

# *The Coordination of Talk and Typing in Police Interrogations*

**Tessa van Charldorp**

*VU University Amsterdam*

In this article, I examine the conduct and coordination of two activities that are relevant in the Dutch police interrogation: talking and typing. By taking a closer look at these activities, I can see how the police record is mutually constructed by officers and suspects and begin to understand what kind of orientation is required for these dual activities. Additionally, I explore how participants orient to and coordinate talking and typing during interrogations and explicate what this tells us about the ways institutional tasks are carried out in this specific environment. I have found that police officers not only structure talk during interrogations, but that their typing activities function as institutional, controlling actions when talk is transformed to text during the interrogations. *Keywords: police interrogation, conversation analysis, typing, activities, coordination*

## INTRODUCTION

In the Netherlands, police interrogations are generally not video or audio recorded.<sup>1</sup> Police records are typed up during the interrogation. According to the Dutch law, this must be done ‘as much as possible in the suspect’s own words’ (Code of Criminal Procedure, article 29). After the police record has been typed up by the officer, the suspect can read through the document and is asked to sign it. The record then becomes part of the case-file, which is read and quoted from in court by the lawyers, prosecutors and judges. Although the police record does not have to be a verbatim account of the suspect’s words, in the courtroom the participants often treat it as such (Komter, 2002).

In fact, the police record is a selection of the suspect’s story told and elicited during the interrogation at the police station. During this interrogation, the officer is asking questions, listening and typing all at the same time. An example of how the police officer accounts for future difficulties of talking, typing and listening simultaneously can be found in example 1. The following interaction occurs three minutes into an interrogation. The police officer (P) has just informed the suspect (S) of the crime for which he is being interrogated.

## EXAMPLE 1 (TCint04min03:45)

S: it's actually a good thing that we're talking about it now,<sup>2</sup>

P: [good.

S: [so. .hh

P: not too fast,

I can type pretty fast,

S: (.h) ((laughs)) yeah °it's (fine°).

P: except I can't always keep up,

a moment please.=

=xx x x X xxxxx x x<sup>3</sup>

I also make a lot [of mistakes when I type,

[X

yeah?

don't pay attention.

In this example the police officer accounts for future difficulties of talking, typing and listening simultaneously by telling the suspect that he can type relatively fast, but he may not always be able to keep up with the talk. This upfront apology attempts to pre-empt possible ways in which typing could become relevant during the remainder of the interrogation. P's announcement not only makes the dual-activity task which P has to perform relevant for the interrogation, it also warns the suspect that future difficulties may arise. This suggests that a special kind of orientation to the dual activities is required from both participants during the interrogation, an orientation that asks the officer to simultaneously interrogate and type up the record, and the suspect to answer questions while keeping in mind that the officer may take some time to type the answers.

Dual activities, in this setting but also in general, often require a main orientation to either one or the other activity (cf. Goffman's main and side involvements, 1963, p. 43). In most cases, we cannot perfectly dual-task for a very long period of time (think of text messaging while listening to a story, or drawing on the white board while answering a student's question), unless the side involvement is an undemanding, subordinate one (think of chewing gum while having a conversation or clicking a pen while listening to the professor). Whatever kind of involvement typing and talking are, the participants' orientation towards these dual activities, specific to the police interrogation setting, is what I want to explore in this article by looking at the interactional construction of the police record via the coordination of talk and typing.

The first aim of this article is to explicate how the participants orient to typing during the interrogation. I will demonstrate that typing and talking simultaneously is a specialized skill that is part of this specific institutional

setting and that is managed by the police officers in various ways. Suspects orient to the typing by answering 'for the record' and by being silent throughout the typing. During the typing, the suspects often remain silent. As typing does not have a hearable projectable ending (for the suspect) and thus no projected course and duration, suspects are often silent also when the typing ends. It is the officer who continues questioning when the typing ends. Although this pre-allocation of turns (Atkinson & Drew, 1979) is somewhat set, the suspect's talk does sometimes overlap with the typing. During these moments, P displays a *selective* interest in the talk by halting the typing or continuing the typing. A direct result of this selective interest can be found in the police record where we can see what selection of talk is typed up in the police record.

The second aim of this article is to explicate that typing is not only part of the institutionalized turn-taking system, but that the orientation to the typing activity is consequential for the organization of talk in the police interrogation. In other words, typing *structures* and *controls* the talk that goes on during the interrogation which in turn influences what is typed up in the record. What may, at first, seem to be a relatively unimportant feature of the interrogation in fact has major implications for the police record and therefore for the future of the suspect.

In this article I will begin by giving a brief overview of the relevant literature on typing and other kinds of activities in institutional settings. I then make visible how the participants manage and orient to multiple activities, talking and typing, during the interrogation. I then move on to the main aim of this article, which is to explore how typing structures and controls the talk, and therefore plays a role in what does and what does not end up in the police record.

## **TYPING AND OTHER ACTIVITIES IN INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS**

Heath (1986) discusses the use of medical records and computers in medical examinations. His findings were presented as a postscript to his book where he provides a brief glimpse into his data on doctors, patients and computers. Heath describes a computer making a 'clicking noise' and 'whirring,' suggesting the difference in technology between now and 1986. Beyond sound changes between now and then, this also raises the question of how interaction with computers changes as technology changes over time. However, since 1986, the use of the computer in institutional interaction has received surprisingly limited attention in the literature and especially in studies of police interrogations.<sup>4</sup>

One police study that demonstrates how participants orient to the typing

is Komter's (2006) work on police interrogations. She provides a step by step analysis of talking and typing in order to show the 'interconnectedness of the talk, the typing and the text of the [police] record' (p. 203). She illustrates that generally a police interrogation consists of a question-answer-typing format; however, there may also be periods of extensive simultaneous activity of talking and typing. The typing displays that the prior utterance was 'recordable' (the suspect's answer was appropriate and is 'written up' in the computer) (p. 205) and makes the answer 'permanent' (p. 211). This may encourage defensive activity from the suspect who may overlap typing with talk, if, for example, the suspect wants to elaborate on her answer. This shows that there is tolerance for simultaneous activity in this particular setting (p. 212).

