apology. Duff (2001, p.109) describes how apologies could be required in a system of criminal punishment, which would not require them to be sincere, but rather “the formalized ritual of public, as distinct from private, apology". He also parallels criminal sentencing with apologies, describing a Community Payback Order as a type of apology with particular force, noting that society does not require people punished in criminal courts to be sincere about doing their community service or serving their time in prison: what matters is that the debt is repaid. The problem Duff suggests with requiring an apologiser to be sincere is that this would take away their freedom of expression and status as an independent agent: society has a right to punish people who commit crimes, it does not have a right to force someone to feel something that they do not feel. Requiring for example a person apologising on behalf of an institution to have the particular feelings to apologise when they do not have those feelings compromises their freedoms of thought, conscience and expression.

While the issues in accessing a genuine judgment on the genuineness of the apology are largely issues for the analyst, there is a more fundamental problem with the question of sincerity in public apologies: a sincerity criterion may be inapplicable. The criterion for sincerity, as set out by Austin (1975) in relation to speech acts, is for certain feelings; as previously noted, institutions, collective entities, Governments, polices forces are “sociopathic", they do not feel, they are incapable of feeling sincerity or the absence of sincerity (Tavuchis, 1991, p.43). There is no sense in asking if ‘the police’ can be sincere in apologising, because there is no sense in which ‘the police’ as an institution can feel apologeticness.

An important part of the difference between speech acts of private and public apology may be the presence or absence of a sincerity criterion. Tavuchis (1991, p.102) describes a collective apology as “a speech whose sole raison d‘etre is the record". What matters in a public apology is not whether the speaker is sincere, but what goes on record through that apology. Howard-Hassman and Gibney (2008) suggest that public apologies are currently proliferating because they are a mechanism by which social movements, such as the civil rights movement in the United States, can shape the historical record to affirm particular social norms, e.g. that past racism, as something requiring apology, was wrong. The public apology restructures power relations in society, defining previously oppressed people as illegitimately oppressed (Lazare, 2004). In this understanding, a public apology has a very different function to an interpersonal apology, important in different ways. (It may however be worth remembering that, as described in chapter 2, public apology studies often look at media responses to public apology; the media view on whether a public apology has redefined oppressed people as not oppressed may differ to the view of the people themselves). There is nevertheless a tendency perhaps in academic work to see the public apology in its inability to be sincere as something less than the interpersonal apology. Howard-Hassman and Gibney (2008, p.5) for example describe the potential for public apologies to be a “diplomatic move" rather than “a sincere act of contrition"; later (p.6), in distinguishing between interpersonal apologies and those between nations and groups, they describe the former as “meaningful" and the latter as different, perhaps implying ‘meaningless’. Davies (2011, p.208) describes the requirement for sincerity in interpersonal apology, concluding that “it seems unlikely that *less* will be required of a political apology than a personal apology" (my emphasis); an apology without a sincerity requirement appears described as a lesser apology. The distinction between an interpersonal apology and a public apology, where the difference is based on the availability of a sincerity criterion, would appear therefore to make the public apology a lesser speech act rather than a different speech act.

Academic criteria for apology include its sincerity, notwithstanding the difficulties in ascertaining its sincerity, whether from a producer or a recipient view. Sincerity is particularly problematic in public apologies - partly because these are more likely to come from collective organisations such as institutions or nations incapable of feeling. The public apology is therefore proposed as a separate speech act from the interpersonal apology, with primary functions of ritual and record. This difference to an interpersonal apology, described as “One of the most profound human interactions" (Lazare, 2004, p.1), often appears however less as a difference and more as an inferiority.

7.2 Sincerity in Scottish police apologies

Despite the difficulties of applying a sincerity criterion to apology it still therefore appears to be a criterion that is valued by academics, as well as by the public, and its absence in public apologies to define them as a lesser speech act. It may be however that sincerity, as Kádár and Haugh (2013) argue for politeness in general, needs to be considered in more specific terms: not whether an apology is sincere, but to whom, about what. Austin's criteria for speech acts do not after all specify what the certain thoughts and feelings are which make an apology, or any speech act, sincere. In this section I will consider two particular examples from this corpus of police apologies to exemplify some of the potential differences in how sincerity in apology could be understood.

Letter 50 contains explicit apology language in the form *regret* with the only example of emphatic *do* which appears in this corpus:

L 66 I do regret that at an early stage you were not given firm guidance as to what could be relevantly listed as a complaint and thereafter investigated. (Ltr. 50).

This is apologetic language being used in the context of a failure in the process of complaints handling, rather than in the context of a substantiated or not substantiated complaint allegation. As discussed in chapter 6 such examples take place in a different frame of interaction to many in this corpus, in that the writer(s) is directly responsible for the act being apologised for. In this instance, the individual has raised matters which do not qualify as complaints. Part of the initial contact over complaint handling should include assessment of whether the matters raised constitute complaints about the police, and if not the complainer should be redirected to the appropriate place to raise their concerns (the statutory guidance gives the example of an individual raising concerns about the police response to a Freedom of Information request, which would be redirected to the Information Commissioner (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2011)). The apologetic language relates to the failure not to inform the complainer of these requirements early on. This results in one allegation being determined as not competent (ie not a complaint allegation) and other matters not being responded to in the letter at all. All other allegations responded to in this letter were found not substantiated; there is no other explicit apology language in this letter.

This is the only example of emphatic *do* in this collection of letters (As this is written language, there is no evidence from intonation that *do* is emphasised here; however, the occurrence of *do* in situations, as here, where the *do* is not motivated by grammatical needs, ie negation, subject-auxiliary inversion or an empty main verb, has been analysed as prohibiting a non-emphatic understanding of *do* (Wilder, 2013)).

Deutschmann (2003) suggests that emphatic *do* may be used as an intensifier with apology verb forms including *apologise* (he does not include *regret*, but found few examples of *regret* in his corpus to consider this issue), and that it is the most common intensifier for these forms (although, as in my collection of letters, he found intensification overall to be relatively rare). Emphatic *do* was also identified as an apology intensifier in the Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP), in that it provided a higher register (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989a). It seems possible therefore that the use of emphatic *do* in this letter is functioning as an intensifier of the apology. However Deutschmann (2003) also describes emphatic *do* as an example of a hyperpolite form which could be used to express a sarcastic apology (although he notes that the syntax of sarcastic and real, meaning sincere, apologies was largely the same).

The attitude of police writers toward intensification was not positive. There were only two examples of adverbial intensification in this corpus, one "I sincerely apologise" (Ltr. 46) and:

L 67 I unreservedly apologise to you for our failure to deal with this matter within a reasonable period of time. (Ltr. 16).

The infrequency of intensification suggests it is not a linguistic strategy that the writers found valuable. Focus groups were asked to comment on the example L67:

F 51 D/F: I don't think I would use that word I unreservedly apologise
G: No
R: Unreservedly
D/F: No I would apologise
G: I either apologise or not yeah
D/F: I wouldn't be I unreservedly apologise
G: because that means every other time you apologise there's kind of a reservation on the back of it (ll. 1693-1700).

Focus group participants did not see a place for intensification, an apology either is or is not, and use of intensification potentially devalued other apologies. It is not clear therefore either from the police writers' understanding of intensification, nor from academic description of use of emphatic *do* to construct a sarcastic apology, that this form would be most likely used to increase the sincerity of an apology.

There is evidence in the remainder of letter 50 that the writer(s) does not have a positive impression of the addressee, for example:

L 68 In response to this allegation, I firstly have to say that you have no grounds nor offer any evidence for alleging that these officers had any reason to embarrass or humiliate you. (Ltr. 50).

An ongoing concern of police complaints handler are complaints which are

F 52 A: persistent vexatious querulous whatever terminology you want to use to describe them (ll. 222-3).

Both focus groups identified this problem spontaneously; it was not an aspect I questioned them about. As aspects of the complaint look to have been identified before investigation ("firstly") as unfounded, the letter writer(s) may be understanding at least some of this complaint as querulous, making it surprising that the writer(s) would use a linguistic device to intensify the sincerity of the apology language.

An unusual aspect of the context of this letter is that the action being apologised for has as much or more impact on the writer(s) as the addressee. Had the complainer been informed at an early stage that the matters he or she wished to raise were not complaints, the writer, and his team, would have had less work to do. This particular letter is four pages long, and refers to an investigation report previously submitted to the Procurator Fiscal, who determined that no charges would be laid; there are twelve allegations referred to in this letter, none of which are found substantiated. There was therefore a significant amount of work that preceded this letter. In contrast, the addressee arguably benefited from the failure to identify matters that were not complaints - as he or she receives an explanation on a matter that was not deemed competent, which might otherwise not have been investigated. Rather than asking whether the apology in letter 50 is sincere in general, it may be necessary to ask whether the writer(s) sincerely regrets the impact of this failing on his team, but does not sincerely regret the impact on the complainer.

The use of *regret* in this letter is one exception to the pattern described in section 6.3.2 where substantiated allegations or acknowledged process failures co-occur with apology expressions in the form *apologise for* and not *regret*. Other exceptional uses of *regret* were discussed in section 6.3.4 with the suggestion that *regret* allows greater ambiguity about the direction of apology language, for example aimed more at the police institution than the complainer. The unusual presence of *regret* against an acknowledged failing further supports the possibility that this *regret* is not being used as a typical police apology, perhaps in the sense that it is not aimed at the complainer (remembering, as discussed in chapter 5 that the final letter may be discussed within a community of police complaints handlers, so the team who (unnecessarily) worked on these many allegations are potential readers).

