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Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane

A Reflection of the Changing Female Roles in 1960's America

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To Todd

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Abstract

This paper is a chronological view of how the comic book character Lois Lane evolves in the 1960's. The research shows how a media image, specifically Lois Lane from the comic book medium, reflects the changing roles of women in society during the time period. The researcher analyzed 21 different issues of the comic book series *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane* from its 17 years of publication, using three criteria to map the changes in Lois Lane's Character. The paper describes how movements such as, the New Left, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Women's Movement affected Lois Lane. The paper describes Lois Lane's gradual change from the private sphere and the feminine mystique into the public sphere and that of the emancipated woman.

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Introduction

“As a distant planet was destroyed by old age, a scientist placed his infant son within a hastily devised space-ship, launching it toward Earth!” and so began the story of the first comic book Superhero.¹ Superman first appeared on the cover of Action Comics #1 by DC Comics in June of 1938, ushering in the Golden Age of the comic book and introducing Lois Lane as a character.² As comics progressed through the years, the portrayal of women fluctuated greatly and typically reflected popular movements, events, and perceptions of their gender. This paper will focus on how the 1960’s affected the image of Lois Lane, a popular woman of the superhero comic genre, and how she reflected the changing role of women and their representation within the comic book medium.

Scholarly interest in comics is not new. However, scholarly historical research on comics is relatively recent. The majority of “historical” accounts of comic books before 1990 were fanfare sponsored by comic book companies to record their origins and those of their own characters. Since the early 1990’s the scholarly community has taken a greater interest in comic books. In this short time span, historians have studied many topics on comic books, such as philosophy, ideology, and religion in some depth, with many articles written by scholars on these subjects.³ The history of the emergence of comic books, the companies that print them,

¹ Dennis O’Neil, ed., *Secret Origins of the DC Superheroes* (New York: National Periodical Publications, inc., 1976), 17.

² Bradford W. Wright, *Comic Book Nation: Transformation of Youth Culture in America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 9.

³ Examples of such are: M. Barker, *Comics: Ideology, Power and the Critics* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1989); Matthew P. McAllister, Edward H. Sewell and Ian Gordan. *Comics and Ideology* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2001); Jeff McLaughlin, ed. *Comics As Philosophy* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2005); B.J Oropeza, ed. *The Gospel According to Superheroes: Religion and Popular Culture* (New York:

and the culture that follows them, also have been examined. Although many topics have been breached, none have been explored to a large degree by the historical community.

This paper endeavors to help fill the gap in the literature on the portrayal of women in comic books. Most of the literary sources on comics include a section on women, but few have been devoted to describing women's roles within comic books. Withstanding a few exceptions, the main secondary sources written on women have only come out since 2000. Sherrie A. Inness has written many essays focused on women's portrayal and image in action roles within popular cultural media.⁴ Some of her recent essays have included women in comic books and how they portray strong female characters.

Lillian S. Robinson dedicated a whole book to describing women within comic books, called *Wonder Women: Feminisms and Superheroes*. Robinson wrote the book to argue that female superheroes created new traditions and borrowed upon old ones, such as mythologies, "to tell different stories about gender, stories that come closer to the universe of belief than do masculine adventure comics."⁵ Her book took an ideological view about how Women Superheroes stories differ from that of male superheroes. Also, there have been other essays written referring to women in comics, but overall women have not been the main focus of historical monographs on comic books.

Lois Lane in particular is the main focus of this study, however, this is not the first study on Lois Lane. Jeanne Pauline Williams wrote her dissertation on Lois Lane and argued that she

Peter Lang Publishing, 2005); Richard Reynolds. *Superheroes: A Modern Mythology* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1992).

⁴ Examples of Sherrie A. Inness' work are: Sherrie A. Inness, *Action Chicks* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Sherrie A. Inness, *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1998); Sherrie A. Inness, *Delinquents and Debutantes: Twentieth-Century American Girls' Cultures* (NY: New York University Press, 1998).

⁵ Lillian S. Robinson, *Wonder Women: Feminisms and Superheroes* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

could be used to show how “character development is vital to the continued success of popular culture” and how media could be used “as indicators of cultural values.”⁶ In order to argue her point, Williams looked at the “life” of Lois Lane from 1938 to 1986, piecing her history together by using six different series in which Lois was a character. She then used samples from each series to depict Lois Lane’s history. Williams divided Lois’s history into four time periods describing how Lois changed from period to period. Williams believed that Lois represented “society’s beliefs and expectations.”⁷ However, Williams did not describe what these social norms were in society and how Lois reflected them.

This study links the changing social norms for women of the 1960’s to Lois Lane’s gradual character changes during that time period. Williams wrote that Lois represented the feminine mystique until the end of 1967.⁸ This study argues that Lois transitioned away from the feminine mystique in the early 1960’s, and gradually moved towards her more career orientated and independent roles of the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. Williams also argued that during this later era Lois was most importantly seen as Superman’s Girlfriend; however, this study shows otherwise as the comic book issues analyzed from this era depict Lois as more career orientated, than focused on her relationship with Superman.⁹ Furthermore Williams argued that Lois and Clark’s relationship in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s was mutual, but Lois was still more dependent on Superman than on herself.¹⁰ The comic books analyzed for this study in the *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane* series, instead point to Superman and Lois as a

⁶ Jeanne Pauline Williams, “The Evolution of Social Norms and the Life of Lois Lane: A Rhetorical Analysis of Popular Culture” (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1986), 1.

⁷ Williams, “Evolution of Social Norms”, 3.

⁸ Williams, “Evolution of Social Norms”, 94.

⁹ Williams, “Evolution of Social Norms”, 54.

¹⁰ Williams, “Evolution of Social Norms”, 111.

team, with Lois deciding her actions for herself. In order to, analyze these differences further; the researcher used a consistent form of methodology while researching Lois Lane.

Methodology

Lois Lane was the chosen female for this research study because she has been in comic books since Action Comics #1 in 1938. Therefore, she has a history of her own in which to compare her role during the 1960's. Besides being in the *Superman* comics, Lois Lane received her own title comic called, *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane* in 1958. This comic spanned from 1958-1974, which correlates with the early part of the Women's Movement in the United States. This particular series was chosen because of the correlation with the Women's Movement, other movements of the 1960's, and to create a manageable time frame to research Lois' development throughout the period. Since different mediums reflect the society it was designed or created in, the events affecting women's roles in society should be similarly affecting the depiction of Lois Lane in the 1960's.