Studies in the doctor-patient setting have shown that patients may attempt to synchronize their talk with the doctor's use of the keyboard (for example, see Greatbatch, Heath, Luff & Campion, 1995, pp. 205-206). Greatbatch et al. suggest that patients orient to the computer activity in such a way that they coordinate their talk so as not to interrupt the doctor's computer activity. According to the authors, patients use visible aspects of the doctor's use of the computer in order to time their next turn. Observable aspects include hand and other body movements, loud last keystrokes, the movement required to make these keystrokes and gaze. Sometimes, depending on the context, patients wait until the keyboard action has clearly stopped before starting their next turn (rather than latching the typing and talking activities).

Although there are few studies on typing in interaction, there have been numerous conversation analytical studies of other types of activities that are performed during talk within institutional settings, such as pointing and moving a trowel in the dirt while asking questions (Goodwin, 2000), looking at a patient's file while talking (Beach & LeBaron, 2002; Frers, 2009) plucking eyebrows while chatting with customers (Toerien & Kitzinger, 2007) and talking on the phone and typing at an emergency center (Whalen, 1995).

A major difference between such activities and typing activity in a police interrogation is that, in the latter, typing and talk are interwoven and dependent on each other. Whereas the goal of plucking eyebrows can be achieved without talking and the goal of changing topic can be achieved without looking at the record, the police record cannot be created without typing and talking. This is similar to the typing during a medical interview and the filling in of computer forms while talking on the phone during an emergency call. In these settings, the participant's involvement in multiple activities is necessary and the activities are dependent on each other.

Another major difference can be observed between participant's orientation towards multiple activities performed face to face and activities performed while on the phone (Whalen, 1995; also see Raymond & Zimmer-

man, 2007). Since the caller does not know in what activities the call-taker is involved, he or she cannot know when he or she is interrupting the typing activity going on 'behind the scene' and therefore does not display an orientation to the second activity. What all of these studies do show is that activities need to be coordinated by the participants.

A similarity between these coordinated activities (using a trowel, touching a knee, flipping a medical record, plucking an eyebrow and typing while talking) and the simultaneous typing and talking that takes place in police interrogations and other institutional settings, are that all these activities can be oriented to as an interactional device—the activities are responded to by the interactional partner. For example, a patient may wait until the doctor finishes the typing activity because the patient wants her symptoms to be recorded accurately in the computer system. This not only shows that the doctor is "supposed to" write up information in the computer because the patient orients to it by not talking while the doctor is typing, but it also demonstrates that such an activity at that moment in time is an important one as the participants both prioritize the typing activity.

Another striking similarity is that the material objects (the medical record, the computer, the police record on the computer) are 'owned' by the professional and therefore there is an asymmetry with regards to access to these objects. At the same time, the objects are interactionally used and managed by both parties. In fact, in many types of institutional settings, physical objects play a role in the interaction; the orientation towards these objects can inform us about the particular institutional setting (think of the orientation to the hammer in Heath & Luff's study of auctions (2007) which can serve to transact millions of dollars). In the police interrogation setting, the officer is the only one who has access to the computer, who has knowledge about the text on the screen and who is the author of the document. This partial access to the information (cf. Goodwin's term "partial opaqueness," 2000, p. 1508) further defines the asymmetrical setting of the police interrogation.

Drafting such important documents is not only typical to the police interrogation setting. The construction of documents has long been an important feature of institutional or bureaucratic settings (see Goodwin, 1994; Heath, 1986; Meehan, 1986; Zimmerman, 1969). However, in this particular context of the police interrogation, the document that is produced on the officer's computer is of great importance to the future of the suspect (also see Komter, 2002 and 2006; Rock, 2001). In order to demonstrate how the typing activity plays a role in the interrogation and how the participants' orientation towards the typing activity has an effect on what is typed up in the document we first need to explore the coordination of multiple activities in the police interrogation setting.

## MANAGING MULTIPLE ACTIVITIES DURING THE POLICE INTERROGATION: TALKING AND TYPING

In this section I will take a closer look at the activities talking and typing so that we can begin to understand how the participants organize and orient themselves to both activities. This investigation will demonstrate that typing and talking are embedded in the institutional interaction. Officers demonstrate specialized skills in managing these two activities and suspects orient to the typing by answering ‘for the typing’ and by being silent while the officer types.

First, I will take a closer look at the general sequential question-answer-typing (QAT) format that is dominant in police interrogations. Following this introduction of basic talking-typing sequences, I will demonstrate the specialized skills necessary in this setting where police officers talk and type simultaneously in various ways. Following this illustration, I will demonstrate that through the organization of talking and typing, the police also show a selective interest in what they want to record. The last two examples show precisely how this selective interest is displayed by halting or continuing the typing.

### Basic QAT Structure

Komter (2006) describes the question, answer, typing (QAT) format “to be the most common sequential organization” (p. 203) in the police interrogation and refers to it as “the basic QAT sequence” (p. 204).

#### EXAMPLE 2 (TCint08min09:32)

1 P: *heb je schulden?*  
do you have debt?<sup>5</sup>

2 S: *nee.*  
no.

3 P: ((types 7 sec))= *Ik heb geen schulden.*  
**I do not have debt.**<sup>6</sup>

4 =*en hoe gaat het thuis.*  
=and how is it going at home.

This example shows a very clear sequential structure of a yes/no question being asked in line 1, an answer in line 2 and typing in line 3. The question is fairly simple and the short answer is clear. The officer starts typing imme-

diately after S has given his answer. The typing indicates that the answer is recordable (Komter, 2006) and complete for the time being. In other words, the talk that was just produced is sufficient and will now be registered in the police record. In the Netherlands the police records are written by the police, but from the perspective of the suspect (see the text in the record on the right hand side). Although there is a general trend towards using a question-answer format in the police record, there are many records or parts of records that are written in monologue-format where the questions are not visible, as is the case in example 2.

During the typing, the suspect is silent. The officer asks a new question (line 4) as soon as she finishes typing, suggesting that the previous question-answer pair is closed by typing and a new QAT sequence begins. Although this structure is common, Komter (2006) adds that the stretches of talk consist minimally of one question-answer exchange, but more often consist of a series of questions and answers before the typing begins.