Letter 50 therefore contains language which has been previously identified to intensify an apology, which might be used therefore by the writer(s) to express the sincerity of the apology, although both previous studies and the police writers in focus groups also suggest negative impacts to the use of intensification. There is evidence

in the letter that the writer(s) does not have apologetic feelings toward the complainer in that he criticises the complainer (Kampf (2009) describes a tactic in not apologising as to blame the victim, which may be a related idea). The writer(s) may however have feelings of genuine regret toward his own and his team's experience - meeting therefore Tavuchis' (1991, p.19) description that "the heart of apology consists of a genuine display of regret and sorrow". Should this apology therefore be understood through form and context as a sarcastic (non)-apology to the complainer or perhaps a sincere intensified apology for readers within the institution - or perhaps both?

Letter 17 also raises questions about how sincerity should be understood in relation to apologies. In this letter the writer(s) describes the complainer's expectations of the service that he or she should receive from the police as:

L 69 unrealistic, impossible to sustain and not proportionate in the circumstances (Ltr. 17).

Again therefore the writer(s) expresses criticism of the complainer's point of view. This letter then goes on to acknowledge a failing, rudeness by an officer dealing with this individual, and use apologetic language in the form *apologise for*:

L 70 Notwithstanding, the Sergeant admits to speaking you in the manner you describe and I would apologise for any offence this may have caused you. I find your allegation substantiated and I will arrange for local corrective measures with regards the conduct of the Sergeant. (Ltr. 17).

I suggested above that *apologise for* might be understood as a more sincere form of apologetic language than *apologise if*. This example also reports that "corrective measures" will be taken against the officer complained about, ie there will be action designed to prevent a reoccurrence. This example therefore appears to make full payment for the identified fault, both in using the payment linguistic form, and making a commitment to future change. It should be noted that making full payment in linguistic form may not be easy for the police writer(s) - in section 6.3.4 I discussed an example of a substantiated failing which did not co-occur with the *apologise for* expression, which I suggested might be due to the description of the complainer as 'goading' the officer (although in this instance the complainer is described as difficult, rather than deliberately provoking the failing which is being apologised for). Putting on record an apology in the 'strong' form *apologise for* where the complainer's behaviour was deemed unreasonable is arguably a significant commitment to the apology from the police. The particular thoughts and feelings for apology that make it sincere may not relate to concern for the complainer but rather to an understanding that a particular fault deserves apology payment in a particular form. It may however not be possible to use *apologise if* in this context because that form, understood as a validation of the complainer's perspective, could not be sincere where the writer(s)

thoughts and feelings, as displayed in example L69, are that the complainer's experience of the incident was not valid. Rather than the different forms being either sincere or insincere, it may be that there are different requirements for thoughts and feelings because these are different speech acts.

There may also be an issue of how the concept of sincerity relates to the construct of apology as reaffirming social norms. Tavuchis (1991), for example, described part of apologising as confirming that the break in social conventions which led to the apology is not acceptable; as noted above, Howard-Hassman and Gibney (2008) suggest this may be a particularly important function for public apologies, in redefining what may have been considered in the past as acceptable behaviour to be in fact in breach. Bilder (2008, p.21) argues that it is the function of apology in relation to social norms which is relevant to the question of whether or not an apology is authentic: "'authentic' apologies - ones that genuinely and unequivocally recognize the existence of particular rules". The apology in letter 17 relates to a breach in the requirement that police officers are civil. Part of the function of this apology may be to express regret that this was breached in relation to the complainer (although the writer(s) criticism of the complainer may suggest he is insincere in this regard), but another part is to reaffirm the requirement for police civility. Expressing this apology despite the behaviour of the complainer might be adduced as evidence that the writer(s) genuinely believes in a norm of police civility. The apology could perhaps be sincere in its affirmation of police norms, while not sincere in other functions of apology.

One argument from existing public apology studies is that where the producer is not sincerely apologising, the apology is simply being used for procedure, a "cheap" way to get out of a mistake (Verdeja, 2010, p.565). A fault was found therefore the police writer(s) carries out the procedural ritual of providing an apology in the form *apologise for* (although I have not found evidence of any police procedural documents which specify this particular linguistic form of apology expression for substantiated complaint allegations). However, the police writers in focus groups identified the possible cost to future policing - that the officer may be put on the 'back foot' in future dealings with this individual. It may not just be the single officer that is affected. By apologising and thereby stating that the police do not have the right to be rude to this individual even if he or she is being unreasonable, the police are restricting their options (where Limberg (2008) suggests police are institutionally sanctioned to be rude to achieve compliance with police instructions, this letter is telling the complainer that that sanction has limits, and that the complainer has rights to enforce those limits). It is therefore not true to say that this public apology comes at no cost to the individual officer or to the police institution.

Austin's criteria for the sincerity of a speech act require that the person has the par-

ticular thoughts and feelings relevant to the act. In this section I have considered two examples which highlight the complexity of what those thoughts and feelings may be. For Letter 50 I consider the possibility that the writer(s) has genuine feelings of regret in relation to the police institution but not the addressee. For Letter 17 I consider the possibility that the writer(s) might have genuine feelings about affirming the social norm which was breached, without genuine regret for the impact of the specific breach of the complainer. Sincerity is not therefore a criterion that can be discussed only in terms of presence of absence, but rather in terms of sincerity about what, to whom. Differentiating aspects of sincerity may be part of differentiating speech acts related to apology, not only public versus private, but, as discussed in chapter 6 the possibility of two related acts of payment apology and validation of an offended party (as noted above, regret for the experience of the offended party may be crucial to an act of validation but perhaps not to an apology in ritual payment of a breach of social norms).

7.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I have considered issues around sincerity in apologies, discussing both technical difficulties in accessing evaluations of sincerity as well as broader issues of whether the question of sincerity can or should be applied to public apologies. While some apology researchers have suggested that public apology should be considered a distinct speech act from interpersonal apology because sincerity is not a factor (e.g. Tavuchis, 1991; Jeffries, 2007), nevertheless it can appear in the academic debate that a public apology is measured against interpersonal apology and found lacking for the inapplicability of the criteria of sincerity. While conceptually sincerity may seem inapplicable to public apologies, it remains part of the debate; it may be important to consider what sincerity means in public apologies rather than to maintain its irrelevance.

I therefore moved on to consider whether a sincerity criterion for apology should be assessed in terms of presence of absence, or rather, following Kádár and Haugh (2013), with more differentiated consideration of sincerity to whom and for what. I discussed two examples from this corpus which highlight possible different understandings of sincerity in apology, first a difference in whose circumstances the writer(s) regrets and secondly a difference in whether the writer(s) regrets the impact of the specific incident or the principle of the breach of social norms. It is perhaps not possible to ask whether the police are apologising sincerely in this corpus without first specifying what is to be understood by a sincere apology, and noting that the judgment may differ among different participants. Considering different types of sincerity rather than simply its presence or absence suits current developments

in apology studies. Several apology studies have begun looking at the question of apologies less in the sense of whether they took place or did not take place, but with reference to a scale of effectiveness (Fehr and Gelfand, 2010) or relationship to a prototype (Jeffries, 2007; Davies, 2011). These understandings of apology may suggest that apology is less a single speech act than a cluster of related activities.

There is an extent to which this chapter supports the argument that public apologies should be considered a separate speech act to private apologies. The issue of whether an apologiser could be sincere about acknowledging, and putting on record, a breach of social norms without feeling concern for the specific addressee is less likely perhaps to occur in interpersonal apologies, where there is no formal record (although consider for example children being instructed to apologise, as part of socialisation into a politeness culture). More than just whether 'apology' needs to be divided into public and private apology, this chapter has considered whether the concept of 'apology' needs to be broken down further, whether there could be different related speech acts which have different understandings of a sincerity criterion. In chapter 6 I described a form/frame correlation in apology language, on the basis of which I suggested there might be two related speech acts, a payment form of apology and an act of validation. In this section I considered the possibility that the payment form of apology might exist without 'sincerity' understood as regret for the addressee, but that the act of validation might demand this. These two speech acts may be distinguished therefore by linguistic form, frame of use and differing understandings of a 'sincerity' criterion.

The discussion in this chapter should also be considered in relation to principles of discursive approaches to politeness. One element of discursive approaches to politeness which distinguish them from Brown and Levinson is the focus on politeness1, the lay person's understanding of politeness, as opposed to politeness2, the analyst's understanding (as discussed in chapter 2). Part of the reason why the sincerity of public apologies remains a topic in apology studies, despite the argument that it is an inapplicable criterion, is that it is a criterion applied by the lay person: the media reported their perceptions of whether Tony Blair apologised sincerely (Jeffries, 2007). In this chapter I have suggested that sincerity cannot simply be applied to apologies in terms of its presence or absence, rather more specific questions need to be asked. This demonstrates perhaps where the study of politeness1 and politeness2 may provide different benefits. The analyst can consider how the lay person is applying the criterion of sincerity to public apologies - in relation to the overall breach in social norms or the individual impact, for example - and academically classify on the basis of different lay sincerity criteria different speech acts. Politeness1 finds that people judge the politeness of apologies in terms of sincerity; politeness2 finds that how those judgments of sincerity are applied illuminates a range of linguistic activity re-

lated to apology.

