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The Pragma Style of Love: Understanding the Practical Path to Compatibility

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When John Lee introduced his color theory of love in the 1970s, he provided a rich, multi-faceted typology of how people experience and express love. Over time, however, popular literature and simplified measurement tools have condensed these vibrant styles into oversimplified summary descriptions. In this article, I revisit the Pragma love style—a unique secondary style formed by the combination of Ludus (game-playing/controlled love) and Storge (friendship-based love). By exploring both Lee's original theoretical roots and recent cross-cultural findings, I demonstrate why Pragma should not be viewed merely as a linear variable, but as a distinct,

complex love type that reflects real-world traditions, technological matchmaking, and modern ways of how people love.

Lee's Theoretical Description of the Pragma Love Style

The following excerpts elaborate on the **Pragma** love style:

> *"Individuals with the* Pragma *love style deliberately consider how suitable a potential beloved is for their prospective relationship. They look for a compatible match, taking into account the age, religion, education, vocation, and other demographic characteristics of a prospective partner."*
>
> (EXCERPT FROM KARANDASHEV, 2022, P. 78).

This Is What the Pragma Love Style Looks Like

In-depth interviews with 120 participants using the **"love story card sort"** technique generated around 100,000 data points. The factor analysis found 32 individual characteristics that set apart the six love styles. This analysis allowed us to portray the distinctive characteristics of the Pragma love style as follows,,

> *"Participants of the Pragma love style are as manipulative and controlled as Ludus. They also experience companionate feelings like those with the* Storge *love style. They have not been lucky enough to find a friend with similar interests or a loved one with*

> *whom the relationship can grow in love. Therefore, they decide, more or less consciously, to find someone who might be their companion and a suitable partner. They do not wait for an appeal of nature; they build a relationship.*
>
> *Having in mind the desired qualities of a prospective mate, they look for an opportunity to meet a partner of their choice. In the case of arranged marriages, the parents, rather than an individual, experience the pragmatic love style. In modern times, matchmaking on the Internet does the same work."*
>
> (EXCERPT FROM KARANDASHEV, 2022, P. 82).

The Pragma Love Style as a Compound Secondary Type

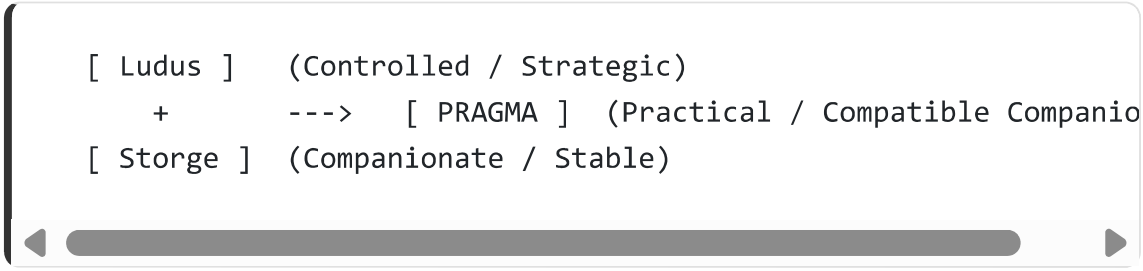
John Lee's (1973, 1976) color theory of love posits three primary styles —***Eros*** (sensory-based love), ***Ludus*** (game-playing love), and ***Storge*** (friendship-based love). From these primary roots, Lee conceptualized secondary styles as distinct compounds formed by combining features of the primary types.

Specifically, J. Lee theorized **Pragma** as a secondary style emerging from the intersection of **Ludus** and **Storge**:

- **From Ludus**, the pragmatic lover adopts a controlled, strategic, and analytical approach to relationships. However, unlike the purely ludic lover who manipulates for immediate pleasure or freedom, the pragmatic lover applies control and manipulation toward a structured, long-term purpose.

- **From Storge**, the pragmatic lover draws a desire for stability, quiet affection, shared interests, and companionate security.

Pragma is thus a unique synthesis: *a calculating search for a companionate bond*. It is rational, conscious, and goal-oriented.



As J. Lee noted, pragmatic lovers do not wait for a spontaneous "appeal of nature" or a sudden spark of Eros. Instead, they actively build a relationship based on defined criteria. They treat partner selection as a deliberate decision, and evaluate potential mates against a realistic "checklist."