This example then demonstrates that within this structure talking and typing are separate as well as sequentially arranged activities. It is this QAT structure that appears commonly throughout the interrogations, specifically at the beginning when the suspect's personal information is filled out (form-filling phase) and when the suspect is asked about his background, family situation and lifestyle during the so-called social part of the interrogation.<sup>7</sup> Questions are asked so that the answers can be typed, and suspects orient to the typing by being silent until the next question is asked.

### **A specialized skill: Police officers type and talk simultaneously**

Although QAT sequences are common in my material, police officers also often have no problem doing both activities—talking and typing—simultaneously or in partial overlap with each other. The following four examples demonstrate that the QAT sequence does not always take place sequentially.

Example 3 below shows that the officer's question is not followed by an answer, but by immediate typing by P. This sometimes occurs when P is still typing up something that was said previously, or when P already projects the answer and starts typing up the question or part of the answer before the suspect starts to respond. Since the record is written from a first person perspective, sentences often begin with "I am..." or "I was..." In the example below, P starts typing immediately after asking a question and S answers while the typing is going on. This demonstrates that S still treats the question as such and answers it within the QA adjacency pair despite the 'interjecting' (Raymond & Lerner, 2009) typing activity. It furthermore demonstrates P's syntactic anticipation to S' response.

## EXAMPLE 3 (TCint03min08:35)

1 P: .hh[h  
 2 [x

3 *hoe oud ben jij?*=  
 how old are you?=  
 =Xx xx[xxx *Ik ben*  
**I am**

5 S: [veertien.  
 [fourteen.

6 P: xx

7 *veertien.*  
*fourteen.*

8 *14 jaar oud.*  
 ((continues typing for 6 seconds)) **14 years old.**

P is gearing up to start typing and talking (inbreath and single keystroke) in lines 1-2 as a pre-beginning to the sequence to come. After asking the question in the clear in line 3, P immediately starts his typing activity, deviating from the standard QAT structure. The officer is able to syntactically anticipate the sentence that he will write down in the record: “I am...” which he begins typing immediately after posing this question (cf. Lerner’s ‘reference to recognition of the initiating action,’ 2002). The first loud keystroke suggests that the officer hits the enter key or space bar in order to prepare the next section. The suspect takes a little pause before he answers the question; however, the typing sound fills the gap. When S does reply ‘fourteen’ it is simultaneous with the typing that P already started. P demonstrates that he has heard S’s answer by repeating fourteen in line 7. This example again demonstrates that questions are asked so that answers can be typed; in fact, the typing begins immediately as the beginning of the answer is projectable within this specific context.

In this next example (4), the typing is coming to an end. After a stretch of editing sounds and continuous typing, P asks a new question: ‘what time was it about?’ in line 3. This occurs simultaneously with the last strain of typing in line 2.

## EXAMPLE 4 (TCint03min29:28)

1 P:x xxxxxxxx Xxx *Ik verklaar U, dat ik*  
 2 xxxxxx[xxxxxxxxxxxxx ] **I declare to you, that I**  
  
 3 [hoe laat was het ongeveer?]  
 [what time was it about? ]  
  
 4 x (1)

The unproblematic management of typing the last few words within a larger string of text and starting a new question at the same time displays an institutionalized, learned manner of dealing with the typical activities going on during the police interrogation.<sup>8</sup>

In the next example (5) the typing is coming to an end. P asks his next question, and while asking the question he hits one last, loud keystroke in line 4. The loud X could be a last spacebar or enter key, which is in overlap with the talk.

## EXAMPLE 5 (TCint03min14:03)

1 P: X (1) x x xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx x  
 2 x x x x xxx=  
  
 3 =praat je wel eens [met je vader hierover?  
 =do you ever talk [with your dad bout this?  
  
 4 [X  
  
 5 (2)

Single keystrokes occurring simultaneously with talk (lines 3-4) are extremely common in my materials. Single keystrokes often mean that the officer hits the enter key or the spacebar in order to prepare the text for the next sentence or paragraph (also observed during fieldwork). This shows that P easily manages both activities of talking to the suspect and working on the layout of the text on the computer.

In the following example (6) P occupies the floor by both typing and talking (cf. Komter's "typing aloud," 2006, p. 208). P is saying out loud exactly the same words as the words he is typing up on the screen and he is able to keep up this "matched" activity for quite some time. Not only his bodily involvement with the computer demonstrates that he is working on the police record, but his voice also audibly demonstrates his work in progress. This

prevents the suspect from adding or elaborating on information while the officer is engaged in the typing activity (also see Whalen, 1995), but provides a unique opportunity for the suspect to hear what is currently being typed in his police record.

#### EXAMPLE 6 (TCint03min17:48)

```

1 P: eeh (3)
      uuuh (3)

2   x x[xxx] X [xxx ]x x[xxxxx xxxx xxxxx      ] Ik wil gaan werken
                                     I want to work

3       [:ik](.)[wil] (.)[ga:an (.) (werken e:n)]
       [I: ](.)[want](.)[to: (.) (work a:nd) ]

4   (0.5)

5   .hh

6   xxx[xxxxx xxx xxxxxxxx ]                en mijn eigen geld
                                               verdienen.
                                               and earn my own
7       [ehm ei::gen geld] ((voorlees toon)) money(literal
       [ehm o::wn money ] ((reading intonation))translation: "my
                                               own money earn")

8   xxxxxx

9   verdienen?=  
earn?=

```

In this example, the activities are not competing with each other, but rather support each other. At the same time, the above example gives us insight into how fast the police officer is typing, which is considerably slow compared to speech. This suggests that when P talks at normal speed while typing, these two activities are generally occurring at different speeds.

All the above examples (3-6) demonstrate that P manages talking and typing simultaneously without any major problems. Officers are able to type and talk (example 4), talk and edit (example 5), and type and read out loud (example 6) at the same time. Officers also type and listen to the suspect at the same time (example 3) and are able to type up the exact words the suspect gave in his answer. This, however, is not always the case. In the next section

we will see how the officer demonstrates selective interest when suspects are not silent during the typing.