The idea that the comic book medium reflects the society in which they were created in is not new. The creator is affected by the society they live in, and subconsciously and consciously put certain aspects from their society into their work. Also, the consumer needs to be able to connect with the artwork in some way to inspire them to keep on buying the commodity. As Jeanne Williams stated on comic books in particular:

The understanding of a culture's values and concerns can be increased through the study of its popular culture....Through both the written text and the visual image, comics depict the concerns and expectations of society.¹¹

These depictions translate into "characters [who] represent ideas and values with which the audience can identify."¹² With these ideas in mind one should be able to look at the characters within the comic book to see how they reflect changes in society.

¹¹ Williams, "Evolution of Social Norms", 132.

The analysis of Lois Lane in *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane* was methodically researched to look for changes in Lois Lane's character. The series stretched from 1958-1974. The researcher had originally hoped to look at two issues per year from the series, one in April and one in October but due to issue availability and other restraints, was unable to attain that goal. Instead, one issue per year of the comic was used as the standard to show progression. The October issue was chosen as the standard month, however, when it was not available the next closest month was used instead. The researcher also looked at the April Issue in conjunction with the October issue for the first five years, but was unable to do so for the other years due to constraints.¹³ Therefore, the researcher was able to systematically analyze at least one issue per year to see what shifts had taken place in Lois' personal identity, and how they correlate with ideas or events within the tumultuous 1960's. In order to do this, each issue was analyzed on Lois' career development (i.e. what did she want out of it and what did she receive), her main goals for herself, and her level of independence, particularly in regards to Superman. The criterion was then compared to female images and actions from the 1960's time period.

¹² Williams, "Evolution of Social Norms", 7.

¹³ See Appendix A for a complete list of all comic issues that were analyzed for this study.

The Comic Code of 1954

The analysis also had to consider the Comic Code, a regulation system in effect on all comics from 1954 into the early 1990's. The code was declared to be similar to other self-regulatory codes that were created for the "radio, television, and motion-picture industries" of the 1950's.¹⁴ However, many believed the comic code to be more "rigid and puritanical" than any of the other industries' regulations. As in other industries, the Comic Code emerged for a number of reasons. Comic books, for example, were beginning to be viewed as reading material created mainly for the younger generations, by the general public. However, comic book companies were trying to market to both adults and youths to turn a larger profit. Also, the decline of the superhero comic genre after WWII had led to a shift in genres. Consumers instead bought crime, horror, romance, and satire comic books. The transfer of popularity had a large effect on the industry.

These new genres became very popular, but with their popularity rising, the disapproval of comic books mounted. In 1954, Fredrick Wertham published his study on the link between Juvenile delinquents and comic books, entitled *The Seduction of the Innocent*.¹⁵ The book was written for a popular audience, but showed no conclusive evidence, nor a bibliography of sources to support his conclusions. Wertham's work, however, "successfully articulated many concerns expressed by parents, teachers, and community leaders during the time."¹⁶

¹⁴ David Hajdu. *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic-Book Scare and How it Changed America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 291.

¹⁵ Fredric Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent* (New York: Rinehart, 1954).

¹⁶ Amy Kiste Nyberg, "Seal Of Approval: The Origins and History of the Comic Code" (Ph. D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1994), 15.

The book's publication also coincided with government interest in Juvenile delinquency. Senate subcommittee hearings were held in 1954 on Juvenile delinquency, during which, comic books were analyzed as a potential cause. Comic book companies, not wanting any form of government mandated regulation, created the Comic Code by the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA).¹⁷ To enforce the regulations the Comic Code Authority (CCA) was created to approve only comic books that would be suitable for America's youth.¹⁸

The Comic Code was very important because all comic images, character portrayals and plotlines during the silver age (1956-1985) of comics were influenced by the code. The code contained forty-one requirements that stipulated what could be present within a comic, and mainstream company's needed the code's authentication mark to sell their comic book in a store or on a newsstand. It must be noted that the observations of the case study on Lois Lane was influenced to a degree by the codes guidelines. Although, the comic code had many stipulations, there were three areas most pertinent to the portrayal of women within comic books. These regulations stated that if marriage was present it should "emphasize the value of the home and the sanctity of marriage"; that "divorce shall not be treated humorously nor represented as desirable"; and that "females shall be drawn realistically without exaggeration of any physical qualities."¹⁹

These three areas of the code, however, did not have an excessive amount of bearing within *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*. Lois in most cases had always been presented as a "realistic woman" in figure and dress. She did not fit the formula of the exotic, scantily clad

¹⁷ Roger Sabin, *Adult Comics: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 160.

¹⁸ B.J. Oropeza, *The Gospel According to Superheroes: Religion and Popular Culture* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2005), 11.

¹⁹ Sabin, *Adult Comics: An Introduction*, 252-253.

women of the jungle comic genre nor did she wear the tight, robust outfits of wonder woman.²⁰ As Jeanne Williams points out in her dissertation, Lois' "physical features" were not exaggerated on the cover or on the splash pages "in order to sell magazines" like women were in other comic books.²¹ Therefore the 1954 Comic Code regulation that mandated women be "drawn realistically without exaggeration of any physical qualities" did not drastically affect the portrayal of Lois Lane.²²

The idea of divorce within the Lois Lane comic also does not apply in large detail to her because she was never actually married to anyone. In a few issues, Lois Lane was "married" but in the end the readers find that it was a dream, or that it was a false marriage, so no mention of divorce was made. It is possible though, that the marriages were fashioned as dreams or as false in order to comply with the comic book code to avoid having Superman divorce Lois or vice versa. However, the code never stipulated that divorce could not happen, only that it had to be an unhappy event. Therefore, divorce could have happened to Lois if the marriages were "real," but they were not, so the regulation on divorce does not affect this analysis of Lois Lane's portrayal.

The part of the code that had the most influence on the Lois Lane comic books, was the requirement that "the value of the home and the sanctity of marriage" must be present in a

²⁰ Comic books during the Golden Age (1938-1954) and throughout the Silver Age (1956-1983) were written by certain formulas. Women of the Jungle comics such as Sheena, Queen of the Jungle(Jumbo Comics), Nyoka The Jungle Girl(Fawcett comics), or Camilla Queen of the Lost Empire(Fiction House Comic Books) were all drawn as exotic sexual beings in skimpy clothes with roughly the same story line present. Wonder Woman was also drawn in a physically attractive and robust manor as well as in sexually appealing clothing to appeal to the same audience as the Jungle Comics. Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, 73.

