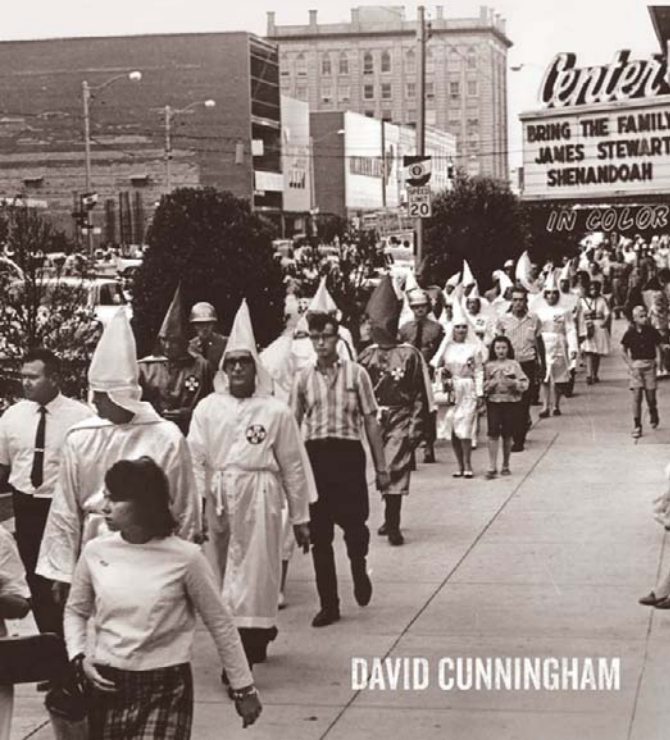


KLANSVILLE, U.S.A.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS-ERA KU KLUX KLAN



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The Rise and Fall of the
Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan

David Cunningham

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Printed in the United States of America
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For Sarah

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My interest in this book's topic emerged somewhat unconventionally, through a previous project on Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) counterintelligence programs that exposed me to thousands of pages of Bureau intelligence memos targeting the civil rights-era KKK. There, amid the expected documentation of cross-burnings, beatings, shootings, and other acts of racist terror, much of what I read seemed surprising. While the memos reflected FBI agents' conflicted orientation to the klan during that period, they also offered strong evidence countering conventional accounts of the 1960s KKK as thriving predominantly within isolated communities in the Deep South, lacking organizational sophistication, and benefiting from the active support of segregationist officials. Instead, I learned that the era's largest and most powerful KKK resided in North Carolina, where officials chose not to "massively" resist desegregation mandates and instead consistently opposed the klan's presence. The Bureau's accounts also provided me with cause to ponder, for the first time, the organizational acumen behind the klan's elaborate public rallies and street walks, church services and barbecue suppers, promotional billboards and bumper stickers, networks of "klaverns" and parallel family-oriented "Ladies Auxiliary Units," monthly newspaper and group life insurance plan.

This book documents and explains this textured reality, an effort made possible only by the benevolent assistance and encouragement of many others. An unexpected, and somewhat bewildering, spark came even before I began formal work on this project, when I crossed paths in 2002 with Robert Shelton, the most influential KKK leader of the civil rights era. Agreeing to meet me at his local haunt, a Burger King near his Alabama home that he claimed his cohorts offered to "keep in business" in return for endless cups of steeply discounted coffee (to make his point, he had me follow him to the registers, where he slapped a dime, nickel, and four pennies on the counter and promptly received a freshly brewed cup), he brought me a pile of materials intended to demonstrate the vitality of his KKK outfit, the United Klans

of America (UKA), in the face of the FBI surveillance and harassment the group had weathered.

