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THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL NORMS AND THE LIFE OF LOIS LANE: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF POPULAR CULTURE

The Ohio State University

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THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL NORMS AND THE LIFE OF LOIS LANE:
A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF POPULAR CULTURE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

by

Jeanne Pauline Williams, B.S., M.A.

*****

The Ohio State University
1986

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1986
To my father
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</th>
<th>iii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. LITERATURE REVIEW</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Overview</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of Sequential Art</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Methodological Literature</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images of Women in Comics Art</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III. METHODOLOGY</strong></td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative Anecdote</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV. CONTENT ANALYSIS</strong></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-1947</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948-1967</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-1982</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983-1986</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V. RHETORICAL CRITICISM</strong></td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-1947</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948-1967</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-1982</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983-1986</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI. CONCLUSION ........................................ 127
    Methodological Implications ........................ 128
    Implications for Further Research .................. 132

APPENDICES

A. List of Stories Included in Sample .................. 135
B. Content Analysis Results ............................ 137

BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................... 150
Chapter One
Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Analysis of the significance of popular culture in contemporary society requires an understanding of the importance of fictional characters as embodiments of cultural values and concerns. The continued popularity of some pieces of popular culture (for example, Superman) over several decades and generations of readers depends in large part on the audience's ability to identify with the story's protagonists. The virtues represented by a hero such as Superman must be those to which the audience also aspires. The conflicts which concern a character such as Lois Lane must be resolved in ways which are compatible with the audience's beliefs. Therefore, as the cultural values of the audience change, the values represented by the fictional characters with whom they spend their leisure time must change as well. When character development ceases, the story's popularity will decline until eventually it is preserved merely as nostalgia.

In advancing the thesis that character development is vital to the continued success of popular culture, this study emphasizes the potential of the popular media as indicators of cultural values. Embedded within the content of television programs, films, comic books and other forms of mass entertainment are assumptions regarding how members of a society should conduct their lives. As the creators of
high art have ceased to fulfill social needs in favor of personal expression, the popular arts have become the artistic forum for promotion and reinforcement of established institutions and ideas.\(^1\)
The debate over whether media cause or reflect cultural values has in some ways distracted our attention from the social messages contained in the popular arts. Regardless of whether media cause a society to emphasize certain ideas or whether media simply mirror the value already placed on these concepts, messages concerning social values clearly are present in popular entertainment. This evidence of cultural values provides the critic with a rich source of study.

According to Walsh, the study of popular culture:

\[\ldots\text{yields insights that other historical methods cannot.}\]

Popular culture explores both the surface and underside of human experience and is particularly suited to discovering historical undercurrents since repressed or dissident fantasies can be expressed more easily through the mediation of myth and symbol. Our deepest fears, worst nightmares, and most rebellious fantasies do not have to stand naked. Rather, they are cloaked in more acceptable garb so that we may indulge them at the same moment that we try to deny, repress, or resolve them miraculously.\(^2\)

The critic's task is to uncover these undercurrents. The rhetorical critic serves as a social critic by analyzing the values and concerns expressed in the discourse. Michalns, for example, distinguishes between literary and rhetorical criticism by virtue of the former's concern with artistic merit and the latter's concern with effect:

Style [in rhetorical criticism] is less considered for its own sake than for its effect in a given situation. The question of literary immortality is regarded as beside the mark, or else... as a separate question requiring separate consideration.\(^3\)
With such a perspective in mind, it is possible to look at popular culture, not in terms of its intrinsic artistic merit, but in terms of the cultural values and issues it addresses. "By examining the complexities of the discourse produced or attended to by individuals and groups," Brumett states, "the rhetorical critic serves as a social critic." Thus, rhetorical criticism can lead to increased understanding of a culture's history and values.

This study is such an examination, focusing on one specific medium (comic books) and one specific set of cultural values (attitudes regarding women's role in society). In particular, the study focuses on the manner in which changes in a society's beliefs and expectations are compensated for and relayed through one particular comic book character and a relationship that has endured almost fifty years. Women's role in society has been selected as a topic for investigation because shifts in attitudes regarding this issue clearly can be seen in recent social history. The last half century has contained both periods of intense questioning of women's traditional role in American society and periods of conformity to those roles. It is during this same era that the comic book became a commercially successful, yet often belittled, entertainment medium.

The comic book is an excellent medium for this type of examination. Comic books such as Superman can be regarded as projections of the concerns of their creators and audience. Comics project a complete fantasy world, one which reflects the values, fears and expectations of society "in more subtle (and more subtly accurate) ways" than do other, more realistic forms of popular culture. Comics feed the dream images
of the readers, "projecting the world they wish to see or dream about, in which the plots they fear or expect or hope for are played out in fantasy terms." We can expect, therefore, that the choices which a comic book character such as Lois Lane makes or is prevented from making will bear a relationship to the choices which are considered appropriate for women in the real world. Furthermore, since the worldview portrayed in the comic books must be compatible with that of the audience in order to assure financial success and continued publication, changes in societal attitudes regarding women's roles should be accompanied by changes in the statement of those roles in the comics. However, relatively little scholarly examination of the comic book medium exists and very few of those studies which have been done systematically critique the comics' portrayal of women.

This study attempts such a critique by tracing changes in the characterization of one well-known comic book heroine (Lois Lane in Superman) since the late 1930s. The decision to approach the topic through in-depth study of the changes in the portrayal of one character is based on what Berger describes as the relationship which develops between the audience and a fictional character whose history that audience has followed for a number of years. These characters "have a 'history,' so to speak--and their activities become more meaningful the more we are acquainted with this history...." If we can understand the character's history and the changes in that character over time, we can better understand the connection between the character's world and the world of the audience.
Lois Lane has been chosen as the focus for this study for several reasons: 1) As the female protagonist of the Superman line of comic books, she is the only female character whose history spans the entire history of the medium's dominant genre, the superhero story; 2) Just as Superman is the prototype for the comic book superhero, Lois Lane is the prototype for the love interest. Subsequent girlfriend/wife characters in comic books copied such traits as Lois Lane's career in journalism and her obsession with the hero's secret identity. Thus, understanding her character increases our understanding of the many characters who followed in the tradition begun with the publication of the first Superman story in Action Comics; 3) Lois Lane is distinguished from other girlfriend characters by the fact that she functions both as heroine and hero. Not only is she the heroine--the damsel-in-distress awaiting rescue--she is also one of the relatively few female characters to have had her own comic book (Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane, published from 1958 to 1974). This combination of heroine and female hero in one character provides a unique opportunity to study the extent to which socially desirable traits for women are portrayed as varying according to social role; 4) A recurring theme in Superman has been the tension expressed between Lois Lane's dedication to her work as a newspaper reporter and her romantic involvement with Superman and his alter ego, Clark Kent. This theme may be particularly valuable in studying the tension between career and family as it has been experienced by American women during the twentieth century.
This study applies dramatic analysis to the social messages found in comic books. Because the scholarly study of comics as art is relatively recent, many different methods of analysis are bound to be used by researchers attempting to find those tools which best further our understanding of the medium. This study combines critical method with content analysis as a means through which to understand the impact of comics art. The combination of dramatism and content analysis makes it possible to study one character in depth and to obtain a precise record of how that character has been portrayed with regard to the areas which most directly relate to the cultural values under examination.

Finally, this study increases our understanding of the relationship between the dissemination of cultural values and the themes of popular fiction. By examining the changes in the characterization of Lois Lane in Superman and the social norms portrayed through her character, this study should increase our knowledge of the rhetorical potential of media on the audience and of audience on the media.

Theoretical Framework

Dramatism, as developed by Kenneth Burke, recognizes that discourse must express values shared by the audience and the creator of a message. Burke emphasizes that such identification with each other's interests is essential to communication:

We might well keep it in mind that a speaker persuades an audience by the use of stylistic identifications; his [or her] act of persuasion may be for the purpose of causing audience to identify itself with the speaker's interests;
and the speaker draws on identification of interests to establish rapport between himself and his audience. So, there is no chance of our keeping apart the meanings of persuasion, identification ('consubstantiality') and communication. One or another of these elements may serve best for extending a line of analysis in some particular direction.

The very need for identification implies that division already exists and must be transcended. An individual's identity is his/her existence as a unique entity, "a demarcated unit having its own particular substance." Identification requires the joining together of separate identities in order to increase the knowledge and understanding of each. Identification, through which unique entities can proclaim their unity with one another, compensates for and is necessitated by the separation of individuals. "If men were not apart from one another," Burke writes, "there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. If men were wholly and truly of one substance, absolute communication would be of man's very essence." Identification, for Burke, is a matter of perceiving the other as essentially like the self: "To call a man a friend or brother is to proclaim him consubstantial with oneself, one's values or purposes."

Such identification in popular culture takes place largely through the element of character. The fictional characters represent ideas and values with which the audience can identify. Because these ideas are presented as defining the characters and shaping their actions, audience members can relate the characters' struggles with their own concerns.
In terms of Burke's theories, stories become "equipment for living": "...the imaginary obstacles of symbolic drama must, to have the relevance necessary for the producing of effects upon audiences, reflect the real obstacles of living drama." In order to continue to serve its function as equipment for living, popular culture must continue to allow characters to evolve into figures with whom audiences can identify. Thus, by learning what values are represented by characters in popular culture, the critic can better understand the concerns of the audience and the society to which that audience belongs.

This study combines Burke's concept of identification with interpretation of the text from the point of view of the female protagonist. In focusing on the character of Lois Lane rather than that of Superman, this study makes use of Simone de Beauvoir's interpretation of woman's role as "the Other" in traditional society. de Beauvoir has written that society takes for granted the implication that man is the subject in art and life. Man is seen as the active sex. Woman, by contrast, is viewed as passive. "Woman is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute--she is the Other." Recent literary critics, building on de Beauvoir's premise, have suggested an approach which makes woman the subject, viewing art and literature from the perspective of its female characters. Such an approach functions as social criticism by demonstrating how women's
"desire for responsible selfhood, for the achievement of authenticity through individual choice, comes up against the assumption that a woman aspiring to selfhood is by definition selfish, deviating from norms of subservience to the dominant gender."14
Notes--Chapter One


8 Ibid., p. 20.

9 Ibid., p. 22.


Chapter Two

Literature Review

Comic books are a medium of communication and entertainment which reach millions of Americans—children and adults—each month. Since the late 1930s, the comic book has evolved from a simple reprint of newspaper comic strips into a highly stylized art form with storytelling techniques that have become standardized over the decades. Because comic books are such a common feature of American popular culture, it might be expected that feminist and communication scholars would have concerned themselves with the study of the images of women and of male-female relationships that comic books portray. In reality, however, very little research has been done regarding how comic books reflect social norms concerning women's roles. Virtually no research exists concerning the portrayal of women in the most popular form of comic book, the superhero story.

A review of the literature relevant to the present study includes an historical overview of the nature of writing about the comics medium. This is followed with reviews of the literature concerning the development of a theory of sequential art and possible methodological approaches to the study of comics. Finally, studies concerning images of women in both comic strips and comic books are examined.
Historical Overview

The earliest comic books were reproductions of newspaper comic strips. In 1935, *Detective Comics* became the first comic book to feature four-color art which had not appeared elsewhere and which was organized around one central theme. *Detective Comics* was quite successful, and in 1938 its publishers decided to bring out a second title of all-original material organized around an "action" theme. The cover story for *Action Comics* was "Superman"—a feature its creators had been trying without success to market as a newspaper comic strip for five years. *Superman* was an immediate success, and soon a number of publishers were bringing out stories about costumed "superheroes" in imitation of the Man of Steel. *Superman* also began appearing in other media such as radio, movie serials and animated cartoons.

The popularity of superhero comic books was not initially limited to children. During World War II, comic books were read avidly by U.S. soldiers. However, the first authors to study the medium were concerned with the effect reading comic books had on children. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, several writers maintained that there was a direct link between the popularity of comic books and rising juvenile delinquency rates.

The best-known opponent of comic books was psychiatrist Frederic Wertham. Wertham based his objections to comic books on the case studies of children he and his staff had encountered in mental hygiene clinics. However, Wertham did not provide evidence that the children he
studied were typical of all comic book readers or that the comic books he described were representative of the entire medium. Despite its considerable limitations, Wertham's research (especially as expressed in his book Seduction of the Innocent) received much attention from both the public and legislators. By 1954, the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency found it necessary to hold three days of hearings to investigate the supposed link between comics and juvenile delinquency, and several cities and states were considering legislation to ban or restrict the sale of comic books. As a result of these criticisms, several publishers joined to establish the Comics Code Authority, a self-censorship organization which devised a lengthy code regarding acceptable story lines, art and advertising for comic books.

Following the formation of the Comics Code Authority, public and scholarly interest in the comics medium diminished for more than a decade. Due in part to the obvious influence of comics art on pop artists such as Andy Warhol and the popularity of "camp" entertainment such as the Batman television series, a revival of interest in comics occurred during the late 1960s and early 1970s. As opposed to the writings of the pre-Comics Code era, this interest was more concerned with nostalgia for the "Golden Age of Comics" of the 1940s than with the social effects of contemporary comics. Many of the publications about comics appearing during this time were reprints of 1940s comic book stories or essays about Golden Age comic book heroes.

Increased interest in comic book collecting, the popularity of Marvel Comics characters such as Spider-Man with college-age audiences
and the trend toward "socially relevant" material in comic books all contributed to the creation of a body of publications specifically for those interested in comics art. The yearly publication of Overstreet's Price Guide has developed from a listing of the worth of back issues to include information on how to preserve a comic book collection and essays about the history of specific comics and their creators. Newspapers such as the Comic Buyer's Guide and magazines such as Comics Journal, Comics Feature and Amazing Heroes present news and comment on current trends in the comics industry, essays on the history of comics and articles on the artistic merit and social impact of the medium. At the same time, articles in scholarly journals began dealing with these same topics. That literature will be discussed in the following sections.

Theory of Sequential Art

The literature regarding the rhetorical impact of comics has emphasized the combination of text and image in relaying social messages and mediating cultural tensions. Faust, for example, analyzes comic books as a means for relaying social messages, stating that comics transmit ideology as well as entertainment. In a recent compilation of the work of E. C. Segar (the creator of Popeye), Cowans states that popular arts have adopted traditional social functions which high art no longer fulfills:
Precisely because popular arts were constrained to work within a context of social function, precisely because "popular artists" primarily served social needs and made personal expression an afterthought if indulged in at all, it is in their work, much more than in any private expressions of the avant-garde establishment, that historical records of the 20th century will be found comparable to those embodied in the great high arts of history.4

Popular media such as comic books, Cowans and Faust maintain, therefore promote and reinforce the validity of established institutions and ideas. Such concern with the connection between popular culture and social norms is also found in the recent scholarship on comics.

Although the comic book seems, at first glance, to be the simplest of art forms, it is in fact a unique blending of reality and fantasy. The reader automatically places the comic book in the realm of fantasy because the visual image is a drawing,

therefore barring the medium from the photographic realism possible in many other media. Accentuating the unreality in the medium's visual technique are the conversational balloons and the narrative boxes which force the "audio" onto the picture. The methods of the medium thus imbue the message with an air of unreality from the beginning.5

What initially seems to be the most straightforward of storytelling forms, therefore, is actually extremely complex. The medium combines the visual image with the printed text in a series of panel drawings with a narrative progression which appears almost cinematic. The reader of the comic book has no choice but to be an active mediator of the story. The sequence of drawings and text requires him/her to fill in the implied sense of movement in the story, to "hear" the angry or happy tone of voice suggested by the words emphasized in heavy black ink. For these reasons, Turner recommends that the
researcher studying comic books focus "on the interaction of medium and audience, viewing comic strip messages as both reflecting and influencing the society from which they grow and to which they are addressed."  

Offsetting the unreality of the medium's form is the use of contemporary urban backgrounds and situations in many stories, which adopt the entymemetic approach traditionally identified for ideas already possessed by the audience on topics known to them, requiring their participation in order to be completed.... Thus, readers supply the cultural knowledge, values, and archetypes called forth by the comic strips they follow....

Thus, as a combination of visual and written images, blending reality and unreality, comic books are ideally suited for the expression of cultural values and concerns.

The recent publication of Will Eisner's *Comics and Sequential Art* develops a theory of comics art from the artist's perspective. Eisner, who is himself a well-known comic book artist, maintains that comics are "an 'art of communication' more than simply an application of art." Like Turner, Eisner emphasizes the interplay of art and text. In order to read of comic book properly, the audience must understand a vocabulary which has developed out of the visual experience common to both artist and reader. That vocabulary contains both words and images, although in many ways the visual element of the story is the more difficult to "read":
Images without words, while they seem to represent a more primitive form of graphic narrative, really require some sophistication on the part of the reader (or viewer). Common experience and a history of observation are necessary to interpret the inner feelings of the actor.

Sequential art as practiced in comics presents a technical hurdle that can only be negotiated with some acquired skill. The number of images allowed is limited, whereas in film an idea or emotion can be expressed by hundreds of images displayed in fluid sequence at such speed as to emulate real movement. In print this effect can only be simulated.9

Through comics, as Berger notes, "it is possible to discover important American values showing through. Perhaps the writers and artists unconsciously let their guards down in drawing from (literally and figuratively) the American ethos."10 Chmaj concurs with Berger, adding that reader reaction also influences the directions comics, as a commercial enterprise, take: "The opinions of the readership are bound to limit or influence the degree and direction of change in characterization."11

Review of Methodological Literature

The study of the relationship between popular culture and social values can be approached from any number of a variety of methods. Walsh encourages the interdisciplinary nature of popular culture studies:

No one sociological or historical method...possesses a superior claim on 'truth.' Rather, each approach is distinctive, structuring questions in a particular way, illuminating certain areas of inquiry, while de-emphasizing others. Each method maps out its own dimension of society in its own specific way. Together, the various modes of historical interpretation challenge, enrich, and complement one another by posing new and different questions, uncovering new and sometimes contradictory data, and checking upon the others' validity. Taken together, they present a complex and multi-layered view of social reality.12
Among these methods, content analysis provides a way in which to establish what the overt message of the discourse is. Butler and Paisley recommend the use of content analysis for the study of media messages, preferring the quantitative nature of such studies to more subjective forms of analysis. Holsti, however, warns against over-emphasis on the quantitative nature of content analysis:

Underlying this definition of content analysis as quantitative is the assumption that frequency is the only valid index of concern, preoccupation, intensity, and the like. Often this may in fact be a valid premise, but there is also ample evidence that measures other than frequency may in some instances prove more useful.

In some instances, Holsti states, the number of times that an attribute is absent from the discourse may be as important as coding the number of times that attribute appears.