On the 1 February 2014 the makers of Buckfast tonic wine reported that they had received a “very sincere" apology from Police Scotland (in relation to attempts to tag this alcoholic beverage so that any related criminality could be traced back to the shop that sold it) (Campbell, 2014). A corporation judged an apology from an institution as sincere; whether or not the ‘police’ are capable of feeling sincerity, it is clearly not a concept that is going to be absent from public debate about apologies. However, the role of the analyst may be less to accept or object to this concept as applicable to public apologies, than to contrast its limitations as an analytical concept with its enduring role in the lay person’s understanding, and then use those limitations to better understand ‘apology’ as a concept relating to a cluster of related speech acts.

8. Conclusion

This thesis has presented an analysis of explicit apology expression used by the Scottish police in letters responding to public complaints. In this chapter I summarise the key findings from my analysis and discuss implications of this for the literature, in terms of apologies, politeness research methodologies, police language and power. I will also discuss the practical applications for this research and directions for further study.

8.1 Summary of analytical findings

In chapter 5 I considered the production and reception of final letters responding to complaints made about the police. While the police writers understood these letters as coming from the police organisation, several individuals are involved in their physical production. The mechanism by which the collective police institution produces a written document was to have a signatory designated in law with responsibility for handling complaints on behalf of the police force. Although this may appear to specify the authorised speaker of a police apology, this only describes the institutional perspective; public perception of the appropriate principal for a police apology does not necessarily accept the institutional framework. The signatory of the letter is not the only writer involved in its production. A range of police, and external e.g. the Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland (PCCS), people had an influence on the contents of the letters. Evaluation of the language was built into the production process, through for example an initial enquiry officer drafting the letter and the signatory reviewing and quality controlling its expression. The final letter therefore displays language which has been evaluated inside the police institution, giving opportunities for anything deemed not polite to be changed.

I identified two main readers of the letters: the addressee (usually the complainer) and the police officer subject to complaint. I described how the institutional context specified a particular identity for the addressee, that of 'member of the public', and how this designation presented challenges to police identity, because the British ideology of 'policing by consent' describes the public as both part of policing and separate as the policed. The second main reader, the officer subject to complaint, also

stresses notions of a simple, homogenous, police identity. The subjects and the writers are members of the same police institution but differentiated by their participation status in this interaction and particular requirements on the writer(s) to provide an independent judgment on the professionalism of other police officers. The addressee and subject each place conflicting pressures on the writers and together further require that the writers negotiate between their competing claims as reader, and likely differing understandings of what constitutes politeness.

Finally in this chapter I described some aspects of the police institutional framework which relate to understandings of politeness and apology. These included Scottish policing policy documents which stress the importance of polite communication with the public to maintain a law abiding society. I described procedural justice theory as underpinning the current institutional framework of policing in Scotland, noting the value of its model of police power tempered by legitimacy to understanding studies of police language. I noted that apology appears to be promoted as a mechanism to resolve complaints, and that previous studies suggesting apology would be feared in an institutional situation for its legal consequences did not fit the Scottish policing situation. I noted that police writers in focus groups talked about apology in terms consistent with this description of the institutional structure although their uses of apology expressions in letters did not entirely sustain this. There was here therefore an indication of a possible contrast between police moral norms about how apology should be done and police empirical norms of how apology is regularly done.

In chapter 6 I described the empirical evidence from my corpus of letters that the police use explicit apology expressions. My first finding was that the police frequently use explicit apology expressions, a crucial constituent of apology. Given that the police have opportunities in the writing process to remove these if they do not intend to apologise, I judge the repeated use of explicit apology expressions to constitute evidence that the police intend to apologise in these letters.

I then described lexical and syntactic variation in the police production of explicit apology expressions in these letters. I found that police choice of apology verbs contrasted with previous findings for interpersonal apologies, showing a particular pattern of more usage of *apologise* over *sorry*, and also frequent use of *regret*, an apology form barely attested in previous studies. I discussed the relative motivations for this difference relating to the written medium of these texts, the particular policing context and the conjunction of these factors.

In contrast to the lexical variation, the syntactic presentation of the speaker of the apology overwhelming took the form described as the prototypical form of apology by Jeffries (2007): the first person singular. While this syntax for person is typical

for apology on the surface, given the discussion in chapter 5 of the multiple writers involved in producing these letters (compared to the prototype of a dyadic apology), it is surprising in this particular situation. I discussed therefore what factors in the police complaints situation might motivate a singular rather than a plural syntactic presentation of the writer(s).

The main contribution of this thesis is the finding that the police regularly, in particular situations, use an unusual complement structure with the verb *apologise*: an *if*-clause. I briefly referred to syntactic analysis of *if*-clauses, suggesting that the examples in this corpus may be understood as discourse conditional rather than standard conditional constructions. The function of a discourse conditional is to specify the relevance of the speech act; in these examples to relate *apologise* to the experience of the complainer.

The next stage in my analysis was to consider when the different linguistic forms of apology occurred, and if there was any regularity between the linguistic variation and the contextual frames, following Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based model. I identified and described an important aspect of the frame which varied in this corpus: the outcome decision on the complaint allegation, whether it was substantiated, not substantiated or resolved. I first noted that this variation in frame did not accord with the presence or absence of apology language; the police use explicit apology expressions where complaints allegations are found not substantiated, ie where the police have been judged not at fault. This suggests that the police are overusing apology language in comparison to previous studies which relate apology to the existence of an offence. It also shows the police overusing apology language against their own moral norms - the police writers stated in focus groups that apology was required where the police had done something wrong but otherwise should not be offered.

While the presence or absence of apology language did not distinguish between distinctions in the contextual frame of the complaint allegation outcome, the form of language did:

- *apologise for* primarily occurred with substantiated allegations;
- *apologise if*, *regret*, or an absence of apologetic language, occur with not substantiated allegations;
- an absence of apologetic language occurred with resolved complaints.

In particular there was an almost categorical split between the different complement structures for *apologise*, with an *if*-clause never occurring with a substantiated allegation. Bearing in mind the previous syntactic analysis of *apologise if* as discourse conditional, I suggested that the police are constructing two separate speech acts: a

payment apology (in the form *apologise for*) and a validation of the addressee (in the form *apologise if*). These speech acts enable the writers to negotiate between demands to apologise to the public addressee and demands not to apologise for the police subject in situations where the complaint allegation cannot be evidenced.

I presented exceptions to the main pattern noting that these often arose where the relationship between interactants varied from the main arrangement of the corpus (the main arrangement being where the police writer(s) is responding to an alleged offence by another officer (the subject) addressing the person claiming to have been offended). I also identified an impact of police understanding of the addressee relating to traffic policing. While there are too few letters in this corpus to identify patterns in linguistic variation relating to these aspects of the frame, the evidence that differences in these factors occur with differences in apology language make this an important area for future research.

In chapter 7 I focused on the discrepancy between my finding that the police frequently use explicit apologetic expression and public perception that the police never apologise, taking perceptions of sincerity as a likely explanation. While a sincerity criterion appears inapplicable to institutional apologies nevertheless it remains part of academic and public discourse. I considered sincerity in relation to two particular examples of apology language from my corpus suggesting that, as Kádár and Haugh (2013) suggest for politeness in general, sincerity is subject to multiple different understandings (sincere about what, to whom). I considered whether a payment apology (in the form *apologise for*) could be sincere in affirming a social norm without expressing genuine concern for the addressee (contrasting this with the focus in an *apologise if* act of validation). Different understandings of sincerity may be part of different acts of apology payment and validation.

Drawing together my findings on linguistic form and sincerity in police apologies in responding to public complaints I conclude that:

- the police do apologise; and
- the concept of 'apology' needs further definition, to allow for separate, if related, speech acts to make payment for a fault and to validate the perspective of an addressee.

8.2 Implications for the literature

This thesis has presented new understanding of linguistic form in apology, firstly by providing a descriptive account of explicit apology expressions in police letters responding to public complaints. As well as providing new understanding of apol-

ogy in the particular institutional domain of policing, this description is also relevant to understanding apology in written language and provides a new angle on public apologies by describing a body of 'on record' everyday apologies, public in a different way to apologies commanding media attention.

This thesis also identified a particular aspect of variation in explicit expression of apology - variation in complements to the verb *apologise* which has not previously been described. Discursive researchers argue that politeness is not inherent in linguistic form, but struggled over in discourse (e.g. Watts, 2003). The existence of variation in complement structure, perhaps a less salient aspect of variation than the difference in lexical items, presents an undocumented site in which such a struggle could take place. I suggested that the particular policing context placed a range of conflicting demands on the police writers, and that the difference between these two forms might represent their struggle to find ways to use apologetic language that allowed them to satisfy these conflicts, to accede to institutional pressures to be polite (to motivate public trust) and therefore to apologise even where there was not a balance of evidence to find for the complainer, while at the same time maintaining a particular linguistic form of apology for those situations where there was evidence of a specific fault to be paid for. This explanation is particularly relevant to the policing context, but the general concept of manipulating the linguistic apology form in an attempt to satisfy multiple differing audiences is relevant to many public institutions.

