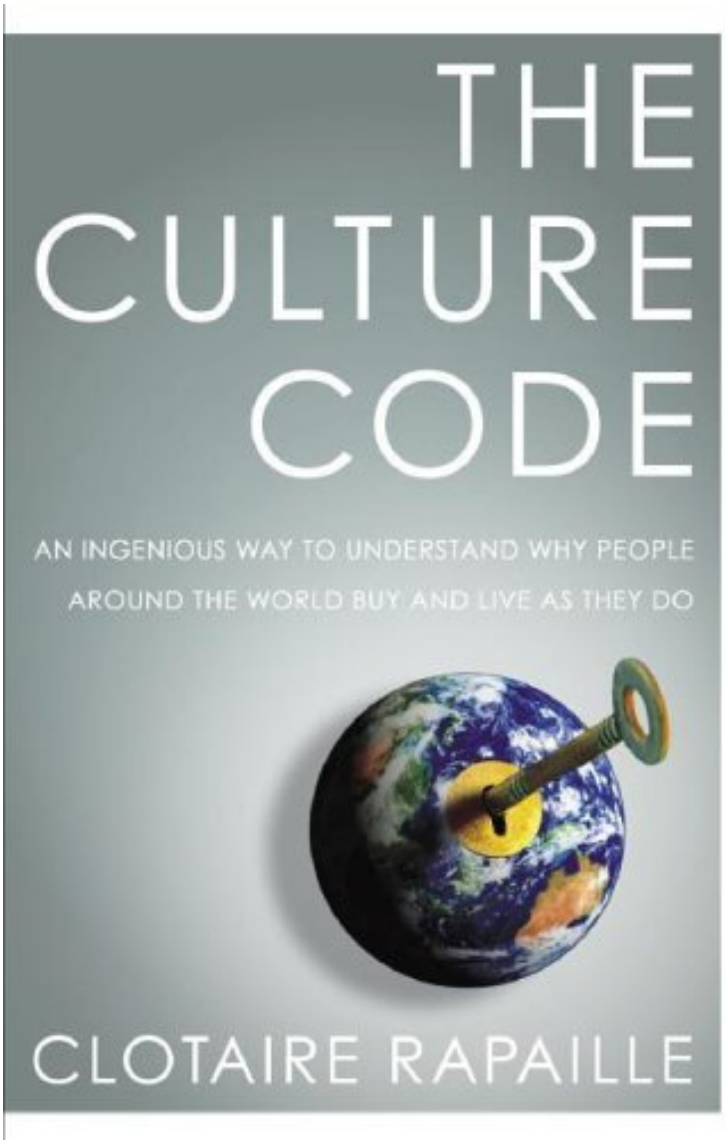
The Culture Code: An Ingenious Way to Understand Why People Around the World Live and Buy as They Do



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Par Clotaire Rapaille : The Culture Code: An Ingenious Way to Understand Why People Around the World Live and Buy as They Do before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Culture Code: An Ingenious Way to Understand Why People Around the World Live and Buy as They Do:

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWhy are people around the world so very different? What makes us live, buy, even love as we do? The answers are in the codes.In The Culture Code, internationally revered cultural anthropologist and marketing expert Clotaire Rapaille reveals for the first time the techniques he has used to improve profitability and practices for dozens of Fortune 100 companies. His groundbreaking revelations

shed light not just on business but on the way every human being acts and lives around the world. Rapailles breakthrough notion is that we acquire a silent system of codes as we grow up within our culture. These codesthe Culture Codeare what make us American, or German, or French, and they invisibly shape how we behave in our personal lives, even when we are completely unaware of our motives. Whats more, we can learn to crack the codes that guide our actions and achieve new understanding of why we do the things we do. Rapaille has used the Culture Code to help Chrysler build the PT Cruiserthe most successful American car launch in recent memory. He has used it to help Procter Gamble design its advertising campaign for Folgers coffee one of the longest lasting and most successful campaigns in the annals of advertising. He has used it to help companies as diverse as GE, ATT, Boeing, Honda, Kellogg, and LOral improve their bottom line at home and overseas. And now, in The Culture Code, he uses it to reveal why Americans act distinctly like Americans, and what makes us different from the world around us. In The Culture Code, Dr. Rapaille decodes two dozen of our most fundamental archetypesranging from sex to money to health to America itselfto give us a new set of glasses with which to view our actions and motivations. Why are we so often disillusioned by love? Why is fat a solution rather than a problem? Why do we reject the notion of perfection? Why is fast food in our lives to stay? The answers are in the Codes. Understanding the Codes gives us unprecedented freedom over our lives. It lets us do business in dramatically new ways. And it finally explains why people around the world really are different, and reveals the hidden clues to understanding us all.ExtraitFrom the Introduction to The Culture CodeThe Culture Code is the unconscious meaning we apply to any given thing a car, a type of food, a relationship, even a country via the culture in which we are raised. The American experience with Jeeps is very different from the French and German experience because our cultures evolved differently (we have strong cultural memories of the open frontier; the French and Germans have strong cultural memories of occupation and war). Therefore, the Codes the meaning we give to the Jeep at an unconscious level are different as well. The reasons for this are numerous (and I will describe them in the next chapter), but it all comes down to the worlds in which we grew up. It is obvious to everyone that cultures are different from one another. What most people dont realize, however, is that these differences actually lead to our processing the same information in different ways. My journey toward the discovery of cultural codes began in the early 1970s. I was a psychoanalyst in Paris at the time, and my clinical work brought me to the research of the great scientist Henri Laborit, who drew a clear connection between learning and emotion, showing that without the latter the former was impossible. The stronger the emotion, the more clearly an experience is learned. Think of a child told by his parents to avoid a hot pan on a stove. This concept is abstract to the child until he reaches out, touches the pan, and it burns him. In this intensely emotional moment of pain, the child learns what hot and burn means and is very unlikely ever to forget it.The combination of the experience and its accompanying emotion create something known widely (and coined as such by Konrad Lorenz) as an imprint. Once an imprint occurs, it strongly conditions our thought processes and shapes our future actions. Each imprint helps make us more of who we are. The combination of these imprints defines us. One of my most memorable personal imprints came when I was a young boy. I grew up in France, and when I was about four years old, my family received an invitation to a wedding. Id never been to one before and I had no idea