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“You are going to change their perception of reality of what they believe is true”

A narrative study of fraud investigators interpretation of Romance and Investment fraud.

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ABSTRACT

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Romance and investment fraud are complex crimes to investigate. Previous research centers around these fraud’s offenders and victims. However, much less attention has been given to the perspectives of the fraud investigators, even though their central role in the investigation and prevention process. The investigators often encounter resistance from victims, due to them being exposed to social manipulation by a fraudster that the investigators understands includes meaning-making. The aim of this thesis is to highlight how investigators within banks strategically work to handle these frauds, where attention is on how their interpretations of romance and investment fraud influence their investigative and preventative strategies. Qualitative interviews have been conducted with fraud investigators, and the findings have been analyzed through a thematic analysis with an abductive approach. Theoretical connections have been drawn upon narrative theory, focusing on meaning-making and narrative stories that guide one's action. The essay is structured as follows: an introduction and background, followed by a literature review and theoretical framework. The methodological approach is then presented through which the results and analysis comes next. Lastly, the study concludes with a discussion. This thesis shows how the participants' investigative practices consist of narrative intervention, management of resistance and introducing alternative narratives. The preventative measures are understood as a way of influencing the customers interpretation of fraud. This study thus contributes to the current research field, as the investigators' perspectives become highlighted that in turn can benefit the fraud preventative work within other social actors.

Keywords: Romance fraud, Investment fraud, Fraud investigators, Manipulation, Narrative conflict, Narrative intervention, Meaning-making

Popular science summary

In contemporary society, fraud is a widespread phenomenon affecting individuals as well as institutional practices. There are different types of fraud, where the focus on this study is on romance and investment fraud. These frauds involve offenders that are manipulating its victims' vulnerabilities, which ultimately leads to the victims suffering financial and emotional damages. Due to these consequences and the widespread problem of these frauds in society, several social actors are working with prevention measures for combating romance and investment fraud and one of those actors are the banks. Previous research often centers around offenders and victims of these frauds. However, there is much less knowledge about fraud investigators' perspectives of these frauds, despite their central role in investigating and preventing this type of crime. Since there is a lack of knowledge of their perspective, this study is contributing with a nuanced understanding by highlighting how fraud investigators interpret romance and investment fraud, and how that interpretation influences their strategic working and preventative practices.

In order to capture the perspectives of these professionals, interviews have been carried out with eight fraud investigators, working at three different banks in Sweden. The interviews have been analyzed and which have led to results of value as other social actors in society can benefit from them to more effectively combat these frauds. This study shows how romance and investment frauds are complex crimes to investigate, based on the experiences of the investigators. The investigators are experiencing a conflict between their perspective and the victims perspective, due to the victims being manipulated into believing that their perception of reality is real. In order for the professionals to fulfill their investigative role, they are using certain communicational techniques in the interaction with the victim, for the purpose of getting them to understand that they are exposed to fraud. The investigators have based their working practices on their previous professional experiences and interpretations of these frauds, and those experiences have also influenced their perception of how to more effectively prevent romance and investment fraud in the future.

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1. Introduction

Frauds have become an established problem in today's society, generating over 2 billion Swedish crowns annually which in turn finances organized crime (Polisen, 2021:6). The crime is committed through the perpetrators exploiting the victims for their own financial gain. There are several different variations of frauds, however, the focus of this thesis is on romance and investment frauds. In romance and investment frauds, perpetrators are taking advantage over the victims' vulnerabilities, through establishing strong emotional connection, where they furthermore trick the victim into making investments or borrowing out money to them (Polisen, 2021:15). In this sense, the common denominator for romance and investment fraud is that victims are exposed to emotional manipulation by the fraudster, which leads to these cases being more complex to interpret and investigate. Due to the widespread problem of fraud in today's context, several actors in society are working to counteract and investigate these crimes. One of these actors are the banks in Sweden. They operate within the field of Financial Crime Prevention (FCP), where investigators work continuously to respond and manage such cases in practice.

Previous research of fraud is often focusing on the offender and their manipulative methods they use to fulfill their crimes, and attention has also been given to the victims. On the other hand, there is much less knowledge about how professionals strategically approach these crimes, and how their interpretation of these frauds shapes their everyday practices. Thus, through a criminological perspective, it is of research interest to explore how these investigators construct meaning in relation to this type of crime, particularly how they understand the reasoning of both the victims and the perpetrators. Furthermore, it is of importance to highlight the perspectives of the fraud investigators, since their interpretation of fraud can influence how they manage their investigations, how victims are received, and how their prevention measures are formed. By illuminating investigators' practices, this thesis contributes to previous research by broadening the understanding of how professional knowledge correlates with how complex cases are handled. Moreover, as this study nuances the current research field, it can enhance other social actors' efforts to prevent financial crime.

1.1 Aim

The aim of this study is to illuminate how fraud investigators within banks operate in practice with romance and investment fraud, and how their interpretations of these frauds shape their investigative strategies and preventive efforts. Thus, the questions to be answered in this essay is:

1.2 Research question

- *How do fraud investigators strategically approach romance and investment fraud in their everyday work?*
    - *How do their interpretations of these frauds shape their investigative and preventive practices?*

In order to answer these questions, empirical data have been collected through qualitative interviews with eight fraud investigators, working in three different banks in Sweden. The data has been analyzed through narrative theory, as the focus of this thesis is on how the fraud investigators construct meaning-making in their everyday work.

1.3 Outline

The study is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter, the introduction, briefly presents the field of fraud, as well as this study's focus area on investigators' interpretation of romance and investment fraud. It also includes the study's aim and research questions. A background section is then introduced, describing the key concepts of relevance for this field for contextualizing the thesis. Following this, a literature review is outlined for illustrating what previous scholars have researched in relation to these types of fraud, and an overall picture of the preventative work for combating fraud in Sweden is also examined. Thereafter, the theoretical framework of narrative theory is discussed, which will function as the basis of the analysis of the empirical data. A methodological chapter is then introduced, which examines the thesis's methodological approach, the sample strategy, the formation of the interviews, the analysis method, and ethical reflections. Following this, the results and analysis of this thesis are presented, which is also the most comprehensive part of this study. This chapter is divided into two main themes, where the collected data is analyzed through narrative theory. The final section of the study is the discussion chapter. It summarizes the thesis's main theoretical results, and also includes a methodological discussion, the study's relevance through a broader context, the comparison of previous research and what could possibly be researched further in the future.

2. Background

This background section offers an explanation of the key concepts relevant for this field. Firstly, it becomes important to present how romance and investment frauds are defined, which will be done through the Swedish police authority's and BRÅ's designation. Secondly, an overview of how these frauds are manifested in Sweden will be presented, as well as how the organisational model for handling these types of fraud is structured, in order to contextualize the thesis within a contemporary context.

2.1 Romance fraud

The victim of a romance fraud is often contacted by a perpetrator through the internet (BRÅ, 2025). A romantic relationship is then initiated, where the purpose for the offender is to mislead the victim for the cause of their own financial gain. This could be done through the offender presenting a fake story that causes the victim to borrow out or give money to the perpetrator (ibid). Furthermore, it is criminal if a person initiates a romantic relationship with another for the purpose of defrauding them of their money (Polisen, 2025). It is easy to hide behind a fabricated facade in the digital world, and the perpetrator is using the romantic relationship with the victim to make them believe they have a close relationship with one another (ibid).

2.3 Investment fraud

In investment fraud, the offender is misleading the victim into doing investments in financial instruments or companies that may not even exist (BRÅ, 2025). The purpose of this fraud, for the offender, is to gain financially (ibid). Investment fraud is often about the victim investing in things such as cryptocurrencies, funds and shares (Polisen, 2025). In reality, these securities lack any real value or are hard to evaluate. This fraud often begins with the victim being tricked into signing up on a platform to take part in deals presented through the internet and social media, and they are often about optimizing tools for improving ones trading with bitcoin. The victim is contacted shortly by someone who presents them as an advisor, who advises them to start an account and transfer a starting amount for the investment, which often begins with an amount of 2500 SEK. Moreover, the process of this fraud can proceed for a longer time. It is criminal when an actor is exploiting a victim by misleading them into making false investments (ibid).

2.4 Frauds in today's society

Proceeds of crime has earlier descended from more traditional criminality but in today's context, one can more easily and risk-free assimilate money from crime in a short amount of time (Polisen, 2021:13). In frauds, organized crime can thus gain access to financial means that are being used for investments in both the legal economy and in the criminal context, where it is said that over 2 billion SEK is generated by fraud annually (Polisen, 2021:6). Due to digital tools, the criminal actors' ability to have organizational skills, and that these crimes are more non-geographic, frauds have become more complex to investigate (Polisen, 2021:11). This complex crime development thus requires a more effective fraud prevention, as the ability to do this has not been sufficiently adapted. The general discourse in Sweden on how to handle these frauds has consisted of a greater focus on authorities and cooperation between authorities, as well as stricter legislation (ibid).

BRÅ (2026) presents data showing that reports of fraud crimes amounted to a total of 232 862 in 2025, which is an increase of 2532 reports compared to the year before. Nevertheless, BRÅ (2025) demonstrates that romance and investment frauds are crimes with a low level of reporting, but where the proceeds of crime are large. The victim often endures a great financial loss by being exposed to social manipulation by the offender. Besides the financial losses, the victim often experiences guilt and shame for becoming a victim of these crimes, where this exposure can form ideas of unsafety. In turn, this can affect the trust in the society's system and institutions. Romance fraud often takes place in online environments, where the offender and the victim in 90% of cases never meet in reality. Regarding investment fraud, these crimes are committed through mobile phones and online-based tools and the crime is often characterized as cross-border. The victim loses on average 350 000 SEK per crime occasion (ibid).