Cultural and Cross-Cultural Dimensions of Pragma

The expression and prevalence of the Pragma love style vary significantly across cultural contexts and social structures, as cross-cultural research demonstrates (Karandashev, 2019). While Western individualistic frameworks often emphasize spontaneous personal attraction, many cultural traditions have historically viewed—and continue to view—love through a pragmatic lens.

1. Collectivism and Familial Utility

In collectivist and traditional societies, love is frequently understood as an interpersonal arrangement that binds not just two individuals, but

two families or communities (Karandashev, 2019). In these settings, Pragma is not an isolated individual attitude; it is a normative cultural ideology. Practical factors—such as social standing, economic stability, family reputation, religious alignment, and mutual obligations—take precedence. As Lee (1976) and Karandashev (2019) observe, in arranged or family-assisted marriages, the pragmatic evaluation is often exercised by parents and relatives rather than solely by the individual partners.

2. Historical Roots of Practical Love Ideology

The pragmatic approach to love has deep historical roots across various civilizations. Historical analyses reveal that in traditional agrarian and feudal societies, alliances and household units were built primarily on socio-economic viability and shared labor (Karandashev, 2019). Love was expected to grow over time out of mutual respect, companionate commitment, and shared duty—aligning directly with the Storge component of Pragma—rather than serving as the initial trigger for union formation.

3. Modern Technological Matchmaking

In contemporary societies, the structural mechanisms of Pragma have shifted from family networks to technological platforms, yet the underlying logic remains similar (Karandashev, 2019, 2022). Internet matchmaking, algorithmic dating services, and specialized filter-based platforms allow individuals to execute the classic Pragma strategy: defining desired demographic, educational, and lifestyle attributes beforehand to find a compatible companion. Technology acts as a modern counterpart to traditional arranged matchmaking, facilitating practical compatibility search in fast-paced modern environments.

Behavioral and Psychological Descriptors of Pragma Love Style

To fully capture the multidimensional nature of Pragma, scholars have identified several core behavioral, cognitive, and social characteristics that define this approach to love:

- **The Rational Checklist:** Pragmatic lovers evaluate prospective partners on tangible social, economic, and lifestyle factors. Compatibility is viewed as a prerequisite for love to develop, rather than a byproduct that emerges after falling in love (Lee, 1976; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986).
- **Strategic Companionate Seeking:** Recognizing that they may not naturally encounter a compatible friend or spontaneous connection, pragmatic individuals take deliberate, conscious steps to seek out someone who fits their criteria (Karandashev, 2022).
- **Reciprocal Utility and Emotional Regulation:** Pragma involves a high degree of emotional self-control. Relationships are evaluated by mutual suitability and practical harmony. If a relationship becomes functionally unviable or structurally incompatible, the pragmatic lover is often capable of disengaging with rational composure (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1998; Karandashev, 2019).

The Pragma Love Style: Typological Structure vs. Linear Variable

This illustrative portrayal demonstrates that the Pragma love style is a complex, integrated combination of attitudes and traits that individuals

bring to relationships. Rather than functioning as a single continuous variable—as measured by traditional psychometric tools like the Love Attitudes Scale (LAS) (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986, 1998)—Pragma represents a distinct, qualitative love type.

The empirical findings from narrative interviews and card-sorting techniques reveal a rich constellation of features that set this style apart. Rather than yielding a simple score on an isolated continuum, the unique convergence of 32 individual characteristics—blending the self-controlled strategy of Ludus with the quiet warmth of Storge—illustrates the true typological structure of Pragma (Karandashev, 2022). This structural profile reflects people's core beliefs, emotional expressions, and relational actions, serving as a comprehensive mindset that shapes how individuals evaluate prospective partners and navigate modern ways of how people love across diverse cultural settings.

Conclusion

The Pragma style of love reveals that love is not always a spontaneous, overwhelming force; for many, it is a conscious, structured, and deeply practical endeavor. From historical traditions of family-assisted alliances to contemporary algorithm-driven matchmaking, the pragmatic approach highlights the essential role of compatibility, emotional self-control, and companionate commitment. Viewing Pragma through a cross-cultural and typological lens reminds us that love takes diverse shapes across societies and eras. Recognizing Pragma as a comprehensive love type—rather than a single isolated score on a scale—enriches our scientific understanding of the varied, deliberate ways human beings choose, build, and sustain love in their lives.

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