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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
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Master's Thesis

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Women on the Periphery: The Invisible Empire Reborn

Master's thesis

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Year of defence: 2018

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 24 July, 2018

.....

Pavel Novota

References

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Abstrakt

Následující diplomová práce se zabývá rolí žen v americkém Ku Klux Klanu v období tzv. zlatých dvacátých let dvacátého století, především v jeho první polovině. Autor se pokusí zaměřit na následující aspekty této problematiky: hlavním cílem bude prokázat, že vznik a vůbec samotná existence ženské pobočky Klanu poukazuje na vnitřní ambivalence tohoto hnutí a je tedy jistou sondou do veškerých problémů KKK, ať už se týkaly financí, členství, soudních sporů atp. Za druhé bude cílem ověřit, zda a do jaké míry ženské členky legitimizovaly Klan, ať už z hlediska veřejného mínění anebo samotných struktur Ku Klux Klanu. Zároveň bude snahou autora práce o to, aby přes působení ženské pobočky Klanu (tzv. WKKK) poukázal na to, že Ku Klux Klan nelze chápat apriorně chápat jako agresivní rasistickou organizaci, ale jako skupinu, která se cítila být ohrožena „venkovním“ světem, před kterým se bránila. Z tohoto důvodu bude kladen značný důraz na společenské prvky, tzn. samotné fungování Klanu, pozice žen v něm, charitativní aspekty hnutí a snaha zasahovat do lokálního života. Posledním bodem je rovněž rovina primárních pramenů, které nesou silně subjektivní prvky a jejichž obsah se mnohdy nekryl s realitou. Spisy členů a členek Klanu jsou zabarveny strachem a obavami ze „druhého“, kdežto novinové články či reakce oponentů většinou naznačují neznalost a nedostatek pochopení pro členy hnutí.

Abstract

The thesis examines the role of women in the Ku Klux Klan in the early 1920s. The author seeks to analyze the following aspects: the main goal is to prove that the foundation and the very existence of the women's auxiliary (WKKK) points to inner tensions within the movement. The WKKK, therefore, can be used as a model or a case study in order to highlight all the issues the Klan had to face, from financial struggles and various allegations to transient and unstable membership. Secondly, the author sets out to verify whether and to what degree WKKK members legitimized the Klan, be it from the outside (public opinion) or from the inside. The author also places emphasis on the fact that the Klan should not be primarily viewed as a violent racist organization, but as a group of members who felt threatened by the outside world from which they needed to shelter themselves. Social life of the Klan and what role Klanswomen had, charity work, or interventions in local affairs play a vital role in this thesis as a result. Last but not least, proper understanding of primary sources is essential. They are obviously highly subjective and serve as a prime example of how reality differed from what was stated. (W)KKK pamphlets and writings were colored by fear of the so-called "other". Most texts written by critics and also journalists, conversely, indicate lack of knowledge and understanding for Klansmen as well as Klanswomen.

Keywords:

Ku Klux Klan, KKK in the 1920s, racism in the U.S., women in the Ku Klux Klan

Klíčová slova:

Ku Klux Klan, KKK ve druhé dekádě 20. století, rasismus v USA, ženy v Ku Klux Klanu

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“[...] hindsight can be a treacherous ally. Enabling us to trace the hidden patterns of past events, it beguiles us with the mirage of inevitability, the assumption that different outcomes lay beyond the limits of the possible.”¹

¹ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (Grand Rapids: Harper and Row, 1989) 603.

Key Terms or Abbreviations:

“alien” – also an “outsider”, someone who is/was not a (W)KKK member

“second” Ku Klux Klan – refers to the Klan which was founded in 1915 and was active in the 1920s

auxiliary – official affiliate of the Klan

chapter – a regional KKK cell/group

Imperial Wizard – leader of the KKK (e.g. William Simmons, Hiram Evans)

initiation/naturalization – process whereby an alien is admitted and joins the Klan

KKK – Ku Klux Klan

Klannish – pertaining to the Klan, e.g. a source published by one of the members

Klansmen/Klanswomen – a KKK or a WKKK member

Klonvokation – an official meeting

Kloran – an official KKK text

The Invisible Empire – self-proclaimed nickname of the Ku Klux Klan

(W)KKK – regarding both the KKK and WKKK

WKKK – Women of the Ku Klux Klan (official name of the auxiliary)

1. Introduction

1.1 Methodology, Aims of the Thesis

The following thesis analyzes the influence Klanswomen had on the KKK movement in the 1920s. The topic has been chosen for multiple reasons. First of all, the history of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s has been studied in depth. Historians who specialize in the Klan have dealt with this period more than with any other. However, as one of the main experts in the field has pointed out, women have largely been ignored.² Even though especially Kathleen Blee has done much to fill the gap, there is still room for new research, discoveries and interpretations.

Another reason why this particular topic is relevant lies in the fact that various researchers have used different sources over the years and their focus varies. The already mentioned Kathleen Blee mostly places emphasis on her own interviews with Klanswomen. Other, soon-to-be-named, researchers have mainly studied official KKK documents which describe the regalia or gatherings of the Ku Klux Klan.³ This thesis obviously works with such primary sources as well, but predominantly analyzes the perspective of various newspaper outlets. The reason is simple. Many primary and even secondary sources are either no longer available or are available only in a few libraries in the United States. Fortunately, the Library of Congress enables access to thousands of newspaper articles and, therefore, was an ideal institution to visit. As a result, this work is a little bit more newspaper-oriented than many other publications about the Ku Klan Klan. The potential advantages and disadvantages of this approach will be discussed throughout the thesis.

One important thing the reader has to bear in mind is that the Klan is still an existing organization. Even though modern Klansmen know only little about women who were affiliated with the Klan in the 1920s, they know today's Klanswomen very well. As a result, historians can compare the role of today's Klanswomen with Klanswomen who were active in the 1920s. The data researchers work with changes all the time because of daily-updated online platforms, such as *Stormfront* or annual reports compiled and published by the *Southern Poverty Law Center*.⁴ For that reason, there is not much comparison, certainly not as recent, of the WKKK movement and today's Klanswomen or between what female members represented at that time and what they mean to Klansmen today.

² “Historians of the various Klan movements, for example, typically dismiss women's Klan activities as incidental, auxiliary, or merely cultural screens behind which men carried out the real politics of the Klan.” From: Kathleen Blee, “Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement,” *Feminist Studies* 17.1 (1991): 60.

³ See the following subchapter for the historiography and secondary sources.

⁴ References are in the bibliography and in subsequent chapters.

There were multiple ways how to approach writing. Every single one of them has its positives, but obviously also negatives. The previous plan was to place the Klan as well as women and radical female movement in broader context of political history. However, such an approach would have entailed at least one chapter on the history of the United States in the 1920s with a succinct summary of women's emancipation. The main weakness is obvious. The chapter would have covered only the basics already known by virtually every reader, making it redundant. In addition, the basic outline with names and dates can be found in the bibliography and has already been explored, analyzed and interpreted in depth by dozens of authors.

On the other hand, it was necessary to introduce the Ku Klux Klan even though much can be found in books written by historians of the Klan. The simple reason is that the structure and ritual forms of the Klan are not as known as the context of the 1920s. In addition, they tend to be very confusing and ambiguous. The chapter also provides the reader with the essential basis for understanding the women's auxiliary, which adopted most of the KKK's features and strategies. To be more specific, the second chapter consists of a brief description of the Reconstruction Klan, followed by its successor founded in 1915. The aim of these two subchapters is to describe the main differences between the two and specify what the Klan actually stood for. The next part of the chapter studies the “social” life of the Klan in more depth. The basic inquiry question is how the Klan operated. The point it tries to convey is that the KKK, contrary to popular belief, was quite an elaborate and complex organization, maybe to its detriment. The last section of the chapter deals with the female “branch” of the Klan (WKKK – Women of the Ku Klux Klan) and its foundation. It provides the basic backbone, which will be developed and expanded upon later, necessary to understand the WKKK and its function.

Another possible approach would have been to draw conclusions from the development of the WKKK auxiliary and apply it somewhere else in order to talk about general aspects of radical movements. Such a result is probably inevitable to some extent. Despite that, this thesis does not necessarily try to persuade the reader to form a more negative or even positive opinion about Klanswomen or the Klan, just like it does not strive to elicit immediate and rash analogies. The thesis is simply not an effort to discredit the WKKK, nor does it want to celebrate the movement by any stretch of the imagination. Instead, one of the key aspects is to unveil what Klanswomen and Klansmen believed in and how they viewed others as well as themselves. It is up to the readers to decide what they want to take from the presented set of facts, stories and possible interpretations.

This thesis is also a bit distinct from some other works of historiography in that it does not focus only on Klansmen or Klanswomen, but offers both perspectives on the foundation and importance of the WKKK. The third and fourth chapter respectively are obvious examples. The former delves into the inner schizophrenia of Klansmen and elucidates why some of them wanted women in the Klan, whereas others were in deep opposition. On the contrary, a similar issue is tackled in the fourth chapter, only from the point of view of women. Both chapters set out to prove that the Klan was a chronically divided organization and point out various examples of clearly evident divergences within the movement. They also show that there was a vast difference between the ideal model of what the Klan was supposed to be and the reality itself.

This ambiguity is certainly identifiable in the fifth chapter which examines the role and importance of Klanswomen for the entire KKK organization. Its aim is to explain why women could and possibly even should be considered legitimizers of the movement. The Klan simply needed to include women because it pretended to be, and to a large degree it was, a family-oriented movement. There was no other way if its propaganda was to work effectively. Klanswomen held a view of other Klanswomen and Klansmen as good citizens who were trying to help those in need, no doubt about it. They attended rallies, prepared food for picnics, visited schools and donated money to the Protestant church. This needs to be counterposed against their participation in boycotts of Catholic or Jewish businesses. Moreover, despite firmly stating that they were not racist or violent, their tone was clearly anti-black, anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant.

Lastly, there is the question of how today's Klansmen view the role of Klanswomen in the 1920s. Official KKK internet sites suggest, and this account is supported by other media outlets such as internet discussion platforms, that Klansmen are largely ignorant of it. Their statements about history of the Klan are mostly of dubious value. On the one hand, they are very proud of the Klan's history and longevity. Yet, they try to distance themselves from its darker days and keep repeating that they are not the violent Klan of the 1860s.

Moreover, they misinterpret history by skewing historical facts and mixing them with fiction to create half-truths at best. They are also prone to talking about historical issues broadly without many specific examples, or conversely they just select a few examples which fit their assumptions and ignore the rest. One distinction between now and the 1920s is obvious. Whereas in the 1920s women had their own organization, albeit only in theory, they have nothing like that today. Their role is more limited than it was ninety five years ago. Today's Klanswomen are consequently even more dependent on Klansmen than in the past.

Finally, a few words of explanation on the title of this thesis should be given. The title “Women on the Periphery: The Invisible Empire Reborn” has been chosen over much more simple “Women of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s” for more than just one reason, but everything basically boils down to the fact that the first phrase says much more than the other one. “The Invisible Empire” is a term, explained in the second chapter, which was used by Klansmen and Klanswomen for the Ku Klux Klan.⁵ The word “[r]eborn” indicates that the thesis is concerned with what historians refer to as the so-called “second” Ku Klux Klan, founded in 1915. From this point of view, the titles are semantically mutually interchangeable. Nonetheless, the first part of the title has much more to offer than just mere “Women of the Ku Klux Klan”.

As far as their rhetoric was concerned, Klansmen considered women's issues very important. They talked and wrote about women quite routinely. They claimed that they needed to protect them. However, the reverse is true. A careful analysis and comparison of their rhetoric with their deeds suggests that Klanswomen were supposed to play only a marginal role in their plans. Even though any concrete numbers are unknown, Klanswomen were in minority in the KKK structures. In spite of that, their involvement had a vital role in how the public image of the Klan was shaped. The Klan would not have resembled a family-oriented organization without their help. The existence of the WKKK validated the entire KKK movement to a large degree.

Therefore, the word “[p]eriphery” used in the title represents a riddle which is not that easy to uncover and solve. This thesis strives to find a solution to the pun and decide whether women were a marginal factor or whether they were more relevant than it might seem. One could also ask whether these women lived on the fringes of society or whether they stood for higher and more commonly shared ideals.

One thing remains certain. Journalists and other “outsiders” who wrote about the Klan considered Klanswomen of secondary interest. They wrote about Klanswomen only sporadically and briefly. Just the discrepancy in sheer numbers of newspaper articles which mentioned the male Klan and the WKKK is so staggering that one could almost doubt whether the WKKK auxiliary existed on its own, let alone that it played an important role. This fact actually says quite a lot about the WKKK, but this is also why other primary sources are so useful.

Newspaper articles were more extensive only when WKKK members committed or at

⁵ At the very beginning of chapter 2.2, pp. 29-30.

least promoted acts of violence or when they were entangled in controversies. The reason was simple. They lacked information and were biased towards the Klan. Klansmen were more visible and consequently easier to attack or write about, which brought negative publicity. However, the press did not necessarily destroy the Klan. The Klan destroyed itself.⁶

To conclude this introduction, the author of the thesis strives to establish the point that Klanswomen may not have achieved much and ended up on the perimeter of society in most meanings of the word. Nevertheless, the WKKK movement enabled its members to lead a different life, a life in which they were able to be socially as well as politically active. It was their sanctuary and refuge from the world they feared, but also which they tried to protect. People with divergent opinions and frames of mind were considered a threat to their world. They differed from the general public not so much in their sentiment, but in their extremism and divisive rhetoric. This is why they either remained or became women of the “periphery”.

1.2 (W)KKK in the 1920s: Primary Sources and Historiography

The biggest problem which all researchers studying the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan face is that the majority of primary sources is now lost. Historians of the WKKK find themselves in an even worse situation. In other words, it is impossible to get a clear understanding of the organization known as Women of the Ku Klux Klan without any access to official KKK sources, which need to be analyzed anyway, among other things, because Klansmen often wrote about Klanswomen and women in general and, for that reason, provide much of the necessary information.

It is perhaps fair to begin with a set of official KKK “legal” documents. These were binding documents which specified what the organization was and defined its rituals, offices, rights and privileges. The first of these was the so-called *Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*.⁷ This “national” document, which served as a model for other state “Constitutions”, is interesting from multiple perspectives. The text stipulated what the KKK was and formulated its goals and requirements for admission. It is not so easy to digest the content because it requires knowledge of KKK's terminology and language, which is typical for other (W)KKK documents as well. It was written in 1921 and ignored women simply because they were not official members of the Klan at that time, but it needs to be stressed that WKKK pamphlets later reproduced its rhetoric, thus stressing its perceived importance. As Klansmen

⁶ This interpretation is shared by: David Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987) 295. The controversies are mentioned and discussed throughout the thesis.

⁷ *Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan* (Atlanta: The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Inc, 1921). <<https://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/constitutionlawsknights.pdf>>. Last accessed: April 4, 2018.

put it, benevolence and “sanctity of the home and the chastity of womanhood” remained important goals and the WKKK auxiliary adopted them as their own.⁸

Very relevant documents are also “Klorans”, handbooks or manuals of the Ku Klux Klan, e.g. *Kloran of the Knights of the Great Forest*, *The Kloran of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan: Realm of Mississippi*, or the national *Kloran Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*.⁹ “Klorans” were confidential documents which defined the Klan's creed and the form of the ritual. They emphasized the more religious and mysterious parts of their meetings and set multiple rules for admission of new members. The national version served as a template for other copies and it is again worth mentioning that the WKKK basically adopted it and only changed a few terms to fit the needs of the auxiliary. *A Fundamental Klan Doctrine* and *Ideals of the Ku Klux Klan* also should not be omitted.¹⁰ The theory was recorded in more practical terms in *Klansman's Manual*, which tried to explore who a true Klansman was or was supposed to be. Chivalry, honesty and protection of womanhood were each vital characteristics. People who were not initiated were fittingly called “aliens”.¹¹

Membership lists are important and very specific documents. They need to be treated with caution. The reason why nobody knows how many Klansmen or Klanswomen were in the Klan is quite simple. The Klan never published names of former members. This type of data was supposed to stay hidden from the public. There were only a few exceptions when the public learned some of the names. *Expose of Traitors [...]* contains around two thousand names of alleged Buffalo Klansmen.¹² The list will be mentioned later in the thesis, but there are two

⁸ *Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*, 10.