²¹ Williams, "Evolution of Social Norms", 47

²² Sabin, *Adult Comics: An Introduction*, 252-253.

comic where marriage is an issue.²³ The code did not stipulate that marriage must be a prominent point of a comic book containing a male-female relationship; however, if a comic book did decide to breach the subject of marriage it must have been done in a favorable light. In *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, the idea of marriage was breached by Lois. It is important to note that although marriage was thought of in a favorable light, the comic book code did not require Lois to think of it at all. Therefore, it can be assumed that the act of Lois' wanting marriage within the comic is a reflection of the time period and social values versus a stipulation of the comic code.

²³ Sabin, *Adult Comics: An Introduction*, 252-253.

Lois Lane before *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*

Lois Lane, before she received her own title, had undergone many changes in her “lifetime.” When she first appeared in 1938, she was a reporter who took her career seriously at the Daily Planet newspaper where she worked with Clark Kent (Superman’s alter ego). She was assertive and purposely pursued assignments that were traditionally not for a woman during the 1940’s. However, she usually was unable to succeed in printing her assignments because of Superman’s or Clark Kent’s interference.²⁴ Lois’s attempts at a scoop usually led her into trouble in which Superman had to save her. Therefore one of Lois’ main functions was to be a damsel in distress, even though she was an assertive career woman.²⁵ However, during the height of WWII, from 1942-1944, Lois’s function as a damsel in distress was not prevalent as Williams mentions:

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)²⁶

The idea that Lois could succeed on her own coincided with the influx of women working to support the war effort without male assistance.²⁷ However, the series was very short lived and stopped before the war was over. Jeanne Williams described the reason for the series short duration as a reflection of 1940’s American society:

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

²⁴ Williams, “Evolution of Social Norms”, 62.

²⁵ Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, 9.

²⁶ Williams, “Evolution of Social Norms”, 70.

²⁷ Allan M. Winkler, *Home Front U.S.A.: America during World War II* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1986), 51.

movement of women into offices and factories created anxiety regarding whether society could return to comfortable, pre-War standards...The intensity of Clark's reaction to...[Lois]...demonstrates just how threatening such a symbol was thought to be even to the most powerful man.²⁸

Williams described how even though Lois was a powerful symbol as a woman, Superman was still superior and more important than Lois, this reflected popular ideas in the 1940's United States. The ideology also reflects why the "Lois Lane, Girl Reporter" series could not continue on as it was a powerful display of a competent woman operating individually. Another facet of Lois' character role was to serve as "Clark's love interest."²⁹ The "Superman-Lois-Clark [love] triangle" developed in those early years.³⁰ The triangle consisted of Lois favoring Superman as a love interest over Clark, but Clark favored Lois while Superman did not. These three aspects of reporter, damsel in distress and love interest were the traits that Lois most contributed to the plot of the 1940 comic books.

²⁸ Williams, "Evolution of Social Norms", 74.

²⁹ Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, 9.

³⁰ Williams, "Evolution of Social Norms", 45.

Superman's Girlfriend in the 1950's

As the United States left the 1940's and shifted to the 1950's, many attitudes about the ideal woman's role as a housewife, not a worker, became more prominent. This attitude reflected the post WWII reaction of men needing the jobs that women had held during the war. The emerging Cold War also added to the shift in attitude. The image of a woman as housewife became the most important role that a female could aspire too during the 1950's. This ideal housewife was proliferated in the media. The increasingly popular television had brought shows such as 'Leave it to Beaver' and 'Father knows best' to family's everywhere, and helped propagate the image of the wife as "a model of 'efficiency, patience and charm' ...helping the family to achieve new levels of fulfillment and prosperity."³¹ Novels and magazines also depicted images of the ideal housewife to the American public. The comic book medium followed this trend, which *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane* initially reflected in almost every facet of her character.

Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane first hit the newsstands in 1958. However, Detective Comics had previously tested the idea of a full length comic book featuring Lois Lane before, in *Showcase*.³² The success of the comic led to the idea of creating a title comic for Lois. During the 1950's, more companies were trying to tap into a larger audience, which included female readership, with titles such as *Young Romance* and *Teen-Age Romances*.³³ These titles were

³¹ William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 124-125.

³² Williams, "Evolution of Social Norms", 84.

³³ Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, 128.

created after noting “that teen-humor titles like Archie had demonstrated popularity among young girls.”³⁴

The title of the Lois Lane comic series reflected 1950’s ideology and the trend of romance comics for girls that comic companies were moving towards. The very title *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.”³⁵ This idea fit into the 1950’s image of a female’s importance being linked to her role as her husband’s wife.³⁶ The comic title also reflected the media trend of the time, illustrating “that traditional male authority and female subservience offered the only way to true happiness.”³⁷ This trend set the mood for the first few years of the comic series.

The first issue of *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane* appeared in April of 1958, and set the standard format for the Lois Lane comic that would not be changed until the mid-1960’s. The issue was broken down into three 9-page stories; one of which was a feature story depicted on the cover. Each story stood alone and did not relate directly to any previous story. However, based on the research themes of analyzing Lois’ relationship with Superman/Clark, her career development, and her dependence within the comic, certain trends are identified that persisted throughout the first four years of the series.

The first four years of Lois’s career as a reporter, in her own series, illustrates two main themes to the reader. The first is that the only appropriate assignments for Lois, as a reporter, are passive assignments. Her typical work constitutes of doing local interviews for the Daily

³⁴ Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, 128.

³⁵ Williams, “Evolution of Social Norms”, 86.

³⁶ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1963), 18.

³⁷ Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 130.

Planet Newspaper. This can be observed in the first issue's feature story "The Witch of Metropolis" where Lois receives two interview assignments within the issue. The first was to "preview a new museum prior to its public opening."³⁸ The second was to interview a biologist on his work in creating a "Youth Serum."³⁹ This issue points out that while Lois receives work that was passive in nature, Clark the "star reporter," was assigned, what Lois perceives as the "juicy jobs." One such job was the dangerous assignment of picking-up "documents exposing a foreign spy plot."⁴⁰ The passive assignments that Lois receives, however, were considered traditional for women reporters as women would not get endangered or hurt during them.⁴¹ Therefore, throughout the first four years of the story, Lois' passive assignments reflect the typical work given to female reporters of the era.

Though Lois may have received passive assignments, she was not a passive reporter. The second theme of Lois' role as journalist was her wish to become a great reporter and get those more dangerous and active "juicy jobs."⁴² Within the feature story "The Witch of Metropolis," Lois attempted to scoop Clark. After her interviews at the museum and the biologists, she unexpectedly turned into a witch and decided to use her new powers to scoop all the reporters in town, including Clark. She succeeded, only for the reader and her to discover, at the end of the story that she never was a witch with powers, Superman had let her

³⁸ "The Witch of Metropolis," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 77(DC Comics, Oct. 1967); reprinted from *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 1 (DC Comics, Mar./April 1958).