As a consequence of finding in this corpus of police letters two distinct constructions of apology language, *apologise for* and *apologise if*, used to achieve specific aims in different contexts, I suggested that the construct of 'apology' should be re-evaluated. In this particular instance, I argued that there may be two related speech acts of payment for a fault and validation of the addressee's perspective. The latter act may be particularly relevant to the domain of public apologies, but not necessarily coterminous with a definition of public, as opposed to private, apologies. There were other aspects of the concept of 'apology' which were also questioned in this thesis, such as whether the politeness1 understanding of 'apology' is 'saying sorry', and also that the police lay understanding of 'explanation' appeared as a separate act to apologising, contrary to the findings of early apology studies that explanation is a mechanism to achieve apology. The acceptance of the construct 'apology', inherent in the titles of many apology studies and indeed this thesis, requires further challenge.

Discursive approaches to apology research often do not accommodate written language. I described in chapter 2 similarities between developments in discursive research and approaches to studying writing. I used these similarities to develop an analytical framework for considering politeness in writing, based on Terkourafi's (2005) frame-based approach. It is this analytical framework which identified a form/frame

relationship between the syntactic construction of apology language and the police decision on the outcome of a complaint. My amended framework is operationally successful and provides opportunities to extend discursive consideration of politeness to a greater range of language in written form.

A major difference between my analytic framework and the approach of much discursive research is my focus on the politeness evaluations of producers rather than recipients. The discursive motivation for using hearer reactions is the principle that politeness exists not inherently in particular linguistic form but through evaluations of communication (Kádár and Haugh, 2013). Such evaluations cannot be accessed directly by a researcher, they take place inside people's heads, and therefore their nearest proxy, whether or not someone challenges the previous utterance as impolite, becomes the most important, almost the only, source of data for this research. In apology studies the defining criterion for whether or not apology has taken place becomes therefore whether the recipient accepts it as such. This presents a problem where the recipient and the apologiser do not come from the same politeness culture, in that it only provides one of the relevant cultural perspectives on that apology. There are fewer mechanisms for accessing the politeness evaluations of the speaker. Davies (2011) however noted that the situation might be different for written language, that the ability to revise texts in production meant that what was produced was the speaker's evaluation of the 'best' version. I provided an analysis of the production of these letters that demonstrate evaluation was built into the writing process, supporting Davies' description. The final written product incorporates evaluations of language from the police perspective. Repeated co-occurrence of linguistic forms in particular contextual frames (such as *apologise if* with not substantiated allegations) provides evidence of emic understandings of politeness, that this is the polite linguistic form to use in this situation. In this thesis, I have captured a view from inside the police institution as to what apologising regularly looks like. In methodological terms this thesis provides evidence that a frame-based approach can be successfully applied to written language and that evaluations take place in the production of written language.

I drew attention in this thesis to contrasts in empirical norms of police apology, what was regularly done in the letters, and moral norms, what police writers consciously described about police apology in focus groups (remembering that only a very limited amount of focus group data was collected). The contrasts suggest the value of looking at politeness2, academic, as well as politeness1, lay person, understandings of politeness. Taking only how the police described apologising would not provide an accurate picture of how they actually used explicit expressions of apology. Investigating the empirical norms of what they actually do is still partially a politeness1 approach in being how the lay person uses apology language but overlays

this with politeness2 understandings of, in this instance, complement variation, providing “systematic evidence" that may then be interpreted in relation to aspects of the policing context (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.98). I also noted problems of relying on politeness1 understandings of sincerity, which underspecify the application of a sincerity criterion - what aspects of apology, which speaker(s) and to whom? A politeness2 approach to sincerity allows for identification of the different criteria encompassed with the lay person’s terminology ‘sincerity’, and potentially therefore of how particular sincerity criteria might be part of evaluations of different speech acts of payment and validation. This thesis has therefore applied the principles suggested by Kádár and Haugh (2013), of the need to consider distinctions between emic and etic understandings, and lay and analyst interpretations, which crossover the original discursive distinction between politeness1 and politeness2. I have described an emic police understanding of apology, with contrasts between the analyst’s categorisation of empirical norms and the lay expression of moral norms.

This thesis engages with questions of police language as well as linguistic politeness. This study describes police language in an unusual context, complaints handling, which also represents the relatively understudied public service side of policing (although it is public service, rather than enforcement, which is described by Reiner (2010) as what police actually spend more of their time on). My findings contrast with studies from the enforcement side of policing, such as police questioning. Instead of the police using their institutional priority for particular linguistic rights to exacerbate the power differential between police and suspect, my study shows the police are dismissing the potential linguistic power given to them by their institutional position. The complaints system provides what is supposed to be an objective mechanism for determining where the police are at fault - which requires investigation, evidence, and independent decision making. The decision that is made on a complaint therefore should provide the police with institutional cover not to apologise where no fault is evidenced. Instead, the police apologised in this corpus in many cases where the institutional structures found that they had done nothing wrong. This contrast suggests that understanding police language requires consideration of that language in both the service and enforcement sides of policing.

The findings in this thesis may also suggest that police language varies in relation to the rank of the police officers studied. Ostermann (2003) investigated police language used in dealing with domestic abuse victims (partially a service context). She compared the language used by police officers to that of non-police, specialist domestic abuse workers. She found the police language to be less empathetic, and argued that person focused language has less value to the police, who, in order to be promoted, needed to demonstrate even in this context that they could use language most valued in carrying out policing tasks. Ostermann (2003) explained this finding using Bour-

dieu's notion of a symbolic marketplace: speaking empathetically had little value to the police officers. Apology language, frequently used in my corpus of letters, is not a use of language obviously associated with policing tasks such as arrest or investigation. The difference between my findings and Ostermann's may reflect the relatively high rank (Inspector and up) of the signatories in my data. To become inspectors, these individuals will have already demonstrated their ability to carry out frontline policing tasks. Perhaps therefore the language expertise that carries cultural capital at higher ranks is more about relationship management, with public complainers but perhaps also with a broader range of stakeholders. The difference in my description of police language in comparison to previous studies may reflect different communities and activities within policing, such as service versus enforcement activities and speakers of different police rank.

The final particular interest for this thesis was in power, language and policing. The contrast between the findings of this study and previous studies of police language in questioning scenarios may also reflect the different power relations in the police complaints context. The complaints system is part of institutional concern for police legitimacy (for example complaints statistics are reported on in the police performance framework indicator for public confidence (The Scottish Government, 2013)). This thesis therefore described the predominant way legitimacy is understood in modern policing, through the theory of procedural justice. The concept of police power constrained by legitimacy explains findings in this thesis, including why the police would apologise when they do not have to; by apologising, by being polite, they contribute to public trust and thereby to the store of legitimacy which means that when police in other situations give orders these are more likely to be obeyed. Procedural Justice Theory provides explanations for findings of previous language studies (e.g. Harris, 2003; Limberg, 2008), which a binary model of police power versus lay person powerlessness finds harder to explain.

As noted above, one of the key findings in this thesis is that the police overuse apologetic language, by apologising when the complaints system has acquitted them of wrongdoing. The comparison between this and findings for interpersonal apologies are worth considering against studies of gender and apologising, though with caution given the age of many gender and apology studies and subsequent developments both in politeness research and in understanding gender. An early description of the relationship between gender and apologising is that women apologise more than men, and apologise for less serious offences (Holmes, 1995). My description of police apologising provides a parallel: police apologise more than non-police, and for offences they have been cleared of. The similarity in these descriptions is unlikely to be a female gender effect as the majority of police officers in Scotland continue to be male (The Scottish Government, 2013). However, O'Barr and Atkins (1980)

suggested that linguistic features identified as women's language were features of powerless language (in their particular study people in a courtroom scenario with less power). It may be particular surprising to conceive of the police, a powerful institution in society with the societal sanction to use physical force, as using linguistic features associated with powerlessness. However, I have suggested that police patterns of apologising may relate to police power tempered by the need for a public grant of legitimacy. Procedural Justice Theory suggests that legitimacy is what gives institutions authority (where an organisation is deemed legitimate, people follow its instructions). It is possible that linguistic features identified as correlating with powerlessness are linguistic strategies used to gain legitimacy and thereby authority to speak.

I described the promotion of police apologising in the police complaints system as relatively recent, perhaps motivated by policy commitment to gaining public confidence in the police and thereby a grant of legitimacy. Apologising, part of politeness, is specified as part of a desired cultural change in policing and in the relationship between the police and the public. Watts (2003, p.81) is one of many discursive politeness researchers with an interest in power and politeness, asking "Could the strategic manipulation of politeness [...] be a significant factor in structuring and restructuring relations of power, social roles and the nature of social institutions?" Police apologies, as described in this thesis, appear to be exactly that, a factor in the restructuring of relations between the police and public.

8.3 Practical applications

Research into policing might also be expected to have applications for how policing is done. As Rock (2007, p.245) notes "Both groups [academics and people within the site of study] assume that research in the police station must be aiming to fix problems." In addition, I described in the introduction that police apologies were important, in that families asked for apology even in relation to findings that the police unlawfully killed a family member, but not done well, evidenced by for example the then PCCS recommending forces restate, in unreserved terms, apologies the Commissioner found unsatisfactory. The obvious practical application for this research would therefore be to recommend how a police apology could be done better. There are however problems with this application.