⁹ *Kloran of the Knights of the Great Forest*, (Atlanta: Imperial Palace, 1928).

<https://archive.org/details/dudeman5685_yahoo_KGF>. *The Kloran of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan: Realm of Mississippi*. From: <<http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/kloranwhiteknights.pdf>>. Both last accessed: March 22, 2018. *Kloran Knights of the Ku Klux Klan* (Atlanta: Imperial Palace, 1916). From: <https://archive.org/stream/KloranOfTheKKK_201404/Kloran%20of%20the%20KKK#page/n0/mode/2u>. Last accessed: March 23, 2018. The name “Kloran” was probably taken from Islam even though the Klan harshly criticized non-Protestants. The reason for doing so might have been to stress the religious importance and sanctity of the text. A very important factor arguably was that the first letter in English is “K” when pronounced. The letter was used by the Klan as often as possible.

¹⁰ *A Fundamental Klan Doctrine* (Atlanta: Ku Klux Klan Incorporated, 1924), From:

<<http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/fundamentalclandoctrine.pdf>>. *Ideals of the Ku Klux Klan*, From: <<http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/idealskkk.pdf>>. Both last accessed: February 20, 2018.

¹¹ *Klansman's Manual*, Paul Etheridge ed. (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Incorporated, 1924) 16-21.

From: <<https://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/klansmansmanual.pdf>>. Last accessed: April 4, 2018. Similar qualities in: *The Ku Klux Klan Unmasked*, W. C. Wright (Taco: The Dallas Press). From:

<<http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/kkkunmasked.pdf>>. Last accessed: April 10, 2018. There were called aliens because “Klan doctrine considered conversion [...] as equivalent to the rites of passage experienced by immigrants to America.” From: David Horowitz, “Social Morality and Personal Revitalization: Oregon's Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 90.4 (1989): 375.

¹² *Expose of Traitors in the Interests of Jews, Catholics, Negroes and All Respecters of the American Principle of Civil and Religious Freedom*. From: <<https://cdml16694.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/VTP005/id/40>>.

things which have to be stated right now. There is no real proof that all people whose names can be found on the list really were Klansmen and there is certainly no evidence that they remained in the Klan for a longer period of time. Despite this, the list has been used as a tool in order to estimate how many members the Klan had in the United States. It has also, at least to some degree, enabled researchers to learn what types of people joined the Klan because their position or job is directly stated next to their names.

Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonvokation from 1924 is an irreplaceable source. It is a transcript of what important Klansmen and future WKKK representatives said during their meeting in Kansas.¹³ The “Klonvokation” addressed various issues, from setting up a Klan auxiliary for women and an organization for younger members to official KKK newspaper topics, such as education in America.¹⁴ The transcript is a clear example of how inner struggles shaped the ideology of the Klan and also of how the KKK propaganda machine worked. The former leader William Simmons, who had previously been viewed as a hero, was now portrayed basically as a traitor. The Klan also bragged about how rich the organization was and how easy it would be to recruit Klanswomen.¹⁵ Both claims were clearly exaggerated, if not outright false. As far as the WKKK was concerned, the new order was called “transcendentally important” and its mission that of the KKK.¹⁶ The reality proved not to be so simple.

Thirty-Three Questions Answered is a pamphlet which provides answers to questions, such as why the Klan existed or what was its aim.¹⁷ The edition used in this thesis, like the aforementioned *Ideals of the Ku Klux Klan*, might be considered problematic because it does not include the name of the author, the publication date, or the location where it was published. Nonetheless, the language and style of writing is typical for other texts published by KKK members. Even really basic analysis shows that there is really no doubt that the “answers” were provided by one of the members. Moreover, it is a pertinent document in the sense that it expands upon other official KKK texts such as, for example, *The Practice of Klanishness* or *Principles and Purposes of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*.¹⁸ Both provide a summation of

Last accessed: March 22, 2018.

¹³ It is similar to *The Ku Klux Klan: Hearings Before the Committee on Rules* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921) in this respect. The source can be found here: <<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100479396>>. Last accessed: April 4, 2018.

¹⁴ *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonvokation*, H. K. Ramsey ed. (Kansas: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Incorporated, 1924) 24-60. From: <<https://archive.org/details/ProceedingsOfTheSecondImperialKlonvokation>>. Last accessed: April 4, 2018.

¹⁵ *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonvokation*, 87-113.

¹⁶ *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonvokation*, 234.

¹⁷ *Thirty-Three Questions Answered*, From:

<<http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/questionsansweredofficial.pdf>>. Last accessed: February 20, 2018.

¹⁸ Or even unofficial texts written by individual Klansmen or supporters of the Klan: *The Ku Klux Klan: Its*

ideals which the organization stood for. It is not without interest that Klanswomen adopted the same ideology.

The Klan also had its own weekly newspapers, the most famous example being the *Imperial Night-Hawk*. The most popular topics were immigration and Catholicism, which proves yet again that black Americans were just one of the targets, not the main one. From the perspective of those who were not in the Klan, the *Imperial Night-Hawk* must have been viewed as mere propaganda. Articles about how pastors were fond of the Klan or about how sound the financial situation of the KKK was were very common.¹⁹ The titles of most articles are quite telling and immediately reveal what the Klan supported or criticized: “Poorly Restricted Immigration Is One of the Greatest Perils Confronting America”, “Another Effort to Wreck the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Fails”, “Christian Citizenship or How Crooked Officials”, “Bootleggers and Law Violators Oppose Progress of Klan”.²⁰ The source is a good example of self-presentation, of how KKK members probably viewed the Klan or, at least, how they wanted to be viewed by fellow Klansmen and Klanswomen.

In addition, there are a few texts which were written by Imperial Wizards (leaders) of the Klan, William Simmons and Hiram Evans respectively. In *The Klan Unmasked*, William Simmons tried to make it clear that the Klan was not an anti-racial movement. However, as Klansmen often did, he contradicted himself by writing that the existence of black Americans was “the burden of the nation as a whole.” He believed that “the mind of the pure Negro, compared to the white, on the average [did] not get beyond the age of twelve years”. The Klan was strongly against intermarriage or social mingling across cultures and Simmons was no exception: “[i]f there were no mixed population to consider our problem would not be nearly so difficult.”²¹ The text largely ignored women and children because the author was mostly interested in the ideals of the Klan as constructed at that particular juncture.

Origin, Meaning and Scope of Operation, Lewis Fowler (Atlanta, 1922). From: <<http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/kkkoriginmeaning.pdf>>. Last accessed: April 4, 2018. And: *The Practice of Klanishness* (Atlanta, 1924), From: <<http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/practiceklanishness.pdf>>. *Principles and Purposes of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*, From: <<http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/principlespurposesknights.pdf>>. Both last accessed on February 20, 2018.

¹⁹ *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1.22 (1923) 3-4. The newspaper has been taken from: <<http://www.balderexlibris.com/index.php?category/English/T/The-Imperial-Nighthawk>>. Last accessed: April 11, 2017.

²⁰ *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1.32 (1923) 6. *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1.22 (1923) 2. *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1.34 (1923) 3-4. *The Imperial Night-Hawk* 1.08 (1923) 5.

²¹ He claimed the Klan was democratic. *The Klan Unmasked*, William Simmons (Atlanta, Wm. E. Thompson Publishing, 1923) 145-152. From: <<https://archive.org/details/TheKlanUnmasked>>. Last accessed: April 5, 2018. Not only in the South: Christina Simmons, “Women’s Power in Sex Radical Challenges to Marriages in the Early Twentieth-Century United States,” *Feminist Studies* 29.1 (2003) 172.

The same thing cannot be necessarily said about Evans's article "The Klan's Fight for Americanism". His ideology and view on what the Invisible Empire was can also be found in *Is the Ku Klux Klan Constructive or Destructive?*. Evans celebrated the Klan and pointed out its purported successes, whether connected to finances, family life, membership, or philanthropy.²² At the same time, he vilified Catholics and regarded them as one of the reasons why the quality of American education and "household" was on the decline.²³

There are also quite a few sources which were written by either Klan supporters or those who were critical of its existence. The first important type were newspaper articles. Columnists were not Klansmen. Their position outside the Klan had its pros and its cons. Their bias towards the Invisible Empire was substantial. Most of the stories were given titles along these lines: "Women and Girls Parade with Klan", "Many Klanswomen Quit", "Klansmen Admit Attacking Doctor", "Woman Sues Ku Klux Klan for 100,000 Dollar Damages", "Woman Warned That She Will Be Kidnapped" and so on and so forth.²⁴

Journalists looked for sensational stories laced with gossip instead of significant facts about the structure, life, or rituals of the Klan. This was quite typical for the press of the 1920s according to some historians. In other words: "[t]he press, preoccupied in many instances with sex, crime, and entertainment, reflected the spirit of the times. The majority of newspapers went with the tide, rather than [...] display [...] significant news [...]."²⁵ It is also quite interesting that stories of Klannish violence mostly occupied front pages, whereas social life of the Klan was relegated to less significant articles hidden somewhere in the middle of the newspaper.²⁶

What makes matters worse is the content of their texts. The title was always catchy, but the actual knowledge gained by the reader must have been very limited. There was no real

²² "The Klan's Fight for Americanism," Hiram Evans, *The North American Review* (1926) 30. From: <<https://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/klansfightamericanism.pdf>>. Last accessed: April 5, 2018.

²³ "The Klan's Fight for Americanism," Evans, 13-25. *Is the Ku Klux Klan Constructive or Destructive?*, E. Haldeman-Julius ed. (Chicago: The Chicago Daily News Company, 1924) 21. From: <<https://archive.org/details/IsTheKuKluxKlanConstructiveOrDestructiveADebateBetweenImperial/>>. Last accessed: April 5, 2018.

²⁴ "Women and Girls Parade With Klan," *NY Times* (6 July 1926) 1. "Klansmen Admit Attacking Doctor," *New York Times* (16 Jun 1922) 13. "Woman Sues Ku Klux for 100,000 Dollar Damages," *The Atlanta Constitution* (25 Aug 1923) 18. "Many Klanswomen Quit," *NY Times* (13 Mar 1927) 13. "Woman Warned That She Will Be Kidnapped," *The Los Angeles Times* (08 Apr 1922) 6.

²⁵ Michael Emery, Edwin Emery eds. et al., *The Press and America*, vol VIII (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000) 270.

²⁶ This is a general feature, but not a rule. It also depended on the type of the newspaper, in more local papers the Klan was often mentioned right away. Some examples: "New Chief Named for Klan Women," *The Atlanta Constitution* (21 Feb 1924) 22. "A Ku Klux Klan Auxiliary," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (18 Sep 1922) 14. "Klan Leader Killed Husband, Says Widow at Harrin Inquest," *The Sun* (4 Sep 1924) 1. "Women's K.K.K. Raids Still and Captures 2 Men," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (25 Jun 1923) 1. Possible counter-arguments: "School Control Sought by Klan," *The Atlanta Constitution* (26 Oct 1924) 1. "Woman Beaten, Says Abduction to Lady K.K.K.," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (14 Sep 1922) 14.

substance behind the text. The title was often the most informative part of the text. The rest was either mere speculation or the writer was simply beating about the bush. However, historians are at least able to tell what the general public approximately knew about the Klan because of the texts they wrote and published. Most of the information the public was able to access had come from national or local newspapers. KKK writings were only rarely accessible, possibly only after they had leaked even though there were some exceptions in the sense that the Klan also handed out leaflets or pamphlets. Moreover, even in these cases they were given to the press, which then spread them further – the *New York World* being a good example.²⁷ The list of used newspapers appears in the final bibliography.

Another source is represented by a more narrative style of writing. The author of *The Trail of Serpent* believed that the Klan had to “be killed and [i]ts leaders [...] sent to jail“ and said that its leaders were “disreputable, drunken and debauched.”²⁸ According to the author, the Klan's main flaw was its hypocrisy. He thought that the purity of the home sounded great in theory, but condemned Klansmen for not living the life they preached.²⁹ The sentiment is typical for those who tried to denounce the Klan. Another example could be the text *The Ku Klux Klan* in which its author delivered a harangue to Klansmen for abusing women even though they promised to support them.³⁰

A former Klansmen, Henry Fry, having left the Klan, exposed Klansmen for treating women as just “one” of many issues in his *The Modern Ku Klux Klan*. As far as the Women of the Ku Klux Klan organization is concerned, his text is relevant because it explains why Klansmen decided to form the auxiliary in the first place.³¹ There were two main reasons why Klansmen did it according to Fry. First, women had formerly aided Klansmen in multiple ways. Secondly, women as mothers had huge influence on the youth. His text is important for a different reason, too. He helped to expose the Ku Klux Klan for what it mostly was because of his own experience.

The Modern Ku Klux Klan was picked up by the newspaper *New York World*. Multiple articles in a row were released in 1921 in which the Klan was severely criticized. A very broad and riveted audience of readers began to buy the newspaper at a record rate, says David

²⁷ More on pages 21-22 of this thesis.

²⁸ *The Trail of Serpent*, W. M. Likins (1928) 3. From: <<https://archive.org/stream/TheTrailOfTheSerpent/TOS#page/n13/mode/1up>>. Last accessed: April 5, 2018.

²⁹ *The Trail of Serpent*, Likins, 26.

³⁰ It was written anonymously: *The Ku Klux Klan* (Denver: American Publishing Society, 1922) 11-12. From: <<http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/thekkk.pdf>>. Last accessed: April 5, 2018.

³¹ *The Modern Ku Klux Klan*, Henry Fry (Boston: Maynar and Company Publishers, 1922) 175-176. From: <<https://archive.org/details/modernkukluxklan00fryhuoft>>. Last accessed: April 5, 2018.

Chalmers. The newspaper received the Pulitzer Prize as a result.³² This points to the fact that the Klan was indeed a polarizing topic in the early 1920s which many people were interested in. It could also serve as a potential source of evidence as to why the Klan could have had up to a few million members in the 1920s. The organization was so known and often earned front pages of various newspapers with extemporized headlines that many people might have enlisted just to see what it was like.

Alma White represents a completely different approach. The title of her pamphlet, *Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty*, says it all. She applauded Klansmen for their patriotism, ardent Protestant belief and willingness to take action without breaking any laws.³³ She believed that the policy of the Klan would bring peace and happiness to American women and families.³⁴ Her work reflects all the propagandist themes most supporters of the Klan sought to magnify to make the organization appear more peaceful. As a bishop of her own church, she was just one of many Protestant clerics who supported the Klan because of its anti-Catholic fervor.³⁵ She referred to newspaper authors who fiercely attacked the Ku Klux Klan in their publications as propagandists.³⁶ However, one could argue that those who were steadfastly in support of the KKK, and she was one of them, were the exact same propagandists, only with a radically different state of mind.

Even though they are scarce and patchy, there are also some important texts which relate to Klanswomen and the WKKK. The first is known under the title *Ideals of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan*. It set out to define what the WKKK was and attempted to specify ideal qualities of Klanswomen who had to be Anglo-Saxon Protestants from the United States of America.³⁷ That the *Ideals of Women of the Ku Klux Klan* resembled *Klansman's Manual* and other KKK texts goes without saying. *America for Americans: As Interpreted by the Women of the Ku Klux Klan* is amazingly similar in its nature as well.³⁸ It placed much emphasis on Americanism and

³² Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 38. John Kneebone, "Publicity and Prejudice: The New York World's Exposé of 1921 and the History of the Second Ku Klux Klan," *VCU Scholars Compass: History Publications* (2015) 1-19. From: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&context=hist_pubs>. Last accessed: June 4, 2018. "Quaint Customs and Methods of the Ku Klux Klan," *The Literary Digest* (5 Aug, 1922): 1. Just like the *Indianapolis Times* in 1928: Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930*, 160.

³³ *Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty*, Alma White (New Jersey: The Good Citizen, 1926) 145-158. From: <https://archive.org/details/dudemman5685_yahoo_LGOL>. Last accessed: April 5, 2018.

³⁴ *Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty*, White, 159

³⁵ Some clerics, however, criticized the Klan: *The Ku Klux Klan*, John Gillis (New York: The Paulist Press, 1922) 14. From: <<https://archive.org/details/kukluxklan00gill>>. Last accessed: April 5, 2018.

³⁶ *Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty*, White, 158.

³⁷ *Ideals of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan*. From: <<http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/idealswomenkkk.pdf>>. Last accessed: March 22, 2018.