As Holsti also points out, content analysis provides the researcher "with a powerful set of tools not only for precise and parsimonious summary of findings, but also for improving the quality of interpretation and inference." He concludes that

the content analyst should use qualitative and quantitative methods to supplement each other. It is by moving back and forth between these approaches that the investigator is most likely to gain insight into the meaning of his data...asking the right question of the data is even more important than the system of enumeration used to present the findings....

Holsti's perspective complements Walsh's thesis that various methodologies can be used in conjunction with one another to provide a multi-layered understanding of the significance of popular culture. The data provided by the content analysis can be compared with the results of the rhetorical criticism so as to increase our knowledge of
the social values present in the stories and the reasons those particular values are depicted. Brummett cites Burke's thesis that literature provides a society with "equipment for living": "...Through types, components, or structures of literature people confront their lived situations, celebrate their triumphs and encompass their tragedies." Brummett maintains that

...it becomes the task of the Burkean critic to identify the modes of discourse enjoying currency in a society and to link discourse to the real situations for which it is symbolic equipment. Brummett recommends Burke's concept of the representative anecdote as a method for such study of mass media. The representative anecdote can be defined as "a dramatic form which underlies the content, or the specific vocabulary, of discourse." The representative anecdote does not have to be stated directly in the text:

Instead, the anecdote is a method used by the critic. The anecdote is a lens, filter, or template through which the critic studies and reconstructs the discourse. The critic represents the essence of discourse by viewing it as if it follows a dramatic plot...The critic in search of an anecdote must therefore exercise his or her powers of abstraction to detect a form or pattern which is a plot, a story line, immanent within the content of the discourse and able to represent the discourse.

Having identified the representative anecdote, the critic must then explain how the discourse embodying the anecdote relates to the audience's problems, "to show how the anecdotal form equips a culture for living in that situation." Brummett maintains that the representative anecdote is a particularly appropriate method for studying the mass media because the media themselves are anecdotal:
The representative anecdote is a particularly representative tool for media analysis, then, because it resonates with the anecdotal, representative, dramatic form of the media, and because the content carried by that form is used by millions as equipment for living, a function to which the method of the anecdote is especially well attuned. The representative anecdote is therefore a method that taps what a culture most deeply fears and hopes, and how that culture confronts those concerns symbolically.22

As previously discussed, Chmaj, Berger and Turner all argue that comics art is a representation of the dreams, hopes and fears of its creators and readers. Therefore, a method which enables the researcher to more fully understand how those fears and hopes are symbolized through the media would be a useful resource for a study such as this.

Images of Women in Comics Art

Researchers have given comparatively little attention to the images of women portrayed in comic books. Much of the existing research into male-female relationships as they are portrayed in comics actually refers to newspaper comic strips rather than to comic books. One of the earliest of these makes several important observations which subsequent researchers have not yet replicated. After studying each comic strip appearing in New York City newspapers for one month, Saenger concluded that whether male or female characters dominated their mates depended on whether the strip fit the domestic or the adventure category. In the domestic strip (such as "Blondie"), fifteen percent of the men were characterized as weak. Female characters in these comic strips frequently used verbal aggression against their mates. In the adventure strips, however, women gave, yet failed to receive, love. "This is the more astonishing," Saenger comments, "as the female
companion of the adventurous hero has great sex appeal, is well-built, and shows her attractions by being scantily clad or wearing well-fitting dresses." The cumulative message of these comic strips, Saenger concludes, is that love is dangerous to men because it leads to marriage and the loss of power.

In her fantasy theme analysis of the portrayal of women in newspaper comic strips, Turner concludes that comics reflect and affect the public's changing rhetorical visions. The image of the independent career woman which developed in comic strips such as "Tillie the Toiler" in the 1920s and 1930s helped popularize the rhetorical vision of "nice girls doing their jobs and coping with ordinary situations." After World War II, however, comic strip women were more likely to be depicted as "boy-crazy homebody types" than as independent working women. The late 1960s and the 1970s saw another change in the image of women in comic strips with the emergence of characters such as "Doonesbury"'s Joanie Caucus, runaway housewife turned day care attendant turned Congressional attorney. Turner therefore concludes that:

While comics may not present the same kind of liberated women as in some of the feminist movement's visions, the fantasies of the funnies are clearly affected by new views on the character and role of women. That image, Turner states, then helps to make the new views more acceptable to the general public.

Chmaj, however, concludes that these new views regarding women had an initially negative effect on comic books. In her study of superhero
comics published by Marvel Comics during the early 1970s, Chmaj reports that feminist concerns were either ridiculed or their importance minimized. During this era, female characters were portrayed by Marvel either as man-haters or as continually apologizing to men for expressing even mildly feminist beliefs. The difference between Turner and Chmaj's findings would seem to indicate that the comic books are more conservative than newspaper comic strips, responding to changes in social values more slowly than newspaper comic strips do.

In addition to the studies which deal only with newspaper comic strips, two studies are concerned with both comic strips and comic books. Although the study by Potkay, et. al. primarily deals with audience perception of comic strip characters, two comic book characters (Superman and Wonder Woman) are included. The authors maintain that audiences have more favorable attitudes toward female than toward male characters. Exceptions are nontraditional female characters (such as Lucy in "Peanuts"). Wonder Woman, however, who as the first female superhero might be considered nontraditional, received a favorable rating. It is possible, therefore, that the context in which the characters are portrayed makes the difference (a conclusion not reached by the authors). Wonder Woman's nontraditional lifestyle is depicted as heroic, while Lucy is portrayed as bossy and unpleasant. The reader may be encouraged to dislike Lucy, whereas he/she is led to admire Wonder Woman.

Horn traces the development of female characters in comic strips and comic books during the 1930s. Since comic books did not reach the
status of mass entertainment until the debut of Superman in *Action Comics* in 1938, Horn's conclusions apply mostly to comic strips. The comics, Horn states, reflect the same emphasis on adventure that was prevalent in most of the popular culture of the decade. Women in adventure comics began as scantily-clad damsels in distress but gradually became more assertive and sometimes even heroic. Female villains, by contrast, were more overtly sexual than the heroes' girlfriends and were often portrayed as having exotic, usually Eurasian, origins. Horn describes one female character from this era as a "special case": Lois Lane. Horn attributes this difference not to Lois Lane's personality, however, but to Superman's dual identity. Horn describes the classic Clark Kent-Lois Lane-Superman triangle, in which Clark is sincerely jealous of his other personality, as "a neurotic parable reflective of our disturbed times." Horn himself, however, provides no analysis of why Superman/Clark and Lois' relationship is so reflective of contemporary society.

Berger, however, does attempt such an analysis. According to this analysis, Superman mirrors conflicting American values. The relationship with Lois, Berger states, parallels symptoms found in schizophrenics. Superman's inability to make a commitment to Lois is similar to the narcissism common to schizophrenics. In turn:

The schizoid split within Superman symbolizes a basic split within the American psyche. Americans are split like Superman, alienated from their selves and bitter about the disparity between the theory that they are in control of their own lives and the reality of their powerlessness and weakness.
Clark's attraction to Lois, Berger suggests, is used to further symbolize the split between Kal-El's two personalities.

Two other sources on Superman explain his relationship with Lois according to Freudian psychology. The Great Superman Book is an encyclopedia of his adventures in the comic books between 1938 and 1965. Fleisher structures the book as though he were writing the biography of a real person. Thus, he analyses the relationships between men and women in Superman in terms of the character's personality and psychology. The major drawback is that Fleisher discusses Lois and Superman's relationship only from Superman's point of view, depriving the reader of any insight into the portrayal of Lois Lane. Both Fleisher and Lottermann interpret Superman in terms of its message concerning male identity. Both interpretations note that Superman sometimes expresses hostility toward the women in his life. Both authors analyze the comics in terms of the title character's Oedipal conflict. According to this interpretation, the infant Kal-El (Superman's real name) was traumatized by his mother's refusal to escape to Earth with her son and her preference for dying on Krypton with her husband. Kal-El rejects Lois Lane when he is Superman because he subconsciously believes that his desires caused his mother's death. However, by pursuing Lois in his Clark Kent identity, Kal-El is free to express his desire, even as Lois rejects him:

Indeed, Superman courts the rejections, for this neurotic drama of courtship and inevitable rejection is, for Superman, a reenactment of his childhood rejection by his mother. At the same time, Superman has the "last laugh" on Lois, for he knows
that Clark Kent is secretly Superman. By having the last laugh on Lois, Superman expresses his contempt for her, and, by extension, his contempt toward his mother for having rejected him.\textsuperscript{32}

Whatever the reason for the hero's hostility toward women, Supermans popularity is often viewed as resulting from the title character's representation of the perfect hero. According to one of the writers for the comics, "Clark is the klutz within us. Superman is the epitome of what we all wish we could be."\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Italics added} Such an interpretation discusses Superman as though its audience consists only of male readers or as though its impact on female readers would necessarily be the same as for male readers. Such an interpretation overlooks the fact that female readers may very well view the story from the perspective of the female protagonist, Lois Lane.

If Superman actually is "the epitome of what the ideal man should be," the depiction of the woman who loves him should indicate how a woman is expected to respond to that ideal. Lois Lane's response has been found wanting, both within the stories and by outside sources. Commentators on the Superman legend have frequently criticized her for being too ambitious and too mean to Clark Kent. In The World Encyclopedia of Comics, the best-known reference work on comics art, Lois is described as

nothing more than a bitch—a conniving, self-seeking, self-serving, egotistical reporter with few ethics and fewer morals. She was not your typical girl-next-door, apple pie woman you'd like to marry. Perhaps the greatest example of her viciousness was her hatred of Superman's alter-ego, Clark Kent.\textsuperscript{34} She rarely missed an opportunity to degrade or humiliate him.
These criticisms of Lois Lane's behavior would suggest that previous analysis of Superman has assumed Kal-El's contempt for Lois is acceptable and appropriate. Although Lois Lane is virtually alone among Clark Kent's colleagues in suspecting that Clark might secretly be the Man of Steel, it is Lois rather than Perry White or Jimmy Olsen who is criticized for not seeing through the disguise. To some commentators, her failure either to prove conclusively that Clark is Superman or to accept Clark as a normal human being is evidence of Lois' inadequacy. This attitude is apparent in Kluger's comment regarding the reason for Clark's mild-mannered persona: "He Superman was testing Lois Lane. But she, the dumb bitch, never got the picture; she was unworthy of him."35 The hostility expressed by both Horn and Kluger in their descriptions of Lois Lane would seem to indicate that for some readers at least the identification with Clark Kent's persona is so great that they cannot understand the story from Lois Lane's point of view.

The commentaries of Fleisher, Lottermann, Horn and Kluger merely discuss the characters' personalities without taking into account the connection between the world of the comics and the world of the readers. However, another perspective draws a clear parallel between character development and social norms. Writing in Comics Feature, a journal for comic book collectors, O'Connell focuses on the relationship between the content of the comics and attitudes in the real world. Her thesis is that "as the original four color exemplar of the ideal American man, Superman reflects the anxiety about women
of society at large as well as of individual male writers, editors and readers.” O’Connell discusses several stories concerning the relationship between Superman and Lois (or Superman and other women), showing how the “double standard” has applied in comic books. Although Superman has frequently pursued other women, Lois’ interest in other men (including Clark Kent) has been portrayed as “fickleness” and she has always been made to suffer for her “disloyalty.” Even when a clear monogamous commitment is made between Superman and Lois in the 1970s, the character of television anchorwoman Lana Lang continues to represent the empty-headed female whose true desire is for the notoriety attached to being Mrs. Superman. O’Connell comments on the attitude toward women which this portrayal reveals:

The comic creators’ fear of and contempt for women, as well as their paradoxical attraction to them despite these feelings of dread, are the real reasons for the Man of Steel’s frequent lapses into behavior more appropriate to a Cad of Steel—behavior which is rarely condemned or even regarded as particularly out of the ordinary by the other characters in the comics, even the women who are hurt by it.

The contempt toward women expressed by the authors and artists of the comics, O’Connell suggests, is reflective of attitudes common within patriarchal culture:

The comics creators’ distrustful ambivalence toward women, and the readers’ unruffled acceptance of this ambivalence and the bizarre ways in which it is expressed by the action of the comics, are in turn a reflection of what has traditionally been the generally accepted view of women in society. This view holds that women are fundamentally unfathomable and other, unstable and irrational creatures whose narrow thought processes are ultimately fearfully alien, determined by factors totally different from those that motivate men, who are more fully rational and thus more fully human.
O'Connell's interpretation of Superman's contempt for Lois as symptomatic of attitudes toward women in the real world relates the psychological analysis of the characters done by authors such as Fleischer and Lottermann to cultural values. O'Connell states that the creators of the comics are not particularly neurotic; they are simply creating an image which reflects society's views regarding women. By focusing on the character of Lois rather than Superman, O'Connell criticizes the behavior which the previous authors took for granted as acceptable for "the epitome of what the ideal man should be." It should also be noted that O'Connell is the only author to consider the Clark-Lois-Superman triangle from Lois Lane's point of view and to question the characterization of an award-winning investigative reporter who remains attached to a man who will not even tell her who he really is. In short, O'Connell is the only author who looks at the Superman legend from Lois Lane's perspective.

A fresh analysis of Superman, looking at the comic book from Lois Lane's point of view, could provide an understanding of what the story says to and about women. Given the conflict expressed in the story between Lois and Kal-El, between the conflicting demands of Lois' role as a reporter and her role as "Superman's girlfriend," it is likely that such a study would discover that Lois Lane is a woman in continual conflict not so much with the stories' villains as with her culture, her lover and herself.
From this literature survey, it appears that researchers have barely begun the task of systematically studying the images of women which the comics have presented, nor have researchers as yet carefully analyzed what cultural values have been expressed through those images. The current study, by analyzing changes in one character's image over a forty-eight-year period, begins to fill in some of these gaps and more clearly show the interplay between the popular beliefs of an era and its mass entertainment.
Notes--Chapter Two


6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., p. 28.


9 Ibid., p. 28.


24 Turner, p. 32.


26 Chmaj, pp. 313-318.


32 Fleisher, p. 409.


37 Ibid., p. 66.

38 Ibid.
Chapter Three

Methodology

Lois Lane has been consistently featured in the Superman line of comic books since 1938. She regularly appears in as many as five different comic books each month. Lois Lane's longevity and prominence provide the researcher with an excellent focus for the study of the relationship between character development and social norms. At the same time, however, the vast number of stories featuring Lois Lane must be organized into a manageable and reliable data base.

This study begins with the selection of a sample of comic book stories spanning the forty-eight year history of Superman. The stories included in the sample are then organized according to four key areas in the depiction of Lois Lane. The results of this content analysis are grouped into four chronological eras. For each of these eras, one story is selected as the representative anecdote and evaluated in greater detail. The content analysis therefore isolates patterns of characterization while study of the representative anecdote provides understanding of how changes in that characterization are incorporated into the narrative.

Content Analysis

In Women and the Mass Media, Butler and Paisley comment on media as a source for understanding social norms:
Social researchers have long been attracted to the media as mirrors of society because of the openness and permanence of the media record. Content is pivotal; it is a social artifact in itself, and it reflects on institutional and audience variables that we want to know more about than we can find out directly.

This study begins with a content analysis of a sample of comic book stories published between 1938 and 1986. What happens to Lois Lane in these stories? How are her career as a journalist, her romance with Superman/Clark and her relationships with other women portrayed? What image of Lois Lane is presented through the artwork of the comics?

Lois Lane has appeared in almost every comic book published by DC Comics at some time. However, she has been a consistently featured character in the following: Action Comics (which began publishing in 1938), Superman (which began publishing in 1939), Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane (1957-1974), Superman Family (1974-1982) and The Daring New Adventures of Supergirl (1983-1984). Superman Family began publication after the cancellation of several Superman-related comic books in 1974. Superman Family essentially replaced Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane as the publication featuring Lois Lane solo stories. Similarly Lois Lane stories were published for a year in The Daring New Adventures of Supergirl following the cancellation of Superman Family.

For the sample, five stories from Action Comics and five stories from Superman have been selected for each of the five decades during which they have been published (1938-1947, 1948-1957, 1958-1967, 1968-1977, 1978-1986). Five stories from Lois Lane from 1958-1967, three stories from Lois Lane and two stories from Superman Family from 1968-1977 and four stories from Superman Family and one story from Supergirl
from 1978-1986 are also part of the sample.² (Comic book stories run from eight to twenty-four pages in length.) A complete listing of the stories to be included in the sample appears as Appendix A.

Because the focus of this study is on the development of Lois Lane's character, criteria for selection of stories for the content analysis relate primarily to her appearance as an active participant in the action of the story. Some stories, such as "Man or Superman?" (the first story in which Lois Lane attempts to prove that Clark Kent is secretly Superman), were immediately chosen because of their pivotal importance in the character's development. Selection for the other stories in the sample was based on consensus regarding whether Lois played a major role in the story. The author and one of the coders of the content analysis, both of whom have been collecting Superman-related comic books for several years, made the final judgment as to which stories would be used in the sample.

The content analysis is divided into the following categories: 1) depictions of Lois Lane's performance as a reporter, 2) depictions of her romantic involvements, 3) depictions of her relationships with other women, 4) visual depictions of Lois on the comic book's cover and 5) visual depictions of Lois on the first page of the comic book stories. These categories enable us to judge differences in the characterization of Lois Lane over time with regard to her professional role and her personal relationships.
Since the visual impact of comics is such a central part of the medium, the content analysis looks at the covers and "splash pages" (the first page of the story, designed to increase reader interest) to record what changes appear in the visual depiction of Lois Lane over the forty-eight year period being studied. Categories for this section of the content analysis include:
1) whether Lois is depicted in the foreground (as a central character in the picture) or in the background; 2) how her physical appearance is depicted (whether, for example, she is pictured as wearing a low-cut or revealing outfit); 3) what she is depicted as doing in the picture (taking aggressive action, crying or screaming, etc.); and 4) what emotions she seems to be expressing.

As previously stated, the categories within the content analysis are being used primarily to determine patterns in the actual portrayal of Lois Lane's personal and professional relationships. After coders were selected, a pretest was conducted to ensure the clarity of category items. Coders were asked to analyze one story, and category items were revised as necessary based on the results of this initial test. Similarly, content validity can be established based on the coders' ability to use these items to catalog what happens in the stories.
Representative Anecdote

Content analysis, however, is only one of a variety of methods which may increase our understanding of the link between cultural values and popular culture. To fully interpret the link between the more passive Lois Lane of 1958 and the cultural attitudes expressed by her passivity, careful rhetorical analysis is necessary. Rhetorical criticism can be especially effective in providing new insights into the social values expressed through the mass media. Dramatistic analysis in particular is helpful in explaining the relationship which develops not only between the artist and the audience but between the audience and a fictional character as well. With regard to the study of popular culture as cultural artifact, Berger notes the special quality of the relationship which develops between the audience and the fictional character whose history that audience has been following for a number of years. These characters "have a 'history,'" so to speak—and their activities become more meaningful the more we are acquainted with this history....We sort of 'know them,' and they become part of us, in a way." As we follow their adventures, it is as if we are friends with Lois Lane, Indiana Jones, Mary Richards or Joanie Caucus. We have a set of expectations regarding how they will respond to a particular situation. We know the kinds of problems they are likely to encounter. Even though the comic book's Lois Lane and television's Mary Richards are both single women with careers in journalism, we would be surprised if Mary were to encounter the type of problem Lois
traditionally faces. Our expectations for that character would be radically altered if Mary fell out of a helicopter or was kidnapped by an enraged criminal scientist such as Lex Luthor. Our expectations for these characters help their creators to communicate with us effectively, since it is partially through these characters that consubstantiality between artist and audience is achieved.