### Police officers demonstrate selective interest

We have already seen an example where S talks when P is already typing. In example 3, S provided the answer ‘fourteen’ while P was already typing. This example demonstrated that there is room for overlap within the basic sequential QAT structure often found in police interrogations. However, S can also talk while the typing is going on for a reason other than answering the question. Komter (2006) has shown that suspects add more information during the typing in order to show defensiveness. She suggests that this occurs in overlap because there appears to be no other slot to do so (2006, p. 212). Whalen demonstrates in his data that when callers elaborate on the information they have previously given during call-takers’ typing activity it “exhibits a recognition that the call-taker’s audible in-progress typing is dedicated, at that moment, to recording precisely that type of information” (1995, p. 203).

In the next two examples this is precisely what happens; S elaborates his answer while P is already typing. I want to show how P manages the additional information that S provides while P is already engaged in the typing activity. P demonstrates selective interest in the suspect’s additional talk and further displays the asymmetry between the suspect and the officer when selecting what information to include in the record. The officer does this by continuing to type but not adding the additional information from the suspect in the police record (example 7) or by halting the typing when the suspect has something to say that the officer does want to record (example 8).

In the following example (7), P starts typing after S has provided an answer to the question about how many hours of community service he received for his previous crime. S elaborates in line 5 with more information while the typing is going on.

#### EXAMPLE 7 (TCint03min20:49)

1 P: *en heb je ook* [straf gehad?  
and did you also [get punishment?

2 [x x x x x x x x

3 S: *eh taakstraf* [van] tachtig u:ur,  
eh community service [of ] eighty hou:rs,

4 P: [x ]



misprojected as he still adds that he also got four weeks suspended youth detention, an addition to the very first question asked in line 1. When uttering this addition, P is already typing and does not halt the typing until S utters the last word. However, P does not type as fast as the interaction occurs, which is demonstrated when he mumbles what he is typing out loud in line 10 ('for this'), line 12 ('eighty') and line 14 ('hours').

We then see that the police record does not include S's elaborated statement about his punishment. The record states: 'I got for this eighty hours of community service' and then continues with the answer to the next question (not shown here). The extended answer 'also four weeks of suspended youth detention' is not taken up in the record. This then tells us that the 'eighty hours' was sufficient to type up for the police record according to P, who not only sets the agenda but also "owns" the computer and therefore decides what is included in the police record and what is not. For the police officer the QA sequence finished at line 7 whereas the suspect only finishes his answer in line 9. In this example then, S exhibits recognition that his answer thus far is now typed up and offers further information 'for the record.' P, however, responds by keeping the floor through mumbling and typing, and selects what he wants to include in the record.

The following example (8) shows that the suspect is adding more information that is important for the case. He does this while P is typing. This example of providing important information in overlap with typing occurs when a crucial question in the interrogation is posed: 'who had the knife?' The suspect answers 'don't know' after which P starts typing. Then, S self-selects and adds information in overlap with the typing. The officer now halts the typing and thereby selects the answer as important.<sup>9</sup>

#### EXAMPLE 8 (TCint03min41:35)

1 P: [x [x  
 2 [wie [had het mes?  
 [who [had the knife?  
 3 x [x xx  
 4 S: [weet niet.  
 [don't know.  
 5 P: heh?  
 huh?  
 6 S: ↑weet niet.

4 don't know.  
 7 P: x x x x x X  
 8 xx[xxx-  
 9 S: [manilo geloof ik,  
 [manilo<sup>10</sup> I believe,  
 10 want hij heeft het van binnen gehaald.  
 because he got it from inside.

Immediately after posing the question, P hits a couple of keys on the keyboard (line 3). While P is hitting these keystrokes, demonstrating engagement in another activity but at the same time preparing the record for the answer (also see examples 5 and 7), S answers the question by saying 'don't know' in line 4. P initiates repair which S does not treat as a request for an elaboration but rather as a problem of understanding and provides the exact same answer again in the clear (line 6). The officer now treats this as recordable and edits or prepares the document with single, slower keystrokes in line 7. Just when the officer finishes editing and when the typing speeds up in line 8 (indicated by the continuous x's in the transcript), S provides a second answer, 'manilo,' followed by an uncertainty marker 'I believe' in line 9 with an extended reason in line 10. P immediately halts his typing. This information is crucial to the case as the person who was holding the knife will most likely be accused of and possibly charged with threatening the victim with a weapon. By giving this information to the officer, S now accuses someone else specifically. By doing this he tells on his friend, something he previously mentioned in the interrogation he would not do. This point in the interrogation is crucially important and this is partially shown by P through the halting of the typing activity while S is providing a legally relevant answer in lines 9-10 (compare to example 7 where the information is not necessarily legally relevant and where P does not stop his typing activity). The information is selected by P's halting the typing and is therefore treated as recordable. This is also demonstrated through the text that P writes in the police record: "I don't know exactly who had the knife. I think Manilo."

## **Summary**

In the previous section I explored the different ways in which the participants orient to, and coordinate, talking and typing during the interrogation. These multiple activities generally occur in a sequential manner, but they also occur simultaneously. Whereas the standard sequence consists of question-answer-typing where the police officer and suspect sequentially take turns in asking a question, answering and typing up the answer, we have also seen variations of this basic sequence. These variations occur especially often when the officer, P, edits or prepares the document and the keystrokes are short, when P manages multiple activities him or herself simultaneously such as reading the text out loud, or when part of the question can already be written up in answer-format (note: the first-person style of the Dutch police record makes this possible). By doing these activities simultaneously, P shows his specialized skills concerning interrogating and writing up a statement. Furthermore, P uses the typing activity to select what information he hears and writes down in the police record, thereby displaying asymmetry regarding the writing of the document. Whether a police officer waits until the suspect is finished, waits until the suspect has started formulating an answer (it being projectable where it is going), continues typing while the suspect adds information (and does not include this information in the record), or halts typing while the suspect adds information (and treats the information as important) shows us what information from the suspect's story matters for the construction of the police record, according to the police.