³⁸ *America for Americans: As Interpreted by the Women of the Ku Klux Klan*. From: <<https://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/americamericanscreed.pdf>>. Last accessed: March 20, 2018.

Protestantism. According to the text, one of the main goals of the WKKK was to make sure that these “principles [should] be maintained, our racial purity preserved, our homes and children protected [...]”.³⁹

Two important documents which clearly demonstrate the similarities between the Klan and the WKKK are the *Ritual in the Degree of Kriterion Konservator of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan* and *Installation Ceremonies, Women of the Ku Klux Klan*.⁴⁰ The content of the documents is basically identical to what was written in KKK's “Klorans”. Historians believe that secret ceremonies and rules “were meant to provoke emotional responses and further bind Klansmen [and Klanswomen] to each other”.⁴¹ A vital quality of a Klanswoman was to be loyal to the KKK. As was directly stated in the *Ritual [...]*, the “glory of a Klanswoman [was] to serve.”⁴²

The most important ideologist of the WKKK was one of its leaders, Robbie Gill. She wrote *Women of America! The Past! The Present! The Future!* and edited the *Official Bulletin (Women of the Ku Klux Klan)*. In the former, she provided information about when the WKKK was established.⁴³ Strangely enough, she did not reveal why it happened. However, the reader can deduce from the text that the reason was that multiple female and pro-Klan organizations had already existed.⁴⁴

The tone and language are typical for any official (W)KKK text. For example, statements like “the negro should be protected” or that those who wanted to join the WKKK were to be women “of dependable character” can be found in it.⁴⁵ However, the organization

³⁹ *America for Americans: As Interpreted by the Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 6.

⁴⁰ *Ritual in the Degree of Kriterion Konservator of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan* (Little Rock: Imperial Headquarters). From: <<http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/ritualdegreekriterion.pdf>>. Last accessed: March 20, 2018. *Installation Ceremonies, Women of the Ku Klux Klan*. From <https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3577016?image_id=1332150>. Last accessed: May 11, 2017. There were also other documents which defined or specified the authority of various WKKK officers, for example: *United States of America, Our God, Our Country [...]*. From: <<http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/pdfgen/exportPDF.php?bibid=2107172&solrid=3577009&imgid=1332069>>. Last accessed: May 11, 2017. Or: *Instructions to Kligrapps for Organized Realms Only*. From: <<http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/pdfgen/exportPDF.php?bibid=2107183&solrid=3577020>>. Last accessed: May 11, 2017. And: *Suggestions to Kligrapps* (Little Rock: Imperial Headquarters). <<http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/pdfgen/exportPDF.php?bibid=2107185&solrid=3577022>>. Last accessed: May 11, 2017. Lastly: *Second Degree, Obligation, First Section: Property of Women of the Ku Klux Klan*. <<http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/pdfgen/exportPDF.php?bibid=2107184&solrid=3577021>>. Last accessed: May 11, 2017.

⁴¹ Kathleen Blew, *Understanding Racist Activism* (London: Routledge, 2018) 199. Amy McDowell is the co-author of the chapter (“The Duality of Spectacle and Secrecy”) from which the quote has been taken. The square bracket with [Klanswoen] was added by the author of the thesis because it fits Klansmen as well as Klanswomen.

⁴² *Ritual in the Degree of Kriterion Konservator of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 16.

⁴³ *Women of America! The Past! The Present! The Future!*, Robbie Gill (Little Rock). From: <<http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/womenamericapast.pdf>>. Last accessed: March 20, 2018.

⁴⁴ *Women of America! The Past! The Present! The Future!*, Gill, 3.

⁴⁵ *Women of America! The Past! The Present! The Future!*, Gill, 7, 15.

was not really supportive of black Americans and, as the profusion of scandals and controversies indicates, many of them were of “questionable” character. The title of the *Official Bulletin (Women of the Ku Klux Klan)* is self-explanatory. The bulletin was a celebration of the successes of the WKKK and its tone was clearly anti-Catholic.⁴⁶ On the other hand, it is also a prime example of the lack of certainty among Klanswomen (or Klansmen for that matter) about how many members the organization really had. Instead of clear numbers, words such as “at least” were employed without any evidence.⁴⁷

There also have been quite a few historians of the Klan who deserve to be mentioned. The most important WKKK historian by far is Kathleen Blee. She has published multiple articles and monographs about female activism and radical groups.⁴⁸ Her approach is mostly sociological. In other words, she focuses on explaining what was the motivation and background of women who decided to join these organizations. She is also interested in the gender aspect of the movement. She relies heavily on oral history because she conducted quite a few interviews with former Klanswomen from Indiana in the past. She uses a plethora of other sources as well though.

Her work is irreplaceable in the sense that she places emphasis on their social work instead of just criticizing or vilifying these women for what they did in the 1920s. Blee's interest is quite broad. Not only has she published about the Klan, but also about Neo-Nazis and other radical and activist groups. She has had followers who have decided to expand her work.⁴⁹ However, some of her work has aged a bit for obvious reasons.

The Klan is still active and it is important to keep updating and reevaluating, which is not always possible. Moreover, it is perhaps possible to argue, even though it is difficult to prove, that she tends to overestimate the number of Klansmen or Klanswomen in the same way as many other authors.⁵⁰ Such an assertion can be made because she does not provide enough

⁴⁶ For example the director of religious education in Kansas was described as a WKKK member: *Official Bulletin (Women of the Ku Klux Klan)*, Robbie Gill ed. (Little Rock, 1927) 3.

From: <<https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3577006>>. Last accessed: May 11, 2017.

⁴⁷ *Official Bulletin (Women of the Ku Klux Klan)*, Gill ed., 4.

⁴⁸ Kathleen Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992). Kathleen Blee, “Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan,” *The Journal of American History* 80.2 (1993): 596-606. Kathleen Blee, *Inside Organized Racism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002). Kathleen Blee, *Democracy in the Making: How Activist Groups Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Kathleen Blee, “Becoming a Racist: Women in Contemporary Ku Klux Klan and Neo-Nazi Groups,” *Gender and Society* 10.6 (1996): 680-702. And the already mentioned: Blee, “Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement,” 57-77. Or: Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 9-213.

⁴⁹ Kelli Kerbawy, *Knights in White Satin: Women of the Ku Klux Klan* (Huntington: Marshall University, 2007).

⁵⁰ The membership: pages 37-40 of this thesis. Other criticism for example: Charles Alexander, “Reviewed Work(s): Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s,” *The Journal of American History* 79.1 (1992): 321-322. Or: Calvin Enders, “Reviewed Work(s): Women of the Ku Klux Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s,”

concrete data which would back up her assumptions. The reason is simple. There is no such data. She also puts more stress on mindset and background of these women, not so much [sic!] on their rhetoric and its meaning, thus unintentionally leaving this spot more blank than some of the others. Furthermore, oral history as a method is problematic when conducted between people of contrasting stances and ideologies. Some of the answers were terse and Klanswomen obviously did not trust Blee; some even threatened her.⁵¹

Another key figure is David Chalmers. Unfortunately, he specializes in the male Klan like most other historians.⁵² In spite of that, his *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* and *Notes on Writing the History of the Ku Klux Klan* are must-reads for everyone who wants to learn the basic chronology of the Klan as well as its regional differentiation and impact on politics in the 1920s.⁵³ His two monographs contain the most relevant secondary sources as it pertains to the Klan. Even though he neglects the WKKK, he is very well-aware of the fact that women “contributed to the brief success of the Klan.” It is also very important that he has found a parallel between the rather sudden breakdown of the Klan and its female counterpart.⁵⁴ One of the aims of the following thesis is to further develop his premise.

Rory McVeigh is another prominent historian of the Klan. He is known for his methodology and the so-called “power-devaluation model”. He has tried to establish the point that structural change functions as an impetus in interpretative processes which activate exploitation of political opportunities.⁵⁵ To put it simply, he has suggested that economic situation influences the political one which, in turn, has impact on radical movements such as the Ku Klux Klan. He has worked hard to provide some elucidation as to why the Klan was so popular in some places and irrelevant in others by using this model. His work is also relevant because it provides the reader with statistics, which are not always easy to find.⁵⁶

Michigan Historical Review 19.2 (1993): 94-96.

⁵¹ She also admits that she has had problems with deciding what she should or should not write: Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 20-29.

⁵² Another example would be Wyn Wade: Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross* (New York: Touchstone Book, 1987). Or: Thomas Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline in the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s* (Chicago: The Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group, 2011).

⁵³ The already mentioned: Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*. And: David Chalmers, *Notes on Writing the History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Tampa: University Press of Florida, 2013).

⁵⁴ The previous quote and this sentence: Chalmers, *Notes on Writing the History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 63.

⁵⁵ Rory McVeigh, *Rise of the Ku Klux Klan* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009) 39. Rory McVeigh, “Structural Incentives for Conservative Mobilization: Power Devaluation and the Rise of the Ku Klux Klan, 1915-1925,” *Social Forces* 77.4 (Jan 1999): 1461-1496.

⁵⁶ For example how many people were literate et cetera: McVeigh, *Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 116. Or about the migration from the South: Rory McVeigh, “Power Devaluation, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Democratic National Convention of 1924,” *Sociological Forum* 16.1 (2001): 19. The probable membership of the WKKK in areas where there also was a KKK unit (or where it was not): Rory McVeigh et al., “Corn, Klansmen, and Coolidge: Structure and Framing in Social Movements,” *Social Forces* 83.2 (2004): 653-690.

Craig Fox's *Everyday Klansfolk* contains more information about the WKKK than McVeigh's or Chalmers's work.⁵⁷ He has even added estimates containing information about how many percent of WKKK members were married or how many were over forty years of age.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, it is vital to realize that every statistic about the (W)KKK is a mere approximation. The book is still mostly a synthesis of the KKK in the 1920s, but Fox has realized that the Klan was a contradiction “inclusive and exclusive in different ways.”⁵⁹ His assumption will be examined later in the thesis by analyzing the divergence between Klannish primary sources and recorded reality.

Kenneth Jackson's *The Ku Klux Klan in the City* can be viewed as a contrast to McVeigh's more rural-oriented work *Rise of the Ku Klux Klan* even though both write about the WKKK sporadically.⁶⁰ Jackson's contribution mostly lies in the fact that he has provided specific examples of what local Klans were doing, what they were trying to accomplish and what were the differences in cities like Chicago, Dallas, Portland or Memphis.⁶¹

Many KKK historians have focused on regional issues in the past twenty years. Elizabeth Hatle and Nancy Vaillancourt have studied the Klan in Minnesota. They have both strived to explain how people were driven by hate and fear and why they poured into the Klan in the first place. They also claim that Klanswomen were salient for the movement because they helped incorporate the KKK into family life.⁶² This assumption is of the utmost importance for the following thesis. Donald Holley and Charles Alexander have tried to analyze the KKK in Arkansas.⁶³ Robert Goldberg has published “The Ku Klux Klan in Madison, 1922-1927” in order to describe how the KKK functioned in Wisconsin in the 1920s. Even though Goldberg neglects the WKKK, he tries to make sense of the strange relationship between Klansmen and women or womanhood.⁶⁴ His case study can be understood as a probe into how Klansmen viewed women and how they reacted to their requests. The relationship between the Klan and women is also very important for the following thesis.

⁵⁷ Craig Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011).

⁵⁸ Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, 92-95.

⁵⁹ Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, 128.

⁶⁰ Kenneth Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City* (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1992).

⁶¹ Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 121, 67, 220, 47.

⁶² Elizabeth Hatle, Nancy Vaillancourt, “One Flag, One School, One Language: Minnesota's Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s,” *Minnesota History* 61.8 (2009/2010): 368-370.

⁶³ Donald Holley, “A Look Behind the Mask: The 1920s Ku Klux Klan in Monticello, Arkansas,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 60.2 (Summer 2001): 131-150. Charles Alexander, “White Robes in Politics: The Ku Klux Klan in Arkansas, 1922-1924,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 22.3 (1963): 195-214.

⁶⁴ Robert Goldberg, “The Ku Klux Klan in Madison, 1922-1927,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 58.1 (1974): 31-44.

Michael Newton, in his *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi*, realizes that the WKKK was not very strong in Mississippi despite the fact that the KKK had quite a strong presence in the area.⁶⁵ This is a key revelation because the Klan was by no means equally powerful across the United States. The WKKK was even more “regional” than the Klan. In fact, it was mostly confined to Indiana and neighboring states such as Ohio.⁶⁶ The organization was chartered in other states, but it was not really effective or it probably did not have more than a few active members. Florida or California are good examples.⁶⁷ The Ku Klux Klan was active in both, yet Klanswomen were no factor in either of them. Texas or Georgia were massively important for the KKK, but the WKKK was virtually nonexistent in these KKK enclaves.

One of the most fertile sources for the KKK of the 1920s is David Horowitz's *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*. It is a commented critical edition of a La Grande Klan in Oregon which provides the reader with a transcript of what was said during the meetings. It gives an account of how Klansmen operated, what was their thought process when deciding how the local chapter should be run and what individual Klansmen were supposed to be doing during the sessions. As David Horowitz has put it himself, the “story provided by the minutes is a complex one, a chronicle of both compassion and complicity in cruelty, of positive social accomplishment and arbitrary and dysfunctional divisiveness.”⁶⁸

The transcript is a clear proof that not everybody was an active Klansmen. La Grande Klansmen claimed they had two hundred and seven Klansmen at one point, but usually only about one sixth or one fifth attended their gatherings.⁶⁹ This example suggests something that is very important for the thesis and which has been a bit overlooked or undervalued. It was one thing to join the Klan, but it was a completely different thing to be an active member who took part in the social life of the Klan. This means that membership rosters and membership estimates do not paint the complete picture.

In general, it is hardly surprising that the Klan, not its female counterpart, has dominated the historiography of the Klan since the information about the WKKK is so limited and also

⁶⁵ Michael Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi* (London: McFarland and Company, 2010) 75.

⁶⁶ About the Klan in Indiana for example: Leonard Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

⁶⁷ David Chalmers, “The Ku Klux Klan in Sunshine State: The 1920's,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 42.3 (1964): 209-215. Chris Rhomberg, “White Nativism and Urban Politics: The 1920s Ku Klux Klan in Oakland, California,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 17.2 (1998): 39-55.

⁶⁸ Horowitz, *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Chicago: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999) 150. The quote comes from the editor, therefore, the work is now viewed as a secondary source.

⁶⁹ *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 33-34. The source will be quoted mostly as a primary source (unless stated otherwise) because it is primarily used that way.

limiting. On the other hand, this may not be that big of a deal because the WKKK and KKK were much more similar than different; their fates were intertwined. Without getting to know the latter, it is impossible to learn more about the former.

2. The Klan

2.1 The Reconstruction Klan

Violence against black Americans grew to “staggering proportions” immediately after the Civil War according to Eric Foner.⁷⁰ It was then that the history of the Ku Klux Klan began. The newly founded Klan became a symbol of terror the former slaves had to endure. However, most of the Klan's first “tenure” is surrounded by mystery. The Klan is said to have been established by six former Confederate soldiers as a social club either in 1865 or in 1866 in Tennessee.⁷¹ According to Wyn Craig Wade, one of the founding members stated that the original Klan was “purely social and for [...] amusement” and that their goal was to “have fun, make mischief, and play pranks on the public”.⁷² Nevertheless, Wade continues, something changed very soon. The Klan turned against blacks as “a new source of butts for their practical jokes” and took “advantage of the supposed gullibility and superstitiousness of the freedmen.”⁷³

Black people were not the only targets of the Ku Klux Klan though. The organization also turned against people they generally referred to as scalawags or carpetbaggers.⁷⁴ In one of its first documents, “Organization and Principles”, the Klan declared itself to be an institution “of chivalry, humanity, mercy, and patriotism.” The organization was supposed to protect the weak and the innocent.⁷⁵ A very similar rhetoric was employed later in the 1920s. Yet, its methods were violent. This explains why the federal government viewed the Klan as the exact opposite of what it claimed it was in the document. The difficulty with suppressing the Klan

⁷⁰ He writes, for example, about whippings in Louisiana or Texas: Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, 119.

⁷¹ Wyn Wade says that their names were James Crowe, Richard Reed, Calvin Jones, John Lester, Frank McCord and John Kennedy: Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, 31-32. The dates differ depending on the historian. It seems to be certain that no concrete program, leadership and ideology was fully in place before 1866 or 1867 even if the group had been assembled before 1866. The name “Ku Klux Klan” originated from the Greek word “kuklos” (circle). The word symbolized “white commonality across divisions of social class and local status.” In: Blee, Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 13. The word “Klan” of course represented this sense of “commonality” as well. The origin of the name also in: Horowitz, *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, 2.