First, as discussed in chapter 4 there are ethical concerns about providing guidance on good apologies. MacCoun (2005) considers a dark side to procedural justice, in that understanding how to do something in a procedurally just way may make it possible to have any decision, no matter how unreasonable, accepted as fair and le-

gitimate. In a police complaints context, understanding how to do a better apology could make it possible to never actually deal with the substance of the complaint. This was a concern that representatives of the police, through whom I collected data, spontaneously identified and refuted by committing to addressing the substance of any complaint.

Secondly, the methodology of this study is not aimed at judging what constitutes a better apology, assuming this means better for the complainer, rebuilding their trust in the police and thereby contributing to police legitimacy. Finding what constitutes a better apology in these terms would require a study focused on the recipient; as previously noted, this thesis has provided a description of understandings of apology from a police perspective, which does not necessarily agree with public viewpoints. A recipient study is a potential complement to this thesis, although there are difficulties in accessing recipient evaluations of apology language. One unsatisfactory methodology would be to ask people about their perceptions of written apology, but this would involve the reader creating a new discourse of their response, not necessarily a reflection of their response at the time of receipt. A related issue is to consider how reader perceptions may change over time. If the complainer returned to the letter six months later would they view it the same way? This thesis does not provide information on what constitutes a good police apology from the complainer's perspective, and developing research to address this question is more complex than it may at first appear.

This does not mean that the findings of this thesis do not have practical applications. I have discussed issues of the linguistic form of apology which suggest revision is needed to current guidance and recommendations on apology. For example, recommendations from the PCCS that police forces issue 'unreserved' apologies are problematic given police interpretation of this intensifier as creating a hierarchy of apology, where other apologies therefore do have reservations. The current statutory guidance also states that that any apology given by the police in response to a complaint should be "sincere" (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2011, p.35); I suggest, on the basis of my discussion in chapter 7, that any instructions for an apology to be sincere need to specify whether for example sincerity relates to affirming a breach in social norms or empathising with the complainer.

More fundamentally, this thesis raises questions about whether current guidance about apologising has considered the competing pressures on the producers of public service apologies. I suggested that the *apologise if* form may be used by police complaints handlers to mediate between their responsibilities to the police subject and the public addressee. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman provides the form *apologise if* as a negative example of how not to apologise; it does not appear to have

taken into consideration that this form might have a value in compromising between the different audiences apologisers may have. The current statutory guidance for police complaints is part of a policy priority around changing police attitudes toward complaints, as part of which it promotes apologising. It may be easier to embed such a cultural shift if this guidance acknowledges pressures on police complaints handlers not to apologise, such as how an apology may be perceived by the police subject of the complaint, as well as the reasons to apologise with regard to public confidence.

8.4 Future directions

The description of how the police apologise in this thesis is relevant to a specific time, place and context. In particular, new statutory guidance for the complaints system came into force in 2011; the creation of a single Police Service in Scotland in 2013 may have supported this guidance in bedding in, by reducing individuality of different force procedures. The guidance is specifically intended to support the cultural shift described previously for the complaints system to move from blaming individual officers for doing things wrong to welcoming complaints as an opportunity to learn, or as the title of the guidance states, to move *from sanctions to solutions* (Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland, 2011). One important direction for future research would be to take a diachronic perspective on apology language in police complaints, to consider whether that cultural shift is taking place and how it relates to apology language used. The data for this thesis originates from shortly before the new guidance came into operation and this thesis therefore provides a baseline description of apologising against which progress toward the desired cultural shift could be measured. Establishing a description of police apology language in this particular context also enables comparison on other dimensions, such as to police use of apology language in England and Wales (which might be expected to be similar due to the similar culture of 'policing by consent'), or to police apologies that are offered in press release format, which would additionally provide a more similar comparison to discursive public apology studies which look at media event apologies.

A further important direction for future research in terms of describing how the police apologise would be to investigate these aspects with a larger corpus of data; a relatively small corpus was originally collected to ensure data could be obtained from the police and because it was not known before data collection if there would be regular, or any, apologetic language in this type of letters. While the near categorical distinction in the frames of usage between the forms *apologise for* and *apologise if* makes a compelling case for this form/frame link, a larger corpus would allow more consideration of other aspects of frame variation, such as differences in the de-

scription of interactants (middle class complainers identified through the proxy of traffic policing incidents) and of the relationship between participants (such as with whom the responsibility for the offending act lies). A larger corpus would also enable systematic investigation of further linguistic features, such as the use of modal verbs and the details within the *if*-clause or *for*-phrase. A separate aspect of collecting more data would be in the form of focus group discussions, as described in chapter 4. The contrast between empirical and moral norms visible even in this limited focus group data argues for more extensive writer perception data to clarify how these norms differ.

The existing dataset also offers opportunities for further investigation of police apology strategies. In particular, I identified a few examples during this thesis of linguistic formulae for apologising other than explicit apology expressions, including explanations and a promise of forbearance. Investigating these alternative mechanisms of enacting apology would be particularly relevant to the issue noted above of whether explanation is a part of the speech act of apology or an independent act.

This study has identified the relevance of procedural justice theory to police apologies, and suggested that its description of legitimacy in relation to power may offer a useful explanatory concept for other studies of police language. A striking gap in procedural justice research is the incorporation of any linguistic definitions. As discussed in chapter 5, procedural justice defines fair process as having four elements, including treating people with respect and dignity, often understood as including politeness, and giving people voice in the decision making process. Description of these elements does not however engage with linguistic discussion of what for example politeness may mean, not even when operationalised for an experimental research study script, as for Mazerolle et al. (2012). An important direction for future research would be to incorporate linguistic insight into procedural justice studies. Forensic linguistic studies have identified problematic understandings of language in the criminal justice system; Ainsworth (2008, p.8) for example describes US Court decisions requiring suspects who wish to exercise their right to a lawyer having to request this in unambiguous language, such that “Can I get my lawyer?" should not be understood as a competent request. The legal system needs more linguistic insight, and procedural justice theory presents a particular gap to be filled.

Hugh Muir writes in the Guardian of problems with police culture, inculcated through the Police Federation, causing a mindset that supports racial discrimination by the police in the use of stop and search, exploitation of the vulnerable for sex and massively increased deployment of TASERs (Thomas A. Swift’s Electric Rifle). He concludes:

> “Here’s the principal cause for concern: without respect and trust, the whole concept we cherish of policing by consent ceases to have meaning. We draw police officers from our communities, but as they take the oath they become role models for our communities." (Muir, 2014).

Like the procedural justice model, he identifies treating people with respect as one of the foundations of legitimate policing. Legitimate policing is also not a minority concern: “police officers are the legal authority with whom people most frequently interact in their everyday lives" (Tyler and Huo, 2002, p.198). Police politeness, as an aspect of treating people with respect, and particularly police apologies, the apology act being described by Thompson (2008, p.34) as “intrinsically an act of respect", are therefore areas of public concern. In this thesis I have described how the Scottish police use apology language in letters of final response to public complaints of police incivility, a description therefore of how the police may be linguistically managing this act of respect.

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Appendices

A. Acronyms

ACC	Assistant Chief Constable
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
ACPOS	Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland
CCSARP	Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns
COPFS	Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
DCC	Deputy Chief Constable
DCT	Discourse Completion Task
DPA	Data Protection Act 1998
FOI	Freedom of Information Act (Scotland) 2002
FTA	Face Threatening Act
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary
HMICS	Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary Scotland
IFID	Illocutionary Force Indicating Device
IPCC	Independent Police Complaints Commission
PACE	Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
PCCS	Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland (renamed PIRC in 2013)
PIRC	Police Investigations and Review Commissioner
SPA	Scottish Police Authority

B. Research proposal for ACPOS

How can greater understanding of communication with complainants assist the police in concluding complaints more satisfactorily?

The Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland has identified as a theme in complaints handling reviews that communication problems let down good handling of police complaints ("Poor communication masking good practice by police, according to PCCS", 21 January 2010). This note outlines a PhD project at the University of Edinburgh aiming to analyse the language used by the police when dealing with complaints, as a potential resource for the police about effective communication in this context. The assistance sought from the police to conduct this project, primarily the provision of a small number of redacted final complaints letters, is summarised at the end.

Effective communication between police and members of the public over complaints: An Arts and Humanities Research Council funded PhD project at the University of Edinburgh

Across public services ineffective communication in handling complaints has been shown to cause problems even where the substance of a complaint is addressed. The Healthcare Commission found that failures in communication by health providers meant complainants had a lack of trust in the initial response and resulted in complaints being escalated (Spotlight on Complaints, 2009). In handling police complaints, inadequate explanations for decisions and miscommunications about apologies have been identified as particular problems. A greater understanding of communicating explanations and apologies may therefore be important in supporting satisfactory handling of police complaints.

Linguistics research in the field of politeness has looked at the language of explanations and apologies, including issues such as: the difference between an apology and an explanation; the different language people can use to communicate these; and how different language strategies are evaluated as more or less successful by speakers, listeners and outside observers such as the media. This research project seeks to apply this area of linguistics research to the handling of police complaints, to increase

understanding of how communication is working in this situation.