### **TYPING AS STRUCTURING AND CONTROLLING ACTION**

If we consider the spoken and written versions of the examples given in this article so far, we can see that there are a number of additions, deletions and transformations when talk is transformed to text. Here, I want to focus on typing as an interactional activity that partially causes these changes. In this section I want to explicate that typing can be seen as an institutional device that controls and structures the interrogation (as could already be seen in examples 7 and 8), and that this contributes to the transformation from talk to text.

Since the typing activity varies throughout the interrogation, I start this section with a short introduction of the different phases of the police interrogation. I then continue with an example commonly found in the social part of an interrogation: a question-answer-typing interaction about a minor's family situation. This example illustrates how typing contributes to the structuring of an interrogation and furthermore displays how P sets the interrogation agenda.

In order to illustrate that typing structures and controls the interrogation and therefore plays a role in the changes that are made from talk to text, I provide a comparison between interrogating without typing and interrogating with typing. This comparison shows that the record is constructed according to P's agenda.

### **Typing in different phases of the interrogation**

What I have left out of the analysis so far is the relevance of the different phases of the interrogation in which the typing takes place. In the standard Dutch police interrogation there are generally five phases. The interrogation begins with form-filling where identifying information about the suspect is filled in on a standardized form. This is followed by the police caution (telling the suspect that he/she has the right to remain silent), after which the official interrogation begins. The official part of the interrogation generally starts off with a social interrogation, where the suspect's background, work situation, family and financial situation are asked about. Then follows the case-related interrogation where the facts of the case for which the suspect has been arrested are discussed. The interrogation ends with several exit activities, such as printing, reading and signing the police record. After these activities, the suspect is brought back to his cell if he is currently held in custody and released if he is not.

The typing activity is different in each of the different phases of the police interrogation. In each of the distinct phases, typing has different consequences not only for the interrogation but also for the police record. For example, during the form-filling phase, the participants are working through a list where the answers are often projectable and short so that typing can begin right away. During the case-related interrogation phase the officers are generally truth-seeking and possibly eliciting a confession. Typing can interject the talk and thereby halt the flow of the conversation. What is typed up during this phase is extremely important for the future of the suspect. What I would like to focus on for the remainder of this article are the social and case-related phases of the police interrogation. These phases form the main body of the interrogation during which all the questioning, or 'interrogating', takes place.

## How typing structures the talk and the text

Here, I want to show a typical example of a social interrogation with a minor. The officer structures the interrogation through his questions and his typing rhythm. He displays his institutional asymmetry by not aligning with previous talk but aligning with his own text which only he currently has access to. In this example (9), P types up all the answers one at a time, and when additional information is given by S, P only types it up when he is ready.

### EXAMPLE 9 (TCint02min21:04)

- 1 P: *je woont nog bij je (.) †ouders?*  
you still live with your (.)†parents?
- 2 *vader en moeder?*  
father and mother?
- 3 S: *m moeder alleen.*  
just m mother.
- 4 P: *je moeder alleen.=*  
just your mother.=
- 5 =X xx[xxx X ] *Ik woon*  
**I live**
- 6 S: *[en met me broer°tje°.* ]  
[and with my °little° brother.]
- 7 P: *xxxX xxx xxxx xxxxxx* *bij mijn moeder.*  
**with my mother.**
- 8 *hoe heet je moe[der?]*  
what is your mo[ther]'s name?
- 9 [xXx ]xxx [xxxx xxxx x ]*Mijn moeder heet*  
**My mother's name is**
- 10 S: *[sabine de graaf]*  
*[sabine de graaf]*
- 11 P: X xxxxxx (.) x xx xx *Sabine*  
**Sabine**

12 *sabine?*  
*sabine?*

13 [(*en dan*)  
[(and then)

14 S: [*ja,*  
[*yeah,*

15 *de graaf.*  
*de graaf.*

16 P: *de* *graaf.*  
*de* *graaf.*

17 S: *d[e* *graaf.*]  
*d[e* *graaf.*]

18 P: [xxxx xx ](.) x .h (0.4) xx *de Graaf.*  
***de Graaf.***

19 *en je hebt nog een broertje?*  
*and you also have a little brother?*

20 S: *ja.*  
*yeah.*

21 P: x [x x xxxx xx ] xx xx *Ik heb nog*  
***I also have***

22 [*hoe oud is hij?*]  
[*how old is he? ]*

23 [xxxxx ] xx xx xxx [xx x ] *een broertje*  
***a little brother***

24 S: [*die is tien*] [*oh nee,*]  
[*he's ten ]* [*oh no, ]*

At the beginning of this example we see that P asks questions about S's home situation. A lot of the minors that have been arrested come from single-parent families. It is therefore not surprising that P adds 'father and mother' (line 2)

to his question. When S replies 'just m mother' P repeats his answer and treats this as recordable by starting to type (line 5). In overlap with the typing, S provides additional information ('and with my little brother') in line 6 (also see examples 7 and 8), but this is not immediately taken up by P. Rather than align with this additional information, P adheres to his own agenda.

P is first of all concerned with typing up that S lives with his mother, which is typed up in lines 5 and 7. When this is in the record, the next question concerns the suspect's mothers' name (line 8). This follows what was last written on the screen, and does not follow the suspect's last words 'and with my little brother.' When P has typed up 'my mother's name is sabine' (line 11), P demonstrates that he is now ready for her last name. Only when P has typed up both first and last name and thereby completes his sentence in the record, is P ready for additional information that was given by S earlier, as is shown by asking 'and you also have a little brother' (line 19). Although the additional information does end up in the police record, the example shows that this only happens when P is ready to type up the information. The agenda of the interrogation and thereby the structure of the talk and the text is controlled by P.

### **A comparison: Story solicitation with and without typing**

I now move on to a comparison between two ways of interrogating during the case-related phase of the same interrogation. In the first example (10), the officer is focused on finding out *why* the suspect did what he did and does not type up anything. Approximately eight minutes later, in the second example (11), the officer types up the earlier elicited story while asking more specific questions concerning *what* exactly happened. These two examples allow us to see how typing further structures and controls the talk and therefore the text. It also shows us that a rather vague, initial story is turned into a well-structured, chronologically-told story in which the causal relations are made explicit.