This study examines how Lois Lane has developed since 1938 as the various writers, editors and artists of the Superman comic books attempt to tie expectations for the character to evolving cultural values. The Burkean method of the representative anecdote is used to analyze the primary messages concerning women's social roles implicit in the comic books.

Burke maintains that dramatism "involves the search for a 'representative anecdote,' to be used as a form in conformity with which the vocabulary is constructed." According to Barry Brummett, ...the Burkean critic looks not for literal stories but for story forms....Burke argues for an 'essentializing strategy' in criticism, which includes discovering the dramatic essence of a discourse. When the critic identifies a dramatic form that underlies and can thus represent a discourse, the critic has named the representative anecdote. Discovery of the representative anecdote will lead the researcher to the prevailing themes and messages of the discourse. Thus, in studying a fictional character such as Lois Lane, the first step might be to find the representative anecdote at the heart of her adventures. In the case of a character such as Lois, whose fictional history consists of almost fifty years of comic book stories, the
Burkean method of the representative anecdote is doubly useful. By focusing on those stories which represent the essence of the depiction of this character, the researcher can organize forty-eight years of comic book material into a manageable data base.

To discover the representative anecdote, the critic must be able to recognize abstract dramatic forms. He/she asks: "If this were story or a play, what would the bare bones or abstract outline of the story be, what is the plot and what pattern does it follow? who are the actors, are they fools, heroes, villains? what is the setting, what are the props, what types of actions take place?"

The critic's decision regarding what constitutes the representative anecdote can be tested in two ways. First, the drama must represent the motives found in other elements of the discourse. For example, in a 1968 issue of Lois Lane, Lois breaks up with Superman because she feels humiliated. By the end of the story, however, she goes back to him (despite the possibility of more humiliation). Lois' behavior in this story is atypical of the stories of that era, so this particular story could not serve as the representative anecdote. On the other hand, in a 1968 issue of Superman, Clark pretends to commit suicide because Lois does not love him. This gives Superman several opportunities to criticize Lois for neglecting Clark. When he has decided that she is properly contrite, Clark reappears and explains away his "death." This story, in which Lois is punished for her behavior, is much more representative of the
type of stories which appeared during the 1950s and 1960s. Thus, the representativetype of stories which appeared during the 1950s and 1960s. Thus, the representative anecdote expressed in this story--"Superman teaches Lois a well-deserved lesson"--could be stated as the representative anecdote for this era.

The second test for the representative anecdote is that it incorporate most of the terms of the discourse. The critic attempts to relate "all incidents to one organizing principle that prevails throughout the diversity of detail." If most of the stories fall into the category of "teaching Lois a lesson," the choice of this theme as a representative anecdote is justified.

The results of the content analysis reveal four distinct periods of character development. The first period begins with the publication of Action Comics in 1938 and continues through the World War II era, ending in 1947. During the second period, between 1948 and 1967, the original conception of Lois Lane as an independent, dynamic reporter became diluted. More attention is given to her personal life, her attempts to persuade Superman to marry her and his intervention in her work.

In the first and second eras, the basic image of the character changes but her situation remains constant throughout. In both the third and fourth eras, however, there is a narrative progression which alters the character's circumstances. The third period, for example, from 1968 to 1982, marks a change in the portrayal of Lois' relationship with Clark/Superman. Although Lois still makes
sacrifices in the name of aiding her boyfriend, she also receives confirmation of his love for her. The progress of their relationship in Superman becomes a subplot running through the action stories. Finally, the era beginning in 1983 has marked the severing of the relationships between Lois and Superman and Lois and Clark Kent.

The rhetorical criticism will center around one story for each era which forms the representative anecdote for that time period.

Walsh emphasizes the power of popular culture as a metaphor which expresses cultural values:

This metaphoric mode can express a variety of sentiments: those of support, acquiescence, submission, distrust, or defiance of mainstream mores and values....It is the task of the cultural analyst to interpret the range of social meanings within this symbolic mode.9

Analysis of the representative anecdotes provides a way of accomplishing this task. Analysis and comparison of the different manner in which the narrative presents Lois Lane in each era can reveal the values implied in the comic books, thus increasing our understanding of how popular culture is related to social norms.
Notes--Chapter Three


2 Publication of *Lois Lane* ceased with the October-November 1974 issue. From 1975-1977, the "Lois Lane" series appeared in *Superman Family*. Therefore, the sample for "Lois Lane" stories from 1968-1977 is divided between stories appearing in *Lois Lane* and in *Superman Family*. A similar division is employed for the continuation of the "Lois Lane" series in *Supergirl* following the 1982 cancellation of *Superman Family*.


6 Ibid., p. 4.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., p. 5.

Chapter Four
Content Analysis

The results of the content analysis (see Appendix B) reveal interesting changes and parallels concerning the portrayal of Lois Lane during the four eras. The character can be seen moving from a state of independence and concern with her career through an era of greater passivity and concern with romance and marriage. By the late 1960s, the concern with romance is combined with a revised portrayal of Lois as a competent reporter and an active, independent woman. After 1983, following the end of her relationship with Superman, Lois' pursuit of an important assignment is again emphasized.

1938-1947

Superman first appeared in Action Comics in 1938. Several sources maintain that the character's immediate success was related to cultural factors of the time. Still feeling the effects of the Depression, the American public eagerly responded to the image of an invulnerable hero. Superman and his incredible array of powers provided comic book readers with a heroic figure who could miraculously rescue others from any difficulty. Moreover, he was what the average person wished to be: invincible, powerful, able to overcome whatever obstacles appeared in his path.¹

43
Results of the content analysis indicate that this all-powerful hero was originally accompanied by an active, career-oriented woman. As the only member of the Superman supporting cast to be included in this original version, Lois Lane played a central role in the stories of the first decade. More than an observer of events in these tales, she is frequently the agent who initiates the action.

1. Work: The majority of stories (seven) included in the content analysis for 1938-1947 deal with Lois Lane's pursuit of a journalistic "scoop." Lois' assignments, for the most part, begin with her editor making the initial assignment. In addition, Lois discovers two assignments on her own and steals another assignment from Clark Kent.

The type of assignment Lois receives from her editor during this period is not always the kind associated with female reporters. Most of the assignments Lois investigates during this period deal with crime, although traditionally women reporters received human interest assignments more frequently than they have reported crime news. On the one occasion when the editor does refuse to send Lois on an assignment because it is "too dangerous for a woman," Lois reacts by stealing the assignment from Clark Kent.

While Lois generally is not content to simply watch events unfold during this period (she does so twice), she also does not go undercover, lie or misrepresent a situation to get her scoop. In five of the seven stories which deal with her career, Lois conducts interviews to bring in her scoop.
Despite her active pursuit of her assignments, Lois fails more often than she succeeds. In three cases, she fails because of Clark/Superman's manipulation. Fleisher has described such an outcome as representing the classic Superman story:

...even in the journalistic arena, Superman makes a fool of Lois and thereby expresses his contempt for her. Typically, the pattern of reportorial rivalry is as follows: (a) when the action begins, Clark Kent feigns cowardice, thereby arousing Lois Lane's scorn and disgust, so that he can slip away and change to Superman; (b) with Kent having fled the scene, Lois remains in the thick of the action, risking her life to get the big story, invariably committing some recklessly daring act which makes it necessary for Superman to come to her rescue; and (c) returning to the Daily Planet with her exclusive, first-hand view of the headline-making events, she finds, to her astonishment and chagrin, that Kent has somehow managed to beat her into print with the story. She fails because of the manipulations of cub reporter Jimmy Olsen in one story. She succeeds on her own in three stories.

Relatively few comments are made by any characters regarding Lois' ability as a reporter. She herself expresses confidence in her ability on two occasions and complains about the sexist nature of an assignment once. Other characters express admiration for her reporting skills in three stories, one asserts that she cannot do the job because she is a woman, and another asserts that her success depends on Superman's aid.

2. Romance: The results of the content analysis indicate that the traditional Superman-Lois-Clark triangle develops during the first decade of Superman. In these stories, Lois prefers Superman to Clark, and "although Superman rejects Lois as Superman, he pursues her slavishly in his role as Clark Kent."
However, even though she clearly prefers Superman to Clark, Lois has relatively little to say about the Man of Steel during this era. She once states that she loves him, once expresses a desire for marriage or a more serious relationship and once expresses a desire to know his secret identity. However, she has more to say about Clark Kent. She ridicules him four times, yet expresses her admiration and friendship for him twice. Only once does she indicate that she thinks he is Superman. She takes virtually no action toward either of Kal-El's identities during this era. Once she tries to discover Superman's secret identity. In one story she does rescue Clark Kent, but that rescue takes place in a dream sequence.

Superman has more to say about Lois than she does about him. Whereas Lois' statements regarding the Man of Steel are positive, he ridicules her in three stories and denies being interested in her in another. He expresses the need to protect her twice and indicates a sense of friendship for her only once. The only kind of action he takes toward her is to rescue her, which he does in seven of the ten stories for this decade.

While Superman is rescuing Lois and ridiculing her, Clark Kent is expressing his admiration and friendship for her in three stories. He also expresses desire to marry Lois in one story and in another states that he is jealous of Superman. Clark is much more passive than his alter-ego, rescuing Lois on only one occasion.
3. Women: Lois Lane lives and works in a male-oriented environment. Very few other women appear in the stories, and Lois is the only female recurring character. The other women who do appear in the stories are interview subjects whose professions are not mentioned. Lois and these women are all friendly toward one another.

4. Cover: The comic book covers during this decade rarely portrayed the events of the stories. Instead the covers were representations of scenes of Superman displaying his strength, frequently by fighting Nazi or Japanese soldiers. Such cover drawings did not generally include Lois. She appears on only two of the ten covers during this era.

On one cover, Lois appears in the foreground as a central character in the drawing. On the other cover, she is in the background. In both cases she is a spectator, watching Superman in action. She appears to be happy in both drawings. She does not fit the stereotype of the scantily-clad woman whose physical features are exaggerated in order to sell magazines. Her physical appearance is not emphasized in either drawing.

5. Splash page: Lois is featured on the first page of the comic book stories more often than she appears on the cover, appearing on five splash pages. In addition, she usually appears in the foreground of the splash page. In four of the five drawings, she is in the foreground. The only similarity between the covers and the splash pages is that Lois' physical appearance is not emphasized in either.
She is seen in a wide variety of situations in the splash pages, appearing as a spectator only once. In the other drawings, she is seen as being threatened, crying, working and comforting another character. The emotions she expresses in these drawings vary as well. She is seen as frightened, sad, confused, happy and angry.

1948-1967

During the second and third decades of the publication of Superman, the depiction of Lois Lane changed significantly. She was portrayed less often as a reporter and more often as "Superman's girlfriend." She became less active and more traditionally feminine. She also began to openly exhibit jealousy toward other women who were involved with Superman.

1. Work: Of those stories which deal with Lois' career, she discovers the assignment on her own as many times (four) as she is given an assignment by her editor. In another two stories, Lois steals another reporter's assignment. Other stories do not specify the genesis of the assignment.

During this second period, Lois more frequently receives less dangerous (and less prestigious) assignments than previously. Between 1948 and 1967 Lois receives three types of assignments: human interest (seven), crime (six) and items which are specifically about Superman (five). Thus, the focus of her career is moving toward the type of assignment that is more traditional for women reporters. In addition, in writing about Superman, Lois' work and her personal life
overlap. As the emphasis on her relationship with Superman increases, so does the number of instances in which Lois receives assignments that put her in direct contact with the Man of Steel. The same person who dominates Lois' emotional life is also her primary source of news, making her 'doubly dependent' on him.

The method of reporting that Lois uses undergoes a dramatic change during this period. Between 1938 and 1947, Lois was primarily involved in interviewing. Between 1948 and 1967, however, she is merely observing events three times more often (in twelve stories) than she is interviewing (in four stories). She also goes undercover, assuming a role other than that of reporter, four times and uses some form of deception to get the information she needs twice.

Lois is actually more successful in her career during this era than she had been previously. Her success in covering these assignments can be attributed to her own skill in three cases and to Superman's intervention in another three instances. In two cases, she decides on ethical grounds not to publish information she possesses. She fails to get the information she needs in only two cases. In one instance, she fails on her own. In another, Superman's manipulation of the situation makes it impossible for Lois to succeed. In six stories, the outcome of Lois' assignment is not specified, indicating that Lois' work is not considered a central feature of those stories.

None of the other characters express any opinion concerning Lois' journalistic ability between 1948 and 1967. Lois herself expresses
confidence in her ability on four occasions. She doubts herself once and on another occasion expresses the desire to abandon her career for marriage. In one story she discusses her social responsibility as a member of the press.

2. Romance: Lois' relationships with Clark and Superman and her desire for marriage become a central topic of the stories during this period. Whereas Lois made more statements about Clark than Superman between 1938 and 1947, in more than two-thirds of the stories in the second era, Lois makes some statement about Superman. These statements center around her desire for marriage (six), expressions of admiration or friendship (five) and love (three). In three of the stories, she expresses the desire to know his secret identity. She expresses jealousy toward other women's relationships with Superman twice.

Although her expressions of affection for Superman increase, Lois' statements about Clark Kent remain contradictory. Her most frequent response toward Clark remains ridicule (in seven of the twenty-five stories). However, she expresses admiration or friendship for Clark five times and once states that she loves him. On three occasions, she states her suspicion that Clark is secretly Superman.

Although she is less active in her pursuit of her career, during this period Lois is more active in her relationships with Superman and Clark. She rescues Superman on three occasions and twice attempts to discover Superman's secret identity. The rest of her actions regarding Superman and Clark during this period involve marriage in
some way. On two occasions, she attempts to avoid situations which might lead to marriage with Superman and once tries to avoid marriage to Clark. In one story, she tries to maneuver Superman into proposing and in another situation she tries to help him avoid marriage to another woman.

Superman no longer ridicules Lois during this period. Instead, the majority (seven) of his comments center around his need to protect her from danger. He expresses admiration and friendship for Lois three times. Although he never says that he loves her, he does express a desire for marriage in one story. On another occasion he states that he is jealous of Clark's relationship with Lois. Superman denies any interest in Lois only once.

Superman is still primarily involved with Lois as her rescuer. In addition to the nine stories in which Superman rescues Lois, there are two stories in which he attempts to prevent her involvement with Clark Kent, two stories in which he proposes to Lois, two stories in which he attempts to avoid marriage to her and one story in which he attempts to "teach Lois a well-deserved lesson."

Clark Kent remains more passive than Superman. He expresses admiration for Lois twice. He also expresses the need to protect her twice. He ridicules her once and once says that he wishes to marry her. Clark only takes some form of action regarding Lois twice. On one occasion he attempts to punish her and on another he attempts to prove to her that he really is Superman.
3. Women: Lois continues to be the only woman in the majority of *Superman* stories. However, the character of television reporter Lana Lang appears in three stories, as does one other female co-worker. Lana and the other co-worker appear in four stories; Lois' younger sister Lucy Lane appears once; female characters who are described as Lois' friends appear on two occasions; and three female characters appear in capacities other than those of friend, co-worker or relative.

Three stories feature women who are newspaper or television reporters (including Lana); Lucy is a flight attendant; two women characters are homemakers; one woman is a receptionist; one is a criminal.

Other women express friendship toward Lois (three), jealousy of her relationship with Superman (two) and pity because she has never married (one). The behavior of other women toward Lois is friendly in six instances; on one occasion another woman asks Lois for help or advice. In three stories, other women (most frequently Lana Lang) take some form of hostile action against Lois.

Lois' statements about other women generally express jealousy (three) or envy (one). She expresses friendship toward another woman only on one occasion. In sharp contrast to what she says about other women, however, are her actions. Five of her actions toward other women are friendly, whereas three of those actions indicate her jealousy.
4. Cover: Lois appears on nine of the twenty-five covers for this era. She appears in the foreground, as a central character, in all but one of these covers. Her physical appearance is emphasized on only one cover.

She is seen in a variety of situations: twice as a spectator, twice crying; twice taking aggressive action; twice getting married; once comforting or aiding another character; and once doing her job as a reporter.

Lois also expresses a variety of emotions on these covers: four times, she is sad or depressed; she is startled twice; she appears jealous once; she appears confused once; she appears happy once; and she appears angry once.

5. Splash page: Lois appears on eighteen of the twenty-five splash pages for this era. In thirteen of those drawings, she is in the foreground and is a central figure in the drawing. Her physical appearance is emphasized in only one of the drawings, whereas in two other splash pages her appearance is altered in some bizarre manner.

The role Lois most frequently plays in these drawings is that of spectator (ten). At other times she is seen crying (three), being threatened (one), taking aggressive action (one), getting married (one), comforting another character (one) and reporting (one).

In six of the drawings, Lois appears startled by what is going on around her. She also seems sad or depressed in four drawings, confused in three, happy in three, jealous in one and angry in one.
1968-1982

During this era, the emphasis shifts to the romances between Superman and Lois and Lois and Clark Kent. At the same time, however, Lois becomes visibly less passive than in the previous era.

1. Work: Most of the stories in this era do not mention Lois' work. In those which do, however, she discovers her assignment on her own as often (four times) as she receives an assignment from her editor. The genesis of the other four assignments is not given.

Lois continues to work primarily on human interest assignments (six). In addition, she covers four crime assignments, one assignment relating to a natural disaster and one which initially concerns Superman. Thus, although the majority of Lois' assignments continue to be in the human interest category, she is once again spending a substantial portion of her time on crime reporting. The fact that she works on only one assignment which initially relates to Superman also indicates a growing separation between her personal and professional lives.

Although still an observer of events in five of her assignments, Lois also plays more active roles at times. She goes undercover to investigate three different assignments, conducts interviews in four cases. Twice she uses deception to further her investigation.

Lois gets her scoop in the majority of cases, although often with Superman's help. Her success is due to Superman's intervention in four instances and to her own efforts in another four cases. Lois only fails
to bring in two of her assignments. In one case her failure is due to Superman's manipulation; in the other instance, she is to blame for her failure.