⁷² Wade, *The Fiery Cross* 32. Something similar implied in: *The Original Ku Klux Klan and Its Successor*, Duncan Milner (Ohio: Companion, 1921). From: <<https://archive.org/details/originalkukluxkl01miln>>. Last accessed: April 6, 2018.

⁷³ Wade, *The Fiery Cross* 35. Their robes and masks enabled them to be even more terrifying. They were used as disguises in the beginning, but Klansmen later realized that they could be used, in Foner's words, as a “frightening method against superstitious blacks.” They even claimed they were ghosts of Confederate soldiers. Funnily enough, Foner claims, at least one assailant was recognized despite the mask: Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, 432.

⁷⁴ “Political, regional, and class prejudice combined to produce the image of the carpetbagger as a member of the lowest class of the Northern population.” Scalawags were Southern-born white Republicans loyalists who had opposed secession. All from: Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, 294-297.

⁷⁵ *Annals of America*, vol. 10, Mortimer Adler ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1976) 135-136. Everyone who wanted to join this organization was supposed to provide a satisfactory answer to ten questions, many of which implied that white supremacy was a necessary belief. The ideal member had to oppose the “negro”, had to be in favor of white man government and needed to be in favor of emancipation of white man in the South.

was that the KKK was not centralized enough and lacked a well-organized structure. In other words, it was relatively easy to take measures against the group, but close to impossible to stop every single member or Klan associate. Incidentally, its cause was supported by many white Americans who were not official members.⁷⁶ Even though the KKK was officially disbanded from within by its leader Nathaniel B. Forrest in 1869, the organization continued to be active until late 1870s.⁷⁷ When it finally ceased to exist as an organized group in the South, its legacy lived on.

2.2 The Invisible Empire Reborn

William Simmons revived the Ku Klux Klan, also known as the “Invisible Empire”, in Atlanta in 1915.⁷⁸ He was inspired by the infamous movie *The Birth of a Nation*, based on the novel *The Clansman* by Thomas Dixon. The Klan differed from its first post-Civil War predecessor in many respects. First, Simmons had been associated with fraternal Protestant societies and the foundation of the Klan reflected his former interests.⁷⁹ Secondly, it targeted more entities than its predecessor. Its enemies were now gamblers, alcoholics, women and men with low morals, black Americans, Jews, and most important of all foreigners and Catholics.⁸⁰ Thirdly, it spread

⁷⁶ For example women supported their husbands despite the fact they could not be an official part of the Klan. Many former slave owners also appreciated the efforts of the Klan. More about women in the subchapter (2.4) about female auxiliary of the Klan.

⁷⁷ It was no longer needed: Richard Schaefer, “The Ku Klux Klan: Continuity and Change,” *Phylon* 32.2 (1971): 144-145. “The North may have won the war, but the South had now won the peace. It was a peace in which Southern blacks found themselves noncitizens, unable to vote, consigned to inadequate housing and menial employment and their children to inferior schools. This was the peace that marked the end of both the Ku-Klux and Reconstruction.” The quote is taken from: Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, 111.

⁷⁸ According to Simmons himself, the phrase “Invisible Empire” meant that the Klan “undert[ook] to establish and maintain a nation-wide organization in the thought of our people. It plan[ned] a conquest only in the realm of the Invisible where men [did] their thinking [...]. It mean[t] the sovereignty of Americanism, of the democratic idea, in every American mind.” *The Klan Unmasked*, Simmons, 84-85. Its critics automatically attacked this notion and said that KKK members swore allegiance to a “supergovernment” above that of the United States: *The Ku Klux Klan of the Present Day*, George Hills ed. (Boston, 1923) 9. From:

<<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001064134>>. Last accessed: April 6, 2018. Its revival was mentioned even in newspapers, for example in: “The South at the Bar,” *Cleveland Gazette* (28 Aug. 1915) 2. The organization was incorporated under the laws of Georgia as a fraternal order: *The Modern Ku Klux Klan*, Fry, 6. Organizations of this sort had to be chartered – had to be given rights which recognized its prerogatives. The “chartering” was celebrated by the Klan. For example, the La Grande Klan became more publicly active only after it had been chartered: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 80.

⁷⁹ “And it is revived, remodeled and expanded into a Ritualistic, Fraternal, Patriotic society of national scope.” From: *Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*, 3. The phrase “[f]raternal organization” as used here denotes a Protestant church-oriented organization.

⁸⁰ *Is the Ku Klux Klan Constructive or Destructive?*, E. Halderman-Julius ed. (Chicago: The Chicago Daily News Company, 1924) 19. One La Grande Klansman was “called upon the carpet to explain why he permitted a red neck [Catholic] to cut his hair.” On a different occasion, the Klan came down heavily on a man who had driven a car while drunk and killed a woman as a result: From: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 79-115. All its enemies also implied in: Ruth Johnston, “Ethic and Discursive Drag in Woody Allen's *Zelig*,” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 24 (2007) 301.

over almost the entire area of the United States, at least in theory. Many of the more powerful and known KKK branches now existed in the North and in the cities.⁸¹ Fourth, the Klan began to embrace more active role of women in the movement, albeit only in the early 1920s.

The new Klan did not have many members at first. The KKK grew only after Simmons had started working with Edward Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler in 1920.⁸² They both had prior experience with other organizations. Their formerly developed skills made them successful propagandists of the Klan.⁸³ When Hiram Evans became new leader of the Klan in 1923, he got rid of both of them because they were connected too much to the former leadership he had helped to overthrow.⁸⁴

Evans focused on making the Klan less mystic and more society-oriented in order to make it accessible and popular among the general public. The number of violent incidents decreased a bit under his new regime as well as the number of secret meetings.⁸⁵ Even though the membership of the Invisible Empire was on the rise, the inner skirmishes slowly but inexorably led to its demise. It became more and more difficult to control the Klan from one

⁸¹ The most famous example being Indiana. But there were many other like Buffalo or Minnesota: Hatle, Vaillancourt, "One Flag, One School, One Language: Minnesota's Ku Klux Klan in the 1920," 363. However, it was probably most successful in small towns: "The Klan is a phenomenon characteristic of the small town." From: E. Haldemann-Julius, *KKK Creed of the Klansmen*, (Girard: Haldeman-Julius Company) 42.

⁸² Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 9. Or: Arnold Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan in American Politics* (Washington D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1962) 6. Not very much was known about the Klan's true goals or intentions. Simmons presented it as a mystical order, but people knew about the dark past of the Klan. From: "Ku Klux Klanism Revived," *Savannah Tribune* (17 Jul 1920) 4. Even then the growth was not that fast. Simmons himself said that the Klan had between ninety and ninety five thousand members in 1921: *Ku Klux Klan*, Julia Johnsen ed. (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1923) 1. From: <<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/101695473>>. Last accessed: March 17, 2017. Whether the number is close to the truth is a different issue. It should not be doubted though that they helped Simmons in recruiting others: Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, 16.

⁸³ Goldberg, "The Ku Klux Klan in Madison, 1922-1927," 31. They were perfect candidates according to Kathleen Blee because they had previous experience with other fraternal societies: Clarke had worked with Woodmen of the World and Tyler with Daughters of America: Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 20.

⁸⁴ They also took a lot of money from the Klan: Alexander, "White Robes in Politics: The Ku Klux Klan in Arkansas, 1922-1924," 195. Charles Alexander, "Kleagles and Cash: The Ku Klux Klan as a Business Organization, 1915-1935," *The Business History Review* 39.3 (1965) 351. Or: "Evans Blamed Klan Trouble on Clarke," *The Baltimore Sun* (08 Apr 1921) 1.

⁸⁵ Evans called fraternalism of the previous leadership a flaw of the Klan: "The Klan's Fight for Americanism," Evans, 3. The robes and masks were no longer worn in public: *What Price Tolerance*, Paul Winter (New York: Hewlett, 1928) 17. From: <[https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.\\$b153190;view=1up;seq=23](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b153190;view=1up;seq=23)>. Last accessed: April 10, 2018. This is hardly surprising considering the structure and content of various texts connected to the Klan. For example, the Klan's "Kloran" was a complex document which tried to describe in detail how each and every single meeting should be held and what it should look like. The document was very religious in its language and its descriptions and also very complex and intricate: *Kloran Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*, 13. It is also important to say that, despite commonly shared belief, the Reconstruction Klan did not burn crosses. The Simmons' Klan started with it and was inspired to do so by the Dixon's novel: Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, 146. Obviously some violent acts occurred later, too: Roger Hux, "The Ku Klux Klan and Collective Violence in Horry County, 1922-1925," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 85.3 (1984) 218-219. Or: John Craig, "There Is Hell Going On Up There: The Carnegie Klan Riot of 1923," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 72.3 (2005) 331-337.

center as the Klan continued to grow.⁸⁶

The first signs of disintegration emerged while Simmons was slowly losing his leadership. He had taken a six-month vacation from the Klan and left Clarke as Imperial Wizard pro tempore who, in turn, had to rely on Hiram Evans quite a lot. When Simmons returned, Evans and others decided to name him Emperor, but kept real power in Evans's hands.⁸⁷ The conflict did not end there. Simmons tried to set up a women's auxiliary known as Kamelia, but did not really succeed because it was never recognized as an official auxiliary.⁸⁸ The dispute was well-publicized.⁸⁹ The incident that symbolically shattered the public image of the Klan occurred when D.C. Stephenson, a former local Klan leader from Indiana, was found guilty of raping and ultimately murdering a young woman named Madge Oberholtzer in 1925. The Klan's reputation suffered badly as a result of the legal process which followed.⁹⁰ But it is important to realize that the Klan had already been struggling for some time. After all, this was not the first time Klansmen had to defend themselves in front of a jury. The difference was that while the first controversies brought them fame, the subsequent ones were slowly bringing them down.⁹¹ However, as bad as it was, even this controversy did not entirely destroy the Klan.

First of all, as will later be unveiled, the Klan also struggled financially, mainly because of corruption and lack of transparency. Secondly, other KKK officials and members were sued on regular basis. Thirdly, the Klan was unable to stay intact as one cohesive body. For instance, the so-called Muncie Klan, whose members claimed they supported black Protestant Americans,

⁸⁶ In terms of violent outbursts among other things: Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 35.

⁸⁷ Clarke was financially compensated, but his contract was cancelled a bit later anyway: Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 100-102.

⁸⁸ *Ku Klux Klan*, Johnsen ed., 48. Evans tried to deny the existence of it: "Women Not Forming Klan," *The Nebraska State Journal* (25 Mar 1923) 1.

⁸⁹ Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930*, 18.

⁹⁰ James Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British: The Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013) 27. Evans tried to distance himself, but did not really succeed: Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 172. The fall of the Klan had already begun slightly before as a result of internal dissensions: Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 154-157. For this reason, Stephenson is more a symbol of its fall than anything else. Also, Stephenson had already left the Klan before the incident: "Stephenson Quits as Klan Member," *The Indianapolis Star* (19 Jun 1924) 1. Paradoxically, its demise symbolically started with a murdered woman just like its revival in 1915. Leo Frank, who was a Jew, was convicted of the murder of a young girl Mary Phagan in 1913. He was lynched two years later as a result of an antisemitic campaign, largely popularized by the politician Tom Watson, who was an avid supporter of the Klan: Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi*, 65. However, Thomas Pegram claims that no connection between the revival of the Klan and the murder of Mary Phagan has been found: Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline in the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s*, 159. The work will later be quoted without the subtitle. The Madge Oberholtzer rape was not the only incident. Ellis Wilson, an active Klan participant and a dentist, was charged with raping and committing manslaughter by performing an abortion: Horowitz, *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, 143.

⁹¹ Simmons had to defend the Klan before the Rules Committee, which actually made the Klan more popular than ever before: Alexander, "Kleagles and Cash: The Ku Klux Klan as a Business Organization, 1915-1935," 354. Also: Adam Laats, "Red Schoolhouse, Burning Cross: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and Educational Reform," *History of Education Quarterly* 52.3 (2012) 326.

was independently formed in 1924. The Muncie Klan was by no means the only one which was at loggerheads over how the Klan was run and which decided to go or threatened to go separate ways. Various journalists loved the fact that the Klan was having internal problems of this sort.⁹² Lastly, the existence of the women's WKKK auxiliary was accompanied with difficulties and issues from the start.

Predominantly scandals of this type – not ideology or bigotry of the KKK itself – weakened and delegitimized the Klan in the eyes of many Americans who had already been influenced by reports from newspaper columnists.⁹³ The Klan's rapid downfall and transiency of its membership was clearly visible between 1924 and 1926, for example, in Texas where the “once powerful” Klan was “virtually extinct” by 1926.⁹⁴ The national membership precipitously dropped from possibly millions in 1924 to dozens of thousands at best in 1926 or 1927.⁹⁵ The nomination of Al Smith as a Catholic Democratic candidate in 1928 possibly led to a small revival of the Klan.⁹⁶ But the Ku Klux Klan struggled, barely survived the economic collapse in 1929 and was finally officially disbanded during WWII.⁹⁷

The “second” Klan was in many respects similar to the Reconstruction KKK despite some of the nuances. The Klan was not reluctant to use force or threats to achieve its goals. Black Americans were still one of the targets. It favored symbolism in the same way its Reconstruction ancestor had, which is why Simmons included a few Reconstruction Klansmen among his charter members.⁹⁸ Klansmen were also very proud of their Klannish history. Even

⁹² “Klan Auxiliary Formed at Muncie,” *The Indianapolis Star* (11 Feb 1925) 7. Or: “Atlanta Klan Is Owner of Name,” *The Indianapolis Star* (01 Apr 1926) 1. On the other hand, the La Grande Klan complained that its black town was immoral and the conditions were undesirable and wanted to clean it up: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 134.

⁹³ “The problem for many respectable Klansmen was clearly a matter of public embarrassment linked to notorious cases, rather than any private revulsion against the Ku Klux bigotry.” From: Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi*, 86. “Indeed, anti-Klan activists frequently shared racial prejudices with members of the secret order.” In: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 149. The very name “Ku Klux Klan” did not help their case because many critics draw parallels between the Reconstruction Klan and its successor: “Many of the best white men and women of the South oppose the new Klan because of personal knowledge of the old organization from accounts by those who lived in Reconstruction days.” From: *The Original Ku Klux Klan and Its Successor*, Milner. The source is not provided with page numbers.

⁹⁴ “State of Indiana Seems to Be Last in Which the Klan Still Has Power,” *Battle Creek Enquirer* (31 Oct 1926) 22. The word “powerful” is problematic, but the idea behind it is that the Klan in Texas suffered greatly by the mid-1920s.

⁹⁵ According to some estimates, the Klan could have had up to nine million members in its peak. More moderate estimates talk about three to six million: Schaefer, “The Ku Klux Klan: Continuity and Change,” 146. The total number of membership will be evaluated later. It should suffice to say for now that it is very difficult to believe that the Klan ever had even three million official members, let alone more than that.

⁹⁶ McVeigh, “Power Devaluation, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Democratic National Convention of 1924,” 5-8. Or: Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, 208.

⁹⁷ In 1944: Schaefer, “The Ku Klux Klan: Continuity and Change,” 151.

⁹⁸ Even the so-called *Constitution* of the Klan shows the similarities between these organizations: “We solemnly declare to all mankind that the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, incorporated, is the original Ku Klux Klan organized

though they now targeted more enemies, their rhetoric did not change much. It was still “us” against “them”, “we“ against the “other” or the “alien”. Their official newspaper and other sources from the early 1920s make it clear that Klannish rhetoric was as divisive as ever.

