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Examining Identity Theft: Empirical Explorations of the Offense and the Offender

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Abstract

Identity theft is an emerging crime area that has, in recent years, garnered increasing attention from the media. Much of that attention has tended to center on extreme cases of economic loss to victims and other long-term hardships suffered by victims in their attempts to recover their financial “good name” after their stolen identities are used to commit fraud. This article calls attention to the need to develop and conduct empirical research to provide a clearer and more comprehensive picture of common characteristics of the crime of identity theft and, also, of those who commit it. The article focuses on two particular studies (one using archival data, the other using interviews) that afford evidence-based insights into this crime area. It then discusses the policy implication value of how this type of offense-offender research can be integrated with victim research to enhance identity theft control.

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