

# Study Looks Inside the Minds of Identity Thieves

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The Federal Trade Commission recently asked a UT Dallas criminology researcher for help understanding what motivates identity thieves.

Dr. Lynne Vieraitis, an associate professor of criminology in the School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences, had interviewed federal inmates who have been incarcerated for identity theft and related crimes to better understand how these thieves operate.

She presented her findings at a recent FTC Fraud Forum in Washington, D.C.

Vieraitis joined Dr. Heith Copes, associate professor in the Department of Justice Sciences at the University of Alabama Birmingham, to conduct the research.

Her presentation for the FTC, “The Motivations and Lifestyles of Identity Thieves,” addressed why offenders engage in identity theft, the justifications they provide to avoid guilt and stigma, and their perceptions of the risks associated with their crimes.

The forum was designed to look at how the FTC can more efficiently guard consumers from fraudulent schemes.

The first day was open to the public as law enforcement, consumer advocates, business representatives and academics examined the extent

of fraud in the economy, the drivers, the segments of the population at greatest risk and best practices in industry.

On the second day of the forum, domestic and international law enforcement officials were invited to discuss strategies to improve interagency efforts in the battle against consumer fraud.

“It was a tremendous honor to be invited by the Federal Trade Commission to present our research on identity thieves. This forum provided an valuable opportunity for law enforcement, victim advocates, industry representatives and academics to meet and share information on fraudsters, their crimes, and their victims.”

Provided by University of Texas at Dallas

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