In today’s context, several authorities and social actors within the financial sector are cooperating with the goal of combating the criminal economy (Ekobrottsmyndigheten, 2025). By exchanging information and collaborating in cases, new ways of working can be designed that can make it difficult for organized crime to exploit the financial system. In turn, this reduces the exploitation of banks (ibid). The banking business belongs to society’s infrastructure, meaning that criminal actors can exploit the bank's services. Because of this, the six largest banks in Sweden and the police authority, have agreed to a collaboration to discover and prevent frauds (Sveriges Riksdag, 2024). The Payment Services Act regulates bank’s obligation to manage and combat fraud, and it is the responsibility of Finansinspektion to ensure these provisions are complied with. Moreover, banks operate under the Act on Measures against Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (2017:630), which for instance submits that the banks have the right to have the knowledge of the transactions carried out by their customers (ibid). In summary, this overall background provides an insight into the field, which contributes to an understanding of the context for this essay. Furthermore, in the next section of the essay, a literature review of the current area will be presented, to account for what has previously been researched in relation to fraud.

3. Literature Review

The following section presents a literature review on the field of fraud. What has emerged during this process is that research on this phenomenon does not appear as a single unified field. Instead, there are several strands intertwined in the context of romance and investment fraud that focus on elements such as the social and psychological processes that form the basis of fraudulent transactions. It is evident there is a lot of research centering on offenders in frauds and also its victims, however, there is much less knowledge of the fraud investigator’s perspectives. As the focus of this study is on investigators’ understanding of fraud and its relation to their working practices, it is essential to highlight how they work preventively to combat fraud.

The literature review has therefore been divided into two main themes, where the first theme discusses fraud as a social and interactional process, whereas the second theme presents research on how fraud is prevented. Regarding this second theme, it should be noted that there is a lack of scientific research on the implemented preventative measures for combating fraud. However, there is information on fraud prevention measures in the form of government reports. Hence, a choice has been made to include government reports to some extent in this section, in order to provide information of relevance for this thesis subject. Taken together, examining previous research enables an understanding of the complex process embedded within this type of crime that is causing individuals to become a victim of fraud, which can influence investigators' everyday practices.

3.1 Fraud as a Social and Interactional process

3.1.1 Online interaction and Social engineering

Frauds involve social processes in online environments that result in interactions between the offender and the victim, which in the end contributes to the victim executing fraudulent transactions. Norris & Brookes (2021:1) and Cross & Holt (2023:117) claim that due to the widespread use of technology in today's society, opportunities have arisen for individuals to commit online fraud, where the fraudster is interacting with the victim for the purpose of obtaining their money (Norris & Brookes, 2021:1). Moreover, Shang et al. (2023:1-2) does also highlight how the internet has become a platform for fraudsters to fulfill their goal of gaining financially on others. Conversely, Atkins & Huang (2013:23) and Norris & Brookes (2021:1) deepen the explanation of how fraud is successfully committed, when they highlight how the fraud process is understood as "social engineering". The fraud becomes successful as the fraudsters are social engineers in the sense that they are exploiting the victims' vulnerabilities through manipulation (Atkins & Huang, 2013:23). Fraudsters are thus using their communication skillfully towards the victims (ibid) which thereby establishes a trusting relationship, where the victim is misled to perform certain actions for the fraudsters own financial gain (Atkins & Huang, 2013:24). Overall, this previous research illustrates how fraud emerges through the social interaction that is taking place on the internet between the offender and the victim. Within these interactions, victims are gradually manipulated by the fraudster that leads to the victims participating in fraudulent transactions. This insight is of value since the process of becoming involved in fraud sets the ground for the investigators' work. However, the victim's role in these interactions are not much presented by these sources, making it relevant to account for further.

For a fraud to be feasible at all, it requires participation of a victim. Carter (2023: 1406) claims that if a fraudster is to have access to one's money, a victim must be in some active participation through interacting with an offender. Whitty illustrates Carter's argument by presenting romance scams as a case where the victim is actively participating in interactions with an offender (Whitty, 2018:105). The victim is here contacted by a fraudster that is presenting themselves through a fake identity, where the fraudster is misleading the victim into a relationship (Whitty, 2018:105, Cross & Holt, 2023:107) and grooms them for a period of time until they find the victim ready to perform fraudulent transactions (Whitty, 2018:105). The victim therefore plays a crucial role in romance frauds, since their ongoing engagement in the interaction with the offender is causing the fraudster to successfully gain financially. As can be understood, the victim is manipulated by the fraudster, but furthermore how this manipulation functions in practice as in why the victims continue to be involved in the fraud, will be further elaborated next.

3.1.2 Emotional manipulation and decision-making

It should be noted that previous research has attempted to explain the occurrence of fraud through demographic risk factors such as gender and age. However, the results appear inconsistent, which can illustrate that victimisation is not to be associated with individual characteristics, but rather with how the fraudsters manipulation of the victim is causing emotions of trust and beliefs. As offenders initiate a romantic relationship that appears legitimate from the victim's perspective, the victim develops feelings of trust towards the offender (Cross & Holt, 2023:116). The trust the victim has in the perpetrator, Whitty (2018:107) argues, makes the victim believe the promises of a perfect relationship and wealth that is presented by the fraudster. Comparably to Whitty (2018), Carter (2023:1417) presents how trust is formed by the victim for the offender, however, Carter explains how this process involves an offender that is presenting themselves through a fake identity that makes them appear as a credible person. In this sense, the victim's involvement in fraud is understood as a social process, where the offender is initiating a relational relationship through manipulating the victim into forming ideas of trust. Until now, previous research has largely focused on romance scams and less on investment scams. The common denominator for these scams, however, is that the victim is subjected to emotional manipulation that is influencing their decision-making. Therefore, the manipulation that occurs in investment scams needs to be further explained.

Individuals' ability to act rationally is weakened through the manipulation executed by the fraudster. Cuadra et al. (2025: 771-772) argue that in investment fraud, the victim is informed by the fraudster that they can miss out on an opportunity to gain financially. As a result, the victims are forming these emotions that are causing them to act impulsively, which weakens their judgement. Deliema et al. (2020: 906) similarly argues as Cuadra et al., how individuals are acting irrationally in investment frauds, as the fraudster is promising guaranteed return with none or little risks, where the victim believes these promises as their feelings of greediness is influencing their financial perception. The greediness Deliema et al. present, can furthermore be applied in Atkins & Huang's (2013:24) reasoning regarding the decision-making process in fraud, where they claim an individual' s decision-making process is highly influenced by the individual's awareness in the interaction with the offender. In this perspective, if a person is greedy to gain financially, it may affect their ability to make rational decisions, causing them to participate in the fraudsters financial offer. Taken together, victims become involved in investment fraud as they go through a complex interplay of emotional manipulation in the social interaction with the offender. One's decision-making is therefore not completely isolated, as it is shaped through the situational factors. Nevertheless, several social actors in society are continuously working to combat financial crime, which makes it important to highlight how this preventative work is formed today.

3.2 Preventative work

3.2.1 Awareness and campaigns

Preventative work to combat fraud is carried out in several sectors of society, and it can for example, take the form of information campaigns and educational efforts. One of the actors working with educational measures is The Financial Supervisory Authority (hereafter referred to as FI) (Finansinspektionen, 2024:4). Several authors are highlighting campaigns as educational and informational opportunities, since it can raise awareness of fraud among society, which for example the campaign *Svårlurad* did (Finansinspektion, 2024:13, Finansinspektionen, 2024:18, BRÅ, 2023:60). BRÅ (2023:60) highlights that campaign as successful, since people got informed about the commonly used approach by fraudsters, and how to become hard to trick. In contrast to Finansinspektionen and BRÅ, Jensen et al. (2024:717) are criticizing awareness campaigns as an effective procedure for combating fraud, as there is a lack of empirical evidence regarding if the campaigns are working. In this sense, there is a divergence in how effectiveness is perceived, as FI and BRÅ are finding awareness campaigns successful as it reaches a broad public and increases their knowledge, while Jensen et al. perceives effectiveness in terms of behavioral change and reduction in number of victims. Besides these campaign measures, technical and system-based measures are used by different social actors to combat fraud, making it necessary to examine further.

3.2.2 Surveillance and transaction monitoring

Preventative fraud work includes central components such as supervision and transaction monitoring, with the purpose of reducing the opportunities for fraudsters to exploit the financial system. FI fulfills a supervisory role in the preventative work, as they are monitoring the actors that have gotten authority to perform their business on the financial market, which thus includes payment services providers and banks (Finansinspektionen, 2024:8). Moreover, BRÅ (2023:57) does also address the preventative work in the form of monitoring. In contrast to FI however, BRÅ highlights how the banks are using operational systems that are monitoring customers' behavioral patterns (BRÅ, 2023:57). The purpose is to highlight deviant transactions so that it can be controlled and perhaps even stopped (ibid). In this perspective, preventative measures possess a structural and system-oriented approach, whereas supervision and transaction monitoring enables one to detect deviant patterns and flaws within the financial system itself. Financial institutions therefore possess responsibility for fraud prevention, which shifts some of the responsibility customers otherwise have. However, the financial institutions do not operate alone as they are collaborating with one another to further promote financial crime prevention, which will be elaborated next.

3.2.3 Institutional collaboration

Several actors in society are collaborating with one another to counteract fraud, whereby informational exchange constitutes a major part in this cooperation. FI collaborates with the payment services providers and the Swedish banks, as they are sharing information with one another about frauds (Finansinspektionen, 2024:10-11). Comparably, the bank's collaboration is also highlighted by BRÅ (2023:57), as they are addressing the fact that the banks together with the police and the banking association have initiated a cooperation for combating fraud. Taken together, the preventative measures against fraud are strengthened through strategic control and information sharing between different institutions. The collaboration enables knowledge sharing, which can illustrate how organisational collaboration functions as a more effective tool for preventative measures, unlike isolated efforts by individual actors. However, even though there are preventative measures across different social actors, fraud can still occur due to the social manipulation the victims are subjected to, which requires further attention.