Soon after, in response to a loosely related email query, Rory McVeigh offhandedly suggested that “somebody really needs to write a good book about the civil rights-era Klan,” a proposition that I appropriated as a mandate to embark on this project. In North Carolina, the hospitality of Bob Edwards and his family in Greenville eased tremendously my initial tentative efforts to spend time in and learn about former KKK hotbeds. At different points, Charlie Kurzman, Andy Andrews, and Larry Griffin offered sage advice and shared good food in Chapel Hill, as did Christian Davenport in Washington, DC, Will Campbell in Nashville, and Peter Young in Massachusetts. In Jackson, Buddy and Frenchie Graham, Adam and Jessica White, and Lara and Chris Kees raised the bar so high as to redefine my conception of hospitality. Jill Williams helped track down newspaper articles and more importantly provided indispensable guidance and advice in Greensboro. She also introduced me to Lewis Brandon, who in a brief conversation provided a kernel of wisdom about the role of North Carolina A&T in the city’s civil rights struggle; this chance encounter ultimately informed much of the argument in Chapter 6.

Invitations to present different parts of this project in North Carolina at UNC–Chapel Hill, East Carolina University, Barton College, and Greensboro’s International Civil Rights Center and Museum provided the dual benefit of thoughtful feedback from those audiences as well as introductions to local people with vital firsthand perspectives on the Carolina Klan. Roy Hardee generously shared materials from his personal KKK archive, gleaned from his years as a journalist in eastern North Carolina (and collected at considerable risk—while covering a UKA rally in Pitt County, he was injured after being hit in the head by a ball-bearing fired by a klansman). Michael Frierson allowed me to listen to interviews with his father, a retired FBI agent charged with developing KKK informants, and klan leader George Dorsett, a major figure in the UKA’s rise and fall. His documentary about their relationship, “FBI-KKK,” is a crucial and compelling story about family and southern racial politics. John Drabble demonstrated unsurpassed collegiality when he volunteered to copy, bind, and send (from Turkey no less!) an exhaustive report compiled by the FBI’s Charlotte office and obtained through his Freedom of Information Act request. E. M. Beck kindly shared the historical lynching data that he and Stuart Tolnay had gathered for their important book *A Festival of Violence*. Patsy Sims provided helpful contact information. Ryan Arp offered technical assistance at a decisive point in the

project. Peter Owens, Crystal Null, Josephine Hsai, and Gilberto Bardales from George Tita's Geographic Information Systems seminar at UC-Irvine created the rally attendance maps that appear in Chapter 2. Kirsten Moe contributed to the research in many ways; it will be hard for future research assistants to top her heroic effort to operationalize the often indecipherable network of North Carolina state roads. One day in the midst of that effort, she arrived at my office with a set of enormous North Carolina state road maps inherited from her grandfather. Two of them have adorned my office wall ever since.

With related endeavors that regularly overlapped with this one, Dan Kryder, Geoff Ward, Margaret Burnham, Susan Glisson, Charles Tucker, and Robby Luckett provided insight, support, and good company in equal measure. Dan's zeal for barbecue and advice about the research process aided my navigation of the project at several challenging points. A number of friends, colleagues, and students read part or all of the manuscript, offering trenchant comments and saving me from embarrassing missteps; that group includes Andy Andrews, Chip Berlet, Wendy Cadge, Charles Eagles, Nicky Fox, Larry Griffin, Clare Hammonds, Randy Hart, Jenny Irons, Joseph Luders, Gary T. Marx, Rory McVeigh, Sara Shostak, Sarah Soule, Stefan Timmermans, Jocelyn Viterna, Steve Whitfield, students in the 2009 "Approaches to Sociological Research" proseminar, and a number of anonymous reviewers (Wendy and Sara get extra credit for patiently talking me through a forty-five-page, single-spaced chapter outline at a particularly muddled juncture). My dissertation advisor, Peter Bearman, offered helpful advice and, as ever, contributed indirectly by example. I also am grateful to audience members and fellow panelists at meetings of the American Sociological Association and the Southern Political Science Association, the Porter L. Fortune, Jr. Symposium at the University of Mississippi, the Hixon-Riggs Forum at Harvey Mudd College, and colloquia and workshop sessions at the University of Connecticut, East Carolina University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Princeton University, and Columbia University. Teaching alongside Mark Auslander in Waltham and the Mississippi Delta broadened my perspective in helpful ways. My friend and colleague John Plotz allowed me to connect some of this work to *Birth of a Nation* in his narrative film course, and guest lectures in several other Brandeis classes and in Marc Dixon's Political Sociology seminar at Dartmouth College helped to clarify my thinking as well.