what to expect. What I encountered was remarkable. French weddings are unlike weddings in any other culture I know. The event went on for two days, nearly all of which was spent around a large communal table. People stood at the table to offer toasts. They stood on the table to sing songs. They slept under the table and (as I later learned) even seduced one another under the table. Food was always available. People drank le trou Normand, a glass of Calvados that allowed them to make room for more food. Others simply went to the bathroom to vomit so they could eat more. It was an amazing thing to see as a child and it left a permanent imprint on me. Forever more, I would always associate weddings with gustatory excess. In fact, the first time I went to a wedding in America, I was taken aback by how sedate it was in comparison. Recently, when I remarried, my wife (who also grew up in France) and I held the kind of multi-day feast that meant wedding to both of us. Every imprint influences us on an unconscious level. When the work of Laborit crystallized this for me, I began to incorporate what I learned from him into my clinical work in Paris, most of which was being done with autistic children (in fact, Laborit led me to the theory that autistic children do not learn effectively because they lack the emotion to do so). The subject of imprinting also formed the foundation of the lectures I gave during this time. After one particular lecture at Geneva University, the father of a student approached me.Dr. Rapaille, I might have a client for you, he said.Always intrigued at the possibilities offered by another case, I nodded with interest. An autistic child?No, he said, smiling, Nestl. At the time, focused on clinical and

scholarly work, I barely understood what the word marketing meant. I therefore couldnt possibly imagine what use I would be to a corporation. Nestl? What can I do for them? We are trying to sell instant coffee in Japan, but we arent having as much success as we would like. Your work on imprints might be very helpful to us.We continued to talk and the man made me an extremely attractive offer. Not only were the financial terms considerable, but there was something promising about a project like this. Unlike my work with autistic children, where progress was painfully slow, this offer was a chance to quickly test theories I had developed about imprinting and the unconscious mind. It was an opportunity too good to pass up. I took a sabbatical and went off on my new assignment.My first meeting with Nestl executives and their Japanese advertising agency was very instructive. Their strategy, which today seems absurdly wrong but wasnt as clear-cut in the 70s, was to try to convince Japanese consumers to switch from tea to coffee. Having spent some time in Japan previously, I knew that tea meant a great deal to this culture, but I had no sense of what emotions they attached to coffee. I decided to gather several groups of people together to discover how they imprinted the beverage. I believed there was a message there that could open a door for Nestl.I structured a three-hour session with each of the groups. In the first hour, I took on the persona of a visitor from another planet, someone who had never seen coffee before and had no idea how one used it. I asked for help understanding the product, believing their descriptions would give me insight into what they thought of it. In the next hour, I had them sit on the floor like elementary school children and use scissors and a pile of magazines to make a collage of words about coffee. The goal here was to get them to tell me stories with these words that would offer me further clues. In the third hour, I had participants lie on the floor with pillows. There was some hesitation among members of every group, but I convinced them I wasnt entirely out of my mind. I put on soothing music and asked the participants to relax. What I was doing was calming their active brain waves, getting them to that tranquil point just before sleep. When they reached this state, I took them on a journey back from their adulthood, past their teenage years, to a time when they were very young. Once they arrived, I asked them to think again about coffee and to recall their earliest memory of it, the first time they consciously experienced it and, if it was different, their most significant memory of it.I designed this process to bring participants back to their first imprint of coffee and the emotion attached to it. In most cases, though, the journey led nowhere. What this signified for Nestl was very clear. While the Japanese had an extremely strong emotional connection to tea (something I learned without asking in the first hour of the sessions), they had at the most a very superficial imprint of coffee. Most, in fact, had no imprint of coffee at all. Under