

## The Suspect's Statement

What suspects tell the police may become a crucial piece of evidence when the case comes to court. But what happens to 'the suspect's statement' when it is written down by the police? Based on a unique set of data from over fifteen years' research, Martha Komter examines the trajectory of the suspect's statement from the police interrogation through to the trial. She shows how the suspect's statement is elicited and written down in the police report, how this police report both represents and differs from the original talk in the interrogation, and how it is quoted and referred to in court. The analyses cover interactions in multiple settings, with documents that link one interaction to the next, providing insights into the interactional and documentary foundations of the criminal process and, more generally, into the construction, character and uses of documents in institutional settings.

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# The Suspect's Statement

*Talk and Text in the Criminal Process*

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Martha Komter

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## Transcription Conventions

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The transcription conventions depart from the standard Jeffersonian transcript notation for reasons of readability, and because the fragments are translated from Dutch (translation by the author). Those features of the standard transcript notation have been preserved that are compatible with the translation. For the original Dutch text, see Appendix B, which can be found online at [www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

P	police interrogator/public prosecutor
P <sup>1</sup>	interrogating police officer
P <sup>2</sup>	reporting police officer
S	suspect
J	judge
D	defence lawyer
full stop.	falling intonation
comma,	slightly rising intonation
question mark?	rising intonation
<u>underlining</u>	emphasis
[brackets	
└brackets	overlap
(3)	pause of three seconds etc.
dash-	sudden cut-off
. . . a few words	
omitted	
=	latched utterances
▲	gaze direction moving upward
▼	gaze direction moving down
::: colons	prolongation of prior sound
°yes°	spoken in a soft voice
( )	unclear utterance
((double brackets))	transcriber's note
shading	typing simultaneous to the talk
'dotted line	editing simultaneous to the talk

**bold** text of the police report  
(13, N) interrogation or trial number 13, of the ‘new’ (O = old) materials

**Disclaimer**  
The names of the participants featuring in the excerpts (police officers, judges, prosecutors, defence lawyers, suspects, witnesses, etc.) and other identifying features (times, dates, places, etc.) have been changed.