I'm not sure what I've done to deserve the good fortune of carrying this project through in the supportive and invigorating atmosphere at Brandeis

University. My colleagues in the Sociology Department provided unflagging models of engaged scholarship. Judy Hanley, Cheryl Hansen, and Elaine Brooks served up administrative aid, crisis management, laughter, and chocolate at every turn. My students keep outdoing each other, even as I continue to fret annually that no incoming group could surpass previous cohorts' energy, curiosity, and enthusiasm. While unfortunately I lack sufficient space to name the dozens of students who have, mostly unknowingly, inspired and shaped the pages that follow, I would like to single out two particular groups. During the summer of 2001, as this project incubated in my head, I spent thirty-two days living in a sleeper bus with fourteen Brandeis students examining social change efforts across America as part of a traveling program we formally dubbed "Possibilities for Change in American Communities" (but then proceeded to refer to simply as "the bus"). For abetting my reintroduction to the South during that trip, and more generally for the inspiring example they set that summer and have only surpassed since, I thank April Alario, Adam Brooks, Barb Browning, Aaron Kagan, Nicole Karlebach, Cheryl Kingma-Kiekhofer, Dan Lustig, George Okrah, Tameka Pettigrew, Allison Schecter, Andrew Slack, Suzy Stone, Lee Tusman, and Jasmine Vallejo. Exactly a decade later, eleven Brandeis students traveled south with me as part of a special summer Justice Brandeis Semester program titled "Civil Rights and Racial Justice in Mississippi." For their invigorating and unswerving belief in the synergies between research and social justice (and for their willingness to become roadfood enthusiasts), I thank my co-instructors Ashley Rondini, Elena Wilson, and Robby Luckett, along with Anwar Abdul-Wahab, Yosep Bae, Jesse Begelfer, Micha Broadnax, Edwin Gonzalez, Jermaine Hamilton, Talya Kahan, Elly Kalfus, Molly Schneider, Gabi Sanchez-Stern, and Jake Weiner.

Few aspects of the research process are as affirming as one's interactions with archivists who share their immense knowledge of their collections while often simultaneously immersing themselves in your topic despite having dozens of other tasks to juggle. Two truly fortuitous events occurred through their herculean efforts. First, archivists' follow-up to my repeated, seemingly futile requests to view the sealed investigatory files from the 1965–1966 House Un-American Activities Committee–KKK hearings helped to procure a special authorization to open the records several years ahead of schedule. Those files proved a vital resource. Second, at the LBJ Archives an intern named Laura (I regret that I don't know her last name) tenaciously tracked down the present whereabouts of Peter B. Young, who became my most valuable and colorful source (amazingly, though the effort was spurred by the work he did

in North Carolina and the archives he deposited in Texas, it turned out that Mr. Young resided literally down the road from me in Massachusetts).

For their aid, advice, and abiding responsiveness, I thank Kate Mollan and the staff at the National Archives; Maury York, Dale Sauter, and the staff at the Special Collections Department in East Carolina University's Joyner Library; Marilyn Schuster, Bob McIness and the Special Collections staff in the Atkins Library at UNC-Charlotte; Allen Fisher and the Research and Archives staff at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum; Randall Burkett, Kathy Shoemaker, and the staff of the Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library at Emory University; Donald Davis at the American Friends Service Committee Archives in Philadelphia; Earl James and the North Carolina State Archives staff; Aimee Boese and Mike Taylor at the Pender County Public Library in Burgaw; Timothy J. Cole and the staff of the Greensboro Public Library; Keith Longiotti and the staff of the Wilson Library at UNC-Chapel Hill; and the helpful staffs of the Perkins Library at Duke University, the Moorland-Springarn Research Center at Howard University, the McCain Library at the University of Southern Mississippi, the Sheppard Memorial Library in Greenville, the Kinston-Lenoir County Public Library, the Caldwell County Public Library, the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, the Montgomery County Library, and the Boston Public Library.