³⁹ "The Witch of Metropolis," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 77(DC Comics, Oct. 1967); reprinted from *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 1 (DC Comics, Mar./April 1958).

⁴⁰ "The Witch of Metropolis," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 77(DC Comics, Oct. 1967); reprinted from *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 1 (DC Comics, Mar./April 1958).

⁴¹ Marion Marzolf, *Up from the Footnote: a History of Women Journalists* (New York: Hastings House, 1977), 75.

⁴² "The Witch of Metropolis," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 77(DC Comics, Oct. 1967); reprinted from *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 1 (DC Comics, Mar. /April 1958).

succeed, and in fact, he was the reason for her success. He had discovered that she had breathed in the defective youth serum at her interview with the biologist and had since turned into an “old hag.”⁴³ However, since she had been to the superstition museum earlier that day she thought she was a real witch. Instead of telling Lois the truth about her situation, Superman is advised by a doctor to be careful because “if she finds out suddenly she is not a witch, it would be a double mental shock! She might never recover!”⁴⁴ The idea that Lois would have a nervous breakdown or mental trauma reflects the idea that women were fragile and needed to be sheltered from their own lack of understanding.⁴⁵ Superman follows Lois to keep her safe and keeps using his powers to “humor her until the serum wears off!”⁴⁶ In this case, humoring her meant using his powers to aid Lois in her scoops and therefore allow her to succeed because of his assistance, not her own skill. Lois’ active attempt to scoop Clark then does not lead to her becoming a star reporter, but instead depicts her dependence on Superman to succeed. Therefore reinforcing the 1950’s idea a woman needed a man to support them for she could not support herself alone.⁴⁷

In addition to needing a man’s assistance to meet her career goals, Lois also needed a man to reach her ultimate goal, that of marriage. Marriage is more important to Lois than anything else in her life. She is often describing to the reader how wonderful it would be to quit her job and marry Superman. The idea of “marriage and a family” as being the “ultimate

⁴³ “The Witch of Metropolis,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 77(DC Comics, Oct. 1967); reprinted from *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 1 (DC Comics, Mar. /April 1958).

⁴⁴ “The Witch of Metropolis,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 77(DC Comics, Oct. 1967); reprinted from *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 1 (DC Comics, Mar. /April 1958).

⁴⁵ Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 125.

⁴⁶ “The Witch of Metropolis,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 77(DC Comics, Oct. 1967); reprinted from *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 1 (DC Comics, Mar. /April 1958).

⁴⁷ Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 125.

definition of female success” was a popular idea in the 1950’s that females tried to conform too.⁴⁸ In every issue analyzed during the first four years, Lois mentions her love for superman and her wish to marry him in some form.

There are two themes linked to her aspiration for the love of superman. First, Lois believes that she will only be truly happy once she attains “what every girl dreams about...a marriage, a home and children!”⁴⁹ This leads Lois to ruthlessly pursue Superman so that she may become “Mrs. Superman.”⁵⁰ In one attempt to lure Superman, she convinces him to give her a Superman Signal watch so that she may contact him when she is in trouble. However, Superman becomes upset with her for using the signal for her own frivolous purposes, such as fixing her shoe, when real people could be in danger.⁵¹ Lois’s tactics to try and achieve marriage with Superman were usually very forward and obvious and he openly refuses her. This leads Jimmy Olsen, a photojournalist at the Daily Planet, to refer to Lois’ methods of trying to marry superman as “pestering” and he tries to help Superman “be free of her for life.”⁵² Throughout the series, Lois tries different ways of coercing Superman into marrying her with little success. In the first four years of the series Lois sees marriage as the epitome of success and struggles in many ways to achieve the goal of happiness through marriage at all costs. This reflects the real woman’s struggle to obtain marriage and the perceived fulfillment of a home and family.

Lois, also, tried to attain Superman by trying to defeat any competition for his love. This leads to the second theme within the first four years of the series in which Lois finds all single

⁴⁸ Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 125.

⁴⁹ “The Perfect Husband,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 24(DC Comics, April 1961).

⁵⁰ “The Super-Courtship of Lois Lane,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 4 (DC Comics, Oct. 1958).

⁵¹ “Lois Lane Signal Watch,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 16 (DC Comics, Apr. 1960).

⁵² “The Super-Courtship of Lois Lane,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 4 (DC Comics, Oct. 1958).

women suspect of loving Superman. She views other woman as a threat to her, except for her sister Lucy Lane. The main threat to Lois is Lana Lang, a television newscaster who grew up with Superman when he was Superboy in their hometown of Smallville. Lois and Lana are constantly fighting for Superman's love in what they term a battle of "friendly rivalry."⁵³ This was a popular theme in media during the 1950's as Rochelle Gatlin suggests:

Female friends were also potential rivals for male attention. Catching-your-man was the most popular theme of romantic fiction...One woman's success in the marriage market was often another's failure.⁵⁴

Lois and Lana fully depict this popular theme that was being presented to the American people as how women should act.

To epitomize this depiction, Lois and Lana tried endlessly to outshine the other by accomplishing different feats to impress Superman. For example, in the November issue of 1960, Lois and Lana were accidental recipients of superpowers. They both then believed that because they had superpowers, Superman would now pick one to be his bride. In order to help Superman decide between the two women, they hold a contest to "see who would be most helpful to superman as a wife."⁵⁵ This reinforces the 1950's woman's perceived desire to establish herself as a "housewife with an up-and-coming husband."⁵⁶ Lois and Lana's competition consisted of what they thought constituted a good wife, which included each woman cooking the best meal, dressing the most attractively, and showing off their new powers by creating stone faces of themselves on Mt. Rushmore. However, the two women

⁵³ "The Battle Between Super-Lois and Super-Lana," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 21 (DC Comics, Nov. 1960).

⁵⁴ Rochelle Gatlin, *American Women Since 1945* (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), 12.

⁵⁵ "The Battle Between Super-Lois and Super-Lana," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 21 (DC Comics, Nov. 1960).

⁵⁶ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1963), 34.

start to fight amongst themselves after the competition as they could not agree on a winner. While fighting their powers begin to wear off. As neither woman can accomplish the previous feats, they would no longer make an acceptable wife and Superman doesn't choose either. The women continue to fight over who would have won and Superman has to settle the matter. He tells them that the person he was going to marry had the initials "L.L."⁵⁷ This could refer to either woman and depicts that the status quo has not changed, neither had lost the battle for Superman's love, and this restores the balance between the two women. The rivalry again reinforces the idea that all women, not just Lois, really want to be married and have children and that this is their main goal in life. The fight between the two for Superman's love continues through the first four years of the series.

