



# Shooters: Myths and Realities of Americas Gun Cultures

*Abigail A. Kohn*

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In the white-hot debate over guns and gun control in America, there is one fact on which both sides in this increasingly polarized conflict can agree: Americans love their guns. 73 million Americans own guns. This translates to 1 gun owner out of every 4 citizens, many of whom, to account for the 250 million weapons currently in circulation, own several. While these facts are undisputed, a related but different question is endlessly contested: why do Americans so love their guns? Broadly speaking, what exactly is the appeal of the gun? In this important work, Abigail Kohn immerses herself in the world of shooters. Emphasizing that not all owners are necessarily enthusiasts, Kohn dispenses with the knee-jerk dogma and rhetoric that has too often passed for reportage to travel directly to the heart of American gun culture. Frequenting gun shops and shooting ranges, and devoting particular attention to those whose interest in weaponry extends beyond the casual, she captures in finegrained and often entertaining, yet always humane, detail how gun owners actually think and feel about their guns. Through her conversations--with cowboy action shooters at a regional match, sport shooters, hunters, with shooters of all ages and races--we hear of the savage beauty of a beautifully crafted long gun, of the powerful historical import owners attach to their guns, of the sense of empowerment that comes with shooting skill, and the visceral thrill of discharging a dangerous weapon. Kohn convincingly brings out the myths, norms, and beliefs of gun ownership, stressing how values such as individualism, toughness, and liberty are intricately linked with the gun and exploring how these core values connect pro-gun ideology to wider cultural and political concerns. Cutting through the cliches that link gun ownership with violent, criminal subcultures and portray shooters as gun nuts or potential terrorists, Abigail Kohn provides us with a lively and untainted portrait of American gun enthusiasts.

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