3.2.4 Limitations of prevention

There are limitations in the preventative measures for combating fraud, due to the fraudsters exploiting individuals rather than the financial system itself. FI argues it is much difficult for external actors to make an individual aware they are being exploited, as the individual has been exposed to social manipulation (Finansinspektionen, 2024:13). Therefore, the fraudsters are aiming at manipulating their victims, rather than exploiting the security flaws within the payment services, especially since the security features continuously develop (Finansinspektionen, 2024:4). In contrast to the acknowledged shortcomings in preventative work addressed by FI, Jensen et al. (2024:717-718) illuminates the key problem of awareness campaigns. Authorities such as the police and banks inform individuals to not trust someone on the phone that is presenting themselves as someone from these institutions, while they simultaneously deliver this warning message through what appears to originate from the same authorities, which causes a paradox that in turn may affect the credibility of such campaigns (ibid). Taken together, social manipulation is a key problem in the area for combating fraud, whereas technological developments within the financial systems further contributes to the fraudulent behaviour of gaining money through social manipulation, as the fraudster is seeking another way for obtaining money.

3.3 Synthesis of previous research

This section has presented a literature review on the field of fraud. What has emerged during this process is that fraud is an interactional phenomenon, as well as a field for institutional preventative measures. Fraudsters are interacting and exploiting their victims through various techniques, for the purpose of obtaining their money. Moreover, the key concept between the presented authors is that social manipulation is a commonly used approach by fraudsters in romance and investment frauds. On a structural level, financial institutions and other social actors in society are working with preventative measures to prevent people falling victims to fraud, however, this does not always work. In summary, scholars and reports have been presented covering the research field of what is relevant to this study. By featuring the presented themes in this section, it covers how fraud is understood, and what factors that can influence the investigation of these fraud cases.

As can be understood, much research is about victims and perpetrators, where there is much less acknowledgement about the perspectives of the investigators'. As a result, it becomes of research interest to explore how fraud investigators operate in practice, since it can achieve a broader understanding of how these investigators' themselves understand the fraud process in terms of manipulation, responsibility and prevention. By gaining a broader understanding of this, one can therefore understand how investigators' interpretation of fraud shapes their preventative working methods, which contributes with valuable knowledge of how to prevent these frauds more effectively in the future. This study therefore contributes to this, by highlighting the narratives of the investigators' and thus their everyday practices.

4. Narrative theory

For analyzing this study's chosen phenomenon, theoretical connections have been drawn upon narrative theory. More specifically, the study has its main theoretical point of departure in Lois Presser's (2018) narrative criminology. The core idea in Presser's narrative theory is that people consume and tell stories to others, which affects them in the sense that they take action (Presser, 2018:1-2). These stories, thus narratives, are therefore giving meaning to things that guide people into taking action, thus functioning as a motivation for individuals to act since they believe the stories they consume. Presser places particular emphasis on how these stories can make people participate in harm-doing or overlook the harm perpetrated by others (ibid). It should be noted it is certain parts of Presser's narrative theory that are to be used in this essay and not her entire theoretical concept. Her concepts centered around the relationship between narratives and harm-doing will not be applied in this study, since there are other aspects of more relevance for this thesis. The focus in this thesis thus relies on Presser's (2018:1-2) notions regarding how narratives shape meaning and how these narratives are action-oriented. Presser's theoretical concepts are applied in this thesis in order to understand how fraud investigators construct meaning in romance and investment frauds, and how these interpretations affect their strategic investigative and preventative practices.

Through Presser's perspective, narratives function as a way for us to understand how things fit together, which therefore enables us to understand the world (Presser, 2018:67 & 72). Moreover, narratives give meanings to situations, and since people are interpreting these narratives in order to understand how things fit together, different emotions can form, as different situations have different meaning structures (Presser, 2018:64). This theoretical argument will be used in this essay in the sense that I analyze how emotions emerge through narrative interpretation. I will therefore show how the same context can be understood differently, as it is dependent on the interpretation one makes. Within narratives, connections are being drawn between different events and experiences that can form a coherence in the story (Presser, 2018:68). As narratives are establishing an intertwined explanation of things, meanings can be integrated that in turn shapes a common sense (ibid). For my analysis, this theoretical reasoning will be used in order to understand why certain stories appear as reasonable and obvious, as well as how some of these narratives become so integrated that it affects what one finds legitimate and unquestionable.

Presser (2018:9) claims narrative criminology is based on the fact that we act on the meanings that have been assigned to things, where a shared understanding of language is essential for understanding the reality of one's everyday life. Narratives therefore function as a way for us to morally interpret an event that can guide us how to respond next, in other words, it organizes experiences and facilitates action (Presser, 2018:10). Furthermore, Presser (2018:4) highlights how narratives do not emerge from thin air, as she argues how our stories are not completely our own since we rely on shared prototypes, meaning when we process or convey a story, we draw connections to similar character types, plots and conventional tropes. One of Presser's core arguments is thus that narratives are a way of reasoning, meaning that we are active thinkers when absorbing a story, as the narrative is reasoning temporally, causally and meaningfully (Presser, 2018:5-6).

This theoretical perspective will function as an analytical framework for interpreting the empirical material. By drawing from narrative theory, one can understand how fraud investigators narrate their strategic approach to romance and investment fraud, and how their interpretation of this type of fraud relates to their investigative and preventative practices.

5. Method

The following section presents the research method used in this study and includes a description of the structure of the interviews, the sample strategy, the analytical methods, and how ethical principles were fulfilled.

5.1 Qualitative interviews

The aim of this thesis is to understand how fraud investigators operate strategically to manage romance and investment fraud, and how their interpretation of these frauds shape their investigative and preventative measures. Therefore, the focus of this thesis relies around meaning-making, making qualitative interviews the most appropriate approach to apply (cf. Bryman, 2018:563). Using a qualitative interview method is effectively suited to a narrative analytical framework, since it allows an examination of how fraud investigators construct, understand and convey meaning through their interpretations of fraud. The investigators' experiences are therefore articulated through narratives that not only highlight what they do, but how they make sense of fraud that in turn influences their professional practices.

Qualitative interview emphasizes individuals' own accounts and experiences of things, whereas these interviews can go in different directions depending on what the participant says, which in turn contributes to knowledge of what the participants find the most important (Bryman, 2018:561). By performing qualitative interviews, it enables one to interpret how these investigators give meaning to fraud, and how those interpretations shape their working practices. By using this methodological approach for interpreting the investigators' experiences of fraud, it contributes to a nuanced understanding of this complex crime that can enable further investigations of this societal problem. Qualitative methods have been criticized by authors such as Bryman (2018:484), as he argues how the researcher has a wide freedom to interpret the results subjectively in a way that aligns with one's own interest. However, the reflexivity aspect of me as a researcher has consistently been in consideration, which will be further elaborated in the ethics and reflexivity section. Nevertheless, a consideration has been made of the characteristics of this approach, where its positive aspects are the most significant for this essay.

5.2 Sample

Since there is a gap in previous research regarding how investigators interpret romance and investment fraud and how that interpretation influences their working practices, the aim of the study was to highlight the perspectives of these professionals. Therefore, I chose to interview participants working as fraud investigators, since they are at the center for the research questions. A convenience sampling strategy has been employed for this study, since the interviewees were selected on the basis of their accessibility (cf. Bryman, 2018:824). However, the study was not based solely on a convenience sample, as attention was also given to achieving gender balance among the interview participants. Additionally, I had access to professionals within this field, due to my own professional network and background as a part-time fraud investigator at a bank. This was therefore of convenience when searching for participants, as the search for them was not time-consuming due to me being familiar with them. However, since I myself share the same professional background as the interviewees, it raises questions about the objectivity of this study, which will be further elaborated in the section of ethics and reflexivity.

The participants of this study consisted of eight fraud investigators who all are investigating romance and investment fraud in their daily work. Furthermore, the participants are working at three different banks in Sweden. The interviewees differed in age, where the age range was between 22 to 45 years. Moreover, the participants had varying length of experience in this role, ranging from eight months to five years. The interlocutors were contacted by text message with a presentation of my thesis, and where I wondered if they would consider participating in this study. Taking the first contact with the interviewees by messaging them was beneficial since it ensured that the participants had all the information of the study available in text. I find this important since it can minimize misunderstanding than if i were to present the information in real life, as the information can be inaccurate later on due to the flaws of human memory. Furthermore, all of the investigators I contacted answered yes for participating in the study. The decision to interview eight investigators was based on considerations of the scope of this thesis, as this number of interviews was deemed reasonable and realistic to analyze within the given timeframe. Regarding the gender aspect of these participants, I wanted to have a variation sampling in order to gain a broader perspective of the phenomenon and to avoid that the results only portrayed a certain group of people. Because of this, I chose to interview four female fraud investigators and four male fraud investigators. By performing this sampling strategy, it allowed me to get access to professionals' own experiences of romance and investment fraud. It therefore captured the aspects of necessity for answering the research questions, which thus allowed an in-depth analysis to be carried out.

5.3 Conducting semi-structured interviews

After the investigators expressed their decision of participating in the study, I sent them a consent form and an information letter (see appendix 1), with a broader explanation of this project and how the interview would be conducted. I adapted the interview session based on what suited the interviewee best, which resulted in a number of interviews taking place via Zoom or facetime, and where some interviews took place at the interviewees' workplace. Due to the use of both in-person and online interviews, it may have influenced the interaction between me and the participants. However, I consider this approach beneficial since it increased participation and facilitated participants' individual circumstances. Moreover, an interview guide was formed before the conducted interviews, consisting of specific themes for the purpose of ensuring that key themes within the study's research questions were being discussed (cf. Bryman, 2018:563). Having an interview guide is also beneficial in the sense that it can make the participant feel more comfortable, as they are aware of the researcher having concepts to ask them about (O'reilly, 2012:149). The interview guide contained four main themes with a variety of sub-questions (see appendix 2), which in summary was about how the investigators understand the fraud process and how they operate in financial crime prevention.