Lois Lane expresses self-confidence in her ability as a reporter three times and discusses her social responsibility as a member of the press in two stories. She expresses desire for a better assignment twice, doubts her ability as a reporter once and seems defensive about her ability to succeed without Superman's aid once. She is therefore more critical of herself than her colleagues are. Even though the majority of stories do not feature characters reflecting on Lois' ability, there is a noticeable change from the previous era when no such comments were made. The seven comments made by other characters regarding Lois' competence are all positive.

2. Romance: Between 1968 and 1982, Lois becomes actively involved first in a romance with Superman and then with Clark. After she breaks up with Clark, she becomes involved with Superman again. The vast majority of Lois' statements regarding Superman are positive. She states in six different stories that she is in love with Superman and in five stories she expresses friendship or admiration for him. She also states her desire for marriage or a more serious relationship in two stories. In one story, when Superman appears to be dying, Lois expresses pity for him. She states her desire to know his secret identity twice and denies any interest in Superman on three occasions.
Despite her increasingly close relationship to Clark in several stories published during the 1970s, Lois continues to ridicule him on five occasions. However, she only denies being interested in him once. She expresses friendship and admiration for Clark four times; she also states her belief that Clark is Superman in four separate stories. Lois states that she loves Clark in three stories and expresses a desire to marry Clark in one story.

Lois comes to Superman's rescue three times. She also makes three attempts to learn his secret identity. She attempts to maneuver Superman into marriage twice. She rescues Clark once, attempts to avoid marrying Superman once and once attacks Clark while under the influence of a rare space virus.

Superman expresses admiration or friendship for Lois five times. In four stories he indicates jealousy of characters (other than Clark) who become involved with Lois. He also expresses the need to protect Lois from danger in four stories. He states that he loves Lois three times and also expresses a desire for marriage three times. He criticizes her behavior toward Clark once.

Superman rescues Lois in eight stories. He prevents her involvement with another man once, proposes once, attempts to avoid marriage once, attempts to punish Lois once and goes to her for help once.

Clark expresses a desire for marriage or a more serious relationship six times. He states that he loves Lois three times and
also expresses jealousy toward characters other than Superman three times. He ridicules Lois twice and twice expresses a need to protect her. He expresses friendship for Lois twice.

During this period, Clark proposes to Lois twice and attempts to punish her twice. He prevents her involvement with someone other than Superman once and encourages her involvement with someone other than Superman once.

3. Women: Lois continues to live and work in a male-dominated environment during this period, especially during the 1970s when the character of Lana Lang is temporarily written out of the comics' story line. Since Lana is the female character who is most often hostile toward Lois, her departure significantly changes the kind of relationships between women which the comics portray. Those few women who do appear in the stories following Lana's departure are more often friendly toward Lois. Jealousy over Superman is rarely portrayed.

Lois' female co-workers are portrayed in five stories. Three other stories include female characters who are sources of news for Lois. Lois' female relatives appear in two stories. One story features female characters who are Lois' friends rather than relatives or co-workers.

Three stories feature women who are journalists or broadcasters. Two stories feature female superheroes. Lucy Lane appears as a flight attendant in one story, and only one story includes a woman who is a homemaker. Other stories include a female high school student, a model and members of a roller derby team.
Other women express friendship for Lois in four stories. Female characters express jealousy of Lois' relationship to Superman in three stories. In a story set in the future, Lois' daughter states her desire to become a newspaper reporter like her mother. In another story, a female character is suspicious of the undercover role Lois has assumed in getting a story.

Six stories portray women behaving in a friendly manner toward Lois. Two women give Lois help or advice. In four other stories, however, other women are hostile toward Lois.

Lois herself expresses friendship for other women characters in three stories and admiration in another. In one story she expresses suspicion of a woman's involvement in a murder case.

Lois' behavior toward other women is friendly in five cases. She asks for help or advice from another woman character in one story and gives advice in another. She behaves in a hostile manner toward female characters in two stories.

4. Covers: Lois appears on sixteen of the twenty-five covers included in this part of the sample. Besides appearing on more covers than in the previous decades, Lois appears as a central figure in eleven of these drawings. Both the frequency and the prominence of Lois' appearances on these covers indicate the increasing importance given to the character and her relationship with Kal-El in the comics.

On nine covers, Lois' physical appearance is not emphasized in any manner. Although the majority of covers do not emphasize Lois' appearance, the seven which do are a significant increase over the
previous eras. On four covers her appearance is deformed or altered in some manner. On the other three she wears a low-cut or revealing outfit which calls attention to her body.

Lois is a spectator on ten covers. On three covers she is acting in an aggressive manner, on two she is crying, and on another she is getting married.

Lois appears to be happy in six drawings. She is angry in four of the drawings and frightened in another four. She appears sad on one cover and startled on another.

5. Splash page: Lois appears on fourteen of the twenty-five splash pages. She is a central character in twelve of these drawings.

Eleven of the splash pages do not emphasize Lois' physical appearance in any manner. Her appearance is deformed or altered in some manner in two of these drawings, and she wears a low-cut gown in one. Thus, changes in her physical appearance are not emphasized as much inside the comics as on the cover, indicating that such alterations were used primarily to attract an audience.

Lois is a spectator in five drawings. She is being threatened in three, is taking aggressive action in three, she is getting married or is embracing someone in three, and is working as a reporter in one.

Lois appears sad in four drawings. She is happy in three, angry in three, frightened in two, startled in one, confused in one and sleepy in one.
1983-1986

Although this part of the sample represents only the last three years and contains only five stories, it marks a significant change in the characterization of Lois Lane. Her relationship with Superman ends at the beginning of this period, and her attempt to put her life back together after the break-up becomes a continuing subplot in Superman and Action Comics.

1. Work: Four stories from this period involve Lois' work. Three deal with an assignment she receives from her editor, and one concerns an assignment she discovers on her own. The type of work Lois does also changes drastically as Lois works on a major assignment involving international politics throughout this period. She is depicted conducting interviews twice and goes undercover once. She is portrayed as observing events only once.

Despite the increased emphasis on her career and her more active role, however, both the stories which depict the outcome of Lois' assignment show her failing. Furthermore, the failure is portrayed as being her own fault for giving up on the assignment while trying to work out her problems with Superman.

Nevertheless, Lois expresses a positive attitude toward her career four times during this period. She also expresses the desire for a better assignment once and once states that she will no longer put her relationship with Superman ahead of her career.
Two other characters give their opinions regarding Lois' ability. Her editor expresses confidence in Lois, while Lana Lang criticizes Lois for worrying about her relationship with Superman instead of her assignment.

2. Romance: Lois' statements regarding her feelings toward Superman waver during this time. Although she denies being interested in Superman in three stories, she also expresses her love for him twice. She says nothing about her feelings toward Clark during this era, nor does she take any action toward Clark or Superman after breaking off the romance.

Superman twice states that he does love Lois. In one story, however, he denies being interested in her. On another occasion, he resents what he considers to be criticism from Lois regarding how he uses his superpowers. The only action Superman takes toward Lois during this period is to agree to end the relationship.

Clark twice expresses his disapproval of Lois' decision to leave Superman, but he takes no action regarding Lois during this time.

3. Women: Two female characters besides Lois appear in four of the five stories from this era. These other female characters, Lana Lang and Jamie Gillis, are Lois' co-workers. Jamie is a photographer for the Daily Planet and Lana continues as a television anchorwoman.

In one story, Lana (who is by now romantically involved with Clark) expresses friendship toward Lois. In a later story, however, Lana indicates that she is still somewhat jealous of Lois' past
relationship with Superman. In that story, Lana acts jealous and
hostile toward Lois. By contrast, Jamie's behavior toward Lois is
friendly, and she helps Lois in one story.

Lois expresses jealousy toward Lana. Lois also admits envying
Lana's professional success after Lois brings in an exclusive story
which had originally been assigned to Lois. Her behavior toward Lana
expresses both jealousy and hostility, while her behavior toward Jamie
is friendly.

4. Cover: Lois does not appear on any of the comic book covers
from this era.

5. Splash page: Lois appears on three of the five splash pages
from this era. She is featured character in two of these drawings.
Her physical appearance is not emphasized in any of these drawings.

Lois appears as a spectator on one splash page. She is seen
working on one and is confronting Superman in the other. She appears
happy on two of the splash pages and is confused on the third.

Conclusion

The content analysis shows differences in the portrayal of Lois
Lane between 1938 and 1986 in a number of areas. Lois is initially
portrayed as highly motivated and primarily concerned with her career.
She seeks out and receives nontraditional assignments (such as crime
reporting) and is highly active in her pursuit of those assignments.
In most cases, however, she fails to bring in her assignment due to
Kal-El's manipulation. Between 1948 and 1967, her career is not as
central to the outcome of Superman as previously, indicated both by the number of stories which do not deal with her journalistic assignments or which do not relate the outcome of those assignments. In addition, she is noticeably more passive at work, observing events more often than she conducts interviews. However, this era features a significant increase in the number of stories in which Lois succeeds in bring in the scoop (often with Superman's assistance). Such outcomes may indicate reinforcement of Lois' increasingly passive nature and her move away from crime news and into human interest reporting.

Between 1968 and 1982, Lois' career features in a smaller number of stories, but that era is moving back toward the more aggressive reporter of the first era. Lois is still working primarily on human interest assignments, although the amount of crime news she reports is also increasing. She also is moving away from the passive observation of events which marked the second era. Succeeding in the majority of cases, Lois is also the recipient of an increasing number of favorable comments from other characters in the stories. Following 1983, Lois embarks on a major foreign news assignment. Although she fails, she adopts a positive attitude and views the experience as the start of a new phase in her career.

Her romantic relationships with Clark and Superman also undergo significant changes during each of the four eras. Although there is little emphasis on romance in the first decade, the traditional
Clark-Lois-Superman triangle develops during that era. Clark claims to care for Lois, who ridicules him but is attracted to Superman, who ridicules her but frequently saves her life. During the second era, Lois' desire to marry the Man of Steel is apparent, while she both ridicules and expresses affection for Clark. Superman no longer ridicules Lois and continues to rescue her on numerous occasions.

Between 1968 and 1982, Lois is alternately involved with Superman and with Clark, even though she still ridicules Clark on occasion. Her relationship with Superman ends in 1983.

Lois is initially the only continuing female character in Superman. When other female characters do appear during the first decade, her behavior toward them is friendly. With the addition of the character Lana Lang after 1948, however, Lois is portrayed as possessing a certain amount of jealousy. In fact, the jealousy she expresses toward other women is greater than the amount of jealousy they express toward her, even though she is the one who is known as "Superman's girlfriend." Lana's departure from Superman for several years during the third decade marks a change in the portrayal of Lois' relationships with other women. Although fewer female characters appear in the stories after Lana's departure, there are fewer instances of jealousy and hostile behavior between women. Correspondingly, after 1983, Lois once again expresses jealousy toward Lana although she is friendly toward the only other female character appearing in the stories.
The depiction of Lois Lane on the covers and splash pages of the comics also reflects changes in emphasis. Lois’ depiction on the covers and splash pages during the first two eras is similar. She is rarely featured on the covers between 1938 and 1967, indicating that her presence was not a selling point for the comics. She appears more often on the splash page, as it is a representation of crucial events in the story. She is seen as an active participant in a variety of roles on those splash pages.

During the third era, Lois appears on the majority of covers. In addition, she is a central figure and for the first time there are instances in which her physical appearance is altered or in which she wears clothing which draws attention to her body. She also appears on the majority of splash pages during this era, although her physical appearance is not emphasized as often on the splash page as on the cover.

She no longer appears on the cover following her break-up with Superman in 1983. As her story becomes a separate subplot running in the Superman series, however, she does appear on a majority of splash pages.
Notes—Chapter Four


⁴ Ibid., p. 415.
Chapter Five
Rhetorical Criticism

Rhetorical criticism of comic books is complicated by the very element which makes the comics such a powerful cultural artifact—the combination of the visual image with the written text. The comic book uses both text and drawing to communicate. Thus, the methods employed in analyzing the rhetorical impact of comics must recognize how these elements work together to relay a message to the audience. An analysis which considers only one element cannot thoroughly examine the expression of social values found in the medium.

This chapter uses Burke's method of the representative anecdote for rhetorical analysis of the development of Lois Lane's character since 1938. As stated in Chapter Three, the representative anecdote makes use of one piece of discourse which the critic has established represents the major themes and elements of the discourse. Brummett has show this method's effectiveness in analyzing motion picture discourse. This study proposes the the representative anecdote can be applied to other forms of popular culture as well and is particularly suited to the analysis of media which rely on both visual and textual elements.

Of further importance to an appreciation of the comics' message is an understanding of those factors within the comic book industry which
have helped shape that industry's product. The output of Superman should be considered in terms of the industry as a whole in order to more fully examine the relationship of the comics medium to social norms. For example, the necessity of abiding by Comics Code Authority restrictions had a definite impact on the type of comics produced during the 1950s. And, in order to compete with the increasing popularity of Marvel Comics in the 1970s, DC Comics began to place more emphasis on continuing subplots and character flaws in its heroes.

This chapter is divided into four major sections, each section representing one of the four eras in Lois Lane's history. Each of these sections begins with a summary of the major developments in the comics industry during this era. This summary is followed by a discussion of the major events in the history of Superman for this era. A synopsis of the representative anecdote for that era is then given. Finally, this synopsis is followed by rhetorical analysis of the representative anecdote and its relation to social norms of the period.

1938-1947

1: Industry history: Prior to 1935, comic books reprinted newspaper cartoon strips. The publishers of these reprints quickly discovered that such material was profitable. It was therefore inevitable that publishers would begin searching for original material which could be produced in comic book form. Thus, Detective Comics appeared in 1935 as the first comic book to feature stories which had not been printed elsewhere. Detective Comics was successful enough
for its publishers to bring out a second title featuring original material. This title, *Action Comics*, introduced the characters of Superman and Lois Lane.

*Action Comics* was the greatest financial success comics had ever experienced. It took DC Comics\(^2\) several months to realize that *Action*’s success was due primarily to the continuing presence of Superman. Once this was understood, however, the audience was flooded with imitations of the Man of Steel.

The 1940s is often referred to as the Golden Age of Comic Books because of the vitality and originality evident in much of that era’s output. The medium experienced its greatest popularity during the Golden Age. Although children were a large part of the Golden Age readership, adults sometimes read comic books as well. Especially during World War II, soldiers made up a substantial portion of the comic book’s audience. More comic books—approximately 40 million per month—were sold during the Golden Age than at any other time.\(^3\)

2. Developments in Superman: Superman was created in 1933 by Jerry Siegal and Joe Schuster, both of whom were seventeen when they first developed the feature. For five years, Siegal and Schuster attempted to market Superman as a newspaper comic strip. Although all these attempts failed, they did serve to bring Superman to the attention of DC Comics.

Superman’s success in *Action Comics* led to the publication of *Superman* in 1939. Whereas Superman was only one of the characters
featured in *Action*, the second publication was devoted solely to his exploits until 1942. From 1942 to 1944, each issue of *Superman* featured three "Superman" stories and one story in the "Lois Lane, Girl Reporter" series. The "Lois Lane" stories concentrated on Lois' pursuit of front-page scoops without the aid of Superman (and usually without Clark Kent).

Superman swiftly became the most prominent fictional hero of the decade. Other comic books published by DC during this decade, notably *World's Finest*, also featured Superman. Within two years of *Action*'s first publication, *Superman* was being adapted to other media. A *Superman* radio series, animated cartoons, a novel, movie serials and a variety of *Superman*-related toys were produced during the 1940s.

The first issue of *Action Comics* established Superman as the last survivor of the planet Krypton. Rocketed to Earth moments before Krypton exploded, the infant Kal-El developed amazing powers. Adopted by an elderly couple named Kent, Kal-El grew up learning to use his powers to fight evil while hiding his extraterrestrial origin as mild-mannered, myopic Clark. Following the deaths of his foster parents, Clark moved to Metropolis to work as a newspaper reporter. There he met Lois Lane, an ambitious reporter who seemed as fascinated by Superman as she was repulsed by Clark Kent.

As discussed in the literature review, the dichotomy between cowardly Clark and his heroic alter-ego has always been a central part of *Superman*. Clark's secret identity serves two practical
purposes. It allows him to ferret out crime without attracting undue attention, and it enables him to live as an ordinary human being. Superman also maintains that the secret identity is necessary to protect his loved ones from his enemies (an explanation weakened by the number of stories in which Lois is kidnapped or threatened simply because of her close association with the Man of Steel). Emphasizing the importance of the secret identity as the first decade progressed are those stories in which someone attempts to discover who Superman really is. No character is more persistently suspicious of Clark Kent than is Lois Lane. The story in which she first expresses her suspicion is the representative anecdote for the first era.

3. Synopsis: The first story in which Lois Lane tries to prove that Clark Kent is secretly Superman appeared in the July-August 1942 issue of Superman. The story established a pattern which would be followed in other stories for more than thirty years. Indeed, it is the pattern which the average person would probably identify as the typical Superman story.

The plot of "Man or Superman?" can be divided into three parts: 1) Lois Lane begins to suspect that Clark Kent is Superman; 2) despite Clark’s denials, Lois’ suspicions continue, and she places herself and Clark in a dangerous situation, thinking that Clark will be forced to reveal his identity when he rescues her; 3) Superman manages to outwit Lois, saving her without revealing his identity and increasing her humiliation by scooping her on a major news story.
4. Analysis: The splash page of "Man or Superman?" visually represents Lois' situation in the story. She is clearly in her office, seated at her desk with her typewriter in front of her. Instead of concentrating on her work, however, she is obviously thinking about Clark and Superman. Two large balloons are linked to her, visualizing her thoughts. In one, she pictures nervous, timid Clark being bullied by another man. The second balloon shows Lois' vision of Superman lifting an automobile. His facial expression, the beads of sweat which emanate from him and the way he appears to be loosening his collar all emphasize Clark's meek disposition. Moreover, Lois sees him with, and subservient to, another person. By contrast, she sees Superman alone and completely self-sufficient. The appearance of confidence Superman seems to have results not so much from his facial expression as from the way his figure dominates the balloon. Increasing the sense of dominance is the fact that the drawing of Superman is almost twice as large as the drawing of Clark. With little, meek Clark thus seen side by side with dynamic Superman, it is not surprising that Lois has doubts regarding Kal-El's secret identity. In fact, her doubts are further indicated by a number of question marks which appear throughout the upper half of the drawing.

Lois' suspicions, and her doubts regarding her suspicions, dominate the drawing. Less apparent, but still indicated in the splash page, is the idea that concern over Superman's secret identity is taking Lois away from her work. A sheet of paper is ready in the
typewriter, a notepad and pencil are at her side, but Lois is too concerned with Superman's secret identity to pay attention to her work. The events of the story, however, indicate that it is concern for her career which initially leads Lois to question Clark's veracity. Only after Clark scoops her and Lois realizes that "Superman himself couldn't have acted any faster" (p. 4, panel 6) does Lois begin to realize the truth. Her efforts to prove her suspicions also center on her work, especially on the erroneous story asserting that she possesses secret information about the Talon.