In the *Imperial Night-Hawk*, a KKK periodical, immigrants from other countries were called a “menace”. They were condemned for not speaking the language, for having low morals and for competing with the “already overcrowded American labor”.⁹⁹ Anglo-Saxon blood and history, as it was viewed and interpreted by the Invisible Empire, was very important to Klansmen. They claimed that loyalty to the traditions of America and to the spirit of Americanism, “which has been an essential part of Americanism ever since the days of Roanoke and Plymouth Rock”, was essential.¹⁰⁰

Everyone who was different was automatically disqualified from being considered a true citizen of the United States. For example, their interpretation of Protestantism was that it was a belief which was connected to the Anglo-Saxon blood, whereas Catholicism was not. The Klan viewed the Pope as the “other one“ from Italy who tried to spread his influence to take over the country.¹⁰¹ Incidentally, intermarriage was much maligned. The Klan hated it. From their perspective, it distorted “the color line” because white people were supposed to remain white, “the black man black, the yellow man yellow.”¹⁰² But their attacks went even deeper. For example, the Klan even discriminated against black soldiers who came back from the war just on the basis of the color of skin.¹⁰³

Klansmen viewed the Invisible Empire as a patriotic organization, but they defined patriotism in different ways than many others.¹⁰⁴ “Americanism” was the most prominent and highest ideal the group shared and presented to others. The KKK representatives viewed it as a

in the year 1866. From, *Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*, 3. Or: *The Practice of Klannishness*, 2. The inclusion of charter members: Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, 146. Or: Rory McVeigh, “Structural Incentives for Conservative Mobilization: Power Devaluation and the Rise of the Ku Klux Klan, 1915-1925,” 1465.

⁹⁹ *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1.22 (1923) 2. They also complained about how Catholics drew numbers mainly from immigrants: Jeanne Petit, “Organized Catholic Womanhood: Suffrage, Citizenship and the National Council of Catholic Women,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 26.1 (2000): 86.

¹⁰⁰ Colin Gordon ed., *Major Problems in American History, 1920-1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999) 158.

¹⁰¹ *Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty*, White, 131. Tom Rice, “Protecting Protestantism: The Ku Klux Klan vs. The Motion Picture Industry,” *Film History* 20.3 (2008) 376-377. Women of the Klan agreed: *America for Americans: As Interpreted by the Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 6. Or: *Ideals of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 2.

¹⁰² *Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty*, White, 159.

¹⁰³ “American Negroes Unite Against Evil of Lynching,” *Kansas City Advocate* (11 July 1919): 2. Simmons himself wrote the following: “The Negro in Africa is a childish barbarian.” He also claimed that every notorious leader was at least partially white. In addition, he said that “the Negro problem [was] the burden of the nation as a whole.” From: *The Klan Unmasked*, Simmons, 148-152.

¹⁰⁴ “We needed a revival of patriotism, and it has been brought about through the efforts of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.” From: *Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty*, White, 110. One WKKK document stated that “[p]atriotism has destroyed the power of the Papacy.” From: *Official Bulletin (Women of the Ku Klux Klan)*, Gill ed., 3.

combination of ideas based on the Constitution, the American flag, and the Bible. They used these symbols to prove how different from “the other” they really were. They interpreted the Bible as a Protestant document.¹⁰⁵ The Constitution was essential because it granted them the freedom of speech, of the press and religious worship. Especially the freedom of speech was essential. The Klan would have felt weak without this privilege as its members would not have been able to write, publish, and say the things they said. But even though they had these privileges, the Klan soon lost its power and appeal.

2.3 How the Klan Operated

The organization had a complicated structure and very complex ritual rules. The structure of the Klan was based on a religious hierarchy and ideology. Kathleen Blee argues that this type of system attracted women and men of the Klan, supposedly because it provided them with a sense of mystique and sense of protection from the outside world.¹⁰⁶

The structure of the male Klan later became a template for the women's auxiliary. The *Kloran*, the official doctrine of the Klan, simply stated that the “government of the Invisible Empire is vested with the Imperial Wizard and his officers.”¹⁰⁷ In other words, the Imperial Wizard was the official leader of the Klan. Similarly, the Imperial Commander governed the Women of the Ku Klux.¹⁰⁸ The existence of these and other subordinate offices shows that the Klan was divided into state chapters and then also into regional or local chapters (realms), but they all were listed under the national leadership.

The Klan also offered a variety of other functions to its members. According to the *Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*, Imperial Klaliff and Klazik were Vice-Presidents, the Imperial Klokard was the lecturer of the Klan, Imperial Kludd was the chaplain, Imperial Kligruff the secretary, Imperial Klabee the treasurer and Imperial Night-

¹⁰⁵ Simmons stated that Klan was a reaction to Catholicism: *The Klan Unmasked*, Simmons, 10. Reverend John Gillis was afraid that their sharp rhetoric would lead Catholics to self-defense, “even to the extent of bloodshed.” From: *The Ku Klux Klan*, Gillis, 14.

¹⁰⁶ Kathleen Blee, “Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement,” 63. According to the historian Horowitz, the La Grande Klan's minutes suggest that the Klan provided opportunities how to fraternize and lead a better and more moral life: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 150. Or: Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 114-115.

¹⁰⁷ *Kloran of the Knights of the Great Forest*, 45. Leaders of the Klan did not want Klansmen to be ignorant of the principles of the organization and wanted them to read the *Kloran* and other key documents *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 72. How many actually did is a whole different issue. Some must have been interested, but most probably only turned up and learned everything by doing it rather than studying it.

¹⁰⁸Blee, “Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement,” 63.

Hawk was the courier of the Klan.¹⁰⁹ Their powers were defined in the *Constitution* [...], but were liable to change if the Imperial Wizard required it. The fact that most of these offices began with the letter “K” says it all. The very name of the office was supposed to strengthen the sense of brotherhood in the Klan. Such puns as well as catchy phrases could have arguably been used to attract new members or simply as a means of entertainment.

Rituals and various meetings of the Klan served as opportunities to unite the Klan, which may explain why they were described in their documents with such precision but also complexity. *The Kloran of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan: Realm of Mississippi*, which was based on the national *Kloran*, included drawings of what the room was supposed to look like during the ceremony/official gathering (so-called “Klonvokation”). It also described the process of naturalization (admission of a new member) or the rite and oath of the naturalized.¹¹⁰ It must have been very difficult and time-consuming for everything to work in accordance with the document. On the other hand, the goal of these meetings was to impress and create a captivating spectacle. Complicated rituals of this sort must have met such a demand. It goes without saying that the content of *Klorans* was secret, not to be revealed to anybody outside the KKK.¹¹¹

Nevertheless, the terminology and rituals of the Klan are well-known because some materials, which belonged to the Klan in the past, have been since discovered or were given to the press. Other “internal” matters remain to be surrounded by mystery to this day. The number of members is not known and historians can only estimate how many people were associated with the Klan, let alone know how many were real and full-fledged members who took part in the ceremonies and other activities. It is difficult to find out in how many states the Klan officially set up its own chapters. It is also not easy to discover how well was the Klan doing financially because there are not that many primary documents which could enable historians to discover the truth except those published by the Klan. Such documents are however not easy to interpret because Klansmen obviously falsified the real data.

The Klan certainly bragged about the state of finances: “[o]ur finances are sound as they have been for years.”¹¹² The leaders claimed in 1923 that the Klan had a surplus of 42 731,11 dollars and, in 1924, that the gross income was more than four times the amount.¹¹³ They

¹⁰⁹ *Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*, 23.

¹¹⁰ *The Kloran of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan: Realm of Mississippi*, 4-22.

¹¹¹ *Kloran of the Knights of the Great Forest*, 3.

¹¹² “The Klan’s Fight for Americanism,” Evans, 30. “That the finances of the Klan is full and overflowing.” From: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 121.

¹¹³ *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonvokation*, 87. But the KKK reported in August of 1923 that the surplus

received “these” sums mostly from their members, either in the form of voluntary contributions or as one of their obligations. For example, the “Klectokon”, the initiation fee, was set at ten dollars for men and five for women.¹¹⁴ The sum had to be paid unless someone, usually a clergyman, was invited for free. In other words, if the Klan had had millions of members, the organization would have been more than financially secure. But the reality was vastly different despite the fact that the Klan also received revenue from sold robes or a variety of other materials.¹¹⁵ One former Klansmen claimed that five hundred thousand people had bought robes at six dollars fifty cents each.¹¹⁶ This is most likely an overestimate, but there cannot be much doubt that robes were quite popular among KKK members and that the Klan amassed a lot of money by selling them.

On the other hand, historians claim that financial problems were one of the reasons for the Klan's demise in the late 1920s. As Charles Alexander has pointed out, it is more than difficult to learn where the money went.¹¹⁷ With less and less robes and materials being sold because of the decreasing membership and because the demand had mostly already been met, the revenues decreased as well. The minutes of the La Grande Klan clearly show that this phenomenon was common. At first, Klansmen were proud of how rich they were, but then they started to complain about debt. The minutes also point out that members of the Klan were not as active as they used to be and that the Invisible Empire had less new recruits than before.¹¹⁸

The Klan also had other financial expenses and troubles, which only added to the severity of their situation. After Simmons had been replaced by Evans, their strife ended up in court with the final decision being a settlement. Simmons was to receive one thousand dollars

was more than 900,000 dollars and, therefore, robes could even be sold for five dollars instead of six dollars and fifty cents: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 120.

¹¹⁴ They were allowed to pay more if they wanted. Those who served in the first Klan or in similar organizations of the Reconstruction were admitted for free: *Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*, 15-16. Kathleen Blee said that women who were wives of former Klansmen also did not have to pay their fee in the WKKK: Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 28. Five dollars was the sum only till 1927 when it increased to ten dollars as well: Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, 92. The sum went up probably because the Klan was struggling and with less people trying to get in than before, they had to maximize their potential. All Klanswomen who did not pay were to be temporarily suspended. It is difficult to say whether this really happened or not. It is also important to mention that one dollar of the newly paid fee should have gone to the Imperial WKKK headquarters: *Suggestions to Kligrapps*, 3.

¹¹⁵ The price of robes: *Catalogue of Official Robes and Banners* (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Incorporated, 1925). From: <<https://archive.org/details/catalogueofoffic00kukl>>. Last accessed: April 6, 2018. They differed depending on the title of the KKK officer, usually the price was between six and thirty dollars.

¹¹⁶ “Seeks Receiver for Ku Klux Klan,” *The Indianapolis Star* (19 Jun 1924) 1. It was also claimed that people in Indiana donated as much as three million dollars to the Klan: “Indiana Donated 3,000,000 Dollars to Klan,” *The Indianapolis Star* (19 Aug 1924) 9.

¹¹⁷ Alexander, “Kleagles and Cash: The Ku Klux Klan as a Business Organization, 1915-1935,” 364.

¹¹⁸ *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 124-136.

per month for his former efforts, which was a substantial sum at that time.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, former Klansmen and Klanswomen complained that the money the Klan had earned went solely to high officers.¹²⁰ The Klan also feared non-Klan members who had previously been attacked by the Klan or who claimed that the attack had happened. Allegations of this sort were immediately picked up by reporters who viewed them as sensations. One woman sued the Klan in 1923 for one hundred thousand dollars. She claimed that the Klan had attacked her husband.¹²¹ A different woman sued Daisy Barr, a high WKKK officer, for fifty thousand dollars for alleged slander.¹²² These stories had two possible results. First, the Klan remained an organization of problematic individuals in the eyes of the public. Conversely, their existence also proved that the public was interested in the Klan even though their attention cost the Klan dearly in the long run.

The Klan had to pay for the distribution of the official KKK newspaper and other propagandist materials, too.¹²³ The Klan also gave money to various families or churches and Protestant clergymen.¹²⁴ It is a well-known fact that local Klaverns (KKK chapters) tried to work closely with Protestant clergy, mainly nonfundamentalists in the Methodist, Presbyterian and Christian churches.¹²⁵ They often did so to earn their trust or to improve their image in the

¹¹⁹ *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klönvokation*, 190.

¹²⁰ "Independent Klan Knights Say Old Organizers Made Millions at Cost of Men and Women Who Joined Klan," *Palladium Item* (28 Mar 1924) 16. The chapter in Salem had already accused the Grand Dragon (state leader) of misappropriation of funds in 1922: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 41.

¹²¹ The attack happened two years before that: "Woman Sues Ku Klux for 100,000 Dollar Damages," *The Atlanta Constitution* (25 Aug 1923) 18. The male Klan leaders were sometimes sued as well: "Klan Leaders Sued for 200 Thousand," *The Star Press* (12 Jul 1924) 7.

¹²² "Charge Against Woman Pastor," *The Call-Leader* (03 Jan 1924) 6. Other sources claim it was forty five thousand, but it is certain that it was quite a big sum.

¹²³ *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klönvokation*, 60. It was alleged that the Klan could have spent up to one million dollars in 1922 for these materials. From: "Recent Klan Called Frameup in Receivership Suit," *The Indianapolis Star* (01 Jan 1923) 10.

¹²⁴ For example, the San Antonio Orphans' Home allegedly received one hundred dollars from the Klan. The Klan at Wharton, Texas supposedly gave fifty dollars to a widow: *Ku Klux Klan*, Johnsen ed., 88. Elizabeth Hatle and Nancy Vaillancourt give an example of twelve KKK members who made a dramatic entrance at a fundraising event and giving a twenty-dollar gold piece to someone with medical expenses: Hatle, Vaillancourt, "One Flag, One School, One Language: Minnesota's Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s," 363.

¹²⁵ It was their strategy: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 3-16. "Klansmen were Protestants, of course, but they cannot be described exclusively or even predominately as fundamentalists. In reality, their religious affiliations mirrored the whole of white Protestant society, including those who did not belong to any church." The majority of Klansmen lived in Protestant areas. In: Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, 9-10. They often attended lectures and sermons given by these ministers: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 15. "The great difference between Indiana's mainstream Protestant churches and the Klan on the one hand, and its most determined fundamentalists on the other, is that the fundamentalists were essentially isolationists. The Klan and the large Protestant churches wanted to reform society; the fundamentalists looked inward." For example, in central Indianapolis in 1923 there were 6% of Lutheran, 4% Episcopal, 6% Quaker, Methodist 6%, Disciples of Christ almost 8%, Presbyterian 6%, Baptist 5%, United Brethren 10%, Church of the Nazarene less than 2%, Church of Christ 0%. From: Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, 42-71.

eyes of the public. Whatever their motivation was, it is obvious that when they found themselves in financial trouble, these expenses only increased their debt. Corruption was also an issue. Among many others, the Clarke-Tyler duo was charged with financial misdeed.¹²⁶ In addition, as has already been suggested, there were people who complained that the Klan owed money because its officers had divided the Klan's treasure among themselves. Disillusioned members probably gave this type of information to the press.¹²⁷

The total number of members has always been an even bigger mystery. Kligrapps, KKK or WKKK officers, were supposed to prepare a “complete list of the membership.”¹²⁸ But since not even Klansmen or Klanswomen knew how many members there were, they obviously failed to do so. Moreover, most membership lists were lost or destroyed by the Klan in order to prevent the media from publishing names of its members because it would have destroyed their reputation. There are lists which have survived to this day, but they are few. Critics have also argued that the surviving lists are often incomplete and frequently inaccurate.¹²⁹

Moreover, it is feasible to imagine that many people were not members, but only tacit supporters of the Klan or some of its ideology.¹³⁰ After all, the 1920s was a turbulent period with many people sharing negative feelings about immigration or Catholicism.¹³¹ In addition, many had joined the Klan only to leave it shortly afterwards. They either became conscious of the fact that the Klan was as radical or more radical than they had thought. Others tried it as a social experiment and had no further motivation to continue to be officially involved.¹³²

That said, estimates range from one to nine million members, but most historians believe that the number was between three and possibly six million.¹³³ But even they admit the number

¹²⁶ *The Modern Ku Klux Klan*, Fry, 242. They basically stole money from the Klan: Alexander, “White Robes in Politics: The Ku Klux Klan in Arkansas, 1922-1924,” 195.

¹²⁷ “Seeks Receiver for Ku Klux Klan,” *The Indianapolis Star* (19 Jun 1924) 1.

¹²⁸ *Suggestions to Kligrapps*, 1-2.

¹²⁹ Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline in the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s*, 221. Destruction of records and one list for example: Kenneth Barnes, “Another Look Behind the Masks: The Ku Klux Klan in Bentoville, Arkansas, 1922-1926.” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 76.3 (2017) 191, 209-215.

¹³⁰ “In a lot of groups, it seems like there is no outward recognition of members or nonmembers, so it's sort of in the gray area what makes a member a member.” Blee later adds: “Like belonging, membership is a construct that activist groups use as a foundational assumption. It guides their actions but is also shaped by what they do and how they interpret their actions and themselves.” From: Blee, *Democracy in the Making: How Activist Groups Work*, 65-69.

¹³¹ *Interpretations of American History*, vol II, Francis Couvares ed. (New York: Free Press, 2000) 284. Books like *The Passing of the Great Race* or *The Rising Tide of Color* were highly popular: Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 111.

