Handout 1.6  Culture, Values, Beliefs, and Assumptions

Culture—Culture is the set of values, beliefs, and assumptions that families share and pass down to children and grandchildren. Culture affects parents’ child-rearing decisions (Christensen, Emde, & Fleming, 2004).

Values—Values are those things that a culture considers very important. This can include traits, routines, rituals, and behaviors. For example, the mainstream culture in the United States values independence in children.

Beliefs—Beliefs are ideas that people accept as true. People are very attached to their beliefs and are unlikely to change them. For example, one person may believe in the existence of a higher being and another person may believe, equally strongly, that there is no such thing. People may not be able to explain their beliefs.

Assumptions—Assumptions are the ideas that people form on the basis of previous experiences. People usually can explain their assumptions and are more likely to change these ideas with new information. For example, some parents assume that answering a young baby’s cries too quickly will lead to spoiling him. When they learn that holding a crying baby helps him learn to soothe himself, parents are often willing to change this assumption.

REFERENCE