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Earlier versions of Chapters 4–8 benefited from development as articles in other venues. I thank the publishers of the *American Journal of Sociology*; *Qualitative Sociology*; *Research in Social Movements, Conflict and Change*; *Social Forces*; *Southern Cultures*; and *Theory and Society* for permission to draw upon that work,¹ as well as several of their anonymous reviewers for suggesting improvements. At Oxford University Press, James Cook has offered a sharp eye and unfailing judgment, and otherwise has been everything one can ask for as an editor—supportive, responsive, and, most important, patient.

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My deepest debt and appreciation goes to my family. As ever, my parents Bill and Ninette Cunningham have been a fount of unwavering love and support. For them, there is no concern or even question that my work will turn out well; they just want to know that I'm happy doing it. David and Ridley Boocock, Lizzie and Adam Dobkowski, and Ann Carroll always offer ardent backing and frequent occasions for celebration. I embarked on this project alongside Sarah, now my wife, who at the outset had no legal bond to indulge the undue attention that it occupied. Back in 2003, she agreed to drive the getaway car during a particularly precarious effort to secure an interview, and to my endlessly great fortune she remains with me, joined more recently by our children, Andrew and Charlotte. I am pleased beyond words about their apparent conspiracy to demonstrate enthusiasm for this and related topics, even weathering the heat of an entire Mississippi summer with me. (Last year, four-year-old Andrew told his pre-school class during a Thanksgiving exercise that he was thankful for "civil rights," apparently even more than for his beloved superheroes, though I think he sagely senses the connections.) I am even more pleased that they insist I remain enthusiastic about a host of other things, superheroes included. For making all this possible, and for allowing me to see with certainty even brighter days ahead, this book is for Sarah.

KLANSVILLE, U.S.A.

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INTRODUCTION

“Quit playing with them niggers,” commanded J. Robert “Bob” Jones. “I didn’t invite them, but I’ve got a few choice words for them.” It was a sultry Sunday afternoon in August 1966, and Jones was addressing a packed house at the Memorial Auditorium in Raleigh, North Carolina. More than 2,000 additional supporters milled around the parking lot outside, having arrived after the auditorium’s 3,067 seats had filled; Jones and other featured guests would later climb out onto the auditorium’s ledge above the parking lot, greeting those supporters to reward their patience. This event, the largest political gathering in the state that year, was hosted by the North Carolina Realm of United Klans of America (UKA), Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), Inc.

Squat and square-faced, with a prominent scar across his cheek, Jones was dressed in a shirt and tie, covered by the ornate, knee-length green silk robes reserved for the United Klans’ state leaders, or “Grand Dragons.” His three-year run in North Carolina marked him as by far the most successful Grand Dragon in the UKA’s five-year history. Perched behind a podium on the auditorium’s stage, he was charged with introducing a long list of speakers, including several fellow Dragons and the UKA’s national leader, “Imperial Wizard” Robert M. Shelton. Jones directed his crude invective to a small group of African Americans who had defiantly filled a handful of the hall’s seats, following a city council ruling that ordered the rally open to any member of the public. State police interspersed around the hall, reinforced by 220 National Guard troops stationed nearby on orders from the governor, kept the general peace, while verbal abuse from klan members and sympathizers rained down on the black rally crashers.

Jones, gauging the significance of the occasion, wanted his followers to remain on their best behavior. Imperial Wizard Shelton, the UKA’s most prominent figure, reinforced that message. Never known for his dynamism—one reporter compared him to Art Carney—Shelton delivered a typically measured speech, downplaying race issues in favor of a focus on their supposed root cause. “Black power and civil rights are not true issues in America today,”

Shelton argued. “They are taken-for-granted means of the international communist conspiracy spreading frustration, animosity, and ill will.” Later, “Imperial Kludd” George Dorsett—the UKA’s national chaplain, the biggest draw at the group’s nightly rallies, and, secretly, an informant on the payroll of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)—would offer the day’s most “choice” words. “I’m fighting not for myself, but for the children of America, to keep them from being raped, mugged, and knifed,” Dorsett warned, prompting the largest cheer of the day. “We don’t believe in violence, and we’re not going to have violence, *if we have to kill every nigger in America!*”¹

