1. Introduction: As you know, I’m working on my dissertation, and I’m interested in understanding how organizational culture influences the way succession planning works in companies. By succession planning, I mean, the process of “getting head,” or getting tapped for a higher position. I have some questions I’d like to ask in this first interview, and I’d like to tape record our conversation and take notes. Is that okay? Please turn–off the recorder anytime you’d like. Describe culture according to Sackmann’s model (including four levels) to ensure participant understanding of the term used.

2. Explanation of consent form: Before we begin, I have a consent form that I’d like to walk through with you. It explains what you’re agreeing to do by participating in this study. I may contact you for another follow–up interview and/or ask you to participate in a small focus group. I may also ask you to review the transcript of your interview and some of my initial explanations and conclusions. The consent form also explains that neither the company nor yourself will be identified in the study. I’m going to assign a pseudonym to you and all tapes, transcripts, and quotes will use that pseudonym. So, what you say will be confidential, and you will remain anonymous. (Participant accepts and reads consent form.) Are you ready to start? (Turn on recorder.)

3. General questions:
   a. If culture were like people, how would you describe this person?
   b. Tell me about your journey to become a manager/supervisor in (current functional unit) here. (Probe for previous work experience, professional background, tenure, etc.)
   c. What factors do you consider in candidates for promotion?
   d. What would you like to tell me about yourself and the reasons for your success thus far that others may not know?

4. Questions to solicit dictionary knowledge (what is) about succession planning:
   a. How would you describe what succession planning (or the process of getting ahead) is in general? (Probe for meaning, content, and use on specific terms used such as planning, written and verbal objectives, coaching, feedback, etc.)
   b. When does it start and when does it end? and When do people get tapped? Put in a pool? Describe these people. (probe for what is, not what should)
   c. How do you know when it’s working well? If you gave it a grade between 0 and 100, what grade would you give it? And why?

5. Questions to solicit directory knowledge (how things are done here) about succession planning:
a. How does succession planning work here? Can you walk me through what happens? (Probe for examples: development, duration, role of mgr & employee, tools used in selection, who makes decisions, what levels are chosen, etc.)
b. How did you learn about succession planning and what to do as a manager?
c. Tell me what you know about the succession of an admired CEO or Management committee member here. Don’t need to mention any names. Why did you pick him/her? Is this typical? Why not?
d. Tell me a story of a succession planning process which worked well and one that you feel did not work so well. You can include yourself or someone else and please do not reveal any names of those you do include. You may also choose to think of an example from a previous company employer. Why do you think it worked well? Why not so well?

6. Questions to solicit recipe knowledge (should/ought to be done) about succession planning:
   a. In the best of all worlds, what factors should be considered in the succession process and who should decide?
   b. If it was up to you to create a succession planning system, what one or two things would you want to be sure of?
   c. If I was a new manager, what advice would you give me about my role in the succession planning process? In this company?
   d. Can you tell me about a time succession planning (or ask about something participant mentioned) didn’t go as expected? What did you do?

7. Questions to solicit axiomatic knowledge (why things are) about succession planning:
   a. Research tells us that most succession plans are derived from ideals instilled by the founder of an organization. Other long-tenured top executives and board members can also influence the succession plan by recognizing values which are more relevant to leadership in more recent times. Which of the CEOs or executive leaders of this company do you think have influenced the succession planning process today the most? How? Why?
   b. Why do you think succession planning does/doesn’t work as you think it should? Are their rules that just can’t be broken?
   c. This company has seen a lot of change in recent years going from privately to publicly–held and with the acquisitions and diversification of other companies. Thinking back, are there any aspects of succession planning being done differently as a result (now or anticipated)? Why do you think that is?
   d. What do you think are the core values of this company which influence the decision–making the most?
   e. You described organizational culture as a person earlier in this interview. On a scale of 0 – 100, does succession planning today reflect the description you gave of this person? Why? How should it be changed? (Clarify culture definition as
the shared values and beliefs which drive decision-making and can be viewed as the “way things are done around here.”)