The interviews were semi-structured and contained specific subject themes, where the questions were mostly open-ended and where further questions were asked drawing on what the participant previously said (cf. Bryman, 2018:563). The reasoning for this structure of the questions was that it contributed with flexibility, as the interviewee had the opportunity to answer freely on the question through their own wishes, while it at the same time ensured that key concepts within my research questions were being addressed. Additionally, I wanted to minimize the risk of leading the participants' answers in a certain direction, where open-ended questions are regarded as preferable (Denscome, 2018:254). Furthermore, as the essay is based on a narrative theoretical framework, the focus centers on the narration of the fraud investigators, which makes it important to offer the participants the opportunity to speak freely to accomplish an understanding of how they interpret the subject. As a result of having mostly open-ended questions, I experienced that all the participants could speak freely, as the participants occasionally raised topics beyond those that were included in the interview guide from the start. Furthermore, doing semi-structured interviews was beneficial for this essay, as it enabled a nuanced understanding of how fraud investigators interpret the subject and how that interpretation correlates with their investigative and preventative practices.

Since the interviews were semi-structured, the interviews differed in time depending on how the participants answered the open-ended questions and what follow-up question I asked. The time of the interviews was approximately therefore between 25-45 minutes. As a result of the structure of the interviews, the data was detailed and rich in content, which made it essential to record the interviews. Thus, I recorded the interviews with voice memo on the phone, and they were later transcribed and coded. The choice of recording and transcribing the interviews was done in order to include the participants' own accounts (Bryman, 2018:577) and it minimized memory bias (Denscombe, 2018:284), which benefited the analysis since it allowed repeated access to the participants' interpretation of the subject after the interviews were made (cf. Bryman, 2018:566).

Taken together, conducting semi-structured interviews was beneficial for this essay, since it ensured that concepts within the research questions were being addressed, while follow-up questions were being asked as the participants' opportunity to speak freely led them to discuss interesting aspects that were not included in the interview guide from the start. In this sense, the interviews contributed to developed insights of the perspectives of the fraud investigators, which promoted the results of this study.

5.4 Analysis method

As a professional in the field of fraud, I have previous experiences and insights in the study's subject, which made me have a pre-understanding of what my data would consist of. However, my pre-understanding was tested as I encountered surprising findings in the data. An example of a surprising finding that was not a part of my pre-understanding of the subject and that I encountered during the first interview, was how the investigator started to reason about how AI would influence their investigative work. Since I thought this aspect was an interesting finding, I started to direct my attention to this aspect in the following analysis, which was not something I had initially anticipated.

The empirical data has been analyzed through a thematic analysis. After I transcribed the interviews, I coded them by identifying different categories within the data related to the aim of this thesis and its research questions (cf. Bryman, 2018:703). The participants' stories were therefore reviewed in the sense that I marked information that represented ideas or concepts of relevance for this study (ibid). Through this, different codes were formed consisting of certain information such as: *emotional manipulation* and *resistance*. The codes were later compared with one another in order to find differences and similarities in the material (cf. Bryman, 2018:705). Through this comparison, I shaped different themes consisting of an amount of codes describing similar patterns (ibid). For instance, the codes *perception of reality* and *denial* were some of the codes that were merged into a theme that described all these codes, which I labelled *Narrative conflict and the investigators' strategic work in the interaction with the victim*.

Regarding that the study is based on narrative theory, it has shaped how I interpreted the themes that emerged though the coding of the data. The themes are interlinked with narrative theory in the sense that they refer to how fraud investigators narrate their understandings of romance and investment fraud, and how they are meaning-making in relation to these frauds and their preventative measures. The analysis of the data has therefore had an abductive approach in the sense that the narrative theory and the empirical data continuously functioned together in the interpretation process. As the analysis developed, I constantly moved back and forth between the data and the theory, as I encountered findings that deepened the theory and which made me return to the material after I had gotten these theoretical insights (cf. Tavory, Timmermans, 2014:59-60). An example of this interplay between theory and data was when the investigators presented their communicative strategies for the purpose of challenging the victim's perception of reality. I first coded this information as practical investigative techniques. However, when I connected this to narrative theory, the practices were reinterpreted as narrative interventions, and this formed how the situation was later analyzed.

Taken together, by performing a thematic analysis, the data became structured and similar patterns could be identified, which in turn enabled an analysis of the subject that could answer the research questions. Furthermore, having an abductive approach was beneficial for this thesis in the sense that it enabled the analysis to remain open to emerging patterns while it at the same time was being theoretically informed.

5.5 Ethical considerations and Reflexivity

As people are unconsciously biased (Benson, O'reilly, 2020:179), reflexivity is an important component during one's research. Therefore, I have reflected upon the reflexivity aspect throughout this study, meaning I am aware of how my own presence on the field influences the participants of my research and the produced knowledge (ibid).

As mentioned earlier in this method section, I have previous experience in this field, since I myself work part-time as a fraud investigator at a bank. Since I possess knowledge of fraud and have a professional interest in this type of crime, it can affect how I formulate the interview questions and how I interpret the interviewees answers. Thus, I am aware of the risk of how my own assumptions of the fraud process and the working practices of it, influences how I understand the narratives of the participants. However, I believe my previous experience of fraud is a strength in this essay, since my own insight has led to me forming interview questions of relevance for fraud investigators to reflect upon. Furthermore, I choose to have open-ended questions to allow the participants to speak freely about their own interpretation and meaning-making of fraud, thereby reducing the influence of my own understanding of fraud on the responses of the fraud investigators. Moreover, follow-up questions were asked either if I wanted the participants to clarify what they previously said, or if they mentioned interesting subjects that were not included in the interview questions from the start. Since I had this strategy, I was not seeking confirmation of my own assumption, but rather allowed the participants to present their own interpretations of fraud.

Regarding the fact I am familiar with the participants, it can have influenced their decision of participating in the study. It is also possible some participants felt they needed to respond in a certain way or be cautious of the information they shared since I am acquainted with them. Even though I am aware of this risk, I also see this as an opportunity since the already established relationship can have created a sense of security for the participants as there is a communal trust, which can allow the participants to have open and nuanced conversations on the subject with me. Furthermore, my own professional experience in the field may have also benefited with a sense of security, as it can be experienced as easier to talk with someone who works in the same field than with someone who does not. My position in the field has thus led to an opportunity to conduct data that might otherwise be harder to achieve for other researchers. Reflexivity has therefore had a central role in this research process, as I continuously have reflected upon my own role and positionality.

Regarding ethical considerations, certain ethical principles have underpinned this study and been applied during all stages of the research project. The reasoning for this is that I wanted to ensure I made well-founded choices in line with the guidelines for research (Vetenskapsrådet, 2024:90), where the central ethical principles I have followed are: the information requirement, the use requirement, the consent requirement and the confidentiality requirement (Vetenskapsrådet, 2014:63). The information requirement has been fulfilled for this research through the information letter (see appendix 1) I sent to the participants during the first contact before the conducted interviews. The information letter presents the purpose of this research, thus understanding how fraud investigators interpret fraud, and how that interpretation correlates with their working-and preventative practices, as well as which elements are included in this thesis. I furthermore highlight that participation is voluntary and can be disrupted without a necessary cause (cf. Vetenskapsrådet, 2024:63).

The information letter and the consent form (see appendix 1) furthermore accommodates the use requirement, since I highlight the empirical data will only be used for the purpose of this essay (cf. Vetenskapsrådet, 2024:20). Thus, the conducted interviews are only being used for enabling an analysis of fraud investigators' perception of fraud in this thesis. The consent requirement has been complied through the consent form, as the interviewees had to sign a consent form before the conducted interviews, where they approved their participation in the research, as well as they had read and understood the information letter, and that they approved recording the interviews. In relation to the consent form and information letter, the participants were informed of the confidentiality requirement, as I highlighted that the gathered information is to be secured in a way that no unauthorized people can access it (cf. Vetenskapsrådet, 2024:77), where the participants are anonymous since I labeled them with fictional names. I chose to anonymize the participants as I wanted to protect their identity from potential harm of their participation in this study. Furthermore, the recordings of the interviews are to be deleted after the research project is finished and approved, which is conveyed both in the information letter and the consent form.

Taken together, reflexivity and ethical consideration have been central throughout the research process, where the aim for this has been to ensure integrity, transparency and respect for the participants. In the following section of this thesis the analysis will be presented, which builds upon these methodological and ethical foundations.

6. Result and analysis

The following section presents the results and analysis of this thesis. The empirical data have been analyzed through the theoretical framework of narrative theory. I have identified two main themes in the material, which has been labelled as: *Narrative conflict and the investigators' strategic work in the interaction with the victim* and *The bank's current preventative measures and possible future measures.*

6.1 Narrative conflict and the investigators' strategic work in the interaction with the victim

In this theme, I present and analyze the narrative conflict between the investigators and the victims, and what strategies are being used by the investigators for handling this problem. I will first examine the narrative conflict and secondly the strategic working practices, since the strategic practices exist as an answer to the narrative conflict. It should be noted that theme 6.1.1 is considerably larger than the other sections in the analysis, which is based on the fact that the experienced narrative conflict between the investigators and victims emerges as a central analytical finding, and it contextualizes the analysis remaining sections.

6.1.1 The investigators competing with the victims narrative

The investigators are forming a narrative story in their own mind, before they verbally interact with the victim. A working method that is consistent with all participants is that they create an overall picture of the customer as an individual, after they have been informed of a possible romance and investment fraudulent transaction. The participants claim they are looking for things that are deviant from the customer's normal behaviour and what patterns that appear. By creating an overall picture of the customer, the participants argue they are trying to interpret whether the transaction is reasonable or not. Some participants claim they often know whether the customer is exposed to a fraud, which is illustrated through the following quotes:

Leah: “[...] I can see when a customer has previously been a victim to fraud, and that is a strong indication of them being a victim again.”

John: “[...] By forming an overall picture of the customer, where I shape an interpretation of the tendencies, I often know for a fact that the customer is exposed to a fraud without even speaking to them first.”