The UKA organized this Memorial Auditorium rally to defend Jones, Shelton, and its other leaders against pending federal prison sentences. Throughout the preceding year, the US House of Representatives had conducted massive hearings on the civil rights-era KKK revival. Dozens of klan leaders refused to turn over subpoenaed records, and now seven of them faced contempt of Congress charges. Though the hearings targeted a wide range of organizations, the UKA was by far the most prominent of the seventeen Ku Klux Klan groups identified by House investigators. Longtime FBI director J. Edgar Hoover noted that the UKA was so dominant as to be synonymous with the broader KKK among the general public. By 1966, more than 500 chapters—referred to, in klan parlance, as “klaverns”—scattered across nineteen states retained an estimated 25,000 UKA members.²

The location of those klaverns was perhaps the investigation’s most unexpected finding. Deadly KKK violence in Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia had garnered the lion’s share of klan publicity, but the United Klans’ real stronghold was in fact North Carolina, long considered the region’s most progressive state. While governors elsewhere in the South sometimes stood—literally or figuratively—in schoolhouse doorways to demonstrate their militant support of segregation, in North Carolina no viable candidate could even consider defying looming federal civil rights legislation. But alongside this pronounced moderation, North Carolina’s UKA boasted between 10,000 and 12,000 dues-paying members spread among approximately 200 klaverns. Across the state, newspaper editors, religious leaders, and other officials denounced this UKA presence, regularly referring to the group as “basically un-American,” “anti-Christian,” and “poisonous” to the state’s interests, and characterizing its rallies as “revolting,” “deplorable,” and “sickening” spectacles.³ In the face of this opposition, however, the UKA regularly attracted the largest crowds of any political organization in the state. At public rallies, adherents welcomed the sort of heated racist rhetoric that

George Dorsett delivered during the Memorial Auditorium event. Members proudly referred to their state as “Klansville, U.S.A.,” and such claims were not mere hyperbole. As Figure I.1 shows, at its mid-1960s peak the UKA’s presence in North Carolina eclipsed klan membership in all other southern states combined.

The UKA enjoyed a spectacularly rapid rise in the state. United Klans had initially formed in 1961, with members confined mostly to Alabama and Georgia. Over the next two years, only a handful of North Carolinians joined the organization. Jones took over as the Tar Heel State’s Grand Dragon in 1963, and his pioneering organizing approach emphasized the UKA’s public face. By the summer of 1964, the Carolina Klan established a demanding schedule of nightly rallies across the state, where they enlisted thousands of dues-paying members. Held generally in cow pastures or local air strips, these klan rallies resembled skewed county fairs, complete with live music, concessions, souvenirs, and raffles and other games for adults and children. Several self-styled preachers and political theorists spoke in support of states’ rights and the South’s segregationist traditions. Most of their rhetoric militantly opposed the looming changes in the political and racial landscape, which the klan rooted in hypocritical liberal Washington politics, the encroaching civil rights movement, and a sweeping “Communist-Jew” conspiracy. Each rally climaxed with a ritualized burning of a cross that reached as far as seventy feet into the sky.

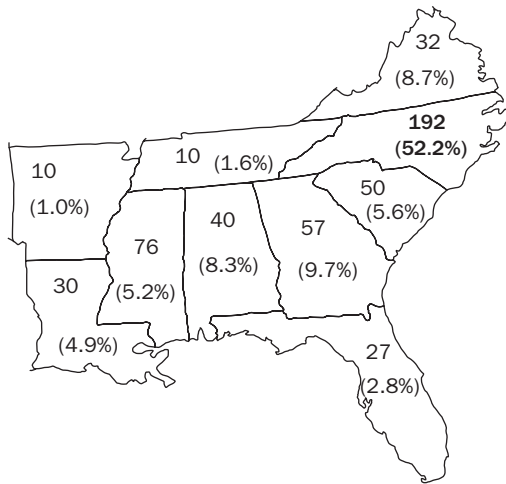


FIGURE I.1. Number of UKA klaverns, and percentage of total membership, by state (1966)

By 1965, hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians had attended these UKA gatherings—crowd estimates by the State Highway Patrol ranged between 200 and 6,000 each night, depending upon the location and time of year. Smaller numbers participated in periodic “street walks” (daytime marches by robed klan members and helmeted members of the UKA “Security Guard”) and members-only barbecues, fish fries, and turkey shoots. While such events defined many adherents’ klan involvement, a militant core within the UKA also pursued more nefarious efforts to intimidate black residents or white liberals through cross burnings, beatings, and shotgun fire.