In the first example (10) there are extended question-answer sequences without P typing. P is asking the suspect about the victim, Mervellino, who was assaulted in a garage<sup>11</sup> by the suspect (currently being interrogated) and two of his friends (also suspects in this case). The victim claims that all three suspects stole his iPod. Until now, the suspect currently being interrogated has denied that he knows anything about stealing an iPod. However, through a confrontation, the officer is successful in getting the information from the suspect, who admits that it was their intention to steal the iPod. During the interrogation, the questions and answers follow each other sequentially with minimal pauses or overlap. This allows for a fast-paced question-answer interaction.



14 *manilo had volgens mij ruzie met hem,*  
manilo had an argument with him I think,

15 *dat was het ja.*  
that was it yeah.

16 P: *hmnn.*  
*hmnn.*

17 S: *[of gavon.*  
*[or gavon.*

18 P: *[nnee.*  
*[nno.*

19 *°nee°.*  
*°no°.*

20 *manilo* zegt dat jullie die ipod wilde stelen van hem.  
*manilo* said that you ((PLURAL)) wanted to steal the ipod from  
him.

21 S: *↑ik vond het sowieso al geen goed idee,*  
*↑I didn't think it was a good idea anyhow,*

22 *ik zei ze al,*  
I already told em,

23 *laat hem.*  
leave him.

In this part of the case-related interrogation the officer is figuring out what happened in the garage. The climax is building up towards a statement in which we hear that S knew all along that the other two suspects wanted to steal the iPod (lines 21-23). The answer S provides here means that he already knew that his two friends wanted to steal the iPod before they pulled the victim, Mervellino, into the garage. Judicially this has implications because it means that the other two suspects *intended* to steal the iPod (Criminal Code, article 310).

In lines 1-2, P strategically uses a summary or a 'formulation' (Heritage & Watson, 1979) of what was previously said in the interaction by S. With this

formulation there is a preference for agreement (Heritage & Watson, 1979), which is demonstrated in line 3. The agreement allows the officer to immediately ask for more details with an open-ended ‘why’ question, which invites S to give an unlimited answer and to provide the story according to how he thinks it happened (also see Kidwell & González, 2010). When P provides a rising intonation continuer (line 6), S gives a new answer in which he again takes no responsibility for pulling the victim into the garage (‘or sumthin’). When P questions him again and asks ‘and why’ they wanted to beat him up, S still doesn’t take blame for the event, uses an uncertainty marker (‘I think’) and leaves himself out of the story. After an appropriate continuer ‘hmnn mnn’ in line 10, S marks further uncertainty by using ‘as far as I know’ and ‘I don’t know’ and ‘I think.’ Up to this point the officer has let the suspect tell his story, which has changed from ‘wanting something of him’ to ‘wanting to beat him up.’

P responds to S’s non-committal story with two ‘no’s’ in lines 18-19. S adds one more uncertainty element ‘or gavon’ in overlap with the downward falling ‘nno.’ This is where S’s story ends. S does not receive a continuer or an agreement token after his elaborated explanation of why they wanted to beat up the victim. Rather, P quotes the other suspect (line 20) and thereby faces the suspect with a confrontation. This shows that P knew the answer to the question all along but wants S to say it himself (also see Edwards, 2008). In reply to the confrontation, S admits that he already told his friends that it wasn’t a good idea from the start. By saying this and by emphasizing the personal pronoun “I” (line 21), S admits that, even if *he* did not think it was a good idea, it was indeed the other suspects’ intention to steal the iPod, which is the exact piece of information the officer was trying to elicit. This confrontation (as well as other police interrogation strategies such as a formulation, open-ended questions, continuers, and disagreements) is consequential for the manner in which this interrogation evolved. Only after approximately eight minutes does P return to these events and start typing up what was elicited here, as will be shown in example 11.

In the next excerpt (11) we see that the officer asks another round of questions and waits for the suspect to answer. It is this second round of questions and answers that is the basis for the text in the police record. The questions are now not only focused on ‘why’ but also on ‘what’ and ‘who,’ and they follow the sequential order of the text on the screen. In this excerpt the questions are asked specifically so that their answers can be typed, and when the answers are not oriented to the typing, the suspect is asked by P to wait.

EXAMPLE 11 (TCint03min35:55)

1 P: *ww[ro::rm,* ((Mervellino stond  
*ww[ro::rm,* ook in de boxgang.))

2 [Xxxxxxx xxx ((Mervellino was  
also in the garage  
hallway))

3 *e[:n,*  
*a[:nd,*

4 [x

5 *jullie staan in die box?=  
you ((PLURAL)) are in that garage?=  
=x x=  
=en wat gebeurt er dan? (1)  
=and what happens then? (1)*

8 S: *mnnn,*  
*mnnn,*

9 *mervellino probeert weg te gaan,  
mervellino tries to leave,*

10 P: *hmnn ;mnn;  
hmnn ;mnn;*

11 X

12 S: *ja [toen hielde we die deur dicht, ]  
yeah [then we kept that door closed, ]*

13 P: [x x x x x x x x ] ((editing))

14 S: [*probeerden we hem tegen te houden, ]  
[we tried to stop him, ]*

15 P: [x x x x x ] x ((editing))

16 °ja.°  
°yeah. °

17 S: [*zijn nog een tijdje bezig geweest*],  
[were busy for a little while,]

18 P: [x x x xxxxxxxxxxxx ] xxx x x *Toen Mervelinio*  
**When Mervelinio**

19 S: *uit[eindelijk was ie weggegaan].*  
in [the end he left.]

20 P: [xx xxxx x x x ] *weg*  
**made**

21 *even hoor,*  
wait a second alright,

22 x [x x x ] xxxxx (0.2) *wilde,*  
**to leave,**

23 [(*zachte mompel*)]  
[(soft mumbling)]

24 xxxxxx *hebben*  
**we kept ((Dutch:**  
25 *wie heeft die deur [dichtgehouden?*  
**kept we))**  
who held the door [closed?