these circumstances, Nestls strategy of getting these consumers to switch from tea to coffee could only fail. Coffee could not compete with tea in the Japanese culture if it had such weak emotional resonance. Instead, if Nestl was going to have any success in this market at all, they needed to start at the beginning. They needed to give the product meaning in this culture. They needed to create an imprint for coffee for the Japanese.Armed with this information, Nestl devised a new strategy. Rather than selling instant coffee to a country dedicated to tea, they created desserts for children infused with the flavor of coffee but without the caffeine. The younger generation embraced these desserts. Their first imprint of coffee was a very positive one, one they would carry throughout their lives. Through this, Nestl gained a meaningful foothold in the Japanese market. Understanding the process of imprinting and how it related directly to Nestls marketing efforts unlocked a door to the Japanese culture for them and turned around a floundering business venture. It did something much more important for me, however. The realization that there was no significant imprint for coffee in Japan underscored for me that early imprinting has a tremendous impact on why people do what they do. In addition, the fact that the Japanese did not have a strong imprint for coffee while the Swiss (Nestl is a Swiss company) obviously did made it clear that imprints vary from culture to culture. If I could get to the source of these imprints if I could somehow decode elements of culture to discover the emotions and meanings attached to them I would learn a great deal about human behavior and how it varies across the planet. This set me on the course of my lifes work. I went off in search of the codes hidden within the unconscious of every culture.From Chapter Two: The Growing Pains of an Adolescent Culture: The Codes for Love, Seduction and SexAs you will learn throughout this book, the American culture exhibits many of the traits consistent with adolescence: intense focus on the now, dramatic mood swings, constant need for exploration and challenge to authority, a fascination with extremes, openness to change and reinvention, and a strong belief that mistakes warrant second chances. As Americans, we feel we know more than our elders do (for instance, we rarely consult France, Germany, Russia, or England on our foreign policy), that their answers are out of date (we pay little heed to the opinions of these cultures when it comes to global matters), and that we must reject their lessons

and re-make the world (few of us including many of our leaders are students of world history, choosing to make our own mistakes rather than learning from the mistakes these other cultures have already made). Like all adolescents, we are preoccupied with love, seduction, and sex. We are not unique in this regard. People in many cultures throughout the world are fascinated with these things perhaps more so than anything else. After all, as human beings, we need sex at the very least to ensure the continuation of our species. The unconscious attitudes we Americans hold about these matters, however, are unique and very much related to our cultural adolescence.Adolescence is a time of confusion and contradictions. New discoveries are promising one day and disappointing the next. Dreams sprout, flower, and wilt as quickly as daffodils in the spring. Certainties become uncertainties in the blink of an eye. This is as true with adolescent cultures as it is with adolescent children and never is it clearer than in the Codes revealed in this chapter. Some of you will find the following pages disturbing. Some of you will insist that you dont see yourself in these Codes in any way. (You might even be right about that. Of course, every individual is different, as he or she is also governed by his or her individual unconscious.) The revelation of the following Codes might be upsetting to you, but please remember that Codes are value-neutral. The Codes themselves do not pass judgment on a particular culture. The American Codes simply reflect our cultural adolescence. This is very good and empowering in many cases, as you will see in subsequent chapters, and explains why we are the best in the world at many things and why we have been such innovators and reformers. If one were to compile a list of things at which the American culture excels, however, love, seduction, and sex would not be on that list. You know this already. After all, when we consider someone a great ladies man, we might call him a Don Juan or a Casanova. We will never, however, call him a Joe Smith. The function of the new set of glasses provided by the Culture Code is to show us why we do the things we do:Why are American women so concerned with finding Mr. Right?Why does the FCC frown