Victim Interview Guide

Preparatory Steps

1. Walk potential participant through the consent form

2. If approval obtained for recording, make sure to state the participant ID#, date, location, and type of interview on the recording before beginning the interview.

Background/Setting the Stage (20 minutes)

Thank you for your willingness to sit down with me for an interview. To give you a sense of what we will be discussing today, I am interested in learning about how you think about your personal information, your experiences with others misusing that information, and your efforts to cope with and fix any resulting problems. My approach is relatively open-ended. There are no right answers. I am most interested in hearing stories about your experiences. Before diving into the heart of the interview, I'd like to know a little bit more about you and your background.

1. Tell me a bit about your home life and family.
    a. Who is in your family?
    b. *[If partnered:]* What does your spouse or partner spend their time doing?

2. What does a typical day look like for you?
    a. What do you do for employment?

Today, I hear a lot of talk in the news or everyday conversations with people about "personal information" or "personal data."

3. What, if anything, do you consider personal data?

4. What does it mean to you for data to be "personal?"

As you know, my research focuses specifically on one issue that comes up in conversations about personal data: "identity theft." I have noticed that when people talk about identity theft, they often have very different understandings or definitions of identity theft.

5. What do you think of when you hear that term?
    a. How do you feel about that term?

Detection (10 minutes)
Now I'd like to hear about your early experience with identity theft.

6. How did you first learn or discover that you were the target of identity theft?
   [Prompt: Did you receive any postal, email, or phone messages or notifications?]
   [Prompt: Did you utilize any paid products or services for protecting or insuring your identity?]

7. How did you feel when you found out?

8. What did your identity theft involve?
   a. What data was taken?
      [Prompt: For example, your credit card number, Social Security Number, bank account number, etc.]
      [Prompt: Are there any other forms of data?]
   b. How was the data misused?
      [Prompt: For example, to take out a new credit card or loan]
      [Probe: Are there any ways your data was misused?]

Resolution (30 minutes)
Now I would like to talk about the steps you've taken since finding out about your case.

9. Can you walk me through the steps you've taken since finding out?
   a. How did you know or decide what to do?

   b. What resources or tools have you utilized?

   c. What organizations or agencies have you worked with?
      [If needing prompting, hand them the sheet listing organizations and agencies]
      i. Tell me about [*name of organization or agency*]'s involvement in the process.
      ii. What kinds of information or documentation did they require?
      iii. How did you convince them you had experienced identity theft?
      iv. In what ways did they help in the resolution of your case?
      v. In what ways did they make resolution difficult?

   d. What laws or legal considerations, if any, have proved most important to or useful in addressing your case?

10. What role did other people you know, such as your family, friends, or coworkers, play in addressing your identity theft?

11. Tell me about the current status of your case.
    a. Is it resolved, or are there issues you are still working to correct?
    b. *[If case resolved]* What does it mean to you that you have resolved your case?
        i. How do you feel now that you have resolved your case?
    c. *[If case unresolved]* What aspects of your case remain unresolved?
        i. How do you feel about your ongoing case?

Consequences (20 minutes)

12. How, if at all, has your experience of identity theft affected you?
    a. How did you manage things related to your job while resolving your case?
    b. Did your case affect your credit?
    c. Did it affect your access to loans, cards, or financial accounts?
    d. What about your legal standing?
    e. What about your physical, emotional, or psychological health, such as illness, anxiety, or trouble sleeping?

13. How do you think your case has affected others around you, such as family, friends, or coworkers?

14. Have your experiences with identity theft changed anything about how you think or live your life?
    a. What about how or when you share your personal data?
    b. What about your willingness to use or apply for credit?
    c. What about your willingness to bank or shop online?
    d. What about how you interact with other people, businesses, or government? Has it affected your ability to trust them?

15. A lot of companies offer paid products or services for monitoring, protecting, or insuring your identity.
    a. What do you think about those products or services?
    b. Have you considered purchasing any of them? Why or why not?

16. Have you considered placing a fraud alert or credit freeze? Why or why not?

Broader Implications (10 minutes)

Now I would love to talk about how the experiences we've discussed may have affected your broader views on personal data and identity theft.

17. How, if at all, has experiencing identity theft changed how you think about personal data?

18. What do you think of the expectations placed on you for resolving identity theft?
    a. Were they reasonable? Excessive?
    b. Should more or less have been expected of you? Why?

19. What, if anything, do you think businesses or government do well when it comes to resolving identity theft?
    a. What could they do better?

20. If you could give someone like yourself one piece of advice about resolving identity theft, what would it be? Why?

Final Statement (10 minutes)
Thank you so much for your time. This has been extremely helpful. My main goals for this interview were to understand:

- What steps you have taken to resolve your case(s) of identity theft.
- What your interactions with organizations and government agencies looked and felt like throughout that process.
- How your experience of identity theft has affected you and those around you financially, emotionally, behaviorally and any other ways.

Is there anything I should have asked you in relationship to these three themes or anything else that I didn't cover that you think is important for me to know?

Finally, if you know someone else who has experienced identity theft that you believe would be willing to participate and share their story, please feel free to share my information with them.

[*Give them business card*]

Likewise, if you have any questions or if you think of anything else you would like to share with me, don't hesitate to reach out to me at that information. Thank you so much!