27 [x

28 S: *weet ik niet (°meer°). (2)*  
i don't remember (°anymore°). (2)

29 P: ((types 22 seconds))<sup>12</sup> *wij die toegangsdeur*  
*dichtgehouden. Dit*  
*om te voorkomen,*  
30 X xxxxx xxxxxx X[xX **((we)) the access**  
**door closed. This in**  
**order to prevent,**

31 [*en waarom wilde jullie eh h:en,*  
[and why did you ((PLURAL)) want  
to eh th:em,

- 32 *nriet hebben dat [mervellino eh (.) wegging?*  
 didn't want that [mervellino would eh (.) leave?
- 33 [X X
- 34 S: *↑i↓pod (hhh).* *dat Mervelinio weg*  
*↑i↓pod (hhh).* *kon gaan. De rede om*  
*Mervelinio te*
- 35 P: *x* *weerhouden om uit*  
*die box te komen,*  
*was, omdat zij die*  
*Ipod van Mervelinio*
- 36 *mnn.* *wilden stelen.*  
*mnn.* **Mervelinio from**  
**leaving.**
- 37 *((types 37 seconds))* **The reason to stop**  
**Mervelinio from**  
**coming out of the**  
**garage, was, because**  
**they wanted to steal**  
**the Ipod from ((or:**  
**'of')) Mervelinio.**

This extract begins with a marked change in activity from typing to talking (markers like 'ohkay,' 'well,' but also stretched nonsense noises like this one here are common in my materials when officers transition from one activity to the other), while at the same time posing an 'and-prefaced' next question linking back to the previous topic (Heritage & Sorjonen, 1994). The officer has just typed up 'Mervellino was also in the garage hallway' which he presents as a summary of the current event unfolding (line 5) before posing a new open ended question (similar to the use of the formulation in example 10). When S produces a longer answer in return to the open question solicitation ('what happens then,' cf. Kidwell & González, 2010), the suspect is not orienting towards the typing and P tells the suspect to hold on (line 21). S is giving an elaborate answer in story-form, which consists of five separate intonation units: 1) Mervellino tries to leave; 2) we held the door closed; 3) tried to stop him; 4) were busy for a little while; 5) in the end he left. Each unit has a rising intonation except for the last unit when his story is finished. Whereas S answered in a similar format when P was not typing (example 10), here we see that P has to keep up with the talking activity, but he is still editing and he does not type as fast as S tells his story (also see example 6). After P asks

S to wait, he takes and maintains the floor by typing continuously and softly mumbling what he is typing (line 23). S therefore not only has to adhere to the agenda that P sets by asking the questions that he wants to ask, but he also has to adapt to the speed of the officer's typing capabilities (which was not the case in example 10).

Now that the officer knows 'why' the suspects wanted to keep the victim in the garage (from the interaction in example 10), the officer is focused on what happened exactly and in what order. His questions are based on what was previously typed up, as we already saw at the beginning of this excerpt in line 5 and 7. The officer's questions lead to a coherent story on paper; the questions are oriented to the text that is already written and that is about to be written. This can also be seen in line 25 where P's question is not based on the last words S uttered ('in the end he left'), but rather on what the officer wants to type up next. This concerns details about the second part of the suspect's story ('yeah then we kept that door closed'). That the questions are based on what was last typed up on the screen can also be seen in lines 29-30 where P finishes writing up the second part of the suspect's story. P begins formulating a causal relationship in the text ('This in order to prevent'), upon which he bases his next question (lines 31-32). The suspect's answer is short, 'iPod,' as they already discussed this approximately eight minutes earlier in the interrogation (see example 10). P now specifically spells out intent when he types up the last two full sentences in the record.

In sum, during the first round of questions (example 10), we see a question-answer session where both participants focus solely on the talk that is going on. The interaction happens rapidly and sequentially; the questions are based on the answers and the answers are based on the questions. The officer's goal is to have the suspect say out loud why they kept the victim in the garage and who is responsible for what; the officer is "doing" interrogating (Komter, 2003).

In the interaction where typing is one of the main activities (example 11), the officer seamlessly switches between talking, listening and typing. Here, the officer is "doing" taking a statement (Komter, 2003). Although both ways of interrogating (example 10 and 11) show similarities (marking topic/activity changes, setting the agenda, using formulations, open-ended questions and continuers), we also see how the typing influences the talk. The officer, who is the only one who has access to the computer and therefore types when he wants to type, is now not only in control of the verbal interrogation, but is also in control of what is typed up and when this is typed up. The officer asks the suspect to hold on and keeps the floor while typing. Furthermore, the agenda is not only based on what the suspect last produced or on what questions he wants to ask next, but on the last words that were written up in the police

record, which are always visible to the officer but not to the suspect. When the suspect provides a long answer while the officer is still busy editing, S is specifically asked to orient to the typing and answer 'for the record.' Whereas the first version of the story was a non-committal account of the events that took place, the second version of the story focused on the specifics of 'who' and 'what' as well as 'why.' The story on the computer, or the end product, is a formal, coherent and legally relevant one that spells out the causal relations between the suspect's actions (keeping the door closed because they wanted to prevent the victim from leaving as well as stopping the victim because they wanted to steal the iPod) (also see Edwards, 2008).

## CONCLUSION

The computer is an essential object in many institutional settings. In the police interrogation setting the computer is necessary in order to produce the written police record. In this article I explored how suspects and police officers orient to the typing activity on the computer and how the police officer specifically coordinates talking and typing. The officers demonstrate quite specialized skills where the orientation towards typing and talking alter between main and side involvements as well as dual involvements (typing out loud). I furthermore explicated how typing functions as an institutional, controlling action when the police officer types up the text. I demonstrated that the police use their specialized skills of talking and typing to even further define the asymmetrical roles between the police and the suspect.

It is always P who is in control of when the typing begins and ends, what information is being typed up, and when the next question comes. Suspects orient to this pre-allocation of turns at talk and embodied actions and orient to the typing by providing answers for the record. Furthermore, the suspects have little choice but to adhere to this pre-allocation of turns, as this partially defines the particular institutional setting in which they are engaged. In this particular setting, police officers deploy typing to display their institutional identity. In this role, they are responsible for interrogating the suspect and typing up the interrogation in police record format.