on (and even prosecute) televising a woman breastfeeding, but allow the exhibition of fictionalized bloodbaths during network Prime Time?Why are American women offended when construction workers whistle at them in New York but flattered when a man does the same in Milan?The answers are in the Codes.Whats love got to do with it?I held imprinting sessions all over the country searching for the Code for love. During these sessions, I asked participants to focus on the word love without specifying whether I meant romantic love, parental love, sibling love, love of country, love of pets, or even love of a sports team. When I guided participants back to their first imprint though, a vast majority of them went to the same place.My first experience with the word love, or related to love, was when I was four or five. In the kitchen, mother was preparing a cake, my favorite cake, a cheesecake. The smell was the smell of love. She opened the oven and I told her, I love you! She closed the oven, came to give me a kiss, and told me, I love you, too. Then she gave me a big portion of the cake and I knew she really meant it when she said, I love you.-- 40-year-old manMother loved us so much, she cooked all Thanksgiving day. She was so happy to see her family all together again, around the table, eatingso much love around the table, so much food. We could not stop eating.-- 36-year-old womanWhen you are little, parents are there to care for and protect you. You have no care or worries. If something bad happens, your family is there for you. I miss this protection.-- 58-year-old womanThe best way to describe my parents room is a nest. The carpet was light brown and the walls were blue. The bed was in the center of the room and had a huge white comforter. It was on this bed that I sat with my mother as a child and asked her about the world.-- 21-year-old manI remember lying in my mothers lap in my early years. I remember talking with my mother and sharing caresses.-- 65-year-old manConsistently, participants related their first experience of love to their mothers care feeding them, holding them, making them feel safe. This is entirely understandable. After all, for nine months, our mothers provide us with the most perfect resort hotel imaginable. The room service is first-rate and available immediately upon demand, the space is neither too hot nor too cold, transportation is free, and theres even a musical backdrop (her heartbeat) for entertainment. And even though we ultimately must leave this vacation paradise, our mothers are there for us to guide us through the transition, feeding us with their bodies, keeping us coddled and warm, taking us out to see the world, and providing numerous ways for us to occupy our time and delight in the act of learning. The nature of these responses was very consistent with the thinking of an adolescent culture. Adolescents, after all, flit from pressing for independence to acting like children throughout this period of their lives. When in the latter mode, they seek the succor (inwardly if not outwardly) of their mothers, the safe harbor provided by that all-encompassing love. Then there is the former mode, the mode that demands a rejection of home and the right to make ones own mistakes. When I asked participants to recall their most powerful memories of love, different stories emerged.I went to college. I was so happy. Free at last. But it did not go so well. First

time I started drinking, I could not stop. Then I dont know what happened next, I was so sick. None of the boys who were after me the night before were there to help me.-- 50-year-old womanI was 13 and I liked a boy but he liked someone else. This taught me a big lesson because I thought that I was prettier than her and she was fat, but I was spoiled and sometimes mean. -- 24-year-old womanMy most powerful experience is when my parents decided to separate. I found out eavesdropping on their discussions late at night. Things were tense, but everyone wanted to be normal.-- 37-year-old manI have an image of a white beautiful horse and a blonde beautiful woman in a flowing crepe-like dress with a lush green forest and waterfall and a handsome man meeting and embracing her. I long to be that woman.-- 38-year-old womanThis was a different component of the adolescent experience: the part where experimentation leads to exhilaration and disappointment, to success and failure. The vast majority of these stories expressed some level of discomfort, of uneasiness with the events described, much in the way an adolescent describes experiences he doesnt like and doesnt understand. Remember, these stories were about the most powerful memory of love.Perhaps the most significant element of the adolescent experience, however, is the loss of innocence. There comes a point in every adolescents life when he realizes his ideals arent as gilded as they once seemed. This realization usually leads to new maturity and the acquisition of new coping tools. It also often comes, though, with a sense of disillusionment. When participants wrote of their most recent memory of love, they repeatedly told the story of lost ideals.I know what boys want. They say they love you, but I know what they want.