The hearings of the congressional House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) marked a turning point in the UKA’s fortunes. In the face of the committee’s findings, North Carolina officials shifted their policing approach. Wide-ranging suppressive tactics increased the costs and risks of membership, sapped the group’s resources, and hindered its ability to organize. While the massive Memorial Auditorium rally seemed to flaunt the UKA’s strength in the face of state opposition, in fact it signaled a last gasp by a crumbling organization. The UKA’s state office began to shed dollars and members far more quickly than it could replace them. Resulting infighting and schisms produced several competing KKK organizations in the state, which, alongside significant overall attrition among the rank-and-file, meant that more groups were battling over the klan’s dwindling membership and financial resources. Shelton and Jones began year-long prison sentences for their contempt convictions in 1969, and the resulting leadership vacuum proved a fatal blow to the UKA.

But for much of the decade, the Carolina Klan was a force. After more than a thousand UKA supporters protested his 1966 speech, Martin Luther King Jr. pondered how “the state that prides itself on being the most liberal in the South can have the largest marches of the Ku Klux Klan.” Charlotte-based writer Harry Golden expressed similar frustration. Everywhere he traveled, incredulous audiences wanted to know: “North Carolina, the largest Ku Klux Klan state? Is this possible in ‘liberal’ North Carolina?”⁴ This book focuses on that puzzle, to explain why and how the dominant KKK outfit of the past half-century emerged not in the militantly segregationist Deep South, but rather in a state lauded for its southern-style progressivism.

The following chapters use the case of the UKA’s North Carolina Realm to understand how the civil rights-era Ku Klux Klan in general reflected, and often stood apart from, the politics of resistance, moderation, and capitulation that represented prevailing southern responses to civil rights reform. Focusing on a single state provides an ideal standpoint for understanding the

UKA's appeal, actions, and trajectory. Organizationally, the group was a confederation of state realms led by their own cadres of officers, each of whom developed distinct participation styles and recruitment strategies. Each state's financial and organizational infrastructure was in large part independent as well. When, for instance, North Carolina State Officer Bob Kornegay was sent to Virginia to serve as that state's Grand Dragon, Bob Jones sent a letter to his Tar Heel membership, announcing that Kornegay was "no longer with us," and instructing them to "refrain from bothering him with North Carolina problems." The autonomy of the UKA's state realms was compounded by the presence of more than a dozen other self-proclaimed authentic Ku Klux Klan organizations across the South.⁵

The account here takes seriously the differences among these varied klan manifestations, and adopts the unconventional lower-case "klan" label to challenge prevailing treatments of "The Klan" as implicitly uniform across organizations, eras, and locales. Civil rights histories have further obscured such distinctions by focusing disproportionately on KKK action in protest "hot spots" such as Birmingham, Alabama; St. Augustine, Florida; and various Mississippi locales.⁶ Widespread reportage of the klan's visible—and often brutal—opposition to civil rights activists in those areas reinforces the tendency to view such cases as typical of KKK organization everywhere in the South. However, even a cursory examination of existing evidence reveals that klan groups varied considerably in their recruitment strategies, ideology, militancy, level of activity, and connections to mainstream political and civic leaders. Focusing on the North Carolina story unearths this variation and considers it in light of the interplay between the KKK and the local, state, and national settings within which its membership thrived or withered.

Theoretical Framework

The chapters that follow introduce and draw on a *mediated competition model* to explain the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in North Carolina. The model demonstrates that the UKA organized most successfully where (1) white residents perceived civil rights reforms to be a significant threat to their status; (2) mainstream outlets for segregationist resistance were lacking; and (3) the policing of the KKK's activities was *laissez-faire*, limited to attempts to prevent acts of organized violence. While federal pressures to desegregate schools, workplaces, and public spaces transformed race relations in every southern community, they hit hardest where white residents' privileged standing most relied on maintaining segregation. When the political environment in those

settings also limited mainstream defenses of the racial status quo and rejected hard-line policing of the klan's presence, the UKA was most likely to thrive.