¹³² One member said that he had joined because of misinformation by one of the Kleagles and quickly realized how violent the organization was: “From Former Klansman,” *Evening Public Ledger* (Sep 24 1921) 4. Many chapters placed great importance on social issues or on local issues: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 109.

¹³³ Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*. Leonard Moore states the same number: Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku*

is probably an overestimate. In fact, one could argue that Klannish membership has always been inflated because of (W)KKK's propaganda. The KKK lied about the membership because “[n]umbers like these created a legitimacy of their own.”¹³⁴ Frank Both wrote that there could have been more than four million members, but that “much of this membership [was] no doubt ephemeral.”¹³⁵ There are other regional estimates or membership numbers which imply that the entire membership was arguably even smaller and more transient than most historians are tempted to believe.

The biggest Klan in Arkansas was the Little Rock Klan. The chapter perhaps had as many as 7,800 members. A local Klan in Madison used to claim a membership of 2,500 in 1923 before the membership decreased in 1925. The Klan was said to have had seven thousand members in Chicago in 1921. Oakland was estimated to have had over 2,000 Klansmen.¹³⁶ It is not known how exact these numbers are and it is likely they are overestimates. One of the few surviving membership rosters is from Buffalo, which survived because it was published as “a vindication of innocent persons.”¹³⁷ There are about two thousand names on the list, but it is questionable how active these people were in the Klan and how long they were associated with

Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928, 1. Kathleen Blee mentions a number of four million: Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 17. Wyn Wade says that between 1921 and 1924 the entire membership rose to almost four million people: Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, 183. Robert Goldberg has written that perhaps as many as five million were involved in its activities: Goldberg, “The Ku Klux Klan in Madison, 1922-1927,” 31. Rick Seltzer and Grace Lopes claim the same thing: Rick Seltzer, Grace Lopes, “The Ku Klux Klan: Reasons for Support or Opposition Among White Respondents,” *Journal of Black Studies* 17.1 (1986): 92. The problem is that it seems like these historians only copy numbers from others and do not really base their numbers on facts. This is often impossible because the exact numbers are not known. But they often do not even make the effort to think about the numbers, they copy the data of other historians.

¹³⁴ Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 9-10. Something similar in: Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 222. Sometimes they did not allow Klansmen to leave the Klan, which made their ranks seem larger. The La Grande Klan stated that “[t]heir consent to withdraw from this Klan [was] now under consideration and further actions [would] take place in the near future” when two Klansmen wanted to leave the Klan: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 34. Nevertheless, it also should be stated that the Klan did not always want everyone. A few people were banished from the La Grande Klan as well: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 44. Probably because of their reputation or, from the Klan's perspective, “immoral” and disorderly behavior. Others, who wanted to join the Klan, were rejected because of “selfish motives”, “bad reputation” or for having been too “fond of moonshine.” On the other hand, someone who had been refused in the past was now being reconsidered. From: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 99-114.

¹³⁵ “The Ku Klux Klan Interpreted,” Frank Bohn, *American Journal of Sociology* 30.4 (1925): 385. Wade says the number of four million was claimed by the Klan: Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, 253. He therefore implies that they said they had so many Klansmen, but in reality did not.

¹³⁶ It is of course questionable how exact the numbers are. Oakland: Rhomberg, “White Nativism and Urban Politics: The 1920s Ku Klux Klan in Oakland, California,” 39. Arkansas was a strong Klan state and less than 8,000 members of one chapter was not that much: White Robes: Alexander, “White Robes in Politics: The Ku Klux Klan in Arkansas, 1922-1924,” 196-199. Madison: Goldberg, “The Ku Klux Klan in Madison, 1922-1927,” 38. “It's said that KKK in Chicago has 7,000 members.” The phrase “it is said” is important here because it shows lack of clarity and certainty: “Ku Klux Klan: Chicago Lake Forest,” *The Appeal* (16 Apr 1921) 1.

¹³⁷ *Expose of Traitors in the Interests of Jews, Catholics, Negroes and all respecters of the American Principle of Civil and Religious Freedom*. It is based on oaths of these people. No page, editor or author is stated.

the movement.

The Klan in Indiana had to disclose membership in court in 1926 and it was announced in regional newspapers that it amounted to fifty thousand members.¹³⁸ The local paper published articles about the Klan quite often and the Indiana Klan retained its prominence longer than other regional chapters.¹³⁹ However, the author of the article did not write whether it was in their heyday or later when the membership had already decreased. It is also not certain that the number was accurate even though it could have possibly been because the Klan in Indiana was one of the biggest in the country. The most populous chapters were also in the Midwest and not only in the South, unlike during the Reconstruction era.¹⁴⁰

Various Klan marches and demonstrations, as reported by journalists, prove that the number of active members was limited. There was a parade of five hundred Klansmen in Florida in 1920.¹⁴¹ A group of approximately one thousand members was present at a parade in Brunswick.¹⁴² The 1923 Ohio Klonkave was allegedly attended by five thousand Klansmen.¹⁴³ Up to three thousand masked men and women paraded through Mineola in New York in 1926.¹⁴⁴ The biggest parade took place in Washington, D.C. in 1925. About 25,000 Klansmen turned up out of the expected 100,000. The number decreased to about 13,000 in 1926.¹⁴⁵ The march in D.C. was supposed to be a show, just like most of their protests or rallies. It was a spectacle. The sensational event was a demonstration of the Klan's unity. Its goal was to show how intimidating the Klan could be. But it also proves that even at its peak, the Klan was unable to stage an event attended by a hundred thousand of a few million alleged members. Furthermore, it points to the fact that the Klan was a short-lived "infatuation".

It is therefore highly unlikely that the Klan had more than a million members; even this number could be an overestimate. Even if so many had poured into the Klan for a while, it does

¹³⁸ "Suit Begins Here Between Ku Klux and Independent Organizations," *The Indianapolis Star* (22 Jan 1926) 2. The number probably refers only to male members.

¹³⁹ The Klan was once powerful in Texas but it was "virtually extinct" after 1925. But the membership was decreasing even in Indiana: "State of Indiana Seems to Be Last in Which the Klan Still Has Power," *Battle Creek Enquirer* (31 Oct 1926) 23. The fact that it was so popular in Indiana made many believe that the headquarters of the KKK would be soon moved from Atlanta to Indiana, but that was never any real plan: "Klan Headquarters to Stay in Atlanta," *The Indianapolis Star* (22 Jan 1926) 2. The Klan in Indiana is certainly the most documented: Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 33. "Indiana, where, by all accounts, the Klan gained its greatest influence and highest level of membership for any state." From: Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, 2.

¹⁴⁰ Stanley Lieberman, *A Piece of the Pie: Black and White Immigrants Since 1880* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980) 105.

¹⁴¹ "Jacksonville, Florida, Sees a March of Ku Klux Klan," *Broad Ax* (6 Nov 1920) 1.

¹⁴² "Women Take Part in Klan Parade," *The Sun* (28 Jun 1922) 1.

¹⁴³ "Ohio State Klonkave Is Attended by 75,000," *IFC* (9 Nov 1923) 1.

¹⁴⁴ "Women and Girls Parade With Klan," *NY Times* (6 July 1926) 1.

¹⁴⁵ All the numbers from: "Night Shirts in D.C. Klan Parade," *Afro-American* (25 June 1927) 1.

not seem likely that the Klan had this many members at the same time. Many (W)KKK members probably desisted from being active any further because they either lost interest or were disgusted with how the Klan was really run. As has been mentioned, the minutes of the La Grande Klan in Oregon suggest that even though the number of active members fluctuated depending on the state of local affairs, it was “slowly” but surely decreasing. For example, they claimed once that they had two hundred and seven members – most from the entire area – but only thirty two showed up.¹⁴⁶ No matter the numbers, there can be no doubt that the Klan exaggerated to look stronger and more imposing.¹⁴⁷

Although the Klan was not very successful in organizing huge events for thousands of members, it enjoyed much more than a modicum of success when it came to attracting attention and eliciting reaction. A couple of dozens or hundred Klansmen and Klanswomen often lured in thousands who just wanted to either see the spectacle or to march against them. According to the historian Horowitz, the *La Grande Evening Observer* reported that several thousand onlookers watched three hundred Klansmen initiate seventy five new members. The minutes of the Klan, however, show that they initiated only eighteen members and that fewer Klansmen had been present than what was reported.¹⁴⁸ This would suggest that the press made it easier for the (W)KKK to seem larger to the outside world because they overestimated their numbers in the same way as Klansmen and Klanswomen did. On a different occasion, five hundred Klansmen with two hundred Klanswomen were followed by another five thousand cars driven by spectators.¹⁴⁹ Possibly up to thirty thousand people came to see a parade of two thousand Klansmen and Klanswomen in 1924.¹⁵⁰

It is also important to mention that the Klan was a hierarchical organization not only in its division of ranks or offices, but also in the way it was run on the federal or state level. There

¹⁴⁶ If one can trust the transcript that even these Klansmen were there. Most members attended their local meeting when the chapter was chartered, when there was a social activity (e.g. Thanksgiving Day) or when they were trying to introduce a very important topic to the community. The number of the members who actually showed up fluctuated, but was usually between forty five and sometimes eighty Klansmen: It also seems like the same members kept showing up and only sometimes other or new members joined them: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 32-34. One KKK officer said he wished more Klansmen would have gone to one of the sermons or to the church more often: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 66.

¹⁴⁷ “Basically the Klan's strength [came] from the feeling of uncertainty of certain members of American society when their life styles [were] threatened.” From: Schaefer, “The Ku Klux Klan: Continuity and Change,” 156.

¹⁴⁸ “Large Crowd Gathers to See Klan Parade,” *The Perry Journal* (06 Oct 1924) 1. Horowitz, *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, 117. Something similar: “The Ku Klux and Politics,” *The Outlook* (6 Sept, 1922) 2.

¹⁴⁹ Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 206.

¹⁵⁰ They expected that more (W)KKK members would have shown up: “30 000 See Klan Parade,” *New York Times* (21 Sep 1924) 25. The number may be inflated, but the point is that more spectators than Klansmen or Klanswomen came.

was only one official federal organization, The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Inc., led by the already mentioned Grand Wizard. The leaders of chartered state Klans were responsible for directing local Klans active in their state. The Reconstruction Klan claimed it was active in Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida, Texas, Arkansas, Missouri and Kentucky.¹⁵¹ It is now known that the “second” Klan was a widespread phenomenon even outside the South.

Yet, it was one thing to officially exist and another thing to be really active and strong or well-represented in that area. Charles Alexander claims that the strongest KKK states were Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Georgia and Indiana.¹⁵² On the other hand, the WKKK was very weak in the South, or at least primary sources, anti-Klan newspaper articles included, suggest so. On the other hand, the auxiliary seemed to have been quite populous in Indiana or Ohio. Historians who have studied local regions support this claim. When the male Klan was powerful in one state, it did not have to mean that the WKKK was as well. Michael Newton, who has explored the achievements of the Klan in Mississippi, has arrived at the conclusion that the WKKK was not particularly strong in the area even though the KKK was.¹⁵³

The Klan(s) had a different agenda depending on the location. Richard Schaefer claims that the Invisible Empire had more than twenty five thousand members in Oregon despite the fact that the population was over 90% Protestant, over 85% native-born and illiteracy was close to zero.¹⁵⁴ The situation in Indiana was similar, but as the deeds of WKKK members show, many Klansmen tried to help other Protestants or Americans who lived in abject poverty. In Nebraska, the importance of the KKK was also mainly social – parades, sport competitions, baseball games, talent shows, weddings and other events were central to their sense of brotherhood or sisterhood.¹⁵⁵ The most famous marches took place in Washington, D.C. To

¹⁵¹ *Annals of America*, vol 10, 136. All were obviously states of the South except Maryland, but Maryland allowed slavery before the Civil War.

¹⁵² Alexander, “White Robes in Politics: The Ku Klux Klan in Arkansas, 1922-1924,” 196. The Klan claimed that the states of Texas and Oklahoma represented almost half of the Klan membership: *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonsvokation*, 101. Some have claimed that Kansas had about one hundred thousand Klansmen: Lila Jones, “The Ku Klux Klan in Eastern Kansas during the 1920's,” *The Emporia State Research Studies* 23.3 (1975) 5. <<https://archive.org/stream/EastKansas#page/n0>>. Accessed: July 20, 2018. The number seem far-fetched considering that even today the entire state has only three million inhabitants.

¹⁵³ Already mentioned in the introduction. Otherwise: Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi*, 75. Thomas Pegrarn claims that the Klan was more anti-black in the South, more anti-Japanese in California, anti-Jew along the Atlantic and anti-Catholic in the Northeast and around the Great Lakes: Pegrarn, *One Hundred Percent American*, 58. The WKKK was mostly active in anti-Catholic areas.

¹⁵⁴ Schaefer, “The Ku Klux Klan: Continuity and Change,” 147. Oregon even had its chapter for women in the form of the Ladies of the Invisible Empire: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 55.

¹⁵⁵ Chalmers, *Notes on Writing the History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 43. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930*, 41.

show up in large numbers in the capital was an opportunity for the Klan to unveil its strength, but the local Klan was not very strong. The male Klan in the South – especially in Alabama, Georgia, or Texas had a tendency to combine Protestant belief with racist ideology and was, for that reason, more aggressive towards black Americans.¹⁵⁶

The Klan also existed in Louisiana, Mississippi, California, Colorado, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Utah, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York and few other states.¹⁵⁷ Its grip on the state differed. The Klan claimed in 1924 that there were twenty two chartered realms (states) and that other would be soon organized.¹⁵⁸ Some of these local Klans had their differences and placed emphasis on different aspects of life, but they were all directed from the central headquarters. Klans in different regions could publish different books and articles or hand out different posters, but the Klan had one central newspaper which was “established to get contact between local Klans and the Imperial Palace.”¹⁵⁹ The WKKK, definitely not as violent as the Klan albeit very similar in other respects, was even more of a local phenomenon than the male Klan.

2.4 Female WKKK Auxiliary Established: Disagreements from the Start

Women were not integrally involved in the Reconstruction Klan. At that particular juncture, women could not become members because the Klan used them as a symbol of purity and chastity, as a symbol that needed protection – but not emancipation. Kathleen Blee confirms that it was traditional of male religious societies not to include women. The exclusion of white women from the organization “solidified the masculinity of racial politics.”¹⁶⁰ Despite the fact

¹⁵⁶ Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 67. The activities of NAACP and other pro-black organizations stimulated the growth of KKK: Chalmers, *Notes on Writing the History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 30-53. But Thomas Pegram says that various shootings between the Klan and its denouncers did not take place only in the traditional South, but also in areas like Buffalo, Los Angeles or Pittsburgh: Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 19. And also the Klan was more violent in these states than in the North especially in Oklahoma and Texas and even Louisiana: Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 56-59.

¹⁵⁷ Short historiography of these local Klans in: Chalmers, *Notes on Writing the History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 23-60.

¹⁵⁸ *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klönvokation*, 102. On the other hand it is probably not true that in 1922, as one author tried to claim, the Klan had already its branches in all states except three (New Hampshire, Montana, Utah) because even the Klan, which tend to overestimate exaggerate very often, claimed smaller numbers: *Ku Klux Klan Secrets Exposed*, Ezra Cook (Chicago, 1922) 23. <<https://archive.org/details/kukluxklansecret00cookiala>>. Accessed: June 11, 2018.

¹⁵⁹ *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klönvokation*, 60. At least in theory they had one. In one of the articles, the Klan warned against *Searchlight*, a competing publication: *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1.22 (1923) 4.