-- A 35-year-old womanI have three children from three different fathers who died in drive-by shootings. Before I die, I want once again to have a baby, to feed him, to love him, and to be loved unconditionally.-- A 15-year old womanI purchased a diamond for my girlfriend. I recall her taking it off in the car while we were arguing and I became infuriated. I took the ring and threw it out the window. I told her since it meant so little to her I threw it away.-- 31-year-old manThese three sets of stories the first imprint, the most powerful memory, and the most recent memory revealed a distinctly American pattern. Participants spoke repeatedly about the desire for love, the need for love, the belief in something called True Love, but they also spoke consistently about being disappointed in this quest. A very large percentage of the most recent memory stories spoke of loss, bitterness, and sadness. When it comes to love, Americans regardless of their ages view love the way an adolescent views the world: as an exciting dream that rarely reaches fulfillment.The American Culture Code for love is FALSE EXPECTATION.Without question, losing at love is an international experience. Even in cultures where marriages are arranged and courtship is rare, there are tales of forbidden love and the sad consequences when that love dies. In older cultures, though ones that passed through adolescence centuries ago the unconscious message about the expectations for love are very different. In France, the concepts of love and pleasure are intertwined. The French consider the notions of true love and Mr. Right irrelevant. The refinement of pleasure is paramount and romance is a highly sophisticated process. Love means helping your partner achieve as much pleasure as possible, even if this requires finding someone else to provide some of this pleasure. French couples can of course be devoted to one another, but their definition of devotion differs greatly from the American definition (fidelity, for instance, is not paramount) and their expectations are set accordingly. The Italians believe that life is a comedy rather than a tragedy and that one should laugh whenever possible. They expect love to contain strong dimensions of pleasure, beauty, and, above all, fun. If love becomes too dramatic or too hard, it is unsatisfying. The Italian culture centers very strongly on family and Italians put their mothers up on pedestals. To them, true love is maternal love. Therefore, their expectations for romantic love are lower. Men romance women, but seek true love from their mothers. Women believe that the best way to express and experience love is by becoming mothers. A man is Mr. Right as long as he provides a child.The Japanese offer perhaps the best illustration of the differences in attitudes toward love between an adolescent culture and an older culture. Japanese men and women often ask me to describe how westerners marry. I tell them that a young man meets a young woman (often one younger than he is himself) and they begin the process of getting to know one another. If he happens to fall deeply in love, the man will ask the woman to marry him, and if she loves him as well, she will say yes. (Obviously, its more complicated that this in practice, but I get the main points across this way.)Stunned expressions always meet this description. The man is young? the Japanese questioner will say. If he is young, how can he possibly have enough experience to make a decision of this type? Only his parents can know what kind of marriage is appropriate for him and will allow him to raise the best family. And you say the woman is younger. That means she is even less experienced than he is! They save their greatest contempt, though, for the notion that westerners marry for love. Love is a temporary disease, they tell me. It is foolish to base something as important as the creation of

