

College Students and Identity Theft: Do Parents Matter?

Laura Lucas, Eastern Illinois University¹
Axton Betz-Hamilton, Eastern Illinois University²

Abstract

At a mid-sized, Midwestern university, 159 college students participated in a survey that was designed to answer the following research questions: “Do parents’ perceptions of identity theft influence college students’ perceptions of identity theft?” and “Do parents’ identity theft prevention behaviors influence college students’ identity theft prevention behaviors?”

Identity theft prevention behaviors among college students have captured previous empirical attention (Milne, 2003; Winterdyk & Thompson, 2008), and consumers’ perceptions of identity theft have been previously studied as well (Betz, 2009). The potential influence of parents’ identity theft perceptions and identity theft prevention behaviors on college students’ identity theft perceptions and identity theft prevention behaviors has not been previously studied. It was expected that college students’ perceptions of identity theft and their identity theft prevention behaviors would be similar to that of their parents, as Bandura’s Social Learning Theory posits that we learn from watching others (Newman & Newman, 2007).

Bivariate regressions were employed to analyze the data. The results indicated that college students’ perceptions and behaviors regarding identity theft could be influenced by their parents’ perceptions and behaviors about identity theft.

While the findings of this study need to be interpreted with great caution in light of the limitations, implications for program development for parents as well as students are provided.

References

- Betz, A. (2009). The effects of demographics on consumer perceptions of identity theft in rural and urban settings. *Consumer Interests Annual*, 55, 9-27.
- Milne, G. R. (2003). How well do consumers protect themselves from identity theft? *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 37, 388-402.
- Newman, B. M. & Newman, P. R. (2007). *Theories of human development*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Winterdyk, J., & Thompson, N. (2008). Student and non-student perceptions and awareness of identity theft. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 50(2), 153-186.
doi:10.3138/cjccj50.2.153

¹ M.S. Student, School of Family and Consumer Sciences, Eastern Illinois University, 600 Lincoln Avenue, Charleston, IL 61920, USA. Email: lblucas88@gmail.com.

² Assistant Professor, School of Family and Consumer Sciences, Eastern Illinois University, 600 Lincoln Avenue, Charleston, IL 61920, USA. Phone: 309-338-9889. Email: aebetz@eiu.edu.