The main part of this project would be to analyse letters from police to members of the public following complaints, identifying different ways in which apologies and explanations are expressed in this context. This would be supplemented by discussions with people writing such letters, to look at what they are trying to achieve, and separately by testing the perceptions and evaluation of examples with potential audiences. The aim of this research project is therefore to clarify what is happening with communication of apologies and explanations in the handling of police complaints but also to consider the likely effectiveness of various linguistic strategies in communicating what complaint handlers are intending to convey. Reports and/or presentations of findings to police forces could therefore include considerations of how to ensure that what you are trying to say about a complaint is being understood.

Assistance sought:

- A total sample of 50 letters sent from Scottish Police Forces to finalise complaints, preferably low level complaints, e.g. incivility; these letters will be analysed linguistically for how explanations and apologies are expressed.
- One focus group (ideally lasting one hour) in each participating force with police officers responsible for writing letters to finalise complaints; these focus groups will be based on examples of real language used in final letters and discuss topics such as what that letter is trying to achieve and how officers decide if an apology or an explanation will be offered. If useful, these focus groups could join up with presentation of findings from the linguistic analysis of letters.

I am happy to further discuss details around access to this data, including agreeing a Memorandum of Understanding or similar covering e.g. redaction, secure storage of data as required.

(Contact details)

C. Focus group information sheet and consent form

THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

You have been asked to take part in a focus group discussion about police communication with members of the public who have made complaints. These focus groups are taking place across Scottish police forces with people who have experience of handling public complaints. The purpose is to get expertise from the people who do this work about how communication in these situations is managed. The focus group will include looking at anonymised excerpts from final letters to complainants and discussing how these texts are trying to achieve their aims.

Below is a summary of the whole research project; there will be opportunities to ask any questions during the focus group. The second page sets out how you are agreeing for this data to be used by participating in the focus group.

Understanding communication between police and the public after complaints: An Arts and Humanities Research Council funded PhD project at the University of Edinburgh

Ineffective communication in handling complaints has been shown to cause problems across public services even though the substance of a complaint has been addressed. The Healthcare Commission found that failures in communication by health providers meant complainants had a lack of trust in the initial response and this resulted in complaints being escalated (Spotlight on Complaints, 2009). In handling police complaints in England, inadequate explanations for decisions and miscommunications about apologies have been identified as particular problem areas. A greater understanding of communication strategies used when handling complaints may therefore be of practical use to public services. It also contributes to a range of linguistics research such as that looking at how trust is communicated by or-

ganisations or politeness research attempting to distinguish between apologies and explanations.

The first phase of this project is qualitative analysis of letters from Scottish police forces to members of the public finalising complaints made about incivility. This analysis seeks to identify the different communication strategies used in this situation and how they work. The second phase of this project comprises two sets of focus groups, taking place in 2011-12. The first set are discussions amongst police individuals with experience of handling complaints, seeking to gather expert understanding of the circumstances in which the letters have been written, the competing aims and objectives the writers are working to, and their intentions in using different strategies. The second set of focus groups are discussions amongst individuals who are potential recipients of such letters, the purpose of which is to look at perceptions, what people may understand when they receive different letters from the police finalising complaints. The focus group data will therefore support the analysis of the letters and allow the research to consider how effective the letters are in communicating to the recipients what the writers intend.

(Contact Details)

Focus Group Consent Form

This focus group is being conducted as part of a study exploring communication between the police and members of the public after there has been some sort of problem. This study is for a PhD in Linguistics and English Language at the University of Edinburgh, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The focus group will be conducted by Ruth Friskney, the researcher. The discussion will last one hour; all data will be anonymised.

Please read the following statements and state if you agree:

I have been given a summary of the research project and been given an opportunity to ask questions about the research.	Yes / No
I understand that participation is voluntary and I am free to leave the focus group at any time.	Yes / No
I understand that the focus group will be audio recorded and the recording will be retained until the end of the research project when it will be destroyed.	Yes / No
I understand that the audio recording will be transcribed into an anonymised text document and this transcription will be retained with the background papers of the research project.	Yes / No
I understand that my name and any other names I mention will be removed from the transcript.	Yes / No
I understand that sections selected from the anonymised transcript, selected at the researcher's discretion, may be used in any publications, papers or presentations arising from this or related research projects.	Yes / No

I agree that a brief description of the type of work I do may be stated in the research write up and that my employment position can be described as:

.....

I agree to take part in this focus group

Signed.....

Date.....

D. Researcher prompts for focus groups

Introduction to focus group

- Thanks for coming/time
- PhD looking at police use of language - specifically re relationship police and members of the public, starting point = how do you rebuild a relationship between a public service and a member of the public when that person believes something has gone wrong
- I'm doing linguistic analysis of final letters to complainants written by Scottish police forces, but I need your help, to give me the view from the inside, from the people who've actually written similar letters, to understand more about them
- I've got some general questions and also some specific examples of text I was hoping that people could tell me more about; last c.1hr, audio recorded and all names removed (consent forms) - can I get them to tell me a bit about who they are and their experience of communicating with members of the public after something has gone wrong and go from there...

General Questions

1. What's the purpose of a final letter to a complainant? What are you trying to achieve? (Process/Relationship building/Ending a complaint) What stages does it cover? (demonstrating understanding of complaint, explaining process, outcome, future effect) How important is it to protecting the police force?
2. Who is a final letter from (re single force)? Is it from an individual, from the police force, from the police service?
3. Many of the letters that I've looked at have an element of explanation and/or apology. In linguistic terms, these are not always easy to distinguish - some people would say that e.g. use of the word 'apologise' = an apology but some people would argue against that. For you as police officers what is an explanation? What's the difference between that and an apology? When is it an

appropriate situation to offer either? What does that mean? What can an apology achieve?

4. What messages do you want the person receiving the letter to read from it? What do you think they actually read from it?

5. Do you ever get any feedback from final letters - get a feeling if they have made a difference to people (anecdotes?)

Text examples

Pairs of examples that relate to particular themes I've been picking up on - differences between them, when do you think you'd use these (or would you do something completely different)

1. Apologies
   "I unreservedly apologise to you for our failure to deal with this matter within a reasonable period of time."
   "I apologise that your perception of the interaction with my officers was not more positive"

2. Explanations
   "This is owing to the fact that there has recently been a high speed crash near to that location involving a young driver of similar age to X(PERSON)X, whereby a passenger in the vehicle was killed as a result of the high speed. Sadly that message is sometimes ignored by young drivers, which is always frustrating to both me and my X(TYPE OF)X Officers"
   "By challenging inappropriate driving behaviour, including the failure to comply with traffic signals, X(FORCE)X is making a significant contribution to reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads and meeting demanding Government targets."

3. Outcomes for the officer
   "Not withstanding this both have been reminded of the need for Officers to be both courteous and professional when dealing with members of the public and they have been reminded that should they have any further dealings with you in the future they should conduct themselves in this manner."
   "I will arrange for local corrective measures with regards to the conduct of the Sergeant."

4. Process of handling a complaint
   "The above information is intended to help you understand how your complaint has been progressed and dealt with. I trust you are satisfied with the manner in which your complaint has been handled."
   "Despite a thorough investigation by Inspector X(NAME)X no evidence has been found to substantiate any aspect of your complaint and I do appreciate that the context of this letter may not be to your satisfaction, however, I can assure you that your complaints were investigated thoroughly and fairly and my findings are based on the available evidence"
   "I trust that having had the opportunity to discuss your concerns with Inspector X(NAME)X this has allowed you some closure on this experience"

5. Moving forward
   "As a force we pride ourselves in providing a high level quality of service to the public and it is unfortunate that on this occasion the performance of this officer has below the standard expected. I very much hope that this experience has not impacted too greatly on your faith in X(FORCE)X."
   "I am disappointed at our collective response to your contact. I intend that we will learn from this. Can I thank you for bringing this unfortunate set of circumstances to my attention and I trust the remedial action being taken by Inspector X(NAME)X will allow me to conclude matters."

If time, also look at justification for decision-making
"I can confirm that Detective Inspector X(NAME)X has carried out a full investigation into your complaint and I can provide you with the outcome as follows"
"The investigation into your complaint was conducted by Inspector X(NAME)XX who gathered evidence from witnesses and submitted a detailed report which I have now considered"

E. Categorisation of complaint outcomes

Complaint allegations have been marked as 'substantiated' where:

- the letter states that an allegation is substantiated;
- the letter states that an allegation is supported by evidence;
- the letter states that the officer will be subject to a misconduct hearing or given 'corrective' or 'management' advice;
- the letter states a finding of judgment that an officer's actions were unprofessional or incorrect.

Where a letter states that officers have been spoken to, made aware of the complaint, advised about aspects of their behaviour or provided with counselling or advice, these have not been understood (in the absence of other information in the letter) as evidence that an allegation is substantiated.

Complaint allegations have been marked as 'not substantiated' where:

- the letter states that an allegation is not substantiated or unsubstantiated;
- the letter states that an allegation is not supported by evidence;
- the letter states that no further action can be taken on an allegation;
- the letter reports two differing accounts on an allegation and no other evidence, e.g. the officer's and complainer's accounts are different and there is no further evidence to be adduced to either account (in the absence of a weight of evidence to substantiate the complaint it can only be found not substantiated).

