

This Week's Citation Classic

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Kaplan A. *The conduct of inquiry: methodology for behavioral science.*
San Francisco, CA: Chandler, 1964. 428 p.
[University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI]

Methodology for the behavioral sciences is not essentially different from that for other sciences. The task is not more closely to imitate physics or any other science but to do better what the behavioral sciences now do. The 'hard' and 'soft' styles need not strive to replace, but rather to improve, one another. [The *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI™) indicates that this book has been cited over 740 times since 1966.]

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"This book was written chiefly at the Center for Advanced Study at Wesleyan University (Connecticut). It was prompted by my distress at the outcome of the logical positivist tradition in which I had been trained. Though the philosophy championed science and scientific method, in practice its logic made for sterility and its positivism for superficiality.

"The philosophy was at fault because of its remoteness from actual scientific practice. It analysed such 'scientific generalizations' as 'all crows are black' and debated whether the belief was justified that the sun will rise tomorrow. My undergraduate major in laboratory chemistry, a hobby of observational

astronomy, and a long interest in the history of science made me sympathetic to a more realistic pragmatism—for instance, in the spirit, if not in the conceptual structure, of John Dewey's *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*,¹ the title I consciously echoed.

"The book has been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and Hebrew; various sections and whole chapters have been reprinted in a half-dozen collections —of social science rather than of philosophy. I take this to be relevant to the frequency of its citation: I have tried to replace the judgmental posture of many philosophers of science by critical analysis in a more accepting vein.

"Acceptance has not prevented me from identifying common shortcomings, like 'the law of the instrument' (give a small boy a hammer and he will find that everything he runs into needs pounding) and 'the drunkard's search' (he hunts for his door key not where he dropped it but under the street-lamp, because it's lighter there).

"Formal requirements can be discerned only in substantive contents. Some of these contents were familiar to me because of personal association over the years with a variety of behavioral scientists. Some years spent consulting for the mathematics division of the Rand Corporation preserved and sharpened a sense of the power of abstraction as well as the importance of concreta.

"Science is not merely a set of propositions; it is the work of scientists and is localized in their belief in these propositions. Its growth depends above all on their belief in the worth of what they are doing. Behavioral scientists have good reason for such a belief."

1. Dewey J. *Logic: the theory of inquiry.* New York: H. Holt, 1938. 546 p.