Although the splash page drawing depicts Lois' dilemma, its caption describes the story in terms of Superman's problem. The conflict, according to this introduction, will not be between hero and villain (the Talon is not even mentioned) but between Superman and Lois:

Ever since the Man of Tomorrow came from the planet Krypton years ago, he has encountered one tight squeeze after another—and unfailingly smashed his way thru [sic] to victory. But now Superman meets a situation in which he is called upon to make use of every ounce of ingenuity he can summon—for Lois Lane, another Daily Planet reporter, finally suspects that Clark Kent and Superman are one and the same! Can Superman continue to pull the wool over Lois' eyes?--Or will the girl reporter successfully pierce the veil of mystery which cloaks the Man of Steel? (p. 1)

Thus, the introduction to the story presents two different versions of what the story will be about. The text describes the story as being about Clark's attempts to protect his secret identity, while visually the story seems to be about Lois' confusion over who Superman really is.
Whether seen from Clark or from Lois' viewpoint, however, the story is obviously concerned with hidden identities. Not only is Clark disguising the fact that he is Superman, the president of the subway company is a facist saboteur in disguise. And Lois Lane threatens to expose both men's secrets. However, she has no substantial proof regarding Clark's secret identity. She does not even suspect the Talon's secret; her interest in that case is solely in arranging a dangerous situation that will force Clark to admit his secret.

In her original incarnation, Lois appears as an example of a female autonomy which 1940s audiences both feared and admired. On the one hand, career women heroines reflected the very real progress of women in the wartime workforce (although the heroines of films and comics generally had more glamorous professions than the average female factory worker). On the other hand, the movement of women into offices and factories created anxiety regarding whether society could return to comfortable, pre-War standards. For the audience, in this context, Lois Lane was a powerful symbol, one whose ambition would have to be kept in check if the status quo was to be preserved. The intensity of Clark's reaction to her suspicions demonstrates just how threatening such a symbol was thought to be even to the most powerful man.

Despite Lois' recklessness, "Man or Superman?" depicts her as an aggressive, energetic character. From the moment her suspicions are first aroused, she pursues the unlikely idea that Clark might be
Superman. Once she believes there is too much evidence to be dismissed lightly, she sets her plan for uncovering Clark's secret into motion. At the same time, Lois does not hide her plans from Clark. She frankly admits to him that she believes he is Superman and that she intends to prove it.

Clark reacts to Lois' accusation with a realistic show of fear. From the moment he realizes that Lois has begun to wonder what is going on, he seems quite agitated. Even when Lois is not in a position to see him (therefore making it unnecessary for him to pretend a fear he does not feel), Clark is obviously nervous. The fourth panel of page four, for example, shows Clark startled as he realizes how Lois is likely to react to the news that he has phoned in a story faster than any ordinary human being could do. Panel seven, page four shows Clark wiping his forehead as he remarks, "That was the closest I've ever come to having my identity discovered."

Only when he realizes that Lois' plan is not going to succeed does Superman relax. He regains his confidence when Lois loses her composure (p. 11). Lois appears willing to admit that she was wrong about Clark's secret identity. She wants Clark to do something, and at this point it does not matter to her if he is Superman or not. After she openly regrets her actions, saying, "Both Clark and I will die—and all because I was silly enough to suspect him of being Superman!" (p. 11, panel 6), Superman saves her.
The situation between Superman and Lois reverses the situation which existed between Clark and Lois. With Clark, Lois has been at least equal and sometimes superior. Throughout the first two sections of the story Lois is usually seen in the foreground of the drawing, with Clark behind her (for example, p. 4, panels 3 and 4) or standing at Clark's side (for example, p. 4, panel 5; p. 10, panel 1). In the last part of the story, however, Superman dominates the drawings and Lois stands behind him (p. 11, panel 7; p. 12, panel 6). Superman, having outwitted Lois, now takes over her role and becomes the one to discover another person's secret identity.

Lois' suspicions have not totally been laid to rest, however, as her comment to Superman about his appearing so soon after Clark's departure indicates. Therefore, it certainly is not prudent for Clark to arrive with a written expose of the Talon only minutes after an event which only Superman and Lois have witnessed. In terms of the relationships of the characters, however, Clark's scoop is necessary since it reinforces his usurping of the role Lois plays at the beginning of the story.

It also reinforces the reader's sense of Lois' dependence on Superman. Despite her aggressiveness throughout the story, the ending makes it clear that:

In the largest sense...the Lane-Kent reportorial rivalry is a sham, for the headline stories for which they compete so assiduously are invariably stories about Superman, and the outcome of the contest to determine which of them can publish a particular story first is just as invariably determined by whether Superman decides to give Lois Lane an exclusive account or to write it up himself as reporter Clark Kent.
The ending of "Man or Superman?" reminds both Lois and the audience that Lois' success does not depend on her talent or the amount of effort she puts into her work. Instead, what matters is whether she has done anything that makes Clark want to prove his superiority. As shown in the content analysis, Lois is active in her pursuit of stories throughout this era and is straightforward in her methods. She conducts interviews rather than using deception to get her story. However, as in "Man or Superman?", she fails more often than she succeeds. Her failures are due to the manipulation of other characters, usually Superman, rather than to her own shortcomings. In those Superman stories which end with Clark bringing in the story Lois has risked her life for, the reader is reminded that however independent Lois Lane may appear she is ultimately dependent on Superman for her success.

In "Man or Superman?" Lois never explains why she wants to discover Superman's secret identity or what she intends to do with the information. She does state that if she can prove that he is Superman she will have Clark "where I want you" (p. 10, panel 1), but where that is and what she's going to do with him once he's there she does not say. Clark fears that Lois will discover his identity, but he never explains why he is worried. Both characters simply operate as though the other cannot be trusted.

The conflict between Clark and Lois in several aspects resembles the undercurrent of suspicion and distrust which Walsh categorizes as
symptomatic of many films of the 1940s. Film noir (such as Double
Indemnity and The Postman Always Rings Twice) presented male
protagonists who encounter dynamic and autonomous but ultimately
destructive women. Such films, Walsh states, may have been reactions
to increasing female autonomy. At the same time, another type of
film featured female protagonists menaced by powerful, seductive
male characters. These films (including Gaslight and Suspicion),
Walsh argues, confirmed women's distrust of men and were particularly
suited to the cultural undercurrents of the World War II era:

Wartime separation brought fear and anxiety to millions of
young women. Would their husbands, fiancés, and boyfriends
return to love the women they are now? Would their men be
the "same"—or would war have transformed them?

Clark Kent and Lois Lane's relationship reflects some of the
same distrust between women and men. In the 1940s, Lois is presented
as a woman who considers herself independent and in control of her
life. She is one of many "career girl" heroines of the era, whose
exploits derive more from ambition and a sense of adventure than
from a desire for romance. She decides whether to co-operate with
Clark (as in the insurance racket story) or compete with him on the
job (as in the Valleyho Dam story and "The Archer") based on what
she considers to be in her own best interest. Although she is
obviously attracted to Superman, in the stories from the 1940s, Lois
pursues scoops, not the Man of Steel. Her energy, talent and
ambition make her a particularly strong symbol of female self-
sufficiency during this period.
Although at times Lois lies to Clark in order to scoop him (as in the Valleyho Dam story), more often she is open and honest while Clark is devious and manipulative. She announces her plan to uncover his secret identity. He lies to her about what he plans to do as well as about who he really is. As noted in the content analysis, Superman rescues Lois but ridicules her; Clark, the more passive of Kal-El's personalities, says only favorable things about Lois. Yet Clark, who professes to love Lois, is ultimately the same person who scorns her and who is responsible for her failures. In this respect, Superman reverses the stereotype of women as devious and manipulative. Kal-El's behavior during this period suggests that women were indeed correct to be suspicious of men since even the representative of "truth, justice and the American Way" could not be trusted to deal honestly with a woman.

As noted in Chapter Four, Lois Lane's role as a reporter is stressed throughout this era while her romance with Superman hardly exists. She is seen as career-oriented; her scorn of Clark is more prevalent than her admiration of Superman simply because she spends more time with Clark. Superman's frequent ridicule of Lois, noted in the content analysis, can be seen as a way of avenging himself for her treatment of his alter-ego. However, it is also a reminder that women's expressions of power and autonomy must be kept within traditional limits. Despite Lois' many positive traits, it is apparent that Superman disapproves of her. Superman is the hero of
the story and the character whose task it is to preserve the social order. His disapproval of the initiative Lois uses in pursuing her goals expresses contempt for such traditionally unfeminine behavior.

In keeping with that attitude, the presence of an independent female character was not emphasized for perspective comics readers. As noted in Chapter Four, Lois appears on only two covers between 1938 and 1947. On both covers, she is a spectator. Her function is simply to watch Superman in action. Her presence, therefore, was not used to sell the comic books. In fact, her independent behavior in the stories is at odds with the passive nature of her portrayal on the covers. That nature becomes apparent, however, on the splash pages, which are more accurate portrayals of the events of the stories and which depict Lois in a variety of situations. Thus, although the reader was not made to think about Lois Lane when purchasing the comics, he/she became aware of Lois' role in the story the moment the book was opened.

Lois' position is made more difficult by the lack of any female support. The only continuing female character in Superman during this era, she is apparently the Planet's only female reporter. On those rare occasions when other women appear in Superman, they are news sources (such as Alice in "A Modern Alice in Wonderland"). Such women are newsworthy through wealth or social position rather than through any professional accomplishments. Although the content analysis finds that these women are friendly toward Lois, their presence in her life
is transitory and their effect on her is negligible. When the story ends, Lois remains alone, her status as a symbol of female accomplishment counteracted by the presentation of her accomplishments as the exception rather than the rule.

Thus, Superman originally synthesized two opposing strands of thought regarding female autonomy. While the Lois Lane of the first era represented a positive image for that portion of the audience which expected to see strong, independent women portrayed in popular culture, the outcome of these stories frequently reinforced the idea that female autonomy was temporary and illusory. As previously noted, Lois' success as a reporter is largely determined by Superman's whim. In "Man or Superman?" she is seen as ultimately having to accept the situation as Superman has arranged it. She is not as self-sufficient as she believes. By extensions, the story suggests that the women who were surviving during the 1940s without the help of men would have to fall back into traditional relationships when the war ended.

1948-1967

1. Industry history: By the end of World War II, the comic book audience had tired of a steady diet of costumedheroes. As sales declined, Superman and a few others managed to survive. Most superhero comics, however, ceased publication. In looking for new genres which would appeal to a mass audience, publishers tried a variety of approaches. The most popular proved to be horror and crime comics, but such comics also brought the industry unprecedented amounts of criticism.
As noted in Chapter Two, public concern over a possible link between comics reading and juvenile delinquency culminated in the Senate hearings of 1954. The major comics publishers, including DC, responded by forming a voluntary regulatory association. This association developed a stringent code. Members submitted text, drawings and advertising for all their comics to the Comics Code Authority prior to publication. Only those comics which conformed with Code standards could be published with the CCA seal on the cover. Distributors and newsstand dealers, also concerned with public opinion and the possibility of government regulation, refused to carry most comics which did not have the CCA seal. Most publishers of crime and horror comics were forced out of business, and the comics market once again consisted primarily of superheroes.

The Silver Age of Comics began with the revival of the Flash by DC editor Julius Schwartz in 1956. This new version of an old hero revitalized the industry:

the art carried the action with dynamic clarity and fluidity; the plot was fast and complex but remarkably well developed. Not only had DC revived, in a new version, one of its best heroes of the 1940s, but it had done so with a tautness and refinement very rare in comics....the high standards of plotting and drawing set by the Schwartz stable of writers and artists would at the same time ensure that comic books would have to keep their quality higher than they ever had before.'

The revitalization of the superhero genre led to increased sales, but comics were by now regarded primarily as entertainment
for children. Even though the artwork was more polished and the stories more tightly crafted, comics as a whole continued to have a poor reputation.

2. Developments in Superman: Superman's creators, Siegal and Schuster, had sold the rights to their characters in 1938. Therefore, when they left DC Comics in the 1940s, their influence over their creation ceased. Superman's immense popularity continued without Siegal and Schuster, however, thanks in part to the television series The Adventures of Superman. At DC Comics, editor Mort Weisinger had the greatest amount of control and influence over the characters of Superman and Lois Lane. Superman continued to be set apart from other comic book heroes by the sheer magnitude of his power.

According to Jacobs and Jones:

Weisinger's Superman was almost a god. He had no private life, except as meek Clark Kent, no personal quirks, no failings, only an awesome array of powers. He was aloof, mysterious, all business. Weisinger had his writers subordinate all else to the rigid, complex plots he demanded. Superman's world was rarely colorful or imaginative. The focus of his stories was the very concept of a costumed hero.8

By emphasizing the hero's near infallibility, Weisinger placed his writers in a difficult position. It was nearly impossible to regularly devise situations which would place Superman in jeopardy. Further complicating matters was the fact that Superman appeared in a number of different comics, each of which contained three stories. Eighteen to twenty-one different Superman stories were produced each
month. Consequently, Weisinger had the writers devise a variety of gimmicks (including the Fortress of Solitude and the Phantom Zone) which would capture the reader's attention.

Weisinger also expanded the Superman supporting cast in an effort to provide new situations for the hero. Both Lois Lane and Superman were given younger female relatives. Lois' younger sister, Lucy Lane, regularly appeared as a flight attendant who was romantically involved with Jimmy Olsen. Superman's teenaged cousin, Kara Zor-El, arrived on Earth and assumed the dual identities of Supergirl and Linda Lee Danvers. A third addition was Lana Lang.

Lana originally appeared as a supporting character in Superboy. The Superboy stories centered on the exploits of young Clark Kent as he first learned to use his powers. Lana, Clark's next door neighbor, was determined to prove that Clark was secretly Superboy. The adult Lana arrived in Metropolis in 1952, asking Clark to help her find a job at the Daily Planet ("The Girls in Superman's Life"). After causing both Lois and Superman a great deal of trouble, Lana left the Planet. She eventually became a television reporter (with Lois' assistance) and assumed a continuing role as "Lois Lane's rival." The major reason for Lana's addition to Superman's supporting cast seems to have been the need for a foil for Lois. Following two successful "all Lois Lane" issues of Showcase in 1957, DC began regular publication of Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane. Just as Superman faced regularly recurring villains such as Lex Luthor, Lois needed a nemesis of her own. This was to be Lana's role.
The difference, of course, was in the scope of the conflict. At most, Luthor wanted to rule the world; at the very least, he wanted to kill Superman. Lois and Lana's rivalry centered on which woman would eventually become Mrs. Superman. For his part, Superman never indicated that he wanted either woman. His attitude toward both Lois and Lana suggests that he regarded them as annoyances, whose feuding kept him from his work.

During the Weisinger era, most issues featured at least one story in which someone tried to discover Superman's secret identity. As in the first era, Lois Lane was the character most interested in discovering who Clark Kent really was. Since her interest in Clark centered around whether he could be Superman, such stories created an image of Lois Lane as empty-headed and more in love with the powers than with the person. Even though she was the only character in these stories who even suspected that Clark could be Superman, the reader was often encouraged to laugh along with Superman at the tremendous joke he was playing on Lois. The representative anecdote for this era is a classic story in this genre, in which Lois appears too obsessed with Superman's powers to recognize Clark's heroic nature.

3. Synopsis: The first part of "Lois Lane's Wedding Day" (Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane, November 1962) concerns Lois' unsuccessful attempts to prove that a lonelyhearts club is a fraud. Having persuaded Clark Kent to help her by posing as actors hired
by the club's manager to play a bride and groom who met at the club, Lois discovers that the wedding ceremony she and Clark have just taken part in is valid. The second half of the story concentrates on Clark's inability to convince Lois that she really has married Superman. The story ends with Lois and Clark's realization that the ceremony is invalid because they did not use their real names and with Lois' rekindled suspicions regarding Clark's secret identity.

4. Analysis: During this second era, Lois' character undergoes a significant change. Previously, regardless of the outcome of the story, Lois clearly viewed herself as independent and career-oriented, a perception generally shared by other characters in the stories. As noted in the content analysis for 1948 to 1967, however, she receives no positive reinforcement from other characters in the stories. The texts usually portray her as well-meaning but incompetent. She frequently seems so concerned with her own romantic affairs that she lets herself be distracted from her job. Such a situation occurs in this era's representative anecdote.

Although published in the Lois Lane comic book, "Lois Lane's Wedding Day" is as much about Clark as it is about Lois. Indeed, the full title of the comic book—Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane—suggests that Lois' importance as a character depends on her relationship to Superman and that this relationship is what makes her worthy of her own publication. Whereas the "Lois Lane, Girl Reporter" series of the 1940s had focused attention on Lois' achievements without the Man
of Steel, Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane rarely featured a story in which Superman did not appear. Even stories which began as chronicles of Lois' solo adventures eventually became stories about Superman.

"Lois Lane's Wedding Day" is just such a story. Its plot falls into two parts. The first four-and-one-half pages depict Lois' attempt to prove that Borsley's Sweethearts' Club is a fraud. In the second part of the story, however, the focus changes abruptly to Clark's efforts to prove that he is Superman. This shift in emphasis is so complete that the news of Borsley's arrest is mentioned on the last page almost as an afterthought. Furthermore, whereas in "Man or Superman?" Clark Kent clearly scoops Lois, in "Lois Lane's Wedding Day" no one even mentions which reporter eventually gets the scoop concerning the Sweethearts' Club. The story ultimately depicts female achievement as depending not on professional accomplishment but on marriage with the ideal man.

Lois Lane fails to achieve such a marriage, the story suggests, because she is too obsessed with her fantasies to see what is obviously in front of her. That the emphasis in this story will be on Lois' conflicting attitudes toward Clark and Superman is clearly indicated in the cover and the splash page. The cover depicts Lois and Clark's wedding. The couple is being showered with rice by Lana, Perry, Jimmy and Lucy. Lois is despondent, crying because she has married Clark instead of Superman. Rather than experiencing Lois' pain and anguish, the reader is put in the position of viewing the
humor and irony in Lois' situation. After all, Clark is Superman; Lois is married to the man she loves. The upper half of the drawing makes this evident. In the wedding scene Lois imagines, nearly everything is the same. She wears the same wedding gown; Lana, Perry, Jimmy and Lucy stand exactly where they are in reality; the groom wears the same tophat. There are only two differences: 1) the groom Lois dreams of wears his Superman costume; 2) Lois looks at Superman and away from Clark. The two scenes are positioned one on top of the other. The reader thus sees the scene of Lois and Clark in relation to the scene of Lois and Superman. The resemblance between Clark and Superman would be difficult to miss, even for a reader who was previously unaware of Superman's secret identity. With the tophat covering the different hairstyles of Clark and Superman, only Clark's glasses prevent him from being recognized as Superman. But Lois cannot see that. She is too wrapped up in her fantasy of the perfect bridegroom to realize that he is right beside her.