a family on something so temporary. This is still the prevalent sensibility in Japan today, even though the content of the Japanese culture has changed. While Japanese teens might date more often than their parents did and might spend more time meeting up at clubs, most marriages are still arranged, and few have anything to do with romance. While this all might sound terribly harsh to American ears, there is at least some logic in this sentiment. While nearly half of all American marriages end in divorce, the Japanese divorce rate is less than 2%. This is not to suggest that older cultures automatically have a clearer vision of the world. In fact, as you will see over the course of this book, there are many instances where the adolescent approach is the more effective one. When it comes to love, however, it is obvious that the American culture is currently in an uneasy place. A woman searches for Mr. Right because she believes the stories she reads in books or watches at the movies, finds someone she believes she can change into her ideal man, and disappointedly sees her efforts fail. A man searches for Ms. Perfect for many of the same reasons, finds a woman who excites him, believes it will stay this way forever, and becomes disappointed when motherhood takes her interests elsewhere. This quest for perfection is, of course, on Code our cultural unconscious compels us to have unrealistically high standards for love. However, as that 50% divorce rate indicates, the Code isnt making our lives easier. Here is a case where an understanding of the Code can help those frustrated by love to go off Code in a productive manner. If you realize your unconscious expects you to fail, you can begin to look at love with more sensible goals. While understanding and respecting the tug to find Mr. Right or Ms. Perfect, one can look for someone who can be a partner, a friend, and a caring lover who cant possibly fulfill all of ones needs. A prominent diamond company deals with the Code in a distinctive fashion. One component of its marketing focuses on the false expectations the American subconscious feels about love: its ads feature couples using diamonds to profess their forever love or to confirm their commitment after years together. Another component of its marketing, however, deals with the consequences of false expectations in a clever manner: highlighting the investment and re-sale value of diamonds. Both campaigns are strongly on Code, addressing our undying belief in the permanence of romantic love and providing a useful benefit when that belief fails to pan out.From Chapter Ten:Who do These Upstarts Think They Are? The Codes for America in Other Cultures (and Vice Versa)The German Code for Germany is perhaps best illustrated in a story.Lego, the Danish toy company, found instant success with their interlocking blocks in the German market, while sales foundered in the U.S. Why? The companys management believed that one of the primary reasons for their success was the quality of the instructions they provided inside each box that helped children build the specific item (a car, a spaceship) that a particular box of blocks was meant to build. The instructions were quite a breakthrough in the field: precise, colorful, and refreshingly self-explanatory. They made construction with Lego blocks not only simple, but in some ways magical. If one followed the path through the instructions, tiny plastic pieces methodically turned into something grander.American children could not have cared less. They would tear into the boxes, glance fleetingly at the instructions (if they glanced at them at all), and immediately set to a construction project on their own. They seemed to be having a wonderful time, but they were as likely to build, say, a fort, as they were to build the automobile for which the blocks were intended. And when they were done, they would tear their fort apart and start over from scratch. Once purchased, to Legos dismay, a single box of Lego could last for years. In Germany, however, Legos strategy worked exactly as intended. German children opened a box of Legos, sought out the instructions, read them carefully, and then sorted the pieces by color. They set to building, comparing their assembly progress to the crisp, helpful illustrations in the instruction booklet. When they were finished, they had an exact duplicate of the product shown on the cover of the box. They showed it to Mother who clapped approvingly and put the model on a shelf. Now the children needed another box. Without even knowing it, Lego had tapped into the Culture Code for Germany itself: ORDER. Over many generations, Germans perfected bureaucracy in an effort to stave off the chaos that came to them in wave after wave, and Germans are imprinted early on with this most powerful of codes. It is that imprint which makes children reach dutifully for the instructions, and it is that code which prevents them from immediately destroying their neat construction in order to build it anew. Legos elegant, full-color instructions had tapped into the German code in a way that assured repeat sales.Revue de presseThis book is just plain astonishing! Filled with profound insights and ideas that have enormous consequences for todays organizations. If you want to understand customers, Constituencies, and crowds, this book is required reading.--Warren Bennis, Distinguished Professor of Business, University of Southern California and author