Through Presser’s narrative theory, the investigator's working method of shaping an overall picture of the customer, is understood as a meaning-making process. The investigators are interpreting the customers normal behavioral patterns, illustrating that they are typing to understand how things fit together (Presser, 2018:64), and they are seeking to find differentialities in the transactions that may appear to be connected to a fraud. The customer's normal behavior is therefore functioning as an established narrative for the investigators, whereas the deviant transactions stand in contrast to the normality. The investigators are therefore being active thinkers (Presser, 2018:5) as they are interpreting the customer's previous history in order to understand whether the customer is exposed to fraud or not. Since a narrative overall picture of the customer is formed by the investigators before the interaction with the victim, an interpretive framework is formed that is linked to how the behaviour of the customer is understood. Furthermore, since all the participants are highlighting this working method, it shows that they have a shared understanding of the meaning of shaping an overall picture of the customer, as are applying this working method in order to understand if the customer is a victim of fraud (Presser, 2018:9).

Leah’s quote can be understood as she has interpreted the customers previous event of being a victim to fraud, as a factor of them being exploited again, meaning that she has drawn a connection to a previous event in order to process a story where the customer is a victim again (Presser, 2018:4). Moreover, John’s quote is understood as the overall picture and behaviour patterns of the customer are joined together, through which a meaningful narrative is being formed for making the situation apprehensible (Presser, 2018:67, 72). This narrative is furthermore action-oriended, as John is organizing his experiences of the customer that enables him to understand whether the customer is a victim to fraud or not, before the interaction with the customer has taken place (Presser, 2018:9-10). These findings demonstrate that the investigators form a narrative story in their own mind before interacting with the customer, where the overall picture of the customer functions as a meaning-making framework. However, the investigators have previous professional experience of romance and investment fraud that can influence the narrative story that is produced before the verbal interaction with the customer, which will be further conveyed next.

A common feature in the material is that the investigators are explaining the occurrence of romance and investment frauds through terms of the offender manipulating the victim, hence explaining these types of frauds through their own interpretations and previous professional experiences of it. The participants argue the victims of romance fraud often consist of individuals that are lonely and have a weak social network around them, and they have also been promised a romantic relationship with promising future plans. Regarding investment fraud, the investigators claim that these victims are being sold to a story of a flourishing economy with high yield. The common denominator for both of these types of fraud, as the interviewees interprets it, is that the fraud is built on a fictional story presented by an offender, that is manipulating the victim into a relationship, either romantically or friendly as a financial advisor, through which a trustful bond is being formed that causes the victims to send money in the belief of a genuine purpose. The investigators interpretation of the characteristics of romance and investment fraud victims was for instance described by Chris:

> Chris: The similarity between victims of romance and investment fraud is that they both are built on trust constructed over time, and the victim is an active participant in the transaction. [...] The romance victim is protecting the relationship. The investment victim is protecting his self-image as financially competent. [...]

Chris' expression illustrates that he understands romance and investment fraud as something that is based on trust that is formed over time, where these victims are justifying their relationship with the offender or their own behavior, such as the relationship fulfills a function or that they themselves are financially competent. Presser’s idea of how narratives cause a coherent story (Presser, 2018:68) can be applied in the quote from Chris, when he says that both romance and investment fraud is “built on trust constructed over time” and that the victim acts through his own self-image or through the relationship. This is understood as the victim's earlier interaction with the offender has constructed a trustworthy relationship that forms a coherent story that makes the victim's action understandable.

Taken together, the investigators previous experience of victims in romance and investment fraud, is a central component in the narrative story that takes place before the verbal interaction with the customer. As the investigators highlight how the fraud starts, thus a relationship is initiated between the offender and the victim that builds trust and ultimately leads to the victim sending money in the belief of a genuine purpose, they are accumulating their experiences of the frauds. Through Presser's (2018:72) perspective, this is understood as they are interpreting how things fit together, meaning that the investigators are assigning meanings to the sequence of events of the fraud. The investigators are drawing connections between different experiences of these frauds (Presser, 2018:68), since they are ascribing romance and investment victims different characteristics such as lonely and manipulated for example, based on their own interpretations of them. Therefore, the investigators are creating a narrative explanation of the customer's behavior that makes it understandable and causes a coherent story (ibid). Additionally, the interpretation of the characteristics of victims in these frauds was particularly prominent in the following quote:

> Lisa: In romance fraud, they start to write and form a relationship and build trust and then, the victim starts to send money. A lot of victims say that they have been lonely for a long time and seeked attention. [...] The males in investment frauds are quite naive or open minded and trust other people so much that they trusts them with their money [...].

Similar to the statement from Chris, Lisa understands romance and investment fraud as a process that involves trust constructed over time, whereas she interprets it as the victims are justifying the relationship with the offender or their own self-image. In Lisa's quote however, it appears that she interprets the victims as "quite" naive. She is therefore careful with her chosen wording, which can be understood as she might not want anyone to feel offended by her interpretation, or that she believes that these customers are a little bit naive but not fully. She does highlight how victims are often lonely and in need of attention, which can be understood as narratives causing different emotional meaning structures (Presser, 2018:64. Based on the interpretation of Lisa of the circumstances for the victim, the relationship with the offender becomes meaningful as loneliness has become an interpretive framework. In other words, this means that Lisa understands it as the relationship with the offender is given meaning through the victim's feeling of loneliness. As has been mentioned in this analysis, the victims of romance and investment fraud are interpreted by the investigators as manipulated by the offender. This manipulation however, contributes to a significant problem for the participants' investigative practices, as the professionals are interpreting the victims as having a different perception of reality than the one they have themselves. This discrepancy therefore requires further investigation.

The experienced depiction in the narrative

All of the participants argue how they have a perception of the customer as a victim of a romance or investment fraud, due to their previous experience of how these frauds emerge. However, the investigators experience their own narrative as being in competition with the narrative that they interpret the victims as holding, which causes them to understand that the victims have a different perception of reality than they themselves do. The participants highlight the importance of speaking to the victim about the situation, since they need to hear the perspectives of the customers in order to be able to put themself in the victim's position. The investigators argue that one must try to understand the perspectives of the victims, since it affects their investigative measures. On the other hand, once the participants have the dialogue with the customer, they often encounter obstacles in the sense that the customer does not believe that they are exposed to fraud. Moreover, the quotes below further illustrate the investigators interpretation of why victims often have difficulty realizing they are exposed to a fraud:

> John: Sometimes, they have already lost enormous amounts of money, and the last thing to leave a person is hope. So somewhere deep down they may know that the purpose for which they are sending money is not legitimate, but I think they already invested so much that they live on the hope that if I have already put so much money, what do I have to lose? There might be a chance of getting it back if I just continue.

> Lisa: Most often, these fraud cases involve very large sums of money that have been sent over several years. In such cases, it is difficult to make the customer understand that these are funds they have sent to fraudsters and that they will not get this money back. Getting them to come to terms with this is difficult, and many continue to send money in order to recover what they have lost. [...]

Isac: The victim has an image of the person they have spoken to as being a legitimate individual. That is their perception of reality. They have often sent money to this perpetrator over a period of time, believing it to be for a genuine purpose, such as receiving help with profitable investments or helping a loved one in need.

The quotes can be understood as interpretations of how the victim acts based on narrative constructed meaning. The investigators' are highlighting their understanding of how earlier investments of the victims are integrated with hope, trust and future recovery. Through narrative theory, the understanding of the investigators is understood as the victims are making sense of their world by drawing connections to their previous experiences (Presser, 2018:67-68). Thus, as the victim has earlier experiences of the offender as a genuine person and that the money they have sent has been done so for a legitimate purpose, a meaning-making narrative has been formed which enables continued action (Presser, 2018:10). One's previous actions is guiding future decisions which makes one's engagement apprehensible, which illustrates Presser's (2018:5-6) idea regarding that narrative reasons temporally, causally and meaningfully. In conclusion, the participants' quotes demonstrate their interpretation of how narratives function as action-oriented interpretive frameworks, which in turn affects the investigators feelings and actions, as they are highlighting the difficulty of making the victim understand that they are exposed to a fraud.

Moreover, the tension between the investigators and their interpretation of the victim's perception of reality, can be understood as competing narratives. The material shows how the investigators use a narrative where the customer is understood as a victim, which they have based on their previous professional experiences of how these frauds emerge. Once again, the investigators are in a meaning-making process as they are interpreting how things fit together (Presser, 2018:67-68). The narratives of the victims are however perceived by the investigators as it often stands in opposition to the perspectives they themselves have, which the investigators understand is due to the victims being manipulated by the fraudsters and which have made them form a different perception of reality. The investigators interpretations of the victims having a different perception of reality, can be analyzed as the victims are acting upon the meanings that have been assigned to the situation (Presser, 2018:9-10). Thus based on the participants' expression, the victims continue to believe the legitimacy of the narrative of the offender, which causes the victims actions to be logical through their own perspective, as they have experienced their relationship with the offender and money transfers as legitimate before. Grounded in the investigators interpretation in this context, a discrepancy is experienced between the narratives, where the participants are experiencing this situation in the sense that the victims are having a hard time believing the interpretation of the investigators, since their narrative does not resemble the one that they have of the situation and offender.

On the other hand, the participants highlighted the importance of trying to put oneself into the positions of the victims, by speaking to them about the situation. This shows how interpretation of the narrative of the victim becomes essential for professional action. As the investigators are trying to interpret the perspective of the victims, they are temporally capturing the meanings that the victims have integrated into the situation. This aligns with Presser's (2018:64, 68) concept regarding how one uses narrative as a way to organize experiences and feelings into a coherent story. The investigators are therefore interpreting the stories of the victims in order to understand how things fit together (ibid), which in turn can affect the strategic approach they use for investigating the case.

The results have shown that the participants are experiencing a competition between their narrative, and the narrative that they have interpreted that the customer has of the situation. Based on the understanding of the participants, they believe the customer has been manipulated by the fraudster into perceiving the situation as legitimate, where on the other hand, the investigators have an understanding of the customer being a victim to fraud. This understanding is based on the narrative framework the investigators bring into the interaction with the customer, which has been based on their prior professional experiences, accumulated knowledge, and earlier interpretations of these types of frauds. Despite the participants' experience of a narrative conflict in this situation, they are trying to convince the victims that they are exposed to fraud, by using narrative intervention as an investigation strategy. Therefore, the strategic working practices will be conveyed next, since they exist due to the experienced narrative conflict.