The splash panel makes the same point. This time, however, Clark and Lois are surrounded by strangers (members of the Sweethearts' Club). These on-lookers mistakenly think that Lois is crying "tears of joy." (On the cover, her friends do not question why Lois is crying.) Again, Lois' thoughts are depicted visually as she imagines herself flying away with Superman. Although this thought
balloon is smaller than the one depicted on the cover, Superman and Clark are both seen in profile and Lois need only take a good look at Clark to notice the resemblance.

As in "Man or Superman?" Lois refuses to trust anything Clark says. However, this time her suspicion is unjustified. Clark is trying to be honest with her. If she would simply trust him and wait until he decides to share his secret with her, Lois would achieve her heart's desire. Her impulsive action, whether in trying to prove that Clark is Superman or in forcing a situation in which Clark feels compelled to tell her the truth, prevents her achieving her goal.

Lois' active nature at first places Clark at a disadvantage. As she entangles him in her plan to expose Borsley, Clark seems at a genuine loss as to how he should proceed. He appears sincerely reluctant to "marry" Lois, even before he has any reason to believe that a legally binding ceremony will take place. Artist Kurt Schaffenberger's use of close-ups with few background details emphasizes the contrast between Lois' overconfidence and Clark's cautiousness. Schaffenberger uses more background figures and detail in the second part of the story. The first section, which Lois dominates, emphasizes emotion, while Clark's section emphasizes action and setting.

Clark takes an active role only after Lois expresses her love for Superman. Realizing the depth of her affection for Superman
gives Clark a distinct advantage. Clark knows that he is the man Lois loves. She does not know that, nor does she know whether Superman returns her love. Clark retains that advantage throughout the story. Even when he decides to tell her that he is Superman, Clark does not tell Lois whether he loves her.

Both Lois and the female members of the Sweethearts' Club present an image of women as guided by emotion. It is implied that these women are gullible precisely because they are emotional. Lois is guided so completely by her emotions that all her plans fail and her perceptions of important matters are incorrect. An element of crime reporting is involved in her investigation of the Sweethearts' Club, yet Lois is just as concerned with the human interest element. Rather than investigating the club's records for evidence of fraud, Lois spends her time observing the lonely people Borsley is manipulating. This is no longer the ruthless reporter of the earlier stories, but a warmhearted (if somewhat misguided) woman who wants to help others. Schaffenberger, who did the art for most of the Lois Lane stories of this period, considers such motivation characteristic of Lois: "Lois is the kind of girl who got into trouble inadvertently, either in the process of an attempt to do some good, or whatever." 9

It is implied that Lois' emotions make her momentarily vulnerable to Borsley's schemes. Disguised as a "plain-Jane," she is definitely interested in the handsome men Borsley suggests are typical club members and seems sincerely disappointed that the men she meets are
unattractive. She is excited when Borsley announces the wedding and thinks, "Maybe this Borsley is on the square after all!" (p. 2, panel 3) Her suspicions are reawakened only when she hears other women express the same enthusiasm she has just experienced. Rather than being presented as an exceptional woman, as she was in the first era, Lois is seen as essentially like other women.

Although Lana Lang appears only on the cover of "Lois Lane's Wedding Day," her manipulative behavior in other stories is used as a contrast with Lois' warmhearted nature. Schaffenberger indicates that he saw a clear distinction between the two characters: "I made Lana more of a minxy character, and a little bit of a trouble-maker, more so than Lois...I pictured Lana as more of a meddler than Lois." Together, Lois and Lana presented two extremes of female behavior: Lois represented women as impulsive, curious, emotional; Lana represented women as calculating, manipulative and cunning. By turning to Lana whenever Lois became too demanding, Superman could avoid making any commitment to Lois. Lois, however, had to focus more energy on maintaining the kind of relationship Superman desired if she was to remain "Superman's girlfriend."

The energy devoted to Superman, of course, was energy diverted from the pursuit of her career. "Lois Lane's Wedding Day" illustrates this. Starting as the story of Lois' investigation of the Sweethearts' Club, it becomes the story of her temporary marriage to Clark Kent.
The Lois Lane of 1938 might have gone off to continue her investigation of Borsley's racket despite Perry White's insistence that she go through with the honeymoon trip. This Lois Lane, however, accepts Perry's demand, turns her attention to the problem of Clark's identity and gives up her story. Even after she returns to Metropolis, Lois' thoughts are not on her career. The story ends with Lois in the newsroom wondering whether Clark is in fact Superman.

This characterization of Lois as flighty, impulsive and frivolous was in tune with the attitudes of post-war America, the era of what Betty Friedan has called "the feminine mystique." Women, according to the feminine mystique, attained personal fulfillment only through marriage, motherhood and homemaking. Women's magazines, an important transmitter of the mystique, presented an image of women as:

- young and frivolous, almost childlike; fluffy and feminine; passive; gaily content in a world of bedroom and kitchen, sex, babies, and home....the only passion, the only pursuit, the only goal a woman is permitted is the pursuit of a man.11

On the surface, Lois Lane became just such a woman. In her feud with Lana over who Superman loved and her obsession with Superman's secret identity, Lois seemed intent on proving that she could be just as silly and frivolous as the feminine mystique required. Of course, Lois could not marry the man of her dreams, quit her job, move to the suburbs of Metropolis and raise superbabies without radically altering the standard elements of the Superman series. However, her often-stated desire for marriage served to remind the audience that at heart Lois Lane just wanted what less career-oriented
women also desired. Whereas in its first decade Superman rarely mentioned Lois' desire for marriage, in the second era the readers were constantly informed that Lois would never really be happy until she had wed Superman. On those occasions when it appears that Superman will marry someone else (such as "The Girl of Tomorrow," "The Super-Prisoner of Amazon Island" and "The Day Superman Married"), she is heartbroken. It is relatively easy for a phony psychiatrist to convince her that she is suffering a nervous breakdown because Superman will not marry her ("The Mad Woman of Metropolis"). On one occasion, she is even tempted to marry someone other than Superman in order to avoid becoming an old maid ("Lois Lane's Last Chance"). When a criminal posing as Superman proposes to her, Lois faints from happiness. After recovering, she accepts the proposal: "The answer is yes...yes...a million times yes! Hurry...take me to the justice of the peace at super-speed...before you change your mind!" ("The Shrinking Superman")

In The Feminine Mystique, Friedan compares the heroines of women's magazine fiction in 1939 to the heroines of the 1950s. The heroines of 1939, she says, "were New Women, creating with a gay determined spirit a new identity for women—a life of their own." This New Woman:

was less aggressive in pursuit of a man. Her passionate involvement with the world, her own sense of herself as an individual, her self-reliance, gave a different flavor to her relationship with the man in the story.
By contrast, the "Happy Housewife Heroines" of the 1950s seemed less mature and competent. The very rare heroine who worked was shown "in the act of renouncing her career and discovering that what she really wanted was to be a housewife." \(^{14}\)

Lois Lane looks the part of the Happy Housewife Heroine during this era. Schaffenberger's light, cartoon-like style of drawing fits the atmosphere of the *Lois Lane* stories perfectly. His version of Lois with her pillbox hats, pearl earrings and gloves has a more matronly air than Schuster's Lois had. In "Man or Superman?" as Lois faces real dangers from subway derailments and falling pendulums, her hair is drawn as longer and softer. Her body is posed in ways which seem freer and less reserved than Schaffenberger's Lois. The Lois Schaffenberger draws, while not allowed the freedom of movement she previously had, however, often betrays her immaturity through her facial expressions (p. 9, panel 1).

Even though Lois was more frequently depicted as successful in her pursuit of assignments (as noted in the previous chapter), her success during this era was often due to Superman's intervention. Her dependence on Superman for her emotional well-being and her jealousy of Lana Lang added to her negative characterization. The stories consistently portrayed Lois as a child rather than a mature, career-oriented woman.
Just as Lois' early portrayal had provided a synthesis of opposing views toward female autonomy, however, the second version of Lois contained an implied criticism of the feminine mystique. Marriage—at any rate, a traditional marriage in which the wife stays home to cook, clean and raise children—simply did not suit Lois Lane. In "Lois Lane's Wedding Day" and many other stories, Lois is as relieved to escape matrimony as Superman is. She refuses to marry him in "The Super-Prisoner of Amazon Island" and "The Reversed Super-Powers." Marriage is almost deadly for her in "The Shrinking Superman," and a number of imaginary stories (such as "Lois Lane's Super-Daughter") show her as deeply dissatisfied when she abandons her career after marrying. Furthermore, Lois appears unwilling to sacrifice her work for marriage. Only in "Lois Lane's Last Chance" does she suggest that she may have made a mistake in pursuing a career rather than marrying. By the end of that story, however, she has decided that she prefers her life as it is.

Marriage, as portrayed in the comics, would have meant Lois' being totally dependent on Superman for her happiness and well-being. The characterization of Lois, however, continually indicates that her own sense of worth comes from her success as a reporter. Even though she becomes distracted from her task in "Lois Lane's Wedding Day," she seems most energetic, confident and content when she is actively pursuing her assignment. More than the presence of Kryptonite or papier mache rocks, it may be a sub-conscious realization that a
traditional marriage is not for her which lies behind Lois Lane's refusal to recognize Clark as Superman. Although Lois responds to Clark's "super-kiss" in "The Great Superman Impersonation," she is appalled by a similar kiss in "Lois Lane's Wedding Day": "You cad!" she says. "How dare you take advantage of me like that when you know we're not really married!" (p. 8, panel 4) At this point, however, she has not yet discovered the marriage license and supposedly believes she and Clark are legally married. Since a traditional marriage would not be fulfilling for a woman such as Lois, however, she is certainly correct in her instinctive feeling that the marriage is not real. Throughout the second era, Lois presses Superman for a declaration of love. If her pursuit of his secret identity seems at times to be exactly what is necessary to turn him against her and prevent any such declaration, perhaps it is useful in saving them from a type of marriage that would be disastrous for Lois.

"Lois Lane's Wedding Day" ends with Lois once a becoming suspicious of Clark's secret identity. Anyone who read Superman regularly (or watched the television series) knew that Lois would soon be trying to prove her suspicions. At first glance, this pointless battle of wits seemed to reinforce the image of Lois as silly and superficial. On the other hand, her refusal to give up harkened back to her origin as a New Woman. Lois Lane had been created as an independent character, and Superman would never be
able to control her entirely. The same need for stability in Superman which prevented her marriage also insured that Lois would maintain a portion of her autonomy even at the height of the feminine mystique. The formula guaranteed that Lois and Superman would never marry, but it also guaranteed that she would continue to pursue her suspicions no matter how many times they were disproved. Thus, Superman seemed doomed to keep its female protagonist wandering in circles until such time as the staff at DC Comics could envision a new relationship for Superman and Lois Lane.

1968-1982

1. Industry history: DC's major competitor was Stan Lee's Marvel Comics Group. Like DC, Marvel featured superheroes. However, the typical Marvel hero was as concerned with his or her personal problems as with the fight against crime. First with a superhero team known as the Fantastic Four, whose conflicts with one another were at least as compelling as their battles against villains, and most notably with Spider-Man, Stan Lee created characters with whom the reader felt directly involved. Marvel's approach stood in direct contrast to DC's emphasis on plotting and suspense.

By the late 1960s, the increasing popularity of Marvel Comics caused changes in DC's approach to storytelling. Marvel's output reached an older audience than Weisinger's Superman had. As comic book prices increased, this new high-school and college-age audience became increasingly important to the publishers. This older audience
wanted the sort of melodramatic subplot that Marvel was giving its readers. Godlike heroes who never showed any emotional weaknesses were no longer popular.

2. Developments in Superman: Rather than being a series of unconnected stories about the same characters, the Superman stories after 1968 featured subplots which continued from one issue to the next, frequently crossing over into each of the Superman-related titles. Weisinger retired and was replaced in 1970 by Julius Schwartz as editor of Action and Superman. Although Weisinger's approach to Superman had been immensely popular in the 1950s, the increasing emphasis on characterization was in opposition to the Weisinger approach. "To Mort," Gary Bates notes, "characterization for Lois was her going through 100 pairs of scissors in a year trying to cut Clark's hair." 16

Although Schwartz undoubtedly was more open to change in the characterizations than Weisinger had been, trends in comics publishing had already forced Weisinger to make several concessions to the times. The first change in the Superman line of comics came in the January 1968 issue of Lois Lane. In the story "Get Out of My Life, Superman," Lois decides that she has spent too much of her time waiting for Superman to declare his love for her. "I'm sick of you messing up my existence!" she tells Superman. "I'm through chasing you! I'm not going to start that endless merry-go-round again!...You've ignored me, hurt me, humiliated me too many times!" Only after Lois leaves
Metropolis to begin a new life does Superman realize how much he has loved her all along. Eventually Superman's love for her becomes clear to Lois as well and she returns to Superman. Even though the changes Lois made in her life lasted for only one issue, the story did prove conclusively that Superman loved Lois and sincerely wished to marry her. This became clear to Lana Lang as well. Realizing that she had lost Superman to Lois, Lana took a job as a foreign correspondent and was written out of the comics for the next five years. The previous concept of two women competing with one another for the attention of the same man was now replaced with an emphasis on the romance between Lois and Kal-El.

Thus, even before Schwartz became editor of Superman, DC had begun making changes in tune with what audiences were demanding from comics. Schwartz, however, altered several factors in the story upon taking over as editor. First, he had Clark become a television reporter after the Daily Planet was purchased by a conglomerate, Galaxy Communications. Lois also was temporarily transferred to WGBS-TV, but she did not function well as a television reporter and was soon back at the Planet.

While these changes were occurring in Superman, another important change took place in Lois Lane. Lois learned that her younger sister Lucy was spying for a criminal organization. After Lucy disappeared, Lois did some serious soul-searching. She left the Daily Planet to work as a freelance reporter and cooled her relationship with Superman.
The changes which have proved to have the greatest effect on the characters have been those which were not as immediately obvious as Clark's new job. If comic book readers were looking for potentially melodramatic subplots in the 1960s and 1970s, Superman was an excellent place for such subplots to develop. Having created the original superhero and the prototype for all love affairs in comic books, DC simply needed to devote more space in Superman to the relationship between Clark and Lois. Weisinger had begun such experimentation as early as 1968; now it was up to Schwartz and his staff to make the relationship the continuing focus of the series.

By 1974, writers Cary Bates and Elliot S. Maggin began a multi-part story in which Clark puts aside his role as Superman to live like an ordinary person for one week. No longer playing the role of coward, Clark discovers that Lois is deeply attracted to him ("Clark Kent Forever, Superman Never"). The following year ("The Laugh Heard 'Round the World") when Lois and Clark vacation together, Lois indicates that she will no longer attempt to prove that Clark is Superman.

The following year, writer Marty Pasko began a subplot which would run for two years concentrating on Lois' love for Clark Kent. During the first part of Pasko's saga, Lois becomes seriously involved with Clark and has relatively little contact with Superman. Eventually Clark's continual disappearances and his extreme personality changes (from charming to cowardly) prove to be too much for Lois. Once
again she makes plans to leave Metropolis. Before she can make the move, however, she nearly dies from a mysterious disease. While recovering, she decides not to leave Metropolis. For his part, Clark is so shaken by Lois' illness that he proposes to her. Lois replies, "I'll say 'yes'...without a moment's hesitation...if you tell me right now--that Clark Kent is Superman!" ("Before This Night Is Over, Superman Will Kill") Clark says that he cannot tell her that. The situation is further complicated by the return of Lana Lang, who becomes Clark's co-anchor at WGBS-TV. Lana does not return because she has been offered a good job but because she has heard that Lois is no longer involved with Superman. Initially disappointed to discover that Lois and Clark have broken up, Lana decides to gamble on the possibility that Clark is Superman. Since Lois has rejected Clark, Lana reasons, Clark will be particularly susceptible to a woman who appears to love him for his human qualities. By making Clark think she cares for him, Lana may succeed in becoming Mrs. Superman. Clark, still hurt from Lois' rejection, initially uses Lana to make Lois jealous. He soon realizes the difference between the two women, however. Superman then tells Lana that he is indeed in love with Lois and compares Lois' affection for him to Lana's obsession with the reflected glory of being a superhero's wife.

Superman and Lois resume their previous relationship. Although they never become engaged officially, the other characters all understand the depth of Superman and Lois' love for each other. Lois' subsequent
relationship with Clark is rarely emphasized in the comic books, although it is clear that they are good friends and that she may indeed know that Clark is Superman.

From the above summary, it is clear that there is more emphasis on the relationships between the characters than in the previous eras. As to how much change exists in the manner in which those relationships are portrayed, it is necessary to look at the representative anecdote.

3. Synopsis: At the beginning of "The Great Superman Locked-Room Puzzle" (Superman Family, September-October 1977), Lois is ready to leave an abandoned apartment where she and Clark are supposed to meet a rock star for an exclusive interview. Clark uses his super-strength to break the doorknob, locking them inside until help arrives. While Lois tries to use the time to discuss their relationship, Clark disappears for a few seconds at a time. After they are released from the apartment, they are told that Superman was putting out a fire nearby. Clark remarks that he wishes Lois still believed he is Superman because "I would've enjoyed disproving it!" (p. 4, panel 6) Lois, however, replies that Clark's presence in the locked apartment with her would not prove anything. She then explains in detail how Clark could have handled the emergency as Superman and still appeared in the apartment at the various times she saw him there. Clark is surprised by Lois' explanation since she has just described exactly what he did.
4. Analysis: "The Great Superman Locked-Room Puzzle" represents an era in which the relationship between Lois and Clark is given a new emphasis. At first, this seems to be a more equal, mature relationship. A closer examination, however, reveals that Lois has yet to regain the sense of autonomy she had in the 1940s. What seems at first to be a more equitable relationship is in fact placing more pressure on the female rather than the male partner.

Central to the development of Lois Lane's character during this period is her new attitude toward Superman's secret identity. During this period, she stops openly questioning whether Clark could be Superman. At the same time, however, various stories indicate that she is certain that Superman and Clark are the same person. Possibly the strongest indication occurs in "The Secret World of Jonathan Kent." Lois seems relatively unsurprised when she is told the truth about Clark. Asked how she can remain so calm about this revelation, she replies, "...Maybe I had already figured out for myself that Clark was Superman...and I've just been smart enough not to let on!" Bates, the author of the story, discovered that readers were pleased with this new twist on the old situation:

Now whenever we refer to that relationship we have to do it on two levels, one where she knows Clark and Superman are the same and the other where she doesn't. The reader is in a "Lady-and-the-Tiger" situation. You never really know now. I think that tantalizes the reader. There is now a mystique to Lois' character that differentiates her from Lana even more so than her personality already does.17
This was a new Lois: no longer going to extremes to prove some vague suspicion, yet mature enough to trust her own perceptions as to Clark's dual identity. Such a characterization in turn changed the reader's attitude toward Lois. If she indeed knew the truth about Clark, the reader was no longer able to feel superior to her. In effect, the flighty, immature character from the 1950s and 1960s was gone. Yet for those readers who were unable to deal with such a major alteration in the character, other interpretations were still possible.

