

## Book reviews

Reviewer [Maria Jicheva](#), SIETAR Europa President  
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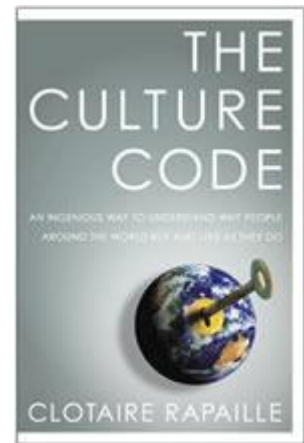
Author Clotaire Rapaille

Title The Culture Code

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Why are people around the world so very different? What makes us live, buy, even love the way we do? These questions may be exciting for a reader unburdened by intercultural theories, however they seem trivial to the intercultural specialist. We have so many tools to analyse cultural differences that it is hard to be surprised with anything new. This is the reason why I started reading Clotaire Rapaille's *The Culture Code* with a high level of scepticism. One more book on culture code...

I wouldn't be writing this review if the book was not a very positive surprise. The book offers not only insights into cultural differences but at the same time reveals the methodology used by the anthropologist and marketing guru Clotaire Rapaille for "cracking" the cultures codes of key concepts in our lives.

Having grown up in France and moved to the US later in his life (however being very clear about his American identity) has allowed Dr Rapaille to focus on American values and find answers to some tough questions: Why are Americans so often disillusioned by love? Why is fat a solution rather than a problem? Why do they reject the notion of perfection? Why is fast food such an integral part of American life? You can find all these answers through the culture code.

American culture is analysed in depth and with a sense of warmth. The very dedication of the book sets the tone: "This book is dedicated to the GI who gave me chocolate and chewing gum on top of his tank two weeks after D-Day... and changed my life for ever." It is refreshing in a time when the USA is losing its popularity because of war in Iraq to read a book predominantly focused on American culture, written with not only deep understanding, but a genuine affection. By somebody who sounds and looks flamboyantly French.

At the same time it would be unfair to say that the book is only about the Americans. Together with the outsider's view of the US (the British code is UNASHAMEDLY ABUNDANT; The German code – JOHN WAYNE and the French code - A SPACE TRAVELLER Clotaire Rapaille offers the codes these countries have for themselves: the

French code for France is IDEA, the English code for England is CLASS, the German code for Germany is ORDER.

You may agree or disagree with the analysis and the methodology used, you may like or dislike the approach; one thing I would venture to guess is that you would not be bored or feel a lack of intellectual stimulation. Try it for yourself.