Typing not only demonstrates that a suspect's answer is recordable, but it is also a way for P to keep the floor and 'overrule' additional information volunteered by the suspect. This causes additional answers that P does not find important enough to be left out of the record. When a suspect does give an important answer, the typing is sometimes halted so that P orients to only one activity at a time. This then means that P is not only in control of structuring the talk, but P's typing activity is also used to exercise control over the interrogation and therefore what is written down in the text.

Aside from Komter's work on police interrogations and Heath's work on doctor-patient interaction, there has been little conversation analytic research to date on face-to-face typing and talking. For this reason I also drew on other studies of performing multiple activities at the beginning of this article to provide a backbone for analysis of participants engaging in multiple activities in an institutional setting. This elaborate account of typing and talking in the Dutch police interrogation adds to the existing literature about coordinating multiple activities in interaction. As human beings we seem to be capable of performing such activities simultaneously, but how we do this and what effects this has on our interaction has not been explicated in such detail to date. Specifically in the institutional setting, material objects or secondary activities that make use of physical objects often play a role in interaction. In this article I demonstrated that the physical activity of typing has an influence on two other activities that take place during the police interrogation, in this case: interrogating and producing the record. Typing therefore not only 'restricts' the talk but also structures the talk and can be strategically used to structure the text that is produced for the police record. It is precisely this police record that will serve a very important function in the future of the suspect.

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For this project I gathered my own materials by sitting in on fifteen police interrogations in the Amsterdam area. The analyses in this article are based on the audio recordings of these police interrogations.

<sup>2</sup> The first example in this article is provided in English only. The remainder of the examples, which will be analyzed more thoroughly, will be provided in Dutch and English. All transcripts have been anonymized. For transcription conventions, see the appendix.

<sup>3</sup> Typing is transcribed with an x. For specific transcription conventions, see the appendix.

<sup>4</sup> It must be noted that in many countries (especially those with an Anglo-Saxon law system) the police officers do not use computers. Rather, interrogations are tape or video recorded and later transcribed.

<sup>5</sup>. I am aware that translating fragments is not a neutral undertaking (Bucholtz, 2007). The English translations aim to maintain a similar flow to the Dutch original, but must therefore be considered a ‘free’ translation. Analyses have been done with the original Dutch recordings and transcripts. When relevant, translation issues will be discussed in the text.

<sup>6</sup>. The bold text on the right hand side of the transcripts refers to the text that was produced in the written police record at that moment in time. Since I have the actual police records that were produced I have been able to reconstruct what was typed when. Through careful listening and typing along I have been able to trace the written production of the record. Of course I cannot account for precise editing changes that occur throughout or at the end of the interrogations. The text therefore provides an approximate version of what was typed at those moments in time.

<sup>7</sup>. The Dutch police interrogation generally consists of five phases: form-filling, the caution, social interrogation, case-related interrogation and exit activities. These phases are also described later in this article and will be described in detail in my Ph.D. thesis.

<sup>8</sup>. Routinized and experienced police officers may display more advanced skills than new or young police officers. Since I do not have exact information about the officers’ experience or time with the police, I cannot say this with certainty.

<sup>9</sup>. There are also other instances in which the typing is halted, for example when the interrogation becomes difficult, when S becomes emotional, when a confession is given, or when S calls on his right to remain silent. In these instances the typing is halted for a longer period of time and the writing is delayed.

<sup>10</sup>. All names of participants have been changed.

<sup>11</sup>. ‘Garage’ in this interrogation is used to describe a garage underneath a city apartment building. These are private garages that can generally be accessed through a hallway that leads to several private garages and/or from the street. It is generally big enough for one car, but is often used for motorbikes, mopeds and bikes.

<sup>12</sup>. In this example, in order to save space, the typing is transcribed as ((types xx seconds)) when the typing occurs in the clear. When the keystrokes are produced simultaneously with the talk, the typing is transcribed using the x and its symbols, as described in the appendix.

## **APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS**

Part I of these transcription conventions is based on Mazeland (2003) and Jefferson (1979). Part II below consists of my own additional conventions in order to transcribe the typing sounds:

## PART I

(1.5)	a silence indicated in seconds
(.)	a silence shorter than 0.2 seconds
dealers= =because	there is no noticeable silence between two sequentially following speaker's turns or between two intonation units produced by the same speaker
[overlap of talk	two conversational partners are speaking in overlap with each other this can occur at the beginning of two new turns, or during a turn
.	falling intonation contour at the end of an intonation unit
,	slightly rising intonation contour at the end of an intonation unit
?	strongly rising intonation unit at the end of an intonation contour (this does not have to concern a question)
↑	rising tone
↓	falling tone
—	the underlined syllable or sound is stressed
e::h	the previous vowel or consonant is noticeably longer than normal for this particular speaker
LOUD	the word or letters in capitals are spoken relatively loud
°soft°	the words or letters within the degree signs are spoken relatively soft
bre-	the speaker holds back and breaks off the production of a word or part thereof abruptly
>	the text that follows is spoken relatively fast (closing symbol: <).
<	the text that follows is spoken relatively slow (closing symbol: >)
.hh	hearable inbreath
((coughs))	characterisation of a non-verbal activity or any other significant happening ((coughs, cries, types))
( )	speaker says something that the transcriber cannot understand
(something)	the transcriber is not certain if the words produced within the parentheses is an accurate representation of what was said

## PART II

x	individual keystroke
X	loud keystroke
°x°	soft keystroke
xxx	continuous typing
x x x	keystrokes with brief pauses between each keystroke (can indicate that a backspace key is used to edit the text)
<b>That is correct.</b>	text in the police record

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**Tessa van Charldorp** is a Ph.D. student at VU University Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Her current research involves the study of social interaction in institutional settings, specifically in the police interrogation setting. Her dissertation is about the interactional construction of the police record. She can be contacted at [tc.van.charldorp@let.vu.nl](mailto:tc.van.charldorp@let.vu.nl).