"The Great Superman Locked-Room Puzzle," like other stories of this era, allows the reader to decide how much Lois knows. On the one hand, Lois repeatedly tells Clark she does not believe that he is Superman (p. 5, panel 4; p. 6, panel 3; p. 8, panel 2). Yet the precision with which she describes his actions is so great that the reader may very well assume that Lois simply does not wish Clark to know that she realizes he is Superman. Thus, she prefaces her detailed explanations of his actions with "If you were Superman... which, of course, you aren't!" On this occasion even Clark is struck by how well Lois knows him, whereas he fails to notice many similar indications in other stories.

In moving the plot forward during this period, DC made Lois' new attitude necessary. As the stories focused more on the progress of the relationship, Lois' former behavior became inappropriate. Whereas before she had attempted to establish a relationship, she now reacted to her involvement with Clark or with Superman in ways she
thought best for insuring everyone's happiness. This concern with maintaining the relationship can be seen as the reason Lois stopped confronting Clark about his secret identity. Part of the mystique which Bates attributes to Lois results not only from her knowledge of Clark's identity but also from her own secrecy regarding exactly how much she knows. That secrecy, in turn, contributes to the impression that Lois is being extremely loyal and supportive in not openly questioning Superman's identity.

However, Lois' secrecy can also be seen as her acknowledgement of defeat. Aware that Superman's identity is "something I can never prove" ("The Laugh Heard 'Round the World"), she also acknowledges that she can only have a relationship with him if she does not openly question him or even state what she knows to be a fact. She accepts that the issue is one which cannot be discussed until he is willing to do so. When she does bring the question up again ("World Enough and Time," Action, February 1983), it is the prelude to their break-up.

In the first era, Lois' suspicions about Clark were viewed as a definite threat to his security. By the 1950s, those same suspicions were portrayed as a minor annoyance to him and indicated Lois' inability to follow a point to its logical conclusion. During this third era, however, Lois' suspicions have been transformed into almost certain knowledge and serve as a continual reminder of her usefulness to Superman. In being able to hide her suspicions even from him, she proves her willingness to put his needs ahead of her own.
Just as in the second era, Lois diverted energy from her career to her pursuit of Superman, now her energy is diverted into maintenance of the relationship. This aspect of the character is not initially noticeable. On the surface, she seems to be successfully balancing her career with her relationships with Clark and Superman. In "The Great Superman Locked-Room Puzzle," for example, Lois is in pursuit of a story. In addition, she and Clark are working together rather than competing with one another. Underneath the surface, however, the conflict between the two characters remains. Rather than allowing Lois to make her own decisions about whether to wait for the interview, Clark literally locks Lois inside the apartment. Clark maintains that he does not want Lois to lose her scoop. However, it is also his assignment and he is in as much danger of losing an exclusive story as Lois is. Clark also uses the excuse of wanting the extra time alone together to talk about their relationship. As soon as Lois begins such a discussion, however, Clark disappears. Even though Clark says he wants to help Lois, his manipulation keeps her at the apartment while he remains free to go elsewhere. Lois is forced into a passive role she had not intended to play. After 1968, therefore, the distrust between men and women portrayed during the first era has given way to depiction of a more trusting relationship. Covertly, however, the story indicates that women who put their trust in men may be seriously mistaken and may find themselves forced into roles they do not wish.
Lois tries to use this time advantageously, discussing their relationship, but it is a one-sided conversation. Clark does indicate at the end of the story that he has heard what Lois said, but he disagrees with her:

How strange--Lois kept going on about how we don't really know each other...but she knows me well enough to anticipate the very way I think in a moment of crisis! Maybe she knows me better than even she realizes! Hardly any married couples know each other that well! (p. 8, panels 6 and 7)

Clark bases his statements on the fact that Lois has been able to tell him exactly how he managed to put out the fire while locked in the apartment with her. From another perspective, however, Lois is correct. As well as she seems to know Clark, it is apparent that Clark does not know her. Not only does he miss the indications she gives him that she knows he is Superman, he also continues to manipulate the situation according to what he thinks is best for her rather than allowing her to make her own decisions. The burden of understanding and making concessions in their relationship all falls on Lois. Such a portrayal reinforces the concept of woman as primary nurturer and caretaker of human relationships.

Researchers, notably Nancy Chodorow, have identified a connection between women's experience of romance and society's expectations that women serve as nurturers in their relationships. Developing from an environment in which women are the primary caretakers of young children, "feminine personality comes to define itself in relation and connection to other people more than masculine personality does."
Although they are expected to nurture those they love, women may experience a lack of emotional sustenance from the men in their lives, who are socialized not to express their feelings.

Janice A. Radway has applied Chodorow's work to analysis of the modern romance novel's appeal for female audience. Radway suggests that women read romance fiction in order to experience the moments of nurturance which the heroine receives. Since the heroine is initially characterized as extremely capable of providing emotional sustenance to those around her, the nurturing she ultimately receives from the hero reinforces the female reader's belief that the emotional support she gives to others will be rewarded.  

In Superman, the reader is given access to such moments even when Lois is denied them. Clark obviously cares deeply for Lois, although he is often unwilling to admit this to her. Numerous stories contain scenes in which Superman aids Lois or in some way indicates his love for her without her knowledge. In this story, he kisses her at super-speed because they "haven't been very close lately--and I miss her!" (p. 8, panel 5) Thus, even though he is willing to admit that he loves her, Lois is unaware of most of his expressions of that love. Therefore, he maintains at least a measure of the freedom he had prior to 1968 and does not have to relinquish the power over Lois which accompanied that freedom.  

These changes in Superman occurred as more attention was being given to the women's movement. Feminist theory during this time
increasingly stressed the need to examine how a patriarchal order affects women's daily lives. The slogan "the personal is the political" summarized the viewpoint seeing a connection between political structures and personal relationships in describing an inequality "so deep as to be invisible." Some changes occurred in attitudes concerning women, although how deeply the changes have affected the structure of society is still a matter of debate. In Superman, certainly, the changes on the surface simply masked the continuing imbalance in Clark and Lois' relationship.

On the surface, Lois and Superman seem to relate to each other as equals and as a couple. In "The Great Superman Locked-Room Puzzle" this concept is visually represented by the number of panels which show both Clark and Lois. The artists, Schaffenberger and Vince Colletta, use relatively few close-ups of either character, preferring to show them together. Colletta, who inked the art from Schaffenberger's original pencils, softens the cartoon-like appearance of Schaffenberger's work. Thus, the characters look more realistic.

Lois works with Superman on occasion ("The Man Who Stole Superman's Eyes") and rescues him at other times ("The Revenger of Steel"). Their relationship is presented as an ideal, with many stories emphasizing the depth of their feelings for one another ("The Revenger of Steel," "Celebration"). The emphasis on Lois' desire for marriage disappears during this time, and they seem content with their relationship as it is.
Lois is still portrayed basically as "Superman's girlfriend," however. As seen in the content analysis, her relationship with Superman continues to be emphasized more than her career. She becomes part of a tradition in which "heterosexual romance has been represented as the great female adventure, duty, and fulfillment." Dedication to work or devotion to a cause is portrayed as unusual for a woman:

People do not associate this kind of behavior with women. The great adventure of woman's life, according to the culture, is courtship and marriage. Thus, most works with women as central characters are versions of the love story.

If Lois is presented as an exemplary woman during this time, it is because of the way she handles her relationship with Superman. She might not be turned aside from her assignments so easily as in the previous era; however, she is guided in her decisions about her career by Clark and by concern for her relationship. Also, she serves as chronicler of Superman's career, even narrating that portion of "The Great Superman Locked-Room Puzzle" which depicts Superman's exploits. Superman's status as a hero depends not so much on having Lois to rescue as on having Lois to record those rescues.

That Lois' primary importance in Superman is in her relationship with Kal-El is further demonstrated by the continuing depiction of Lana Lang as Lois' rival. Throughout most of this era, Lana is portrayed as cunning and manipulative. Furthermore, Lana is the only continuing female character on an equal basis with Lois. Other such characters, such as Lucy Lane and Jamie Gillis, are younger or
in an inferior social position to Lois. Only Lana shares Lois' position as a star reporter. Yet what separates the two characters from one another is not the way they behave professionally but their attitudes toward Superman. Lana wants Superman for the fame that would result from their relationship while Lois sincerely cares for Superman. At the same time, however, Lana continues to serve as a threat to Lois. When Lois finds in 1983 that she must question Clark about his identity, he quickly develops a relationship with Lana.

Thus, between 1968 and 1982, Lois and Superman's relationship is presented as an ideal whereby the characters seem to have a mutually satisfying relationship. Such a relationship might seem to reflect changing patterns in society. However, if Clark and Lois are any indication, the changes did not go far beyond the surface. Lois continued to be seen more as Superman's girlfriend than as a reporter. She had to put more effort into the relationship than he did. The kinds of tensions noted in the relationship previously had not been resolved; they were simply underneath the surface. As part of this couple, Lois could not regain the sense of independence which had originally characterized her.

1983-1986

1. Industry history: After fifty years of publishing, DC had accumulated a vast, complex set of characters and parallel Earths. The management at DC felt the concept of the multiple Earths,
originally devised to explain the differences in Golden and Silver Age versions of the same characters, had become too complicated for new readers to understand and was costing the company its "proper share of the marketplace." Therefore, DC published the twelve-issue series Crisis on Infinite Earths in 1984 to uncomplicate the continuity. Several major characters, including Supergirl, died in the series and the multiple Earths were collapsed into one. Individual editors then started making necessary changes in the treatment of their characters to conform to the revised DC universe.

2. Developments in Superman: Attempts to update Superman began even before the publication of Crisis on Infinite Earths when Lois ended her relationship with Superman in 1983. This change was made, according to DC managing editor Dick Giordano, "to help bring the comic books into line with current lifestyles and popular storytelling techniques." The break-up was to provide Clark and Lois "with a chance to meet and interact with others." The break-up had such an effect for Clark, who became increasingly involved with Lana. The emphasis on Lois, however, was on whether she could adjust to life without Superman. She has yet to become romantically involved with any other characters.

The break-up proved extremely popular with readers, according to Bates. "The letters tell us the kids are more interested in the various sub-plots than the so-called main plot." The emphasis on the subplots disappeared during 1984, however, possibly because of
the need to wait until after Crisis was completed before making any further changes in Superman. The next major developments are scheduled to take place during 1986.

The first of these is a two-issue Lois Lane mini-series. The writer, Mindy Newell, states that the series has two objectives:

First, we are going to find out more about Lois as a person than ever before...because, considering she has a number of books to her credits, and a Pulitzer Prize or two, there has to be something more to the woman than just "the once and future girlfriend of Superman"...As for the story itself...Lois is going to become involved in a missing child case...to the point of obsession, in fact....

The second major development in Superman will be the revamping of the character by writer-artist John Byrne. Byrne, who is extremely popular with comics fans for his work at Marvel, plans to make major revisions in the Superman legend itself. Byrne is reportedly planning to do away with all the remnants of the Weisinger era, such as the Fortress of Solitude. Possibly the most basic change Byrne plans is in his characterization of Clark Kent. Byrne's version of Clark is said to be "tougher" and no longer a mild-mannered coward. Byrne also is reported to be basing his characterization of Lois on Margot Kidder's performance in the three Superman movies, although there are no plans to revive the relationship between Superman and Lois. Byrne's version of Superman is scheduled to begin in July.

3. Synopsis: The final representative anecdote ("Savage Awakening," Action Comics, April 1983) is the story in which Lois
ends her relationship with Superman. The story begins with an argument between the couple. Lois maintains that Superman refuses to make any kind of real commitment to her because of his own emotional insecurity. Superman, however, maintains that such a commitment is impossible because of his duty to the world as a superhero. Lois leaves Metropolis for an assignment in the Middle East, after telling Clark that she will no longer sacrifice her career because of her relationship with Superman.

4. Analysis: This issue gives an unusual amount of space to character development unrelated to the issue's main story line (a plot against Superman by a villain called Vandal Savage). The very fact that the splash page is a drawing of Superman and Lois emphasizes the importance of the ensuing disagreement. As the narration points out, the background is gray and dismal. Superman and Lois dominate their surroundings not only because of their placement in the foreground of the drawing but because the bright colors they wear offset the muted tones in the background. Rather than designating their status as a couple, however, the use of color in the splash page emphasizes the division between Lois and Superman. Lois' dress is purple, white and gold. It clashes with Superman's uniform of primary colors, whereas she usually wears colors which complement his costume. The overall impact of the splash page gives the reader the impression that something of importance is about to happen between Superman and Lois and that whatever happens will reveal a fundamental difference in the characters' attitudes.
None of the creative staff of Superman associated with the break-up stories were new to the feature. The stories were edited, written and drawn by individuals who had worked on the stories between 1968 and 1982. Having worked through the relationship with Superman and Lois as it developed during those years, these artists and writers were very familiar with the problems inherent in the relationship. Indeed, the differences expressed by Superman and Lois in "Savage Awakening" seem a logical outgrowth of Lois' function as nurturer and caretaker of the romance.

The conflict between Superman and Lois can be analyzed in terms of Carol Gilligan's thesis that men and women use different imagery in discussing relationships and moral dilemmas. Gilligan bases much of her theory on Chodorow's discussion of woman's role as the caretakers of relationships. As previously discussed, Chodorow maintains that female personality defines itself in relation to others. Gilligan expands this discussion, stating that "men and women may experience attachment and separation in different ways and that each sex perceives a danger which the other does not see—men in connection, women in separation."\(^{33}\) Women see a web of interconnected relationships; men see a hierarchy into which they must place each separate relationship. In terms of duties, rights and responsibilities, men and women have differing outlooks:
The moral imperative that emerges repeatedly in interviews with women is an injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate the 'real and recognizable' trouble of this world. For men, the moral imperative appears rather as an injunction to respect the rights of others and thus to protect from interference the rights of life and self-fulfillment. Women's insistence on care is at first self-critical rather than self-protective, while men initially conceive obligation to others negatively in terms of noninterference. Development for both sexes would therefore seem to entail an integration of rights and responsibilities through the discovery of the complementarity of these disparate views.  

The conflict between Superman and Lois expresses these differences in men's and women's voices. Lois repeatedly searches for connection. Superman, by contrast, speaks of his duties and insists on separating himself from Lois despite the fact that he loves her. Lois immediately recognizes his reluctance for the commitment she desires and criticizes him for it: "Oh, you bury yourself in your work, so you don't have to express your feelings. You don't have to commit yourself. You save everyone's life, but you've lost your own heart." (p. 2, panel 5)

Superman insists that his personal desires have nothing to do with the matter. There is a hierarchy involved which places his duty to humanity above his love for Lois: "You've never understood, have you? Look out at Metropolis--that's my city. Eight million people depend on me. Beyond that is a world I've sworn to protect. And beyond even that is a universe that comes under my jurisdiction." (p. 2, panel 4)

The conflict between them is so basic that Superman cannot see any way to resolve it. He responds to Lois' criticisms by ending the conversation and is unwilling to concede that any portion of her
criticism could be correct. Yet in her argument with Superman Lois finds and uses her own moral voice. Speaking in this voice, she begins to make choices and decisions without regard to what others might think. She rejects her previous role, no longer willing to carry the entire burden of keeping the relationship alive. She starts by declaring that she may not always wait for Superman to fit her into his schedule and follows up this statement by leaving the country in pursuit of a major assignment. Realizing that she is not receiving nurturance from Superman, she chooses to end the romance. Self-development has become for her "a higher duty than self-sacrifice." 35

The harder Lois works at re-establishing her own identity, the more seriously she criticizes the man who has been the dominant figure in her life. Her "great adventure, duty and fulfillment" becomes her own life, and she feels the freedom to disagree with Superman about the way in which he uses his powers ("Within These Hands--Power"). However, she has a tremendous price to pay for that freedom. Her increasing independence and open criticism of Superman separates her from her friends and co-workers, most of whom take Superman's part in the quarrel. She even loses her assignment to Lana ("The Kid Who Played Superman"). Following Lois' return from the Middle East, the emphasis in the stories gradually shifts away from the more independent Lois and onto Lana as the damsel-in-distress, plagued by a series of deranged admirers
and hostile extraterrestrials. Having freed Lois from her dependence on Superman and restored to her a degree of autonomy she has not possessed since the 1940s, the writers appeared unsure as to what to do with her. If her role in the stories was no longer that of "Superman's girlfriend," what was it supposed to be?

However, the very decision to dramatize this conflict between the most famous romantic couple in comics shows an awareness by the industry that the characters need to develop. The development expresses the values and expectations of the culture. If there is concern and discussion within the society about women's roles, that concern will somehow be dramatized inside the pages of the comics. The artists, writers and editors will present (perhaps unconsciously) their views on the nature of the problem. However, when the society cannot solve these problems, the solutions presented in the comics are likely to contain subtle warnings about the dangers inherent in the process of change.

Self-knowledge is portrayed in such a way as to suggest that it is more a punishment than a reward. When Lois Lane seeks more than a one-sided romance out of life, she is severely criticized by her friends and co-workers. She even suffers a major career set-back. At the same time, the more traditional Lana gains love, admiration and credit for work begun by Lois. Lana continues to be presented as a foil for Lois and as Lois' replacement in Clark's life.
Although Lana expresses sympathy for Lois in "Savage Awakening," elsewhere she continues to criticize Lois. Even when Lois attempts to overcome her disappointment at losing an important assignment to Lana, Lana's sarcastic reply serves to reinforce Lois' position as a "gracious loser" ("The Kid Who Played Superman"). By provoking Lois into throwing a glass of punch in Lana's face (Lana retaliates by dunking Lois' head in the punch bowl), Lana even returns Superman to the kind of female antipathy portrayed during the 1950s.