¹⁶⁰ It barred white women and all nonwhites from membership, just as the Southern polity did.” From: Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 13. Robert Putnam says that during the Gilded Age most organizations were separated by sex. This is also why fraternal organizations were only for men. He also states that fraternal organizations were quite common: Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000) 388.

that they were not official members, they still found a way how to help their husbands or fathers who actually were in the Klan. The KKK famously claimed in the 1920s that women had sown the robes Klansmen had worn.¹⁶¹ The Invisible Empire also spread a legend about a woman who had supposedly aided Nathaniel B. Forrest, the first leader of the Klan, in a moment of danger during the Civil War.¹⁶²

When the Klan was revived in 1915, it was yet again a male organization. This time, however, women began playing a bigger role much faster than before. The Klan became more popular only after Elizabeth Tyler and Edward Clarke had been fully hired in 1920. Especially Mrs. Tyler became a very powerful person behind the scenes even though she was not an official member. This was not appreciated by many Klansmen who thought they were part of a male fraternal society and not something controlled by a woman.¹⁶³ Simmons promised to get rid of them Tyler and Clarke, but failed to do so. David Chalmers has documented that multiple frustrated KKK officers gave their story to the press, which ended up on the front page again.¹⁶⁴ Someone even tried to assassinate Tyler or at least intimidate her. The attempt also did not escape the attention of some journalists.¹⁶⁵ She had to resign by 1922.¹⁶⁶

Tyler claimed that the Klan represented women's ideals, but she also wanted to establish an official Klan auxiliary (branch) for women.¹⁶⁷ But her intention was for the female auxiliary to be on par with the Ku Klux Klan.¹⁶⁸ What helped her argument was that unofficial auxiliaries had already existed. Kathleen Blee claims that Tyler herself was a member of the Ladies of the Invisible Eye, a secret women's organization with close ties to the KKK.¹⁶⁹ Women had also

¹⁶¹ A book written in the 1920s, *The Modern Ku Klux Klan*, by a former Klansman explains how women helped male members of the Klan by having been loyal to them despite not having been official members. He lavished praise on them when he wrote the following: "We know women can keep a secret, because they made with their fingers 160,000 robes for members of the old Klan and not one of them ever disclosed the identity of any man who were one of those robes." *The Modern Ku Klux Klan*, Fry, 176. Whether the number was real or – much more likely – overestimated, there can be no doubt that at least some, if not many, wives supported their KKK husbands. Mrs. Gill, a leading figure in the WKKK organization, wrote that even though their mother had not been allowed to become members, they still were "Klanswomen at heart": *Women of America! The Past! The Present! The Future!*, Gill, 9.

¹⁶² "Kamelia Holds Public Meeting," *The Atlanta Constitution* (7 May 1923) 1.

¹⁶³ Many opponents of the Klan derisively ridiculed the organization and said she was its true leader, Kathleen Blee writes. More: Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 65.

¹⁶⁴ Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 100.

¹⁶⁵ "Five Shots Fired Through Window at Head of Woman's Department of Ku Klux Klan," *East Oregonian* (12 Oct 1921) 1.

¹⁶⁶ She stated her daughter's illness as one of the reasons: Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 101.

¹⁶⁷ "Women Were Admitted to Ku Klux Klan by Edict of His Imperial Majesty," *Capital Journal* (18 Aug 1922) 22. Or: "Women Organizer Defends Ku Klux," *NY Times* (12 Sept 1921) 1.

¹⁶⁸ "Says Women Flock to Join the Klan," *Grand Forks Herald* (19 Sep 1921) 6.

¹⁶⁹ According to Kathleen Blee, other organizations were the Dixie Protestant Women's Political League, the Grand League of Protestant Women, the White American Protestants (WAP) and later finally the Ladies of the Invisible Empire (LOTIEs). The Dixie group wore similar robes as the Klan did and the Grand League called for white

taken part in various Klan marches, which persuaded various Klansmen to think really hard about setting up an official Klan auxiliary solely for women.¹⁷⁰

Simmons was the first one who tried to capitalize on the Klan's popularity. Having lost power and authority within the movement, in order to redeem himself, he announced the foundation of Kamelia, a female organization very similar to the already existing Ladies of the Invisible Empire in Oregon and White American Protestants.¹⁷¹ Klansmen soon denounced his actions at one of their meetings. New leaders stated that Simmons selfishly sought to regain control and that he strived to place the auxiliary in the hands of men for private gain.¹⁷² The statement was an exaggeration and was supposed to turn Klansmen against Simmons. The Klonvokation was an opportunity to, among other things, solidify the new rule and denigrate the former Grand Wizard. It can hardly be denied that the issue of a women's order led to the influx of the already existing tensions within the male order, especially among those who were connected to Simmons. Members of the Kamelia were recognized only when Simmons had ceased organizing them. Having been dissolved, they were allowed to join the newly founded WKKK.¹⁷³

While Simmons was secretly setting up his Kamelia, the leaders of the Klan had already been thinking about a new auxiliary themselves. They met at the Klonvokation in Atlanta in 1922 and discussed whether the Klan should recognize “any one of the numerous women's organizations already in existence: or whether a new women's organization should be brought into being, fostered by the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.”¹⁷⁴ Simmons's actions accelerated

supremacy just like the Klan and also wanted to protect women: Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 26. There was at least one march in 1922 during which women wore masks and robes of the Klan, but the public did not know whether they were KKK members or not: “Look Like Women's Ku Klux Klan,” *Marble Hill Press* (28 Dec 1922) 6. Or: “Women Using Klan Outfits,” *Los Angeles Times* (12 Jul 1922) 12. It is likely these women were members of the Dixie Protestant Women's Political League or a similar group.

¹⁷⁰ Women took part in one of the marches in 1922: “Women Take Part in Klan Parade,” *The Sun* (28 June 1922) 1.

¹⁷¹ LOTIE: “Baltimore Women Take Fiery Cross,” *The Sun* (25 Sep 1922) 20. Simmons had for a long time an idea of a “great woman's organization, adhering to the same principles, committed to the same purposes and impelled by the same motives as to organization as the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.” *Ku Klux Klan*, Julia Johnsen ed., 48. He tried to recognize WAP (White American Protestants) as the basis for the new order: *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonvokation*, 110.

¹⁷² *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonvokation*, 59. Evans against it: “Denies Klan is Forming Auxiliary of Women,” *The Sun* (25 Mar 1923) 3.

¹⁷³ The reached settlement was that Evans would stop his opposition to Kamelia. However, he refused. Simmons sued him, but lost and had to give up on Kamelia: Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 107. *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonvokation*, 189. It should be noted that not everyone agreed with the fact that LOTIEs should be merged with the Atlanta's WKKK: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 55.

¹⁷⁴ *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonvokation*, 110. Something similar in: *Official Bulletin (Women of the Ku Klux Klan)*, Gill ed., 3. The fact that other auxiliaries had already existed possibly also put more pressure on them: “Women Plan Nation-Wide Body Similar to the Ku Klux Klan,” *The Sun* (23 Nov 1922) 1.

their plans. To make the Klan more accessible for women was only another step in making the Invisible Empire more “visible” and easier to relate to. It also “helped” that the new leader Evans was under pressure and had to act. As a result, women, who had previously worked with the Klan, were offered that a new auxiliary/order would be established in 1923 using the same regalia, oaths, rituals and constitution.¹⁷⁵ The business of the national WKKK was also to be conducted in irregularly held Imperial Klönvokations (legislatures) which resembled male Klönvokations.¹⁷⁶

The Klönvokation also decided that the KKK would not be responsible for the Women of the Ku Klux Klan (WKKK). It stated that the WKKK “established by women, for women, and of women, [was] now operating with Headquarters at Little Rock, Ark., as the official and only auxiliary of the Order.”¹⁷⁷ A meeting of several women's organizations was scheduled to take place in Washington, D.C., where the WKKK was officially chartered in June 1923.¹⁷⁸ Many women from other fraternal orders or societies started to join the WKKK. The auxiliary absorbed other organizations which did not enjoy “official sanction from Atlanta”, such as LOTIEs, Simmons' Kamelia, League of Protestant Women, Ladies of the Cu Klux Clan, Ladies of the Golden Mask, the Puritan Daughters of America.¹⁷⁹ Simmons did not recognize the new order and filed a complaint.¹⁸⁰ Both the WKKK and Kamelia claimed they were the real order and that the other one was fake.¹⁸¹ The situation improved only after the settlement with Simmons had been reached. Not every female Klan-like organization accepted the result without a fight though. David Chalmers claims that when a Klan official stormed in authoritatively to tell LOTIEs (Ladies of the Invisible Empire) to merge with the WKKK,

¹⁷⁵ *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klönvokation*, 76.

¹⁷⁶ They were supposed to meet every month, but it did not happen: Kerbawy, *Knights in White Satin: Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 48. They met for the first time in 1923 in Asheville. Later they met in 1926 in D.C. and a year later in St. Louis and in 1927 in Indianapolis: Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 30.

¹⁷⁷ *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klönvokation*, 75-76. Little Rock was probably chosen to make the WKKK look more independent because the KKK had its headquarters in Atlanta.

¹⁷⁸ *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klönvokation*, 112.

¹⁷⁹ Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 28. According to some estimates, the newly founded WKKK could have absorbed up to 250,000 members from all these organizations: “Wizard Evans Forms His Own Women's Klan,” *The Des Moines Register* (03 Jan 1923) 13. The quote from: Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi*, 75. These organizations differed, sometimes more and sometimes less, from the WKKK. LOTIEs were less politically active and operated more as messengers of men according to Kelli Kerbawy: Kerbawy, *Knights in White Satin: Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 8-9. The National League of Protestant Women in America was organized in Chicago, but important figures of the movement began to bicker among themselves: Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930*, 123.

¹⁸⁰ “Courts Are Urged to Bar Ku Klux Klan for Women,” *The Atlanta Constitution* (6 Nov 1923) 18.

¹⁸¹ “Klan and Kamelia Exchange Charges,” *The Atlanta Constitution* (21 Oct 1923) 2. Simmons claimed that women could not be trusted one hundred percent: “Emperor Says Women Misuse Klan Secrets,” *The Akron Beacon Journal* (05 Nov 1923) 1. This was probably his defense as to why women should not be allowed to run their auxiliary independently on their own. He also appointed himself leader of Kamelia: Kerbawy, *Knights in White Satin: Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 72.

enraged LOTIEs beat him “with their fists and pocketbooks.”¹⁸²

It is obvious how dependent the new auxiliary was on the male organization and not everyone was satisfied as a result. The WKKK was supposed to be independent, but the reality was vastly different and the very name of the newly founded auxiliary proves it. One of the WKKK leaders wrote that “the name selected” had been chosen “particularly as the two orders were to be so closely allied.”¹⁸³ The Klan on the one hand said that the auxiliary was a women's organization where the male KKK should not have any major say. However, they also said that the WKKK owed its existence to the Klan and should be loyal to Klansmen as a result.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, the WKKK had basically the same rules and offices, rituals and doctrine. It had been modeled on its male predecessor. Worse than that, possibly up to four fifths of the initiation fee went to one of the officers who could have been a woman, but also a man.¹⁸⁵

In addition, Klanswomen had no financial resources and had to depend on the KKK, which became problematic. The Klan promised that the financing of the WKKK would not be “conducted by the Klan” in the same way they had assured WKKK's leaders of their independence.¹⁸⁶ James Comer, a powerful Klansman, had helped out financially, but soon started to exert tremendous influence over the WKKK movement.¹⁸⁷

The first WKKK leader was Lulu Markwell. She claimed that Protestantism and national security was being threatened. The way she saw it, women were supposed to be politically active to save the country.¹⁸⁸ She tried to be a representative of womanhood, something male members could have never become. Nevertheless, she was soon replaced. To the shock of many Klanswomen not by Alice Cloud, who was supposed to be her replacement, but by the wife of James Comer, the benefactor of the auxiliary, Robbie Gill.¹⁸⁹ Gill was a radical Protestant and

¹⁸² Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 90.

¹⁸³ Even their motto “Non Silba Sed Anthar”, meaning “not for self but for other”, was the same: *Official Bulletin (Women of the Ku Klux Klan)*, Gill ed., 4-12.

¹⁸⁴ They also should have exerted influence over their children and influence them to join the Klan: *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonvokation*, 113.

¹⁸⁵ Charles Alexander also believes that the WKKK's independence was mostly illusory: Alexander, “Kleagles and Cash: The Ku Klux Klan as a Business Organization, 1915-1935,” 364-365. *Official Bulletin (Women of the Ku Klux Klan)*, Gill ed., 5. Only the name of the leader of the WKKK was slightly different. The Imperial Commander was supposed to lead the WKKK: *Official Bulletin (Women of the Ku Klux Klan)*, Gill ed., 1-2. The ceremony for initiation of new members or installing officers was very similar: *Installation Ceremonies, Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 5-15.

¹⁸⁶ “Wizard Evans Forms His Own Women's Klan,” *The Des Moines Register* (03 Jan 1923) 13.

¹⁸⁷ Charles Alexander, “Defeat, Decline, Disintegration: The Ku Klux Klan in Arkansas, 1924 and After,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* (1963): 325.

¹⁸⁸ Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 32. Immigration statistics: David Gerber, Alan Kraut eds., *American Immigration and Ethnicity: A Reader* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) chart 16.

¹⁸⁹ “New Chief Named for Klan Women,” *The Atlanta Constitution* (21 Feb 1924) 22. Alexander, “Defeat, Decline, Disintegration: The Ku Klux Klan in Arkansas, 1924 and After,” 323. Barnes, “Another Look Behind the Masks: The Ku Klux Klan in Bentoville, Arkansas, 1922-1926.” 207.

supported women's emancipation, but the auxiliary became more dependent on the male Klan anyway because of her marriage. Moreover, she was not the only one who was married to a KKK member by any stretch of the imagination.¹⁹⁰

Many women hated the fact that Gill was the new leader of the WKKK solely because of her husband. The remaining distinctiveness and independence of the auxiliary was put in jeopardy. A few Klanswomen charged the couple with waste, extravagance and misappropriation of funds, but had to drop the case “filed in circuit court for the salary Mrs. Comer received after becoming Imperial Commander.”¹⁹¹ Gill retained her position, but the drama did not end there. As some columnists noticed, more and more local auxiliaries started protesting against the influence of the KKK.¹⁹² However, at the same time, since the male and female Klan were in theory divided, a few Klanswomen raised general concern about the situation and said that they should be more interlinked because they had family members in the male Klan.¹⁹³ The reputation of the Klan sustained damage because of these inner issues between the KKK and WKKK, resulting in a rapid decline of female as well as male membership after 1925.

Kathleen Blee claims that the WKKK may have had over half a million members in total and that most were active in Indiana. On the other hand, she adds, the numbers dropped dramatically by 1925 and 1926.¹⁹⁴ Leonard Moore adds that the entire Indiana Klan numbered close to 300,000 male and female members.¹⁹⁵ This means that the WKKK in Indiana must have had less than 150,000 members because female auxiliaries were always smaller. Rory McVeigh talks about “the tens of thousands of women who were members of the Indiana Women's Ku Klux Klan.”¹⁹⁶ The WKKK organization itself claimed it had four thousand

¹⁹⁰ *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonsvokation*, 115-116. “Women's Realm of the Ku Klux Klan,” *The Bridgeport Telegram* (06 Oct 1924) 10. Helen Lutterman, a major Kleagle of Feminine Branch, was the wife of the Kleagle in Connecticut. From: “Women Separately Organized But Leaders Are Affiliated,” *The Bridgeport Telegram* (06 Oct 1924) 10.

¹⁹¹ Alexander, “Defeat, Decline, Disintegration: The Ku Klux Klan in Arkansas, 1924 and After,” 323. They complained that she wasted money she had been given: “Many Klanswomen Quit,” *NY Times* (13 Mar 1927) 13.

¹⁹² New Hampshire: “Farnsworth Attacks Klan,” *The Portsmouth Herald* (17 May, 1924) 3. For example in Michigan. The case ended up in court. Something similar happened in Pittsburgh in 1927: Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 64.

¹⁹³ “Many Klanswomen Quit,” *NY Times* (13 Mar 1927) 13.

¹⁹⁴ Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 126. Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 169. In 1928, only a very diminished Klonsvokation was held in Dallas: Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 31. The total number of half a million in: Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 2.

¹⁹⁵ “There is no way of knowing how many women were members of Indiana's Women of the Ku Klux Klan and how many children belonged to its Junior Klan. These auxiliary groups appear to have been quite active in many communities, but there are no membership documents to indicate the extent of their popularity. It is likely that the Indiana Klan numbered close to 300,000 male and female members.” From: Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, 47.

¹⁹⁶ McVeigh, “Structural Incentives for Conservative Mobilization: Power Devaluation and the Rise of the Ku

Klanswomen “preparing to take the second degree”, which means that four thousand women had introduced at least one new member.¹⁹⁷ This would suggest that the Klan probably could have had a few tens of thousand followers because some women probably brought more than just one woman to the WKKK, whereas other came on their own. But it is very difficult to believe any WKKK source because they tend to obfuscate the numbers on purpose almost all the time and other sources are scarce.¹⁹⁸

It needs to be added that many men and women became members of the Klan only for a while. The leader of the Klan, Hiram Evans, later admitted that many men and women, who had once joined the organization, dropped from its ranks.¹⁹⁹

Kathleen Blee has tried to be a bit more specific. She believes that Indianapolis itself could have had ten thousand in 1923, Kokomo less than three thousand in 1924 and Hartford City under one thousand WKKK members. Blee also shows that attendance at various meetings between 1923 and 1925 was slightly over twenty seven thousand in total in the entire region.²⁰⁰ Klanswomen were often active and traveled to these events even though many probably stayed home. One's ability to estimate anything is limited as a result, but it probably only reduces the total number of members because the KKK was known for its social activities, meaning that the same women routinely traveled to such events.

