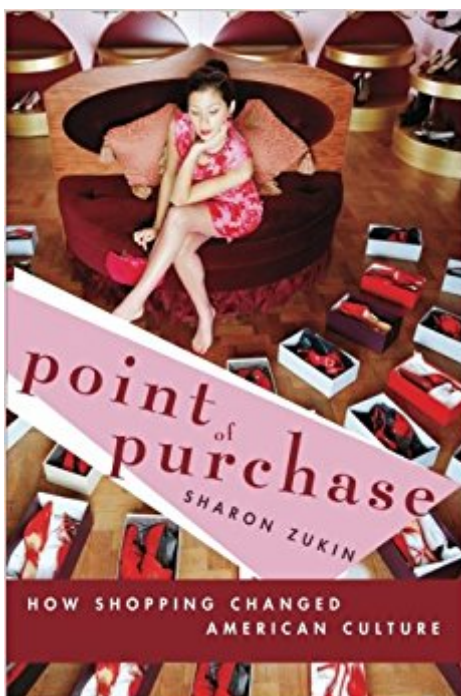


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# Point Of Purchase: How Shopping Changed American Culture



## Synopsis

This accessible, smart, and expansive book on shopping's impact on American life is in part historical, stretching back to the mid-19th century, yet also has a contemporary focus, with material on recent trends in shopping from the internet to Zagat's guides. Drawing inspiration from both Pierre Bourdieu's work and Walter Benjamin's seminal essay on the shopping arcades of 19th-century Paris, Zukin explores the forces that have made shopping so central to our lives: the rise of consumer culture, the never-ending quest for better value, and shopping's ability to help us improve our social status and attain new social identities.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

'We shop therefore we are' seems to be the conclusion of this homage to the great American pastime. Rather than pass judgment on our shopping compulsion, Zukin, an endowed chair of sociology at the City University of New York, provides a historical and analytical context to help readers understand how shopping has affected public and private life from the mid-19th century to today. Zukin's 1995 book, *The Cultures of Cities*, described her experiences growing up in one of Philadelphia's retail neighborhoods and examined how other shopping districts, like 125th Street in Harlem and Fulton Street in Brooklyn, had gone through significant racial changes. Here she dissects shopping culture at large, from eBay and the Internet to the death of Woolworth's and the birth of WalMart. Well researched and thorough, the book unearths how and where we shop and, more importantly, why consumer culture has so much power over us. Zukin examines these issues by analyzing both particular individuals' experiences-such as a young woman's search for the

perfect pair of leather pants-and retailers' shifts in business strategies. For many people, Zukin writes, shopping isn't simply a transaction, but an experience: "We dream of shopping for beauty, truth and perfection, and if we do not shop for a perfect society, at least we shop for a perfect self." She believes that the noblest aspect of shopping is finding a community, a discovery that usually happens at a place like a farmer's market or a neighborhood store, where interaction among customers is fostered. Rallying for these public spaces rather than buying things, she argues, should be what we use shopping to achieve. Though this book is more likely to appeal to specialists than to general readers, Zukin's lively prose and vivid anecdotes may win her a larger audience. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Sharon Zukin avoids clichés, never ducks an argument, and digs out unfamiliar facts. The result is a brilliant and unsettling essay." - Richard Sennett, London School of Economics

I got this for one of my classes for school. It had a lot of highlighting in a lot of different colors. It arrived very quickly. I have enjoyed reading it so far.

Zukin rocks!

I love shopping so I want to know what does shopping and the economy have to do with it. Therefore, I bought the book to see what it is about.

In *Point of Purchase*, author Sharon Zukin explores why we shop and how it affects us, individually and as a society. She looks at the history of shopping, from a brief look at ancient Roman olive oil shops in Pompeii to a more elaborate history of department stores in New York. All that is interesting, but I found the sections on current shopping the most intriguing. Zukin explores superstores and warehouse stores, then moves on to internet shopping. She discusses .com and eBay, even examining the merits of allowing customers to review the products for sale. It seems all reviews are good for sales, even negative reviews, since anything that keeps you on the site yields more sales. One of the most gripping sections of *Point of Purchase* is the interview with a young Hispanic New Yorker who describes his venture into Tiffany's to buy his girlfriend an expensive gift. The interactions between him and the security guards, the sales clerks, the other customers, as well as the way he tells his story and the way the interviewer retells it are material for an entire article or

book itself.

Such an aspiring read. I can't put the book down once I opened the chapter on critics and consumer reviews and quickly sprawled my way through the preceding and following chapters. Be it scholarly review, news clip montage, personal story, or uncanny anecdotes, the book is intellectual, breezy, accessible...and so much more on the subject. One thing I have to point out. Despite of my faith in the quality and entertainment value of the writing style at my first few attempts I couldn't pass through the beginning few pages. Now it seems all clear that the story is more or less weighed down by much relevant yet also dated information by diving in history of shopping culture in America. For the sake of gripping my short span attention I do wish the author would reorganize the chapters and stuff this bit of information at a less elevated position of the book. A book of great value without imposing or forcing the author's viewpoint at any level. A worthy Saturday night spent staying in with a chic & intimate cultural scroll spreading on my laps.

New in paperwork is an excellent social history, Sharon Zukin's *Point Of Purchase: How Shopping Changed American Culture*. Zukin is Brooklyn College Professor of sociology at Brooklyn College and City University of New York: her background in cities and culture lends well to an analysis of shopping as the American dream ideal, tracing the history of American shopping from mid-19th century to modern shopping trends. A fascinating social history evolves.

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