According to Fiske’s Relational Model theory, there are four general ways to organize systems, which act as guides for acting. They are communal sharing, authority ranking, equality matching, and market pricing. In American family relationships, or at least in my family, communal sharing is the dominant model. However, in other societies such as traditional Iranian families, the prevailing model is authority ranking. Household chores, eating practices and finances will be compared in the two cultures.

In my family, everyone is viewed as equals. I treat my father the same as I treat my mother and vice versa. It is very egalitarian. There is an understanding of mutual respect, not based on age, sex, or other division, but simply because we are all members of the same family. For instance, house chores are seen as a collective responsibility and everyone helps out. If one person vacuums one week, he/she does it willingly, not because someone is keeping track of whose turn it is. Some activities might be delegated to certain people but this is because the others might not have the skills necessary to do it. For example, a 5 year old who cannot reach the sink will not be asked to wash the dishes. Also, at the dinner table, everyone is free to eat whatever and how much of what they want. Food is not distributed in a systematic manner. No one will object if I have a second serving of corn and everyone else only had one, as in equality matching. Also, the oldest person does not necessarily eat first or get more food, as might be the case with authority ranking. Finances are also communal sharing. For example, if I spend $30 on a present for my mom, I do not necessarily need to spend the same amount on a present for my dad. No one is keeping track of how much each person receives. Some people in the family do contribute more financially than others but everyone reaps the benefits of
receiving food, a home, clothes, etc. Overall, everyone shares and theoretically there should not be resentment if goods or services are not distributed exactly evenly.

The aforementioned type of family relationship is what I have been raised in. However, my parents were raised in a different type. They grew up in Iran, which has authority ranking. In this type, everyone is not equal. The father is the absolute head of the household. Among the children, the males rank higher than the females, and older children rank higher than younger children. Concerning the home, household chores are the sole responsibility of the women in the family. Depending on the circumstance, the mother might be responsible for cooking while the daughters clean the house, or if the mother needs to care for younger infants, then the older daughters take care of the cooking. With respect to food, no one eats until the father is present. Furthermore, the father is served food first. Followed by serving the older children and then the younger children. Quality of food is also distributed unequally. The superiors receive the better part of the meat, and sometimes a little extra meat. In regard to finances, the father takes responsibility for the subordinates. It is unheard of that the male stays home and fulfills the household responsibilities and the female goes to work. The children do not work either.

I have compared my family life in America with my parents' family life in Iran. Hopefully it is evident that the American life is characterized to a large extent by communal sharing and the Iranian life by authority ranking. Of course there are aspects of the four types of relational models in each culture but I have focused on what I believe to be the dominant form. Also, it is necessary to stress that I am comparing my parents' time in Iran (1950-1978) with my time in the United States (1981-2002). The
information would be different than stated if I had compared the same time period among the two cultures.