6.1.2 Narrative intervention as a strategic working practice

When examining the empirical data, it showed that the investigators continuously engage in what can be understood as narrative intervention when interacting with victims of romance and investment fraud. As has been presented in this analysis, the participants emphasize the importance of allowing the customer to present their perspective of the situation, due to it helping the investigators to understand the transaction, relationship and the emotional investments involved in the case. A recurring theme in the material was that by interpreting the perspectives of the victims, the investigators have the opportunity to respond to this and stop the customer with their deviant behavior. Moreover, some of the participants claim that it is crucial to enter the dialogue with the customer in an non-aggressive and open manner, as a confrontational approach from the start often leads to resistance. Sofie further highlights that this process involves her “getting down on the customers level”.

The participants' claims of letting the customer present their perspective of the situation is understood as a way of getting access to the victim’s own meaning-making narrative. As the investigators let the customer speak freely and have an open approach, the investigators interpret the victim's story, illustrating Presser’s (2018:67-68, 72) idea regarding how narratives are interpreted through coherence, that is formed as individuals draw connections between different experiences. Therefore, the investigators interpret the narratives of the victims, which allows them to understand their story and thus what meanings the victims have attributed to their own actions and the situation as whole. In turn, having this approach can lead to the investigators forming an understanding of the actions made by the victim, which aligns with Presser’s explanation of how narratives are establishing an intertwined explanation of things that is integrated by another and which forms a common sense (Presser, 2018:9). Sofie’s expression of “getting down on the customer’s level" is understood as narratives that organize emotions and involve different interpretations of the situation (Presser, 2018:64). This means that when the investigator confirms the victim's experience of the situation rather than question it from the start, the investigator avoids questioning the meanings that the victim has based her or his actions upon. In summary, using an open approach as Sofie does, can facilitate the investigation, because as the participants highlighted, it minimizes the risk of facing resistance from the customer. Lisa further describes the benefits of entering the dialogue with the customer in an open manner:

> Lisa: I would say that it is good to go in as open as possible in the beginning, because if you enter aggressively, they are often quite closed. However, if the customers are open in their treatment, it is often easy to reach them and to make them cease with their behaviour.

Lisa's statement can be understood as she is not just seeking to gather more information, but she is also actively positioning herself into the narrative perspectives of the victims, in order for them to negotiate their meanings. This can illustrate an example of how narratives function as action-oriented meaning structures, whereas a transformation in one's actions requires a change in the story that gives the action its meaning (Presser, 2018:1,9-10). This means that when Lisa is interpreting the narrative of the victim, in order for her to reach the victim in terms of changing their future behaviour, she is forming an alternative narrative of the situation which can cause the victim to act differently, due to them interpreting the meanings of their behavior differently now. After listening to the perspectives of the victims, the investigators are starting to challenge the narrative of the victim by using different communicative strategies, which will be further elaborated next.

The participants highlighted communicative strategies aimed at challenging the story presented by the victims. All of the participants emphasized the importance of applying these communicative strategies in situations where the victim does not agree with the perspectives of the investigators, in order for them to recognize that they are exposed to fraud and therefore stop participating in fraudulent transactions. The investigators are doing narrative intervention by posing counter-questions regarding the purpose and logic of the transaction. The participants also highlighted how the story of the victim often consists of inconsistencies and deviations, and that they are listening to these irregularities in the story, where they are then highlighting those aspects in the interaction with the customer to explain why those aspects are illogical. The purpose of asking counter-questions is highlighted by Lisa for instance:

> Lisa: By asking the customer a counter-question based on the story they have told to me, I can hopefully get the customer to start questioning the situation themselves.

Lisa’s quote is an example of how the investigators are listening to deviations in the narrative of the victim, where she uses a communicational strategy formed as a counter-question. However, she uses the term “hopefully”, which can illustrate how this working method may not always be successful. John present the same strategy as Lisa, however, he highlights how some of the customers respond to those counter-questions, and how he responds back:

John: [...] Some victims express it as I feel good when I talk to them. Well yeah, but you also lose all your money. There are friends who are actually friends who do not just take your money and leave when they have pumped it all out”

The quote from John is understood as an example of how he interprets the situation in terms of the customer being manipulated by the fraudster, as the customer believes the offender is a good friend. Moreover, some of the participants present how they gradually break down the story of the victim, which is done in order to make the customer understand that they have been exposed to a fraud, due to their story showing deviant tendencies.

The investigators' communicative strategy of asking counter-questions due to the irregularities in the story, is understood as them trying to destabilize the meaning-making narrative of the victim. If a customer continues to engage in fraudulent transactions even though there are warning signals in the situation, it illustrates Presser’s reasoning of how connections are being drawn between different events in order to make sense of a situation, thus giving meaning to the actions one performs (Presser, 2018:67-68, 72). Based on the interpretations of the investigators, the victims are therefore making sense of their actions through having internalized the situation with the offender as legitimate. From the victim’s perspective, their narrative is therefore understood as coherent and action logical (Presser, 2018:9). As the investigators are asking counter-questions based on the presented story from the customer, they are trying to affect how the story is resonated causally and meaningfully (Presser, 2018:5-6). The investigators are empathizing with the inconsistencies and the illogical aspects of the situation, which challenges the coherence of the narrative of the victim and which can enable a possible reinterpretation for them.

When Lisa tries to get the customer to question themselves, it can be understood as she is not trying to replace the narrative, but to displace the narrative's meaning-structure. John's quote can be understood as narratives organizing emotions through one's interpretation of their meaning-structures (Presser, 2018:64). John interprets it as the victim perceives the offender as someone contributing with emotional comfort, which makes the victim interpret their own actions as reasonable. The investigators are therefore also doing interventions that are aimed at how the relationship is understood within the narrative of the victim. Furthermore from the perspective of narrative theory, the communicational strategy of breaking down the story gradually is understood as the investigators trying to highlight the deviant patterns that are otherwise integrated into a coherent story. This illustrates Presser's explanation of how narratives do not appear isolated, but are being formed through shared prototypes and recognizable patterns (Presser, 2018:4). By fragmenting the narrative into smaller components, this weakens the narrative's internal coherence, which makes it possible for the victim to rethink the meaning of their actions.

Taken together, the findings of this sub-theme illustrate that the investigators' strategic work can be understood as a form of narrative intervention. The investigators are trying to reshape the interpretation of the context of the customers. Firstly, the investigators are hearing the narrative perspective of the victim, and they are later challenging its coherence, but where they can adapt their approach in the interaction with the victim depending on how they react. This adaptation is done in order to make the victim understand that they are exposed to fraud, which they are carefully doing so without severing the relationship with the customer. These working practices show how the participants are investigating these fraud cases through active engagement that involves meaning-making processes.

6.2 The bank's current preventative measures and possible future measures

In this theme, I present and analyze the bank's current preventative measures, and what possible future measures the investigators wish to implement in the future. Hence, this theme is centered around the framework of which the investigators have based their working practices on. Firstly, I will present what preventative measures are implemented today within the banks, and how the participant interprets these practices. Secondly, I will examine what preventative and working measures the investigators wish to implement in the future, illustrating how the bank is an organizationally controlled activity but where there are meanings in the investigators' sense-making.

6.2.1 Current preventative measures

The participants were asked how their preventative measures within the bank are designed today. All of the interviewees highlighted how they daily are working with their monitoring systems, where these systems show warning flags of potential frauds. Furthermore, all of the participants from the three different banks point out that their banks have information on their websites of how to avoid becoming a victim of fraud, and what warning signs there are for romance and investment fraud. Additionally, the participants highlighted that the banks perform educational/informational campaigns for the purpose of highlighting how a romance and investment fraud function, what the consequences of becoming a victim of fraud is, and in summary, these campaigns aim at functioning as preventative measures by raising public awareness of fraud. Some of the participants argue that they find these campaigns effective, due to it raising awareness of these frauds among the public. However, Chris illustrated a negative perspective of these campaigns:

> Chris: Information campaigns do not work. The customer that sees a generic "be cautious with frauds" banner, and three weeks after becomes socially manipulated, still makes the transfer. Awareness at the wrong occasion is useless.

Through narrative theory, the bank's information campaigns are understood as a preventative measure through introducing an alternative narrative of fraud. As Presser argues, individuals are understanding their environment through interpreting the meanings in narratives, which in turn guides their actions (Presser, 2018:67-68, 72). In this context, the information campaigns can be understood as a way for the banks to influence how potential victims interpret relations, risk and financial decisions before they become exposed to fraud. Therefore, the banks offer a narrative of fraud that hopefully can affect how their customers interpret situations that can be potential fraud. The quote from Chris is understood as he is very critical to the campaigns as he starts his expression by saying "Information campaigns do not work". This can be understood as the campaigns are failing to become integrated in the customers' meaning-making. As Presser (2018:9-10) highlights, people are acting upon the meanings that have been assigned to situations. Since the information campaigns are presented as general warnings of fraud, it risks becoming an external story, rather than that such narratives become integrated into one's everyday life. Based on Chris' expression "awareness at the wrong occasion is useless" can therefore illustrate how the bank's offered narrative is not experienced as relevant through a customer's own perspective. Similar to Chris, Sofie and John also described a negative perception of these campaigns:

> Sofie: [...] Unfortunately I do not think it is very effective because people are so wrapped up in their own. People think well I will not be exposed or this does not apply to me. You do not connect it to yourself in the same way, but you rather read it and then move on. [...]

> John: Unfortunately, I think many who go to these information campaigns are those who already are aware of the risk and who still would not have been scammed. Many are perceived as nonchalant, they think that they will not get scammed and then they go and get scammed and that is because they do not go for the information and do not really understand how frauds work. [...]