The last trend noted in the first four years, is that of Lois's dependent relationship on Superman for both her mental development and physical safety. Throughout the issues Superman tries to teach Lois different lessons to improve her and make their relationship better. In one issue Superman gives Lois some of his superpowers to turn her into a Superwoman, in order to teach her what it is like to have a secret identity.⁵⁸ He does this in the hopes that once she realizes how important a secret identity is, that she will stop trying to figure out his. In another issue Superman attempts to teach Lois not to disobey him because it gets her into trouble. In the issue he purposely lets Lois believe that she has kryptonite vision, which is the only substance that can hurt Superman. Superman calls Lois a "little idiot!" and a

⁵⁷ "The Battle Between Super-Lois and Super-Lana," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 21 (DC Comics, Nov. 1960).

⁵⁸ "The Superwoman of Metropolis," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 8 (DC Comics, Apr. 1959); reprinted in *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 95 (DC Comics, Oct. 1969).

“menace” to his life for “acting impulsively” and disobeying him.⁵⁹ She then has to leave Metropolis and live in Alaska until Superman, deciding she had learned her lesson, cures her.

The idea that Superman knows best reflects the idea of women as being illogical or irrational.⁶⁰ The message is that the only way Lois will succeed in the future is to listen to Superman because he is more intelligent. This can be easily perceived as Lois remarks in one issue after her experience as the “smartest person in the world,” that the only person who should have a “Super-brain” is Superman.⁶¹ She comes to this conclusion because in order for her to be smart her head grows humongous and all her hair falls out. This makes her known in the story as the “girl with the big ugly head” that she believes no one will want to marry.⁶² This not only reinforces the idea that Superman is smarter, but that she cannot achieve his level of intelligence without giving up her femininity. A female was not supposed to try to achieve higher education, as this was a more masculine pursuit that was not needed in a world where female domesticity was viewed as the goal.⁶³

Lois Lane was also dependent on Superman for her physical safety. The Lois Lane comic of the late 1950’s still illustrated the theme of Lois as the damsel in distress from the 1940’s *Superman* comic series. The theme of Lois getting into trouble, usually by attempting an active assignment that was not meant for her, leads to Superman having to save her from evil. This theme changes slightly in the Lois Lane comic series. Instead of always saving her from evil, Superman now must also save her from herself. For example, in the story “Annie Oakley gets

⁵⁹ “The Kryptonite Girl,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 16 (DC Comics, Apr. 1960).

⁶⁰ Gatlin, *American Women Since 1945*, 16.

⁶¹ “Lois Lane’s Superbrain,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 95 (DC Comics, Oct. 1969); reprinted from *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 27 (DC Comics, Aug. 1961).

⁶² “Lois Lane’s Superbrain,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 95 (DC Comics, Oct. 1969); reprinted from *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 27 (DC Comics, Aug. 1961).

⁶³ Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 26.

her (Super)man” Lois hits her head in “Dude City,” a replica of a wild western town, and upon waking believes she is Annie Oakley.⁶⁴ Superman then has to protect her from bandits, while pretending that Lois is Annie Oakley because the shock of finding out her real identity could “damage her mind.”⁶⁵ Lois, believing she is Annie Oakley and “a dead shot” keeps trying to shoot bandits, so Superman has to protect her from the bandits, while making it look like Lois is really competent.⁶⁶ This again reinforces Lois’ dependence on Superman for her safety, belittling Lois accomplishments. Another example of this is in “Lois Lane, Working Girl” where Lois leaves the Daily Planet to become a pretzel bender.⁶⁷ One male worker at the establishment does not want Lois to work there and tries to sabotage her work. Superman watches the man and has to keep devising new ideas to keep Lois from getting hurt or fired from her Job. These instances illustrate that in *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, Lois still plays the damsel in distress of the 1940’s. However, Superman must not just save her from evil, but from herself and the everyday mischief that she gets herself into as well. This portrays how the 1950’s Lois is completely dependent on Superman for her well-being. The dependency she illustrates depicts how a feminine woman was supposedly unable to fend for herself in the public sphere during the era.

Lois Lane of the 1950’s was a typical media reinforcement of the female image. She was trying to work while she exerted herself to accomplish the superior goal of marriage, and display women’s dependency on men. This image is what Betty Friedan calls, “The Feminine Mystique,” which she describes as the issue of women who have been brainwashed into

⁶⁴ “Annie Oakley Gets Her (Super)man,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 4 (DC Comics, Oct. 1958).

⁶⁵ “Annie Oakley Gets Her (Super)man,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 4 (DC Comics, Oct. 1958).

⁶⁶ “Annie Oakley Gets Her (Super)man,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 4 (DC Comics, Oct. 1958).

⁶⁷ “Lois Lane, Working Girl.” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 4 (DC Comics, Oct. 1958).

believing that “feminine fulfillment” can only be accomplished through “marriage and children.”⁶⁸ The feminine mystique was an idea at the core of 1950’s society, and Lois Lane epitomized this idea to her readers during that time period. However, contrary to the scholar Jeanne Williams’ research, Lois did not continue to exemplify the feminine mystique throughout the early and mid 1960’s.

⁶⁸ Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 27.

Lois Lane and the early-mid 1960's

In the midst of the early 1960's, Lois Lane started to reject the feminine mystique in varying ways as new roles and ideas started to emerge in the comic. These new themes reflect the growing tension in 1960's cultural society and politics. The New Left movement, the Civil Rights movement and the burgeoning awareness of gender inequality as an issue in the early 1960's, aided Lois Lane in becoming more politically aware throughout the early 1960's comics.⁶⁹ This is a significant turn from the image of the feminine mystique. These new themes are analyzed again in the context of her relationship with Superman/Clark, her career development, and her level of independence.

The year 1961 marks the period when Lois' career developmental course changes and becomes more integral to the story line. This year also represents the establishment of the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) in the United States, which was a commission "intended to explore and document problems of sex discrimination, but its goal was not equal rights for women but rather the old progressive goal of protection."⁷⁰ However, the commission was important in signifying a greater political influence for women within government. At this same time, The New Left and the Civil Right Movement were growing in popularity and visibility. As the movements grew, the public witnessed the obvious involvement of women within these groups. The year culminated with Women Strike for

⁶⁹ The New Left's initial focus was on "liberal, reformist ideas" to correct the gap between the American dream and the American reality. The Civil Rights Movement was working towards equality for black Americans. The Feminist Movement was starting with the goal of liberation from oppression for women within American society. Gatlin, *American women Since 1945*, 78.