This model follows previous research that views the KKK as perhaps the archetypal example of a reactive movement—one that mobilizes in response to threats to the political, economic, or social status quo. It builds on the most powerful framework for understanding reactive political action: ethnic competition theory, which suggests that individuals are motivated to join groups like the klan when they see themselves as competing for scarce resources with members of other racial or ethnic groups.⁷ As an explanation for many forms of political contention—from riots and church burnings, to hate group membership and electoral support for divisive candidates—ethnic competition theory suggests that when multiple groups vie for a limited pool of resources, the boundaries that define and separate those groups harden. As a result, individual members of any particular group more easily attribute their tenuous status to other factions, increasing the likelihood of conflict between the groups in question. Organizations like the UKA exploited these kinds of insecurities, attracting followers convinced by claims that civil rights reforms unjustly threatened whites' entrenched advantage in political, economic, and social arenas.⁸

The mediated competition model developed here extends previous competition-based analyses in two ways. First, by examining how perceived competition relates to factors associated with statewide political cultures, county demographics, local community associations, and individual social locations, this account outlines and assesses processes occurring at multiple levels. This approach adds precision to conventional competition explanations that focus on how general, or “macro-level,” environments shape possibilities for political action.⁹ Consistent with past research, this analysis of the UKA shows that the general composition of states, counties, and communities defines the degree to which racial groups overlap and thus compete for economic, political, and social resources. But the argument here additionally emphasizes how potential klan adherents experience that general overlap within their local social worlds, through the structure and orientation of neighborhoods, community associations and institutions, and interpersonal ties. Those mediating contexts shape the extent to which individuals perceive racial overlap as a potential threat, construct grievances in racialized ways, and in some cases view the UKA as a vehicle to combat threats to the racial status quo.

Second, this account explains *how* the UKA mobilized racial threat, by drawing on concepts typically associated with social movement theory to identify and analyze the processes through which racial threat translates into

racist action. While competition-based explanations typically focus on when and where threats emerge and view subsequent political action as a straightforward product of those threats, social movement scholars often seek to understand how such threats translate into collective action. In that vein, rather than assuming that shared grievances coalesce into coordinated action, the following chapters emphasize the ways in which political contexts and organizational resources mediate such baseline conditions—that is, how the UKA drew upon, and often aggravated, racially charged environments to mobilize thousands of white North Carolinians to act together to preserve the segregationist status quo.

To uncover the processes that link the presence of racial competition to klan action, the analysis here shows how the broad political environment shaped klan recruits' shared sense of racial threat. In moderate North Carolina, where officials would abide by the Civil Rights Act, klansmen could more effectively argue that only the KKK would offer an organized defense of "authentic" white interests. The UKA in Mississippi and Alabama, in contrast, competed with a variety of mainstream institutions—from elected political leaders and school board officials, to local employers and Citizens' Council chapters—dedicated to defying federal civil rights statutes to maintain the segregationist status quo.¹⁰ In the Deep South's more expansive segregationist field, the klan filled a narrower niche. Also crucial was the orientation of local and state police. By adopting laissez-faire policies that sent a tacit message of support for the UKA or instead by unambivalently and aggressively suppressing klan organization, police could shift the stakes of klan affiliation, helping or hindering the UKA's efforts to build active mass support.¹¹

This account also emphasizes how competition dynamics were mediated by aspects of UKA organization, including the group's ability to marshal and deploy resources to build and nourish its membership. By organizing rallies and other events to secure funds, drawing on social networks to connect and align with sympathetic constituencies, and adopting strategies intended to enhance the visibility and resonance of their appeals, UKA officials worked to extend the group's reach and impact. Efforts to build a sense of racial solidarity and collective identity around the ideal of "authentic whiteness" were especially important. Crafting compelling ideological arguments that aligned with their constituencies' bedrock religious and nationalistic sentiments and then using klan-centered rituals and events to reinforce such frames, UKA recruiters sought to solidify a shared sense of racial threat among sympathetic white North Carolinians.¹²

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