For this discussion, I have chosen the HBO original series The Sopranos. The reason for my choice is that it has a plot that emphasizes several interpersonal relationships in detail, but also that I thought it would be interesting to re-watch an episode of a show that I have a great appreciation for through the lens of analysis; and for that reason, I chose the first episode of the series to analyze.

For those who are unfamiliar, The Sopranos is a drama television series that is centered around the fictional character Tony Soprano, and portrays his life as a member of the Soprano organized crime family from the late 1990’s to the late 2000’s, and the relationships that he has with several characters throughout. For context, the first episode shows us that Tony has a medical condition that causes him to pass out, though initially it is thought that his condition is physical, it is determined after an MRI that it is a physiological condition, and he is referred to a therapist; an act that is seen as taboo and essentially a death sentence should anyone within the mafia find out. In addition to this, the episode reveals that Tony has a highly conflicted relationship with his mother, and that he has been unfaithful to his wife, Carmela.

The relationship that I chose to analyze is the one between the protagonist Tony and Carmela. I chose their relationship as the topic for this discussion because I felt that the first episode does an excellent job of representing their relationship by demonstrating their differing loves languages, both of which seem to be conflicted or in the process of changing, as well as their familial relationship, both of which are influenced by the cultures in which they live. While Tony shows patterns of several love types, Carmela is portrayed to be more of a pragmatist. Furthermore, their relationship has clearly defined familial roles and responsibilities.

In analysis of Tony’s love type, he does not love any specific way. In one scene in which Tony is on his boat with his “goomar” Irina, an extradyadic lover of his. In a different scene, where Tony is preparing for his M.R.I., it shows Tony talking to Carmela about how they had some “good times” and appears to be highly sentimental. In the scene with his lover, Tony appears to have characteristics of a Ludus lover, but in the scene with Carmela, his love type appears to be more of a Storge. In both seems, however, it does seem that Tony has genuinely deep feelings for both Carmela and Irina, which indicates to me that Tony’s love type has changed since the beginning of his marriage, or – more likely—his love type toward Carmela has developed to be more of that of a Storge.

In contrast, Carmela indicates that she is more of a pragmatic lover in the way that she stays with Tony even though she is aware of his affairs. In one scene, she further demonstrates her pragmatism when she asks Tony when or not, he will be home for their son’s birthday party. Although she is verbally aggressive in her question – likely due to the jealousy that she is undoubtedly feeling – her focus remains on her son, her birthday party, and that she wants Tony to be there for it. Like Tony, Carmela’s love for Tony is shown in the M.R.I. room, along with her jealousy. Just before Tony is inserted into the machine, Carmela tells Tony that the difference between them is that “the place that he’s going when he dies is Hell”, a statement that she quite obviously did not mean based on her non-verbal expressions that followed.

While the difference in their love types is more than apparent throughout the episode, what is less obvious is that their love for each other is probably, at least partly, influenced by their culture. During one scene when Tony and Carmela are taking his mother to look at an assisted living facility, Tony is apparently triggered by his mother’s ranting about how it was a place that people go to die and passes out again. Then, it shows him speaking to his therapist about how his mother wore-down his father. His obvious resentment toward his own mother could be seen as a contributing factor to his adultery. To Tony, his mother, and the relationship she had with his father, a person who he speaks highly of, all contributes to a culture in which the matriarch drives the patriarch to being unfaithful. This assumption is reinforced by the look of annoyance that Tony shows toward Carmela when she asks him about their son’s birthday. When this happens, it is almost as if Tony is looking at Carmela through the lens of his father looking at Tony’s mother, and the fact that Tony does not seem to think that his affairs are inappropriate is almost certainly attributed to the fact that he is part of the mafia (it is implied that it is common for mobsters to have goomars). Carmela, on the other hand seems to be of the more collectivist mindset – like that of traditional Italian culture – and that the greater good of her family is the most important thing to her.

In terms of their family type, I would say that they operate in a consensual, monopoly type of family. The reasons for this are that they seem to have a wide channel for communication with one another, as well as with their children, but Tony is certainly in charge. This can be witnessed in the same scene that Carmela asks Tony about their son’s birthday party, as Tony enters the room wearing his robe and boxers, while everyone else is dressed for the day. This indicates to me that Tony is does things as he pleases. Another thing that indicates this to me is that when Carmela asks Tony her question, he initially does not respond, showing that he does not feel compelled to show Carmela the same respect that she shows him. Another point that can be made is that their relationship is built on traditional values, where Tony is the one that provides for the family, and Carmela’s cooks, cleans, and takes care of their children.

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On a side note, this assignment has completely changed the way that I will watch The Sopranos, there are so many interesting relationships to analyze, and one of the most difficult parts for me was committing to analyzing the one between Tony and Carmela.