Complaint allegations have been marked as 'resolved' where the letter states that an informal resolution or an agreement was reached.

One allegation has been marked 'Net yet determined' (it refers to speaking to an officer on his return from leave). One allegation is marked 'Not a complaint (force priorities)' as it refers to how police are deployed rather than misconduct matters.

Matters have been marked 'Process' where the issues relate to the handling of the complaint. Where a complaint arose from Traffic Policing operations the letter is marked 'Traffic'.

Letter	Evidence of decision on complaint	Decision	Apologetic Language	Apology
01	I consider that your allegations are supported by the evidence available.	Substantiated	I must apologise for all the failings above.	*Apologise for*
02	I am unable to substantiate your allegation. (x5)	Not substantiated	I apologise that your perception of the interaction with my officers was not more positive. (after fifth finding)	*Apologise that*
03	Our investigation ... has not substantiated any bias	Not substantiated	-	(*Apologise if* at end)
03	you found him to be unprofessional...the officer (and) his colleague ... recalled your encounter as good humoured your perception and that of the officer are clearly different	Not substantiated	-	(*Apologise if* at end)
03	I do not consider that including X(person)X in discussion disclosed any private information	Not substantiated	I apologise if the approach adopted by this officer left you with a negative impression of X(force)X.	*Apologise if*
04	Your complaint has therefore been formally recorded as withdrawn. That said, X(name)X's investigation did identify some issues with regard to the service provided where I believe that our performance could have been better	Substantiated (Withdrawn)	I apologise for any upset or dissatisfaction caused by the way this matter was handled by the police.	*Apologise for*
04	(Delay)	Substantiated (Process)	I must also apologise for the time taken to provide you with this formal response, which falls short of the standards we try to deliver.	*Apologise for*
05	overall, I must advise that our investigation has found no evidence to support your account (3 allegations)	Not substantiated	I apologise if your experience of the police on this occasion failed to meet your expectations	*Apologise if*

Letter	Evidence of decision on complaint	Decision	Apologetic Language	Apology
06	The officer has denied acting in an overbearing or oppressive manner towards you, and in the absence of further information from you regarding the incident I am not in a position to dispute his account.	(Traffic) Not substantiated	I regret that your experience of contact with my officer did not meet your expectation.	*Regret*
07	I am now in receipt of Inspector X(name)X's report in which he mentions having discussed the matter with you and that you are happy for him to resolve the matter informally with the officer concerned.	Resolved	-	None
08	There is therefore no evidence which supports your claim that the police failed to investigate your complaint to a proper standard	Not substantiated	-	None
08	There is therefore no evidence to suggest that the officers were guilty of wrongful arrest against you	Not substantiated	-	None
08	there is no evidence to support your claim that X(force)X were guilty of your unlawful detention	Not substantiated	-	None
08	there is no evidence to support your claim that the officers fabricated vexatious charges against you	Not substantiated	-	None
08	there is no evidence to support your claim that the reason for three officers arriving at your address was that they had made their mind up to arrest you prior to attending there	Not substantiated	-	None
08	there is no evidence available to me which supports your claim that the Police investigation was flawed	Not substantiated	-	None
08	there is no evidence to support your claim that there was insufficient evidence in the Police statements	Not substantiated	-	None

Letter	Evidence of decision on complaint	Decision	Apologetic Language	Apology
09	Although the Officer is currently on annual leave, please be assured that your complaint will be discussed with him in due course.	Not yet determined	I apologise if any offence or distress has been caused.	*Apologise if*
10	Force procedure dictates that they should indeed have carried out a breath test irrespective of the lack of smell of alcohol	(Traffic) Substantiated	-	None
10	Both officers ... deny using any inflammatory language	Not substantiated	-	None
10	I am content that the correct procedure was carried out in this instance	Not substantiated	-	None
11	He fully accepts that the form was out of date in so much as the telephone number is no longer in operation and that his professionalism has been brought into question through the use of this document.	Substantiated	For that I can only apologise to you.	*Apologise for*
11	Both deny that Constable X(name)X was aggressive and rude throughout their dealings with you.	Not substantiated	-	None
12	The Officer has denied being intimidating towards you	(Traffic) Not substantiated	I would like to apologise if, as is clear in this case, you felt the officer's actions were not professional.	*Apologise if*
12	I would expect Road Policing Officers to be thorough in their inspections of such matters. To do this would take some time.	Not substantiated	-	None

Letter	Evidence of decision on complaint	Decision	Apologetic Language	Apology
13	My officers are trained to visually note X(description)X this fact is used as evidence in any subsequent case	(Traffic) Not substantiated	-	None
13	Although X(person)X may not feel this was professional to carry this out in his hearing, I am heartened to hear that Officers are taking advice of those who may be more experienced in such matters	Not substantiated	-	None
14	all officers in attendance, state they acted in a professional manner at all times and there is no further evidence available, which would suggest otherwise.	Not substantiated	-	None
15	I am satisfied that the officers acted appropriately in difficult circumstances	Not substantiated	I regret that you perceived their attitude towards you lacked the level of understanding appropriate to deal with someone suffering from X(condition)X ... I apologise if on this occasion we did not manage to do that (deliver a quality service to everyone).	*Regret*, *Apologise if*

Letter	Evidence of decision on complaint	Decision	Apologetic Language	Apology
16	you should have received a personal visit in response to these actions.	Substantiated	I unreservedly apologise to you for our failure to deal with this matter within a reasonable period of time.	*Apologise for*
16	PC X(name)X believes that this may have been down to a misunderstanding as he was simply trying to inform you as to how the investigation would proceed.	Not substantiated	I regret that we did not meet your expectations in this regard.	*Regret*
16	I am not convinced that PC X(name)X expressed himself sufficiently well	Not substantiated (Complaint not about expression)	I regret any confusion that resulted from your conversation with PC X(name)X.	*Regret*
16	I believe the reason for his call was simply to try and provide you with some clarity in regard to the progress of the investigation. Again, the medium perhaps did not assist him to do so	Not substantiated	I regret if you felt that he was not in possession of the full facts of the case.	*Regret*
16	The incident should have been responded to within two hours	Substantiated	as I have already indicated, I apologise that we did not achieve that on this occasion	*Apologise that*
17	I find your allegation substantiated	Substantiated	I would apologise for any offence this may have caused you.	*Apologise for*
18	Based upon the investigation undertaken, and evidence and views presented, it is assessed that this allegation is unsubstantiated.	Not substantiated	-	(*Regret*, *Apologise for* at end)
18	In this regard, this issue is substantiated (x4)	Substantiated	-	(*Regret*, *Apologise for* at end)
18	The officer involved has been provided with corrective advice in this regard.	Substantiated	In conclusion, I regret the actions of this officer and apologise for the poor service received by your family and you on this occasion.	*Regret*, *Apologise for*

Letter	Evidence of decision on complaint	Decision	Apologetic Language	Apology
19	I feel the complaint cannot be substantiated	Not substantiated	-	None
20	I find insufficient evidence to support your assertion that this officer was uncivil towards you. However, I am of the opinion that he could have been more professional in his handling of the situation and the manner and approach he adopted may have added to the escalation of this incident.	Not substantiated	I refer to the above and regret that you found it necessary to complain about X(force)X.	*Regret*
21	Although I do not fault X(name)X for phoning at that hour, I am receptive to your view it was a relatively late hour	Not substantiated	and for that I would offer an apology.	*Apologise for*
21	Unfortunately there is insufficient evidence provided to substantiate your allegation that the Inspector was rude to you.	Not substantiated	-	None
22	(delay)	(Traffic) Substantiated (Process)	Firstly, may I apologise to you for the length of time it has taken to reply to you as the issues were investigated.	*Apologise for*
22	there is insufficient information for me to progress this further	Not substantiated	I can only apologise to you if you have misread the officer's intentions	*Apologise if*
23	As a result, I can therefore only find your complaint unsubstantiated	Not substantiated	-	None
24	there is insufficient evidence to substantiate the complaint	Not substantiated	-	None

Letter	Evidence of decision on complaint	Decision	Apologetic Language	Apology
25	I now consider the matter resolved.	Resolved	-	None
26	The officer does accept that his comment was inappropriate and has been counselled regarding his communication style [...] the matter has now been resolved to your satisfaction.	Substantiated	-	None
27	I believe the matter is now resolved	Resolved	I apologise for any distress caused	*Apologise for*
28	you are satisfied that your complaint has been resolved.	(Traffic) Resolved	-	None
29	there is evidence available that you were spoken to inappropriately by one of the Officers.	Substantiated	-	None
30	this matter has been resolved.	Resolved	-	None
31	an informal resolution was achieved.	Resolved	I apologise that on this occasion in your dealings with X(force)X you felt the need to complain	*Apologise that*
32	an informal resolution was achieved.	Resolved	I regret that on this occasion in your dealing with X(force)X you felt the need to complain.	*Regret*
33	an agreement was reached	Resolved	I apologise that on this occasion in your dealings with X(force)X you felt the need to complain	*Apologise that*
34	an informal resolution was achieved.	Resolved	I regret that on this occasion in your dealings with X(force)X you felt the need to complain.	*Regret*
35	I am unable to substantiate this complaint	Not substantiated	I regret that on this occasion in your dealings with X(force)X you felt the need to complain.	*Regret*