⁷⁰ Winifred D. Wandersee, *On The Move: American Women in the 1970s* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1988), 16.

Peace, where women organized a protest against cold war politics.⁷¹ These new public examples of women being politically involved outside the home is reflected in Lois Lane's life as she begins to dabble into more complex stories throughout the early 1960's. Her assignments change from being focused only on her community, to incorporating a more national and international scope. Her career goals, though still overshadowed by the theme of marriage, start to become a more fundamental part of the story lines.

The first step towards a change in Lois' career occurs in 1961. Her editor Perry White, sends Lois overseas on an assignment to cover a "revolution...in the near eastern kingdom of Pahla!" She is ecstatic to receive the assignment as she exclaims, "intrigue, mystery, danger...Here I come!"⁷² This new assignment contrasts with the themes of the 1950's, where Lois was given only local, passive pieces that would not in any way endanger her. This story also depicts a new theme of Lois taking on assignments with more political connotations. None of the issues analyzed before this showed Lois receiving an assignment on a political issue, such as the revolution in "Pahla."⁷³ By 1962, all the issues analyzed until 1965 had one story that had a political connotation. As Lois was reporting on larger political ideas, or stories with political connotations, American women were becoming more involved with political ideas and groups. The act of women involving themselves in politics, and Lois Lane following the trend, is a step away from the feminine mystique, and the 1950's ideal of women in the home protected from the tensions of the public sphere. The comic continued to move away from depicting Lois in the private sphere.

⁷¹ Gatlin, *American Women Since 1945*, 116.

⁷² "Lois Lane, Traitor," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 24 (DC Comics, April, 1961).

⁷³ "Lois Lane, Traitor," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 24 (DC Comics, April, 1961).

The second change in Lois' career, is that her experience while on assignment is covered within the story, unlike in the 1950's where her assignments were not a main focus, but rather a side story. For example, while on assignment in "Pahla" she describes the land as a mix of "modern conveniences" and "yet...ancient, barbaric customs."⁷⁴ Lois also decides to wear "native clothes" for women, which in this instance, is a burka.⁷⁵ Dressed as a native woman Lois explores "Pahla" only to be mistaken as a female slave for sale. Lois, however, promptly asserts to the men holding the slave auction that she is passing, "Not so fast, Pal! You can't auction ME off! I am not for sale!"⁷⁶ After which she walks away and tries "Hookah."⁷⁷ The amount of reporting that Lois Lane does on "Pahla" is much more extensive than in the 1950's comics, where her reporting only lasted about two frames or did not even include Lois's career in the story. The more frames consumed by Lois reporting leads to less time spent on her 1950's goal of marriage and love with Superman within the Story.

Lois' relationship between her and Superman, though still a main theme to the story, starts to change in the early 1960's. Superman starts to give Lois more respect. This added respect starts to stem from Lois' involvement in politics and work. For example, in "The day Lois Lane Vanished" no one remembers Lois Lane. Lois figures out that everyone is trying to trick her into believing she doesn't exist, and is really "Mertle Merkins, an Unemployed Stenographer!"⁷⁸ Lois devises a plan to make everyone reveal the truth. In the end, it turns out that her editor Perry White had created the hoax to test her wits and see if she could "handle the tricks and intrigues of Foreign Agents" in order to give her a promotion to Foreign

⁷⁴ "Lois Lane, Traitor," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 24 (DC Comics, April, 1961).

⁷⁵ "Lois Lane, Traitor," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 24 (DC Comics, April, 1961).

⁷⁶ "Lois Lane, Traitor," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 24 (DC Comics, April, 1961).

⁷⁷ "Lois Lane, Traitor," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 24 (DC Comics, April, 1961).

⁷⁸ "The Day Lois Lane Vanished," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 36 (DC Comics, Oct., 1962).

Correspondent.⁷⁹ Lois passed the test. Superman, although originally thinking that it was “a long chance” Lois could do it on her own, didn’t help her in her feat and at the end of the story decided she really was “very clever!”⁸⁰

Lois continued to amaze Superman as she begins to do more undercover work and succeeds at it. In “Lois Lane’s Pen Pal Romance,” she goes undercover as a widow to get the scoop on how men swindle rich widows out of their “life’s savings.”⁸¹ Superman is again greatly impressed with Lois in “Lois Lane’s Great Houdini Trick!,” in which she outs a fortune teller who was tricking mothers who had lost their children into paying him for séances. Lois not only exposes the “racket,” but also recognizes the swami as a suspected murderer.⁸² She devises a plan that assists Superman in capturing the swami with enough evidence to indict him. Superman proudly introduces the criminal to Lois as the one who discovered him and then Superman asks Lois to explain to him how she “hoodwinked” the criminal.⁸³ Her editor was also impressed and gave Lois her first bonus.

Superman also learns to stop believing that Lois’s mind is too fragile to handle the truth of a situation. In “Lois Lane—Queen and Superman—Commoner!,” Lois is forced to pretend she is a different Queen everyday in order to protect her kidnapped sister.⁸⁴ Superman, however, believes that after Lois visited the “Royal Wax Museum” and dropped a cursed dagger

⁷⁹ “The Day Lois Lane Vanished,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 36 (DC Comics, Oct., 1962).

⁸⁰ “The Day Lois Lane Vanished,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 36 (DC Comics, Oct., 1962).

⁸¹ “Lois Lane’s Pen Pal Romance,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 52 (DC Comics, Oct., 1964).

⁸² “Lois Lane’s Great Houdini Trick,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 58 (DC Comics, July, 1965).

⁸³ “Lois Lane’s Great Houdini Trick,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 58 (DC Comics, July, 1965).

⁸⁴ “Lois Lane—Queen and Superman—Commoner,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 67 (DC Comics, Aug. 1966).

she had gone insane and now believes herself to be a queen.⁸⁵ This scenario is the exact opposite of the first issue, where Lois thought a cursed mirror had turned her into a witch, while Superman didn't believe in superstition. In the new issue, Superman believing her insane, decided he had to humor Lois in her belief she was a queen so that he wouldn't "destroy her mind for good" until he can figure out how to save her.⁸⁶ Lois however, figures out the whole scheme herself and only tells Superman the truth when she has the evidence to convict the people who kidnapped her sister. The story shows Lois in control of the situation, while Superman can't figure out what is happening to her. This is another example of Lois casting away the feminine mystique. She no longer has to be contained to the private sphere for her own protection, because she can figure out ways to decipher new situations and protect herself in the public sphere.