In the quotes from John and Sofie, it appears that they both uses the term "Unfortunaly", and they both align in their expression when they discuss how people think they will not be exposed to a fraud. The reasoning of them using the word "unfortunately" can be understood as they wish this preventative measure functioned in practice, but that they do not believe that it actually does so. Information campaigns are thus criticized by some of the participants, which highlights its limitations as a preventative measure. However, all of the participants highlight during the interviews that they are still trying to protect its customers through all of the above mentioned preventative measures, but that it can be hard to fulfill this task as the customers can show resistance in terms of questioning the purpose of the banks interfering in their affairs. This becomes particularly prominent in Sofie's quote:

Sofie: Customers are often like "What are the bank's interests?", "You question this or do not allow this just because you want me to keep the money with you". They try to twist it into "You are doing this for your own sake" [...]. Also, many customers feel a bit offended that we interfere in their business and their money, as they feel like I can do whatever I want with it. [...]

The investigators are highlighting how they experience resistance by the customers in relation to the bank's preventative measures, which can be understood as competing meaning-making narratives. Similarly to the analysis in theme 6.1 of the investigators' interpretations of a narrative conflict between them and the victims of what has happened in the situation, similar reasoning can be made in this context. The investigators have a narrative for their preventive measures, while they have a perception that customers have a narrative that is in opposition to the purpose of the bank's preventive measures. It appears in Sofie's quote she interprets the victims having an interpretation of the inference of the bank through a narrative that is positioning the bank as an actor with their own interest, rather than an actor that wants to protect them. Presser's notion regarding how narratives function as interpretive frameworks that makes individuals interpret situations (Presser, 2018:67-68,72) can thus be applied as Sofie interprets this situation as the customers understands the interference of the bank as something that stands in contrast to their own perception, whereas the narrative of the bank is given the customer an alternative meaning of their action and which legitimize their own resistance.

At the same time, since the investigators experience the customer having a different perception of the preventative measures in terms of it threatening the individual autonomy and being controlling, it shows how narrative can be interpreted differently by different actors and which guides their further actions since they are acting upon the meanings they have attributed to the situation (Presser, 2018:9-10). In this context, the investigators aim to protect the customer from becoming a victim of fraud, whereas, as the investigators understand it, the customer understands this intervention as offensive. In summary, preventative measures can risk loosening their action-directing effect if they do not align with the narrative through which customers are understood to interpret the bank's intentions. Given the challenges described above of the bank's preventative measures, the next section examines which preventative measures and working methods the investigators themselves think and wish will be implemented in the future.

6.2.2 Possible future measures

As a result of the investigators professional experiences, they have an interpretation of romance and investment fraud that has influenced their perception of what measures can be implemented to more effectively combat these types of fraud. Some of the participants noted the long processing times to investigate these cases due to the banking secrecy that prevails. The participants therefore wish to interact with other banks more easily, as a customer sometimes is a customer at another bank too. Lucas explains that if he has a customer that is a victim of this type of fraud, there is a risk the customer has made fraudulent transactions at that other bank too. He further says the investigation process would proceed faster if he had the knowledge of the other bank's interpretation of the situation. The problem of confidentiality the investigators work under is further illustrated in the following quote:

> Leah: [...] It is hard to have an open dialogue with the police and other banks. The confidentiality makes it difficult. This is not the bank's fault, it is due to Swedish law, but it absolutely limits my work and I wish it becomes easier to do so in the future.

In the quote from Leah, it becomes evident that the work is limited due to the confidentiality that prevails. However, she is highlighting it is not the bank's fault but rather the jurisdictions, which can be understood as she is defending her workplace instead of criticizing it, even though her everyday work is affected by this problem. Leah's expression reflects Presser's idea regarding how narratives are relied upon shared prototypes and does not emerge from thin air (Presser, 2018:4). She seeks institutional narrative intervention rather than individual narrative intervention, which can illustrate that the banks narrative can become more strengthened if they are all working together through shared prototypes (ibid). At this moment, Leah is working under circumstances that includes a shared prototype of confidentiality among the banks. However, if it became easier to have a more open dialogue among these social actors, a new shared prototype could be formed which can be understood as an institutional narrative that makes the investigators work more efficiently. Similar to Leah, Sofie does also highlight the problem of confidentiality and why a change of it could benefit the investigative practices:

> Sofie: I would like to have more open communication between the banks [...]. They are customers of one bank first and then they switch to another when they are no longer allowed to do things with us. So that information, that you can both take from other banks and inform other banks. For many customers, they often put a lot of blame on us, that it is we who do not want them to do things. But I think that if more banks deny it, maybe the person will somehow understand that it is not us at the bank who are "bad", but that they are exposed to fraud.

Sofie's experience of how the victims experience the bank as the ones who are "bad", illustrates how she understands the victim's interpretation of the situation in the sense that the victim experiences the bank's intervention as something that is controlling and limitative. Presser's idea of how narratives organize interpretations of events (Presser, 2018:10) can thus be applied. Since Sofie expresses how one can come to understand they are a victim of fraud if more banks deny their behaviour, it can be understood as she experiences the interpretation of the victim of the bank as being bad as something that is amplified if only her bank is the one that sets boundaries. As Presser argues, a coherence is formed in a story when connections are being drawn between narratives (Presser, 2018:68), which means that if the banks are working through a coherent narrative, thus that they are limiting the customer, it can through Sofie's perspective influence how the bank and the situation is interpreted by the victim. In turn, when such coherence is formed in the story, one's actions can be guided through the interpretation of the meanings of the narrative (Presser, 2018:1,9), which means that the victim can cease their participation in the fraud as he or she now has integrated the coherent story of the banks, based on Sofie's interpretation of the perspective of the victim.

The investigators' wishes of collaborating with other banks and to be able to have a more open information sharing can furthermore through narrative theory be understood as they seek to form a more coherent narrative of the victim's situation. As has been established earlier in this essay, narratives help us to understand how things fit together (Presser, 2018:67-68, 72). The participants highlighted how their customers can be a customer at another bank too and due to the banking secrecy, they are not allowed to have an open communication with the banks among themselves. The narrative of the overall picture of the situation therefore becomes affected, as the participants do not have access to the whole story, which can affect their interpretation of how the things fit together (ibid). As a result of banking secrecy, investigators are limited in their ability to take part in a larger narrative, which means that they have to act on a fragmented narrative that in turn can affect their ability to act more effectively. In summary, this shows that a change in the confidentiality the investigators are working under can result in a better collaboration among the banks, whereas a coherent narrative would be formed that strengthens the narrative intervention of the banks. Based on the perspectives of the participants, the formation of this working measure can therefore influence the investigative process and customers' meaning-making.

It appears during all interviews that the participants wish that their banks work more proactively. This proactive approach, they argue, aims to make their monitoring systems even sharper. The investigators highlight how digital developments enable methods for fraudsters to expose people to this type of fraud. The bank therefore needs to keep up with these developments at all times, the participants argue. Furthermore, an interesting finding in the material was that all participants began to reason about how the developments of AI will influence their work, and that the bank needs to have the tools to be able to handle cases with AI as an element at an early stage. The AI aspect is for example illustrated by the following participants:

> Victoria: I have thought about this with romance and a lot around AI and the technical development, it is going to make it easier for offenders and harder for us. It is easier to sell a believable image with fake voices, videos and pictures which they can then use to convince the customer. [...]

> Leah: I think that more and more will be done with the help of AI from the fraudster's side. It takes quite a lot of time for an offender to maintain contact as they do with a victim, both in romance and investment fraud. So I think it can go faster with the help of for instance AI, but I hope that the bank is at the forefront there too [...].

The participants' claim of how technical developments are enabling methods for fraudsters to exploit people, can through narrative theory be understood as it changes narrative possibilities. The participants are describing how the fraudsters' use of AI makes the fraud more credible as they are more convincing and hard to question. This can be understood through narrative theory (Presser, 2018:68) as the fraudsters are presenting a story that seems coherent, due to the victim interpreting the meanings of the actions by the fraudster as something that is genuine. Grounded in the participants' interpretations, AI is strengthening this story, which enables narrative possibilities for the offenders to use in order to make people victims of fraud. If a narrative is interpreted as meaningful and coherent, it becomes action-oriented (Presser, 2018:9), and the investigators' expression of the banks working more with proactive systems can be understood as them wanting to intervene in the situation before the narrative of the offenders becomes more established for the victims. By working more proactive, the investigators can perform interventions that possibly affect the actions of the victim, due to the victim being presented to an alternative narrative of the situation before it has escalated.

In summary, by examining the investigators current preventative measures and their interpretations of its effectiveness, the investigators have also presented their perception of how possible future measures could be implemented for more sufficiently combat romance and investment fraud. This illustrates that even though the bank is an organizationally controlled activity, which emerges when the investigators highlight their working methods, they are forming an interpretation of their working measures that is causing them to form a meaning-making process of how to more effectively develop methods that are combating romance and investment fraud. Once again, the analysis is built upon the investigators interpretation of the victim's meaning-making, and that interpretation is affecting how they imagine future preventative measures in the sense of changing institutional narrative rather than solely working with isolated measures.

7. Discussion

The aim of this thesis has been fulfilled and the research questions have been answered, since the study presents how fraud investigators within banks operate within romance and investment fraud in their everyday work, and how their interpretations of these frauds influence their investigative and preventative measures.

Regarding the research question: *How do fraud investigators strategically approach romance and investment fraud in their everyday work?,* the analysis of the material shows the following: the investigators are using communicative strategies during the verbal interaction with the victim, and these strategies have been analyzed as narrative interventions. The investigators let the customer present their perspective first of the situation, and they are then trying to intervene and reshape the narrative that they interpret are guiding the customers' action. The participants furthermore argue that the victims have become manipulated by a fraudster and due to this, they experience that the victims have a different perception of reality than themselves. As a result, the participants claim that they encounter resistance from the victims when they are trying to inform them that they are a victim of fraud. To avoid this, the investigators are trying to introduce an alternative narrative of the situation, thus avoiding direct confrontations. Through a narrative perspective, this is understood as they are trying to challenge the narrative's emotional and meaning-making structure, which they do through highlighting deviant patterns in the victim's story, and by having an open-approach to the story presented by the customer. Due to the investigators interpretation of a narrative conflict in this context, they argue how their preventative measures should be more proactive, as it allows them to interfere with the situation before the narrative of the offender becomes too established within the customers. These proactive measures, the participants argue, aim at making their monitoring systems sharper, having informational efforts and having a more sufficient collaboration with other social actors. By having these measures, the participants believe they can make the customer have a different interpretation of the situation and thus avoid becoming or continuing being a victim of fraud. Moreover, the investigators highlight how their current working strategies have limitations, in terms of the secrecy that prevails for information sharing between other banks. Hence, as they do not have access to other banks interpretations of the situation, and due to the participants interpreting the customer having a different perception of the situation than themselves, it becomes difficult to convince the customer that they are exposed to fraud.

