A CHECKLIST FOR A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

(Adapted from Bill Reimer 90/8/20 - with thanks to Joe Smucker)

1. THE PROBLEM

- Present a clear, brief statement of the problem.
- Describe the significance of the problem. This is often done with reference to one or more of the following criteria:
  - is timely
  - relates to a practical problem
  - relates to a wide population
  - relates to an influential or critical population
  - fills a research gap
  - permits generalization to broader principles of social interaction or general theory
  - sharpens the definition of an important concept or relationship
  - has many implications for a wide range of practical problems
  - may create or improve an instrument for observing and analyzing data.
  - provides opportunity for gathering data that is restricted by the limited time available for gathering particular data.
  - provides possibility for a fruitful exploration with known techniques.

2. THE RESEARCH QUESTION

- State the specific question you wish to answer.

3. PROPOSED ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION

- Describe what answers have been suggested in the literature.
- Add to the above, your own suggestions for answers.
- Briefly describe how various answers are related to particular theoretical framework(s).

4. RESEARCH PROPOSITION

- State a research proposition selected from or derived from section 3 above.
- Elaborate the theoretical framework for your proposition and show how it is related to the proposition.
- Define the main concepts.
- Clarify the nature of the relationship proposed.
- Indicate the significance of this proposition for the advancement of research and theory.

5. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

- Define the concepts from your research proposition in operational terms where necessary.
- State your research hypothesis.
- Identify independent and dependent variables, as well as any scales which might be used to identify them.
- Identify any serious problems in operationalizing your concepts.

6. RESEARCH DESIGN

- Describe the ideal design or designs with special attention to the control of interfering variables.
- Describe the compromises in the ideal design which you will make.
    - Describe procedures, subjects, environment and responses with the objects, events and properties necessary for their specification.
    - Describe how control of interfering variables is achieved.
    - Identify the units of analysis and points of focus used.
- Specify the statistical tests, if appropriate, including dummy tables for each test.

7. SAMPLING PROCEDURES

- Specify the population to which the hypotheses are relevant.
- Explain the determination of the size and type of sample.
- Specify the method of drawing or selecting the sample.
- Specify the relative importance of Type I and Type II errors.
- Estimate the relative costs of the various sizes and types of samples allowed by the theory.

8. METHODS OF GATHERING THE DATA

- Include the following in description of your procedure if appropriate.
    - Means of obtaining information, i.e. by observation, available sources, interview, field research, conducting experiments or other means.
    - Particular characteristics interviewers or other data collectors must have or special training that must be given to them.
- Describe the measures of quantitative variables showing reliability and validity when these are known. Describe the means of identifying qualitative variables.
- Include the following in description of questionnaires or interview schedules, if these are used.
    - Approximate number of questions to be asked of each respondent.
    - Approximate time needed for interview.
    - The schedule as it has been constructed to this time.
    - Preliminary testing of interview and results.
- Describe the use made of pilot study, pretest, or trial run.
- Indicate the importance of and means for coping with unavailables, refusals and response error.

9. WORKING GUIDE

- Prepare working guide with time and budget estimates. Refer to:
    - Planning
    - Pilot study and pretest
    - Drawing sample
    - Preparing observational materials
    - Selection and training
    - Trial plan
    - Revising plans
    - Collecting data
    - Processing data
    - Preparing final report
- Estimate total hours and cost.

10. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

- Specify method of analysis.
    - use of analytic induction, multivariate analysis, ideal types, ethnomethodological techniques, content analysis, etc.
    - use of computer, etc.
    - use of graphic techniques
    - specify type of tables to be constructed.

11. INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

- Discuss how conclusions will be related to the original theoretical framework and problem. In doing so, outline the logic used and the conclusions which you will draw depending on different outcomes of the results.