Letter	Evidence of decision on complaint	Decision	Apologetic Language	Apology
36	an informal resolution was achieved	Resolved	I apologise that on this occasion in your dealings with X(force)X you felt the need to complain.	*Apologise that*
37	an agreement was reached	Resolved	I apologise that on this occasion in your dealings with X(force)X you felt the need to complain	*Apologise that*
38	As discussed with yourself, I have spoken to X(name)X and advised him as to the points raised by yourself regarding his attitude towards yourself and X(name)X and your view that he failed to introduce himself.	Not substantiated	I would like to apologise for any offence caused and reassure you that we have taken due cognisance of the points you have made.	*Apologise for*
39	Handwritten note on letter states “conciliated"	Resolved	-	None
40	The officer has been made aware of your complaint and has received appropriate counselling and advice [...] I can assure you that I take complaints about the Police seriously and always seek to resolve same to the satisfaction of all concerned. I trust this has been achieved on this occasion	Substantiated	-	None
40	I also note your comments about people cycling on pavements and youths in general within the confines of the City Centre. I appreciate that these are matters which affect members of the public and would hope to reassure you that we take such matters seriously.	Not a complaint (force priorities)	Officers are tasked on a daily basis to deal with all reported incidents and I apologise if on this occasion our service fell short of what you expected.	*Apologise if*

Letter	Evidence of decision on complaint	Decision	Apologetic Language	Apology
41	X(force)X is committed to delivering a service to the community that is professional, measured and provides reassurance. It is clear to me that, on the occasion you describe, we have fallen short of that... In compliance with your wish, I have spoken to the officer concerned.. I trust we can agree that this is the end of the matter.	Resolved	-	None
42	In conclusion, may I take this opportunity to reassure you that we take complaints about the police seriously and always seek to resolve them in a fair and proper manner, which I believe has been achieved in this instance.	Resolved	-	None
43	You also concluded that your complaint had been resolved.	Resolved	-	None
44	both officers acknowledge all the comments that you have made in your correspondence ... Both officers did recall at least one period of silence and on reflection should have explained the reason to you for this delay	(Traffic) Unclear	it is fair to say they regret that you felt aggrieved by the manner in which they went about their business...(both officers) regret that you felt the way you did while they were in your company	(they) *Regret*x2

Letter	Evidence of decision on complaint	Decision	Apologetic Language	Apology
45	Whilst I cannot find the officer concerned acted incorrectly, your allegation has identified a learning point for X(force)X	Not substantiated	-	None
45	I cannot find that the officers failed to ensure your medical needs were properly cared for	Not substantiated	-	None
45	I am unable to conclude that they were irregular or incorrect in their actions	Not substantiated	-	None
45	I am therefore not in possession of evidence which would reasonably allow me to conclude with certainty that any officer conducted themselves in a manner where they used force which was excessive.	Not substantiated	I can only offer my apologies should you continue to believe that this X(INJURY)X was caused by the excessive or unreasonable actions of a police officer.	*Apologise should* (=*Apologise if*)
45	I cannot substantiate your complaint	Not substantiated	-	None
45	I have not been able to find any evidence to substantiate your allegation	Not substantiated	-	None
45	I can find no evidence in the gathered statements and documents to suggest their actions were spiteful	Not substantiated	-	None
45	I am unable to find any evidence or draw a conclusion that this decision taken in respect of X(person)X indicates that your treatment was unfair	Not substantiated	-	None
45	I cannot find that the length of time you had to wait was unreasonably long or caused you any disadvantage	Not substantiated	-	None
45	I am unable to substantiate your allegation	Not substantiated	but offer my regrets should you continue to believe the member of staff was uncivil to you.	*Regret*

Letter	Evidence of decision on complaint	Decision	Apologetic Language	Apology
45	I am not in possession of any evidence to support your allegation that he conducted himself unprofessionally	Not substantiated	-	None
45	I cannot find he acted oppressively or otherwise incorrectly towards you	Not substantiated	-	None
45	Having considered the circumstances I cannot find fault with the police officer who used this term	Not substantiated	but nevertheless I offer my apologies if it caused you upset or offence.	*Apologise if*
46	(unable to discuss)	(Traffic) Substantiated (process)	I regret as the matter is 'sub-judice', i.e. subject of judicial proceedings, I am prevented from entering into discussion about the matter	*Regret*
46	It was necessary however for my officers to satisfy themselves you were not under the influence of alcohol while driving your vehicle and obtain a proper sample of breath from you.	Not substantiated	It is a matter of regret that on this occasion you felt the attitude of the officer fell below the high standard which is expected of X(force)X, and for this I sincerely apologise.	*Regret* *Apologise for*
47	I am unable to substantiate your complaint	Not substantiated	-	None
47	I have been unable to substantiate your complaint	Not substantiated	-	None
47	I am therefore, based on available evidence, unable to substantiate your complaint	Not substantiated	-	None
47	I have carefully reviewed the evidence available to me and although I am unable to substantiate your complaint	Not substantiated	if it remains your position that incorrect information was provided to you, then I apologise.	*Apologise if*

Letter	Evidence of decision on complaint	Decision	Apologetic Language	Apology
48	I have carefully reviewed the circumstances in relation to this allegation and find that the officer's remarks were unprofessional and inappropriate particular at a time when you may have felt vulnerable.	Substantiated	I am sure the officer will take time to reflect upon the comments made at the time, and I offer an apology to you for any distress caused.	*Apologise for*
48	I am therefore, based on the evidence available to me, unable to substantiate your complaint.	Not substantiated	-	None
48	I am therefore, based on the evidence available to me, unable to substantiate your complaint.	Not substantiated	-	None
49	I have identified an incivility on the part of one of the officers...I have provided the officer concerned with corrective advice	Substantiated	it is a matter of regret to me that the officer concerned failed to remain professional throughout his dealings with your client.	*Regret*
50	(complaint process guidance)	Substantiated (Process)	I do regret that at an early stage you were not given firm guidance as to what could be relevantly listed as a complaint and thereafter investigated.	*Regret*
50	To summarise, I have found with the evidence available to me, that your allegations are unsubstantiated.	Not substantiated	-	None
51	(delay)	Substantiated (Process)	I ... apologise for the delay that this error will cause.	*Apologise for*
51	it is a general principle that in correspondence with complainers about the police, individuals, including witnesses and police officers are not referred to by name. That being said, it would, on reflection, have been more accurate for me to have made clear the status of this individual as a witness.	Not substantiated	I apologise if my reference to a 'member of the public' conveyed an erroneous perception to you	*Apologise if*

Letter	Evidence of decision on complaint	Decision	Apologetic Language	Apology
52	He informs me that he has discussed this incident with you and that you consider it appropriate for the Officer concerned to be spoken to by him and made aware of your concerns	Resolved	I am sorry that on this occasion your interaction with X(force)X has been unsatisfactory	*Sorry*
53	I can assure you it was indeed Inspector X(name)X who visited you that day, that he was properly dressed in his police uniform and that the purpose of his visit was to assist you. He assures me that he was not aggressive to you but was genuinely trying to help you both.	Not substantiated	If you felt he was over-bearing towards you, please accept my apology but knowing Inspector X(name)X as I do, I am certain he would have been attempting to resolve your problems in a positive manner.	*Apologise if*
53	In respect of Chief Inspector X(name)X, I can again confirm that it was indeed he who visited your home on X(date)X and that he too was appropriately dressed in his police uniform. I have viewed the statements which Chief Inspector X(name)X noted from you that date and I can confirm they have been properly recorded and documented and that you have not signed blank statement forms.	Not substantiated	Again I apologise if you feel this procedure was not properly undertaken, however Chief Inspector X(name)X who is a Senior Police Officer with significant experience in dealing with complaints, assures me he explained the procedure and the statements to you as best as he could.	*Apologise if*
54	the manner in which you were spoken to ... is to be addressed by that person receiving corrective advice	Substantiated	Please accept my apologies in respect of the issues highlighted in your e-mail	*Apologise in respect of*

Letter	Evidence of decision on complaint	Decision	Apologetic Language	Apology
55	Whilst your concerns are acknowledged and respected, given there is no independent account of what happened between you and the Officers that evening, I do not consider there are any grounds for taking any form of formal action against the Officer concerned and I have now concluded the investigation.	Not substantiated	-	None
56	I can find no evidence which would suggest that the officers were unprofessional in their dealing of the incident.	Not substantiated	I am sorry that you feel that you have not received a quality of service from X(force)X on this occasion	*Sorry*
57	there is no basis for me taking any further action in respect of this issue.	(Traffic) Not substantiated	However, if it is still your perception that the officers conduct was not as professional as you would have expected, I can only apologise for that. ... We expect the highest standards from our officers and I am sorry that you feel that this did not happen on this occasion.	*Apologise for* (=*Apologise if*) *Sorry*
58	(officers) state that they do not believe the officer's actions to have been unprofessional or discourteous ... you apologised to the officer concerned	Not substantiated	I am sorry you feel that the conduct of the officer did not meet your expectations on this occasion.	*Sorry*