Regarding the secondary research question: *How do their interpretations of these frauds shape their investigative and preventive practices?*, the analysis of the data illustrates the following: the investigators' interpretation of romance and investment fraud has formed a meaning-making process that has guided their further actions in the terms of their strategies for handling these frauds. Due to their previous professional experience which includes their experience of encountering resistance in the interaction with the customer, it causes the investigators to form a meaning-making process for their own working practices, which becomes evident when the participants are highlighting why they need more proactive preventative measures. Due to the participants' interpretation of there being a narrative conflict, it shapes their idea of what could be a more effective prevention, in terms of more collaboration with other social actors in which an institutional narrative intervention could be formed. This shows how the investigators wish to form a more coherent narrative. However, due to the investigators' interpretation of how these frauds emerge and what characterizes its victims, they have also shaped investigative practices based on this. An example of this is the communicational strategies they use in the interaction with the victims, as such strategies are needed in order to make the customer understand that they are being exploited. Moreover, even though the bank is an organizational controlled activity, the material shows how the participants are continuously in a meaning-making process, which illustrates that their interpretations of fraud and its victims also sets the ground for the work they perform.

In the perspective of previous research, there is a gap concerning how fraud investigators interpret these frauds and how that influences their practices. This thesis therefore contributes to previous research as it functions as a complement to this research gap. Regarding previous research and the findings of this study, there are different points of departure, as the previous research centers on the offenders and victims, where this thesis centers on the investigators' own interpretations of these frauds. Despite this difference in level of analysis, the material shows the investigators' way of understanding their customers and their own preventative practices is relatively well aligned with what previous research says. The participants highlighted how the offenders are presenting a fictional story to a victim, whereby a relationship is formed that builds on trust constructed over time on the basis of manipulation, where the customer later starts to send money. This interpretation of the participants can be compared to Whitty (2018:105) and Cross & Holt (2023:107) regarding how the fraudster misleads the victim into a relationship, and also to what Atkins & Huang (2013:23) and Norris & Brookes (2021:1) call social engineering, where the fraudster manipulates the victim into a relationship by exploiting the victim's vulnerabilities. The investigators further argued how they interpret the victims having a belief that the situation is legitimate as they have developed feelings of trust towards an offender, something that is also highlighted by Cross & Holt (2023:116), Whitty (2018:107) and Carter (2023:1417). Furthermore, the investigators showed an ambivalence towards informational campaigns, as some of them argued it to be an ineffective preventative measure. Such critique is comparable to Jensen et al. (2024:717) regarding how there is a lack of empirical evidence if such campaigns are working in practice. Taken together, one can understand it as the information by the investigators and the information from the previous research matches.

Through a broader social context, the results centering around the preventive work and the investigators interpretations of them, are of value since other social actors in society can learn and benefit from them in order to more effectively combat romance and investment fraud. For example, which have been demonstrated by the participants, they request suitable tools for handling cases with elements of AI, since they predict romance and investment fraud are to become more complex to investigate due to this technical development. From a broader context, this can be understood as the preventative work for combating fraud requires an adaptation in its practices, which includes enhanced competence in handling AI-enhanced fraud and a more proactive preventative approach.

Regarding the qualitative method for this thesis, it has functioned well in relation to its aim, as the perspectives of the investigators' have become highlighted. The investigators' statements often corresponded with each other, for instance when they presented their experiences of having a different perception of reality than the ones that the victims have, and how they are encountering resistance from the customer and which makes them apply communicative strategies. Due to the investigators being in alignment with this expression, it is reasonable to assume investigators working with the same type of cases as these are facing the same challenges, and are using the same type of strategies as those used by my participants. This may indicate that the findings are transferable to similar contexts (cf. Bryman, 2018:467-468). An alternative approach that could potentially increase the generalizability of the findings, would be to perform a quantitative study by sending out surveys to fraud investigators. Such an approach may increase generalizability due to a possible larger dataset. However, this was not aligned with the aim of this study, since the purpose was to explore how fraud investigators themselves interpret and operate within romance and investment fraud. Hence, I needed a methodological approach that allowed me to capture interpretations and meaning-making, making the qualitative method the most suited approach to apply. Despite the limited sample for this study, the sample is considered to be homogenous, due to the participants sharing the same professional role and experience of investigating romance and investment fraud at banks. Even though the material can be considered small, an empirical saturation has been experienced, as I experienced that I could answer my research question where it did not emerge any new information during the last interviews. Furthermore, as the focus centers on the investigators interpretations, narrative theory allowed an analysis to be carried out on the investigators' meaning-making and interpretation and how that understanding correlates with their actions, which is also the reason why the focus was not on the organizational factors, as the analysis needed to be delimited. In this sense, the organizational and structural factors were not analyzed in depth which delimited the results. Other theoretical frameworks focusing organizational perspectives could therefore function as a complement to this study. However, in the lens of this study's aim, this delimitation was perceived as reasonable.

For future research, it would be of interest to investigate the interaction between the investigators and the customers through an observation study. Since the narrative conflict between these two actors emerged as a prominent analytical finding in this thesis, performing such observation study could contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how that encounter appears in practice. Observational data could illuminate how meanings are negotiated in the given context, making investigators' practices of performing narrative interventions more prominent as they are enacted in real-time interactions. This is of relevance, since such interventions may appear differently in practice than how they are subsequently described in interviews.

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9. Appendices

The appendices were originally produced in Swedish and have been translated into english for the purpose of this essay.

Appendix 1- Information letter and consent form

I (Isabella) am a student at Lund University, studying the master's program in Cultural Criminology. I am currently writing my thesis, where I intend to investigate how fraud investigators within banks work strategically to handle romance and investment fraud in their daily work. Special focus is placed on how their understanding of these frauds shapes their investigative and preventive practice. The thesis and the program are issued in English, of which the research questions thus are:

- *How do fraud investigators strategically approach romance and investment fraud in their everyday work?*
    - *How do their interpretations of these frauds shape their investigative and preventive practices?*

To investigate this, I will use qualitative research interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the investigators' perspective on the subject. The purpose of the work is to investigate how the investigators' understanding of this type of fraud affects how they handle these cases. At the same time, this can shed light on how victims are received, and how the bank's preventive measures are designed. The results of my completed thesis can nuance the current research field, while it at the same time can contribute to other social actors in society improving their measures to combat financial crime.

I would like to interview you for my study since your insights are valuable to my work. The interview is expected to take between 20-40 minutes and can take place in any environment, but where physical interaction is preferable. I will adapt the location for the interview to where you feel safe, for example at your workplace or a booked group room at the university. Your participation is of course completely voluntary. If you agree, I will record the interview as an audio file and then transcribe it. In the interview and the final essay, you are completely anonymous and you have the right to discontinue your participation at any time without giving a reason.

The interview will be analyzed based on cultural criminological theories and previous research related to the topic, where the final essay will be presented to authorized actors. Individual individuals, names of workplaces and other information that could be traced back to you will be anonymized. The recorded material will therefore be treated completely confidentially and no outside parties will be able to access the material. Furthermore, the recording and transcription will be deleted when the thesis has been approved. The material will ultimately only be used for the purpose of this study. If you choose to participate in this study, you will be given a consent form to sign, either before the interview takes place or on site when the interview is conducted. I am available to answer questions via email or telephone.

With kindest regards,
Isabella Johnsson: [Contact details]

Consent form

- ☐ I have read and understood the information letter
- ☐ I give my consent to participate in the study
- ☐ I am aware of that participation is voluntary and can be disrupted at any time without giving cause, even if I sign this
- ☐ I give consent to record the interview and I am aware that the recording and transcription will be deleted after the project is finished

Date: ______________________________

Signature: ______________________________

Name clarification: ______________________________

Appendix 2- Interview guide

Interview guide: Fraud Investigators'

1. **Professional role and everyday work with invest-and romance**

- Can you start by briefly telling me about your role at the bank?
- How would you describe what romance fraud is, based on your professional experience?
- How would you describe what investment fraud is, based on your professional experience?
- Is there anything typical of this type of fraud?
    - Follow-up question: Are there any similarities or differences between these two forms of fraud?

2. **Strategies in the investigation and preventive work**

- How do you usually approach this type of fraud as an investigator?
- What is the first thing you usually do when you receive a case?
- Are there work strategies that recur in romance fraud?
- Are there work strategies that recur in investment fraud?
- How does the bank work preventively against romance and investment fraud?
- Are there any limitations within the bank that affect your ability to work?
- Are there things you have changed since you started working with this type of fraud?
    - Why then?
- How do you think this type of fraud will develop in the future?
- How do you think the bank's role in handling these frauds will develop in the future?

3. **Interpretations of the frauds**

- How would you describe the typical victim of these frauds?
    - What are they characterized by, what do they do?
- How does it feel to talk to these victims?
- Who do you think are the typical perpetrators of these frauds?
    - What are they characterized by, what do they do?
- Is there anything that makes these frauds particularly complex or difficult to investigate?

4. Interpretations of customers and the relationship with them

- What is important for you to know about the customer in order to handle the case?
    - How do you proceed based on that?
- Are there situations where the bank's and the customer's stories of what happened clash?
    - Is there anything recurring in these situations?

5. Closing

- Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not covered in previous questions?