Even though Lois could take care of herself, she still wanted to marry and loved Superman during this time period. However, none of the issues were dedicated solely to the quest for Superman's hand in marriage. Most issues contained three stories, two of which focused on Lois's career, and one that would revolve around her or Superman's personal life. Love and marriage were usually explored in one story, however, it wasn't always between Lois and Superman. In "The Perfect Husband," Lois was in love with another and she was going to marry him, but Superman revealed that the man was bald, and the man was so mortified, he ran away.⁸⁷ In another story, "The Lois Lane-Lana Lang Truce," Superman was in love with an

⁸⁵ "Lois Lane—Queen and Superman—Commoner," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 67 (DC Comics, Aug. 1966).

⁸⁶ "Lois Lane—Queen and Superman—Commoner," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 67 (DC Comics, Aug. 1966).

⁸⁷ "The Perfect Husband," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 24 (DC Comics, April 1961).

alien woman, that Lana and Lois revealed was a spy sent to kill Superman.⁸⁸ The stories would end with Lois and Superman in their original state of a relationship retaining the status quo of Lois loving Superman but Superman unable to love her. These stories show that Lois did still want to marry, but since most of the stories in each issue did not focus on marriage, the idea was not Lois' main goal. Her hopes for marriage remained stagnant while her career developed.

Her career development also led to Lois asserting more independence. Throughout the early 1960's, Lois continued to rely more on herself, not Superman, for her happiness. This is already evidenced in her career growth as she took on undercover roles, solved cases by herself, and didn't call on Superman for help until she had already figured out how he could capture the criminals. As Lois became more independent of Superman's help, her goals started to shift. Instead of focusing on marriage, most of the stories focused on her career. Since Superman's love wasn't the primary goal, Lois and Lana became better allies. In "The Murder of Lana Lang," the two women fake a fight over Superman which was aired on television and Superman had to end it.⁸⁹ The fight, however, was part of a ploy to prove a point and land a scoop. After the fight, the two women fly off in a helicopter together and Lois drops Lana off on an island and she shoots off a gun. When Lois returns home, Lana isn't with her. Lana's work calls the authorities to search for her. Lois is questioned by them as the last person to see Lana; during the questioning the police find the gun and one of Lana's buttons with blood on it. Lois is then taken to Star City on charges of murder, her motive being to get Lana out of the way so that she can marry Superman. Lois is then charged with the death sentence. However, Lana

⁸⁸ "The Lois Lane-Lana Lang Truce," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 52 (DC Comics, Oct. 1964).

⁸⁹ "The Murder of Lana Lang," *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 44 (DC Comics, Oct. 1963).

is still alive and together the two women had proven to the people of Star City that “it is possible for an innocent person to be executed,” and that Star City, like Metropolis, should not have capital punishment.⁹⁰ Lois and Lana continue to become friends, not rivals, as the story lines progress.

The early sixties shift of Lois becoming more independent, career orientated, and politically inclined illustrate that she had cast of the feminine mystique before 1967, not after as Jeanne Williams had declared. Lois still wanted to marry Superman during this time period; however the importance of her career had become the focus within the stories. In one issue, she even gives up the dream of a life with Superman to save The Daily Planet from being shut down.⁹¹ Lois had decided there were other things in life that were more important to her than Superman. These new revelations continue to grow as she progresses into the late sixties and early seventies.

⁹⁰ “The Murder of Lana Lang,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 44 (DC Comics, Oct. 1963).

⁹¹ “Superman’s Surprise Choice,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 44 (DC Comics, Oct. 1963).

Lois Lane Moves Forward

The late 1960's through the early 1970's held many changes for Lois Lane. During this time period the women's movement was sweeping the nation. Women were pushing for liberation for their gender from patriarchy and the reformation of gender ideology.⁹² The women's movement's affect on women in the United States was reflected in the format of Lois Lane's comic and in Lois Lane's "life" as well.

The format of the comic Superman's Girl Friend Lois Lane changed many times in the late sixties. In 1966, the comic replaces the original format of three, approximately nine page stories, with one roughly 16 page new story and one reprint from an earlier issue. After 1970, the comic followed no repeating format. In 1970, the comic contained one approximately 14 page Lois Lane Story, 2 pages reprinted from Wonder Woman's "Wonder Women of History", one page on "Women of Distinction", and a nine page story involving "The Rose and the Thorn."⁹³ Rose and Thorn are split personalities; Thorn is a vigilante seeking revenge for her father's death, while Rose is a secretary who just wants to live a normal life. The publisher added stories to Lois Lane of "Wonder Women of History," "Women of Distinction," and "The Rose and the Thorn" which reflect that a larger interest was being taken in presenting female role models and stronger female characters to the audience. The audience was changing as the women's movement pressed for more recognition of the female experience.⁹⁴

⁹² Kathleen C. Berkeley, *The Women's Liberation Movement in America* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999), 44.

⁹³ *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 106 (DC Comics, Nov. 1970).

⁹⁴ Gatlin, *American Women Since 1945*, 153.

The comic continued to change its format. In 1971, contained a feature Lois Lane story, and a new “The Rose and the Thorn.” However, instead of having articles on women’s history reprints of “Lois Lane Girl Reporter” from the early 1940’s were printed. These stories were 4 pages long and were solely about Lois and did not include Superman. The reprinting of “Lois Lane Girl Reporter” seems to show that the female image has shifted from the home, as in the 1950’s ideal, back to women in the workplace, as it had been during World War II. By 1972, no reprints were present in the comic, instead it consisted of one 16 page Lois Lane feature story and one “The Rose and the Thorn” story. The last issue analyzed in the study was from 1973, the comic consisted of just one 20 page story on Lois Lane. This shift from short varying stories to one long story shows that Lois’s comic had become more centered on her.

The later issues depict Lois’s Career as the central part of the story. Lois no longer works for The Daily Planet, but instead is a free lance writer for Galaxy.⁹⁵ At the same time that Lois decided to become a free lance writer women around the United States were taking over some counterculture movement publications and broadening their artistic and authoritative skills.⁹⁶ As a career woman, Lois Lane attempted more controversial stories, such as in “I am Curious (Black).”⁹⁷ It is a story, in which, Lois goes undercover as a black woman “to get the inside story of Metropolis’ Little Africa.”⁹⁸ While on assignment, Lois meets an impoverished single mother, experiences racism, and helps another member of the community confront drug dealers corrupting the youth of the neighborhood. The issue of single mothers living in poverty

⁹⁵ “The Brain Busters,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 126 (DC Comics, Sept. 1972).

