Dominant American Values

Although this is not a definitive list, it is a good start--especially for kids. You can add your own or omit others. The list provided does detail values and beliefs that have been seen throughout our culture and history.

1. **Achievement and Success**: America is a competitive society and stresses personal achievement. Achievement and success is most often measured by how much money you make, how famous you are, or by how powerful you've become. Failure to achieve is often seen as a defect in your character. Success is often equated with "bigness" and "newness".

2. **Activity and Work**: Americans also value busyness, speed, bustle, and action. The frontier idea of work for survival is still with us, as is the Puritan ethic of work before play. A person's worth is often measured by his or her work performance and success.

3. **Morality**: Americans think in terms of good and bad, right and wrong. Early Puritan ideas of working hard, leading an orderly life, having a reputation for integrity and fair dealing, avoiding a reckless lifestyle, and carrying out one's purpose in life are still ideals that hold weight today.

4. **Humanitarianism**: In America, emphasis is placed on concern, helpfulness, personal kindness, aid and comfort, spontaneous aid in mass disasters, as well as on charity. This emphasis is related to equality in a democracy, but often clashes with our value of rugged individualism.

5. **Efficiency and Practicality**: Americans like modern innovation, expediency, mass production, industry, and getting things done! We value science, research, and new inventions that make our lives easier. We value usefulness and practical innovations.

6. **Progress**: Americans look forward more to the future than back to the past. We reject old-fashioned, outmoded ideals. We seek the best through change. Progress is often identified with Darwin's idea of survival of the fittest and with the free enterprise system.

7. **Material Comfort**: American enjoy being content, gratified, and comfortable. We long for lots of material possessions that provide comfort as well as entertainment. Activities, work, and our daily lives are centered around our beliefs in the comforts of life.

8. **Equality**: Our history has stressed the importance of opportunity, especially economic opportunity. We fundamentally believe that everyone has the same and equal opportunity to achieve. While discrimination exists, much lip service is paid to formal civil and legal rights of citizens.
9. Freedom: Americans also seek freedom from restraint having confidence in the individual to make his own choices. Freedom enters into free enterprise, progress, individual choice, and equality. It does not mean the absence of social or governmental control.

10. External Conformity: Americans also believe in adherence to a group, especially for success. We are often economically, politically, and socially dependent upon each other, and interdependence calls for some conformity.

11. Science: Americans have faith in science and its tools. Science is rational, functional, and active. It adds to our material comfort and progress.

12. Nationalism and Patriotism: Americans feel some sense of loyalty to their country, its national symbols, and its history. We believe that America is the greatest country in the world.

13. Democracy: Americans have grown to accept majority rule, representative government, and the rights of the individual. We reject monarchies and dictatorships. We accept law, equality, and freedom.

14. Individuality: We protect our individualism by laws and by the belief in one's own worth. Americans pride themselves on being self-sufficient, strong, and rugged individualists.

15. Racism and Group Superiority: Although a more negative value, Americans believe that they (or their individual group) are the best. This belief takes its form in racial, religious, political, ethnic, and sexual discrimination and crosses all boundaries of American belief systems.

16. Order and Security: Americans believe in a structured religious, political, and social system that keeps them from physical harm and chaos.