Superman portrays a situation in which only one person continues to grow. Superman simply ends all contact with Lois. As the dominating party in the relationship, he has no motivation for altering his behavior when he can more easily replace Lois with the less demanding Lana. Lois, having challenged Superman's opinions, cannot return to her previous situation. She moves away from an ethic based on self-sacrifice (putting her own needs second to Superman's needs) to one based on self-fulfillment (concentrating once again on her career). Only the person who does not benefit from the status quo is portrayed as being motivated toward maturation. That maturation is costly for Lois, as it separates her from her friends and colleagues who cannot understand the reasons behind her break-up with Superman.
Conclusion

Viewed from Lois Lane's perspective, Superman becomes a very different story from the one analyzed by Fleisher, Lotterman and others who have examined the comics from Kal-El's point of view. From this new perspective, Superman is revealed as a story about the control of an ambitious, potentially heroic woman. The means by which control is exercised may vary, but Superman's domination over Lois is demonstrated continually. Since 1938, Superman has manipulated Lois' career; he has refused to tell her who he really is; he has placed her in dangerous situations and blamed her for being in danger. In the original conception of Lois Lane, Jerry Siegal and Joe Schuster created an active, intelligent character whose primary motivation was the pursuit of her career. Although the Superman-Lois-Clark triangle was created in these early stories, romance was not a major part of the plots. Lois was a character to be admired. She was portrayed as confident and assured. She followed her instincts regarding her assignments and Superman's secret identity. Although she was the only continuing female character in the series, Lois played a central role. Lois, in her original conception, was a symbol of female autonomy. As seen in the analysis of "Man or Superman?", Lois' attempts to discover Clark's secret identity expressed both the positive side of such autonomy and corresponding fears of the disruption such independence could cause for society.
The ways in which that original conception was altered during the three subsequent eras illustrate the implicit values in the text. Between 1948 and 1967, Lois was portrayed as a rather foolish character. While the stories continued to maintain her competence as a reporter, they denied her power in ways which reaffirmed the feminine mystique. Lois was labelled as "Superman's girlfriend," and stories frequently centered around her desire to marry the Man of Steel. The singlemindedness with which she had previously pursued scoops now went into the pursuit of Superman. Even though her suspicions regarding Clark Kent's secret identity were correct, she was ridiculed for her inability to prove her suspicions. Lois was usually portrayed as flighty, immature and unlikely to follow an assignment or an idea to its conclusion. Thus, her determination, ambition and independent streak were more of a joke than a serious threat to the cultural standards Superman represented. However, in order to deny Lois' power, the comics had to manufacture situations in which Lois could have exercised her abilities under different circumstances. Simply her persistence in continuing to try to prove something that had been disproved in previous issues contradicted the diluted image of Lois for readers who followed Superman during this period.

A major change in characterization occurred in 1968 when Superman openly admitted his love for Lois. After that, the comics presented a series of subplots designed to show the depth of Lois and Superman's
love for one another. Lois' abilities as a reporter were not undermined, and she obviously took both her work and her relationship with Kal-El seriously. However, her skill as a reporter was alluded to more often than it was displayed. Lois' work rarely served as the focus of the stories. Her talent existed primarily to demonstrate Kal-El's superiority. Superman, after all, could not be expected to love an ordinary woman. Lois, as talented and intelligent as she may have been portrayed during this era, did not return to her original characterization. At most, she appeared as part of a couple. Although intelligent enough to realize that Clark is Superman, Lois felt compelled to hide her knowledge since it was obviously something he did not wish her to know. Thus, a plot device meant to demonstrate the depth of Lois' love for Superman ultimately became an indication of the flaws in this apparently ideal romance. Clark's professed desire for a relationship was completely at odds with his refusal to reveal his secret identity. Lois was obviously putting her considerable talent and ambition second to her love for him, while he refused to relinquish the power his secret had previously given him over her. It became increasingly apparent that this was not the equal partnership it seemed on the surface.

The fourth era in Lois Lane's characterization began with the dissolution of the relationship in 1983. Significantly, it was Lois who made the decision to end the romance with Superman after Clark became involved with Lana Lang. In making this decision, Lois
again became an independent character. However, her place in the Superman cast became uncertain. Her story developed as a separate subplot away from the main action of the comics. Eventually, with her return to Metropolis after losing a major assignment to Lana Lang, Lois' story ended. Her role in the comics during the last year has been minor. Having made Lois an autonomous character again, the writers and artists seem unable to find a new direction for her. It is possible to see the flaws in her previous relationship with Superman and to realize the need to free her from that relationship, but it is clearly more difficult to envision what the character would do once she is free. In that context, the projected Lois Lane mini-series and John Byrne's forthcoming changes in Superman may provide the direction Lois' character has been lacking during the past year.
Notes—Chapter Five


Although the company was officially called National Periodical Publications for many years, it is usually referred to as "DC," an abbreviation of Detective Comics.


3 Ibid., p. 414.


7 Ibid., p. 21.

8 Ibid., p. 31.


10 Ibid.


12 Ibid., p. 32.

13 Ibid., p. 33.

14 Ibid., p. 38.

15 Jacobs and Jones, pp. 242-268.


18. Ibid., p. 27.


21. The most famous example of this occurs in Superman--The Movie (1978), following Lois' death during an earthquake. Overcome with grief, Superman turns the world back in order to restore Lois' life. Lois, unaware that anything more serious than running out of gas has happened to her, complains about Superman's neglect of her: "That's the problem with Men of Steel--there's never one around when you want one."


24. Further discussion concerning the content analysis and rhetorical analysis results for this era appears in Chapter Six.


29. Ibid.
30 Greenberger, p. 32.

31 Amazing Heroes (November 1, 1985), p. 66.


34 Ibid., p. 100.

35 Ibid., p. 129.
Chapter Six

Conclusion

As noted previously, the character of Lois Lane undergoes four distinct periods of development. These changes correspond to concerns with women's roles and relationships occurring within the society for which the comics were produced. The results of this study indicate the accuracy of Chmaj's statement that comic books serve as projections of the hopes and fears of the society at large. The continuing popularity of Superman may indeed depend upon this ability to adapt its characters to fit the times. The recent amount of publicity accompanying the announcement of Byrne's plans for Lois Lane and Superman further indicates the depth of the relationship which has developed between these characters and the American public. Having followed the characters for forty-eight years, the readers have a strong, continuing interest in learning how Clark and Lois will deal with their problems. Superman serves as equipment for living through this use of character development to increase audience identification with its fictional protagonists. In turn, the immense popularity of Superman indicates the importance of character development in insuring the commercial success of popular culture.
Methodological Implications

Central to the rhetorical study of popular culture is the discovery of critical methods appropriate to the medium under investigation. As noted in Chapter Two, the scholarly study of sequential art forms such as comic books is relatively recent. There is not, as yet, any accepted method for studying such material. Rather than assuming that the comics medium effects behavior, however, rhetorical criticism is approaching popular culture with the assumption that media are indicators of cultural values. This study has begun with such an assumption, applying Burke's concept of the representative anecdote as a means of examining dominant themes in comic book discourse and the relation of those themes to social norms. The representative anecdote has provided a method for analyzing the differences in characterization which have occurred in the discourse since 1938. Each of the representative anecdotes considered in this study have been expressions of the different cultural values of their eras. By looking in detail at each anecdote, the study has been able to isolate and examine changes in the messages the audience received from comics in each of those eras.

These anecdotes provide audiences with literature which embodies in fantasy form the hopes and fears of their respective eras. The first two eras are largely descriptive in nature. That is, the stories offer a portrait of a female protagonist in which her independent nature is presented as potentially disruptive to the
social order. These two stories also present an attitude toward that threat as either serious ("Man or Superman?") or as a minor annoyance ("Lois Lane's Wedding Day"). For female readers, however, the messages in these two stories could be more complex, indicating that the independence Lois Lane aspired to is either a positive strategy for dealing with male duplicity ("Man or Superman?") or an impossible goal ("Lois Lane's Wedding Day"). By contrast, the last two anecdotes are more clearly prescriptive. "The Great Superman Locked-Room Puzzle" presents Clark and Lois as a couple working together, with the implied suggestion that theirs is an ideal relationship worthy of emulation. Yet the notion that women must put the greater effort into relationships and make more concessions to their partners can also be found in this story. "Savage Awakening" suggests that it is acceptable for a woman to leave a failed relationship and prescribes work as a cure for a broken heart.

Because of the continuing nature of Superman, closure is impossible. The audience never learns Lois and Superman's ultimate fate. The story changes and adapts to fit the times, but it does not actually end. For this very reason, however, as long as Superman remains a popular cultural icon, study of each new version will continue to increase our knowledge of the assumptions our society makes regarding issues such as women's roles.

Rhetorical criticism of the popular arts are, therefore, of tremendous importance to the understanding of contemporary culture.
According to Fisher, "symbols are created and communicated ultimately as stories meant to give order to human experience and to induce others to dwell in them to establish ways of living in common, in communities in which there is sanction for the story that constitutes one's life." These stories can be discovered in the popular culture of an era. In discovering how those stories function as "equipment for living," we can also increase our understanding of the real situations for which the stories prepare the audience.

Furthermore, through the rhetorical study of the text it is possible to identify undercurrents and tensions within the discourse which could not be quantified through content analysis alone. Whereas the content analysis in this study has been most useful in identifying the types of events which occur in the text, identification of such categories has not proved sufficient for understanding the social messages found in the comics. Rhetorical analysis has made it possible to put those events into a wider context. Rhetorical analysis of "The Great Superman Locked-Room Puzzle," for example, confirms the results of the content analysis for the 1968-1982 period. In that story, Lois is portrayed as a competent reporter pursuing a human interest assignment. She also is clearly involved in a romantic relationship with Kal-El, and her pattern of ridiculing Clark continues. She is the only female character in the story, as she is in most stories from this era. What the content analysis cannot record, however, is the tension
underlying the relationship between Clark and Lois and the effect that tension has on all aspects of her life. The story implies that Lois knows that Clark is Superman. Her decision not to challenge Clark about that knowledge gives additional significance to the text, especially in terms of its relationship to the role of women as nurturers in society. These interpretations are not strictly possible through content analysis alone. After all, Lois never overtly states that Clark is Superman or that she carries the burden of maintaining their relationship. Conclusions concerning the meaning of Lois' implicit understanding of Clark's secret identity and her decision not to challenge him about that identity are possible only through rhetorical analysis. Rhetorical analysis of the text enables the critic to study Lois' behavior in this story in light of how consistently the character behaves (especially in terms of how she has acted in previous stories) and what such behavior is likely to connote in this story. Her subsequent break-up with Superman, which might seem unexpected if viewed only in terms of the content analysis, is now seen to come naturally out of the problems inherent in the relationship. Those problems, in turn, express the values and concerns of the society. The rhetorical analysis, therefore, is seen as a vital component in understanding the evolution of social norms in popular culture, whereas the content analysis is most useful in providing information regarding how the events of the story being analyzed relate to overall patterns of events in the discourse.
Implications for Further Research

The understanding of a culture's values and concerns can be increased through the study of its popular culture. Since the bond that exists between character and audience in one area in which these values can be seen, greater understanding of the role of character will help us interpret popular culture. As demonstrated in this study, further research into the nature of the changes which occur in characterization over time would increase our comprehension of the connections between the character's world and the world of the audience.

As noted in Chapter Two, relatively few studies of the comics media have been done. However, sequential art is a rich source of data regarding cultural values. Through both the written text and the visual image, comics depict the concerns and expectations of society. This study has revealed how cultural values concerning women's role in society have been expressed through the character of Lois Lane in Superman. Additional studies of comics are needed to complete our understanding of the worldview presented by this complex medium.

Finally, the continued popularity of all forms of fantasy and science fiction media deserves serious consideration. Despite the continued popularity of comics and films such as Superman, many scholars tend to dismiss the rhetorical impact of fantasy and
science fiction as simple escapist entertainment. Such criticism, however, fails to address why audiences choose this particular form of entertainment for escape. The continued popular success of the fantasy and science fiction genre suggests that audiences find in them some form of equipment for living. Through studying their characters and the values expressed through those characters, we may discover more about what audiences seek to escape through popular culture.
Notes--Chapter Six


Appendix A

The following is a list of the stories included in this study:

1938-1947

1. Origin story, Action Comics (1938)
2. Valleyho Dam, Action Comics (1938)
3. Insurance Racket, Action Comics (1940)
5. "Lois Lane—Superwoman," Action Comics (1943)
6. The Archer, Superman (1941)
7. "Man or Superman?" Superman (1942)
8. "Lois Lane, Girl Reporter," Superman (1944)

1948-1967

2. "Superman's Hall of Trophies," Action Comics (1952)
3. "Lois Lane—Wanted!" Action Comics (1954)
17. "When Lois First Suspected Clark Was Superman!" Superman (1960)
23. "Lois Lane's Wedding Day," Lois Lane (1962)
24. "Lois Lane, Spy Hunter!" Lois Lane (1965)
25. "Lois Lane's Last Chance," Lois Lane (1966)
1968-1982

1. "The Untouchable of Metropolis!" Action Comics (1968)
10. "Before This Night Is Over, Superman Will Kill!" Superman (1977)
12. "I Am Curious (Black)," Lois Lane (1970)
13. "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lois Lane," Lois Lane (1972)

1983-1986

Appendix B

Content Analysis Results

Categories:

**Lois Lane as Reporter**

1 **Genesis of assignment**
   a. not specified; does not apply
   b. editor/publisher assigns story
   c. Lois discovers story on her own
   d. Lois steals another reporter's assignment
   e. Lois' assignment is stolen

2 **Method of Investigation**
   a. not specified; does not apply
   b. interviewing
   c. going undercover (assuming a role other than reporter)
   d. observation of events
   e. deception (lying or misrepresenting the situation)

3 **Story Subject Lois Is Initially Assigned**
   a. not specified; does not apply
   b. initially Superman-related
   c. initially human interest (not involving Superman)
   d. crime (not initially involving Superman)
   e. natural disaster (not initially involving Superman)
   f. woman's page/"woman's angle"
   g. politics/international events

4 **Lois' Success as a Reporter**
   a. not specified; does not apply
   b. Lois succeeds on her own
   c. Lois fails on her own
   d. Superman intercedes and helps Lois succeed
   e. Superman rescues Lois without manipulating her success or failure
   f. Lois fails because of Superman/Clark's manipulation
   g. Lois fails because of another character's manipulation
   h. Lois decides not to publish the story
5 Lois' Evaluation of Her Career
   a. not specified; does not apply
   b. positive; self-confident
   c. desire for better assignment
   d. complains about sexist nature of assignment
   e. lack of faith in her ability as a reporter
   f. discusses social responsibility of reporters
   g. defensive about her talent or her ability to succeed
      without Superman's assistance
   h. desire to abandon career for marriage
   i. other

6 Reactions to Lois' Career by Other Characters
   a. not specified; does not apply
   b. admiration/confidence
   c. cannot do job because she's a woman
   d. success depends on Superman's aid

Romantic Relationships

1 Lois' Statements Concerning Superman
   a. none
   b. love
   c. desire for marriage or more serious relationship
   d. jealousy of other women's relationships with Superman
   e. envy of his powers, etc.
   f. admiration/friendship
   g. desire to know his secret identity
   h. denies being interested in Superman
   i. other

2 Lois' Statements Concerning Clark Kent
   a. none
   b. love
   c. desire for marriage or more serious relationship
   d. jealousy of other women's relationships to Clark
   e. ridicule
   f. admiration/friendship
   g. suspicion that he is Superman
   h. denies being interest in Clark Kent
3 **Superman's Statements Concerning Lois**
   a. none
   b. love
   c. desire for marriage or more serious relationship
   d. jealousy toward Clark's relationship with Lois
   e. jealousy toward other characters' relationships with Lois
   f. ridicule
   g. admiration/friendship
   h. need to protect her from possible danger
   i. desire to tell her that he is Clark
   j. denies being interested in Lois
   k. other

4 **Clark's Statements Concerning Lois**
   a. none
   b. love
   c. desire for marriage or more serious relationship
   d. jealousy toward Superman's relationship with Lois
   e. jealousy toward other characters' relationships with Lois
   f. ridicule
   g. admiration/friendship
   h. need to protect her from possible danger
   i. denies being interested in Lois
   j. other

5 **Lois' Actions Toward Clark and Superman**
   a. none
   b. rescues Superman
   c. rescues Clark
   d. attempts to maneuver Superman into marriage/declaration of love
   e. attempts to maneuver Clark into marriage/declaration of love
   f. attempts to discover Superman's secret identity
   g. attempts to avoid marriage to Superman
   h. attempts to avoid marriage to Clark
   i. other

6 **Actions Taken by Superman Toward Lois**
   a. none
   b. rescues Lois
   c. prevents her involvement with Clark
   d. encourages her involvement with Clark
   e. prevents her involvement with someone other than Clark
   f. encourages her involvement with someone other than Clark
   g. proposes marriage
   h. attempts to avoid marriage
   i. attempts to punish Lois or "teach her a well-deserved lesson"
   j. other
7 **Actions Taken by Clark Toward Lois**
   a. none
   b. rescues Lois
   c. prevents her involvement with Superman
   d. encourages her involvement with Superman
   e. prevents her involvement with someone other than Superman
   f. encourages her involvement with someone other than Superman
   g. proposes marriage
   h. attempts to avoid marriage
   i. attempts to punish Lois or "teach her a well-deserved lesson"
   j. other

**Lois' Relationships with Women**

1 **Nature of Relationship**
   a. none
   b. co-worker
   c. friend
   d. relative
   e. other

2 **Professional Roles Played by Other Female Characters**
   a. none; not specified
   b. journalist/broadcaster
   c. superhero
   d. flight attendant
   e. homemaker
   f. other

3 **Behavior of Other Women Toward Lois**
   a. none
   b. hostile (stealing assignments, etc.)
   c. friendly
   d. jealous
   e. asks Lois for help or advice
   f. gives help or advice to Lois

4 **Behavior of Lois to Other Women**
   a. none
   b. hostile (stealing assignments, etc.)
   c. friendly
   d. jealous
   e. asks other women for help or advice
   f. gives help or advice to other women
5 Other Women's Statements About Lois
   a. none
   b. friendly
   c. jealousy of her relationship with Superman
   d. admiration
   e. envy of her success as a reporter

6 Lois' Statements About Other Women
   a. none
   b. friendship
   c. jealousy
   d. admiration
   e. envy of other women's success

Cover and Splash Page

1 Prominence
   a. Lois is in foreground; is a central character in drawing
   b. Lois is in background; is not a central character in drawing

2 Physical Appearance
   a. wears a low-cut or revealing outfit which calls attention to her body
   b. Lois' appearance is deformed or altered in some manner (drawn as an old woman or grotesquely overweight, etc.)
   c. Lois' physical appearance is not emphasized

3 Situation
   a. spectator: observing events, not taking action
   b. being threatened; in jeopardy
   c. crying or screaming
   d. taking aggressive action; threatening or harming another character
   e. embracing Superman, Clark or other character; getting married
   f. comforting or aiding another character
   g. reporting
   h. other

4 Emotional State
   a. frightened
   b. startled
   c. sad/depressed
   d. jealous
   e. confused
   f. happy
   g. angry
### 1938-1947

#### Lois Lane as Reporter

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Splash Page

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8 a c g g
9 b c c c

1948-1967

Lois Lane as Reporter

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