⁹⁶ Gatlin, *American Women Since 1945*, 105.

⁹⁷ “I am Curious (Black),” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 106 (DC Comics, Nov. 1970).

⁹⁸ “I am Curious (Black),” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 106 (DC Comics, Nov. 1970).

was very prevalent at the time, as “the number of female headed households” was increasing.⁹⁹ Also, the story was a look at black neighborhoods after the civil right movement had come to a halt. Overall, the story shows Lois as taking an interest in issues that were facing the contemporary public. Her career continued to be her main goal.

As her career becomes her main focus, her relationship with Superman develops into a more equal and team orientated partnership. Lois and Superman work on problems together, and look out for one another. In “The Brain Busters,” Lois and Superman both try to help all the people who are under the power of hypnosis.¹⁰⁰ Lois saves one hypnotized man from being hit by a taxi and Superman acknowledges her accomplishment by exclaiming, “Nice bit of life saving Lois!”¹⁰¹ This is a large shift from the 1950’s conversations in which Superman degraded Lois and didn’t acknowledge any of her accomplishments. Lois goes on in the issue to figure out that a criminal was using hypnosis to plan a large scale robbery. Lois then devises a plan in which she and Superman disguise themselves to capture the crooks. The issue depicts the new type of team the two have created. Lois was sharing in the decision making and was the one to figure out the dilemma; which illustrates how Lois was being treated and an equal to superman in intelligence and determination.

Lois, by the end of the series, has become a more emancipated woman. She no longer calculates all of her actions to meet her goal of marriage with Superman. Instead, she and Superman are in a more mutual relationship in which he loves her and respects her. Lois has

⁹⁹ Gatlin, *American Women Since 1945*, 144.

¹⁰⁰ “The Brain Busters,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 126 (DC Comics, Sept. 1972).

¹⁰¹ “The Brain Busters,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 126 (DC Comics, Sept. 1972).

taken control of her career as a freelance reporter working on topics of her own choosing. Her personal life has now become a backdrop for her career. Lois is able to make her own decisions and take decisive actions, as in “The Brain Busters,” where she decided to jump in front of the taxi to save the hypnotized man.¹⁰² Or in “My Death...By Lois Lane,” where she mysteriously types obituaries before they occur and attempts to save the individuals from death.¹⁰³ By the end of the series Lois did not depend on Superman for her happiness, instead she took matters upon herself to figure out and decide which direction she would take.

¹⁰² “The Brain Busters,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 126 (DC Comics, Sept. 1972).

¹⁰³ “My Death...By Lois Lane,” *Superman’s Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 115 (DC Comics, Oct. 1971).

Conclusion

Lois Lane changed tremendously during the 16 year run of her title comic *Superman's Girl Friend Lois Lane*. The changes she endured were representative of how women transitioned from the 1950's into the 1960's. As the many movements of the sixties progressed and changed society and people's views, Lois changed accordingly too. By the end of the 1960's and early seventies Lois had developed throughout the decade from the feminine mystique to an emancipated woman.

The changing social norms for women in the 1960's influenced Lois Lane. At the same time, that more women were starting to join movements to ensure the well being of their race, gender, or community interests, she took on similar agendas. She stopped viewing other people of her gender as enemies or rivals, and instead became friends with them, as evidenced in Lana's character. Her stories also became more inclusive as she tried to learn more about people from different backgrounds, cultures, or races than herself. As Lois grew, she took on political interests to fight against capital punishment, men swindling women, and for better living conditions for people in low income communities. Many of the issues Lois began to tackle, women in society were tackling as well.

Throughout the decade, Lois's goals shifted. In the late fifties Lois's main goal was marriage and a family. Every issue aspired to this larger goal, with her career aspirations in the background because she would give up her career once she married. In the early 1960's, though, Lois started to put more energy into her career than into trying to marry Superman.

Marriage was still a goal but her career had developed from a short term goal into a primary one, as she strived to gain a promotion and receive bonuses for exemplary work.

Superman also shifted his view of Lois. In the late 1950's, he viewed her as an annoying and meddling woman who needed someone stronger to protect her fragile countenance. In the mid-sixties Superman, however, was impressed with Lois's work skills instead of viewing them as a hindrance to her femininity. He also respected her as a professional reporter, instead of viewing her as incapable of protecting herself and advancing within the public sphere.

In the end marriage was not the main goal as much as a relationship with Superman was. Lois had moved from being the damsel in distress to a heroine herself. She could solve mysteries, protect people, and work with Superman as a team. Their new relationship explored Lois's new independence as she made decisions that did not require his assistance as a hero. Superman also stopped trying to treat Lois as a lesser individual by teaching her lessons, calling her names, or viewing her as too weak to handle situations by herself.

The decade of the 1960's transitioned Lois from the epitome of the feminine mystique to the emancipated woman. At the same time as the women of the decade were struggling to find a new identity for themselves, so too did Lois. She moved into the political sphere in 1961 and by 1962 had cast off the feminine mystique by gaining a promotion and establishing herself more permanently at her job. By the end of the 1960's she had ventured out on her own as a freelance reporter, and with Superman she had gained respect and an equal partnership. Lois reflected the changing women's roles throughout the decade by simultaneously experiencing the challenges that real women faced.

Appendix

A. List of Issues/stories Analyzed from *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*

- 1) *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 1 (Mar./Apr. 1958)
"The Witch of Metropolis" 8p. in *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 77 (Oct. 1967);
reprinted from *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 1 (Mar./Apr. 1958).
- 2) *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 4 (Oct. 1958)
Contents: "The Super-courtship of Lois Lane" 8p., "Lois Lane, Working Girl" 8p., "Annie
Oakley gets her (Super)man" 8p.
- 3) *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 8(Apr. 1959)
"The Superwoman of Metropolis!" 7p. in *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 95(Oct.
1969); reprinted from *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 8(Apr. 1959).
- 4) *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 12(Oct. 1959)
"The Girl Atlas!" 8p. in *Lois Lane Annual*, no. 2 (Summer 1963); reprinted from
Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane, no. 12(Oct. 1959).
- 5) *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 16(Apr. 1960)
Contents: "Lois Lane's Signal Watch" 9p., "The Kryptonite Girl!" 9p.,
- 6) *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 21(Nov. 1960)
Contents: "The Lois Lane Doll" 17p., "The Battle Between Super-Lois and Super-Lana" 9p.
- 7) *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane*, no. 24(Apr. 1961)
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