It is also difficult to learn how many women were associated with the movement because there are not that many primary or even secondary sources which deal with the topic of female membership. There are no specific numbers, only estimates based on very limited existing data. The most reliable source are probably non-KKK newspaper articles which reported on various Klan meetings or marches. These mostly mentioned a couple of hundred women only.²⁰¹ However, the number of members also could have been inflated because women often marched

Klux Klan, 1915-1925,” 1487. It was typical for female activists that they were in minority: Mary McCune, “Creating a Place for Women in a Socialist Brotherhood: Class and Gender Politics in the Workmen's Circle, 1892-1930,” *Feminist Studies* 28.3 (2002) 585.

¹⁹⁷ *Official Bulletin (Women of the Ku Klux Klan)*, Gill ed., 4.

¹⁹⁸ For example, one WKKK Kleague claimed in 1923 that the WKKK would have over seven million members within twelve months: “Reasons Women Become Affiliated with Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,” *Bryan Daily Eagle* (15 Dec 1923) 2.

¹⁹⁹ But he also claimed that they stayed with them in purpose: “The Klan's Fight for Americanism,” Evans, 2.

²⁰⁰ It sounds like she claims that the WKKK in Indiana could have had over eighty thousand members in total. Numbers from: Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 125-127. She also says that by 1928 the entire Klan had only several hundred thousand members: Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 175. She is more optimistic than most other historians who talk about drastic decrease after 1925 to a couple of dozens of thousands. Rory McVeigh claims that almost one third of the male population in Kokomo belonged to the KKK: McVeigh, *Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 3. Kokomo is often mentioned by historians of the Klan, even in: Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, 104.

²⁰¹ For example: “250 Women Join Klan While 6,000 Look On,” *The New York Tribune* (1 Dec, 1923) 2.

in tandem with men. It was difficult to distinguish who was who because of the robes. Even though there were undoubtedly many more men than women, these parades skewed perspective of those who were watching them. Also nobody really counted how many people were present. Everything was based on guesses and estimates.

What is even harder to explain is why the Indiana WKKK chapter was probably the largest one in the country. Most historians do not really give an explanation for why this was the case. First of all, the Women of the Ku Klux Klan was a popular organization in Indiana because the local male KKK representation was one of the biggest in the country as well. Had the Indiana KKK been small, the WKKK would not have reached the popularity it did simply because most husbands, brothers or fathers motivated their wives, sisters or mothers to join or at least support the Klan. Kathleen Blee says that what also helped was that the Klan in Indiana “was granted an astonishing amount of legitimacy” because “local newspapers publicized routes for Klan marches and fostered excitement, parade permits were issued by mayors and police officers were sent to the marches.”²⁰² This suggests more or less direct connection between journalism and publicity.

Secondly, researchers have shown and some primary sources suggest that the (W)KKK's anti-Catholic crusade was quite popular in Indiana. Some counties consisted of almost twenty percent Catholic church members, which was not a small percentage at that time.²⁰³ However, the vast majority of the population was white, Protestant and Anglo-Saxon. According to Rory McVeigh it was perhaps too homogeneous. The society simply was not used to being confronted by the “other”. In his words: “In fact, some scholars have argued that Indiana was so homogeneous in terms of its racism, nativism, and religious bigotry, that any movement promoting the supremacy of native-born, white Protestants could have caught on like wildfire.”²⁰⁴ The (W)KKK fit such a description perfectly. Thirdly, Kathleen Blee adds, Indiana had a tradition of vigilante movements posing as morality crusaders.²⁰⁵ On the other hands, she

²⁰² Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 169. But mostly publicized marches with more Klansmen than Klanswomen.

²⁰³ McVeigh et al., “Corn, Klansmen, and Coolidge: Structure and Framing in Social Movements,” 666. On the other hand, it was not an extreme number either. Wyn Wade claims that the state did not have a huge Catholic or Jewish minority (and certainly not black), but their press was aggressively anti-Catholic nonetheless. Yet, he does not say why. From: Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, 218-226. Even though there were not many black Americans in Indiana, their numbers increased by fifty percent between 1910 and 1920 and then by another forty percent in the 1920s: Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 79. Many Protestants, even if they had been unwilling to support or join the Klan, basically said or thought the same or very similar things about the Catholics like the Klan: Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, 29. “Klan and Church,” *Atlantic Monthly* (Nov 1923) 5. Allen Safianov, “The Klan Comes to Tipton,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 95.3 (1999) 203-231.

²⁰⁴ McVeigh et al., “Corn, Klansmen, and Coolidge: Structure and Framing in Social Movements,” 667.

²⁰⁵ Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 79-80.

also claims that the Indiana WKKK was large, but not unique.²⁰⁶

The WKKK was surely not as widespread across the United States as the male Klan, but it was also active in multiple states. Already the Kamelia order had set up its chapters in about twenty states according to Kathleen Blee, however (in)active they had been, and the WKKK was not doing much worse because it had its chapters in sixteen states by 1926.²⁰⁷ Even the age barrier was set low in order to attract more members. All Protestant Anglo-Saxon women over the age of eighteen – and after 1924 over the age of sixteen – were eligible to join the female auxiliary.²⁰⁸

To sum it up, the structure of both the male and female Klan was almost alike.²⁰⁹ Their goals were similar, but they also differed. The genesis of the female auxiliary was accompanied by problems from the start. Various women had cooperated with the male Klan without having had an official chapter. Later, William Simmons founded a new female auxiliary, but it was denied by the new Klan leadership. Klan officers reacted and finally established the Women of the Ku Klux Klan. But the problems, various issues and struggles only continued.

²⁰⁶ Blee, “Women in the 1920s’ Ku Klux Klan Movement,” 61. Probably in the sense that its aims and methods were similar to the WKKK in other areas.

²⁰⁷ Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 27-30. They all had to be chartered just like the male Klan: “Klan Women Apply for State Charter,” *Los Angeles Times* (25 Nov 1924) 1.

²⁰⁸ “Printer’s Error is Responsible for Age Limit Story,” *Indianapolis Fiery Cross* (19 Oct 1923) 1.

²⁰⁹ Even though the Klan tried to say otherwise: *The Klan in Action* (Atlanta: American Printing Company, 1925) 26. Accessed through the Library of Congress on June 19, 2017.

3. The Klan vs. Women

3.1 Why Klansmen Did Not Want Women as Official Members

Women were not supposed to actively protect themselves against, according to members of the Reconstructions Klan, “sexually-driven” freedmen because white men were those who needed to facilitate this protection. The tradition at that time was for women to take care of the household, whereas for men to earn money and defend their wives. Therefore, the KKK propaganda basically portrayed women as “passive acquisitions of men.”²¹⁰

The way they saw it, the end of slavery could potentially mean the end of “exclusive access” to white women. Such a change was deemed unacceptable.²¹¹ The Grand Wizard Nathaniel Forrest apparently defended the existence of the KKK in front of the Senate. He was reported to have said that the Klan was needed because multiple ladies had been “ravished” by freedmen.²¹² It seems that the Klan viewed itself as a male-dominated force which could cope with these, albeit usually overestimated or false, threats. The organization should also be understood as a certain initiative by those who wanted to take matters into their own hands because they felt that the federal government did not offer their wives and sisters enough protection.

The very first objective of the order was to “protect the weak, the innocent and the defenseless from the indignities, wrongs and outrages of the lawless, the violent, and the brutal.”²¹³ It is quite obvious that women belonged to this category. But since official KKK documents stated that the organization was “in favor of the reenfranchisement and emancipation of the white men of the South”, women were not officially allowed to take part in the Klan.²¹⁴ In fact, these documents did not explicitly say anything about women except that “[f]emale friends, widows, and their households [would] ever be special objects of our regard and protection.”²¹⁵ Men were supposed to be those who pushed for the enfranchisement and also for women's emancipation, not women. This is why they wrote about female “friends” and not about female members. They considered it sufficient when women helped with robe-sewing or performed other helpful but minor tasks outside the Klan structures.

The commonly shared opinion of the group that men and not women should not play any active role in the movement did not change even when Simmons became the leader of the

²¹⁰ Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 14.

²¹¹ Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 14.

²¹² Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 13.

²¹³ *Annals of America*, vol 10, 136.

²¹⁴ *Annals of America*, vol 10, 136.

²¹⁵ *Annals of America*, vol 10, 253.

Klan in 1915. It was unthinkable for women to be more actively involved in such a religious Protestant order. It was later stated that anyone affiliated with any of the existing women's organizations would be banished from the Klan.²¹⁶ Klannish conservative rhetoric towards women did not change at all. Women were to support their husbands or fathers in their endeavors and raise their sons in a manner which would propel them to join the Klan in the future.²¹⁷ Despite the help women provided, their place was at home.

Klansmen did not want be rid of their privileges so easily. This is one of the main reasons why Klansmen rejected female membership even later. They wanted be the ones with influence and power. They did not have a reason to share their dominant position in the movement. Nancy MacLean firmly believes that there was always a certain tension when women were too initiative.²¹⁸ Moreover, Klansmen thought that what the Klan strived to implement was what many women wanted as well. They were against immigration, hoped for better education for their children, condemned Catholicism and renounced alcoholism. Therefore, they probably felt that they could receive support from their wives and sisters without sharing the authority or power. One WKKK officer stated that this was common for many men in the past. She said that men had refused to give women ballot point blank because they feared losing their dominant position.²¹⁹

Indeed, Klansmen intended to preserve the chastity of women.²²⁰ But they wanted to do it on their own. Had they failed to act, their masculine pride would have been hurt. One attribute they revered was “matchless manhood.”²²¹ As one author put it: “[o]ne claim as to the need of the Ku Klux Klan's revival [was] that the women of the South [had to] be protected from assault. This [was] made the apology for lynchings.”²²² They admitted that they had attacked a doctor because of a “bad treatment of one girl.”²²³ But from their point of view, Klansmen viewed themselves as enforcers of law and order.²²⁴ They were those who were to provide for honorable women and ensure that they felt good and had everything they needed, not anyone else – women included.

²¹⁶ “Ku Klux Puts Ban on Woman's Clubs” *Detroit Free Press* (1 Dec 1922) 10.

²¹⁷ *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1.22 (1923) 7.

²¹⁸ MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, 117.

²¹⁹ “Reasons Women Become Affiliated with Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,” *Bryan Daily Eagle* (15 Dec 1923) 2.

²²⁰ *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1.32 (1923) 2. Or: *Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*, 10.

²²¹ *The Practice of Klannishness*, 9. They claimed that the Klan was “an organization of the Protestant manhood of America.” From: *The Ku Klux Klan: Its Origin, Meaning and Scope of Operation*, Fowler, 54.

²²² *The Original Ku Klux Klan and Its Successor*, Milner. The source is not provided with page numbers.

²²³ “Klansmen Admit Attacking Doctor,” *New York Times* (16 Jun 1922) 13.

²²⁴ “Ostensibly, of course, the Klan [was] an organization for the support of law and order.” From: “Democracy or Invisible Empire?” *Current Opinion* (1 Nov 1923) 521.

Despite the fact that women were not allowed to join the Klan for a very long time, they were expected to behave and act in accordance with the principles of the KKK. Klansmen often threatened black, Catholic, or “immoral” women. Sometimes it posed only a minor threat or it was just a facetious joke, but not always. The victims were scared and intimidated nonetheless. Furthermore, the media was interested in their stories. Newspaper editors never failed to send them to the print. One woman received a letter declaring that she would soon be kidnapped by the Klan.²²⁵ A different woman in Alabama was reported to have been tied to a barrel and then whipped. The Klan wanted her to admit a scandal she had allegedly committed.²²⁶ In addition, there were reports of women who had been driven out of their city by the KKK.²²⁷ There is evidence that were instances when Klansmen were caught and sentenced as a result of their violent actions. One Ku Klux Klan officer was sent to prison for having taken part in a woman's flogging.²²⁸

The fact that Klansmen often attacked women, whether physically or verbally, they considered “immoral” or husbands who were cheating on their “honorable” wives just proves that they wanted to take matters into their hands. They believed that they did not need an official help from women. Some women accepted their “passive role” in the movement to a certain degree. They informed the Klan of their husbands' adultery and wanted Klansmen to “go against their husbands for drinking or running around with other women.”²²⁹ As has already been mentioned, many Klansmen also thought that women should focus on their household and children instead of being politically active within the Klan. They “attributed increases in crime, vice and immorality to working's women neglect of family responsibilities” in many cases.²³⁰ Obviously the more time women would have spent on Klan-organized activities, the less time they would have had on their children and husbands. Many in the Klan deemed it out of the question, unfair and simply wrong for women to waste time on politics instead of taking care of their children.

²²⁵ “You will be kidnapped by the K.K.K.” From: “Woman Warned That She Will Be Kidnapped,” *The Los Angeles Times* (08 Apr 1922) 6. Another one received a warning “Beware, Ku Klux Klan” in a bundle of feather and a chunk of tar: “Woman Gets Klan Warning,” *The Washington Post* (03 Feb 1923) 3. They also sent similar warnings to men: Jones, “The Ku Klux Klan in Eastern Kansas during the 1920's,” 30.

²²⁶ “Klan Linked to Flogging of Woman in Alabama,” *New York Herald Tribune* (11 Jun 1927) 3.

²²⁷ “Women Are Driven from City by Klan,” *The Washington Post* (3 Sep 1925) 2.

²²⁸ “Ku Klux Constable Sent to Prison for Woman's Flogging,” *The Washington Post* (28 Aug 1923) 3.

²²⁹ Goldberg, “The Ku Klux Klan in Madison, 1922-1927,” 36. The quoted member of the Klan in the article also claimed that they refused to do this in Madison. It was normal in other states however. The Klan paid attention to the “prosecution of cases involving the honor of women.” From: Rhomberg, Rhomberg, “White Nativism and Urban Politics: The 1920s Ku Klux Klan in Oakland, California,” 43.

²³⁰ McVeigh, “Structural Incentives for Conservative Mobilization: Power Devaluation and the Rise of the Ku Klux Klan, 1915-1925,” 1467.

Many Klansmen also used the activities of Mrs. Tyler as an excuse for why the auxiliary for women should not be chartered. Many Klansmen complained that she attained too much power and authority. They did not appreciate it when they were kept in check by a “corrupt” woman.²³¹ Some texts also imply a concern that the KKK would have been likely to focus too much on women issues had female members been accepted into the organization. Its attention was already divided into multiple areas. Klan members talked and wrote about almost everything, but it sounds reasonable that with women as a large segment of the movement, the topics would have shifted more towards issues which were mostly affecting women.

However, shortly before the Klan opened its doors to women, the KKK had already started to gravitate more towards suffrage and other issues connected to “womanhood” anyway because the new Imperial Wizard Evans sought to make the organization more accessible to the general public. One can agree with Rory McVeigh who claims that the Invisible Empire began to really recognize the merit of women only in the early 1920s: “[f]rom that point forward, a substantial amount of effort was devoted to trying to promote political participation among native-born, white Protestant women.”²³² However, their agenda has most accurately been described as “motherhood, social purity, Americanism, and all other et ceteras.”²³³ Therefore, the majority of what they really wrote about women was used as propaganda, as “just” another issue that was used in order to make the Klan more popular.

After the WKKK had been established, women helped children or people in need very often. However, even male members were active in this respect. They demanded better salaries for teachers because they thought that only motivated teachers were able to share good mental and moral principles with their children.²³⁴ Furthermore, they tried to raise money to help Protestant children in need on multiple occasions. For instance, they started a campaign through which they wanted to build a proper home for two Protestant “poor little girls.”²³⁵ There can be no doubt that most Klansmen were ardent Protestants and that their motivation was often genuine. On the other hand, their desires were mostly combined with selfish interests. Rhetoric of this type improved their public image because many women probably agreed with their “service activities”. Klanswomen also wanted to look active to attract attention. However, this

²³¹ Someone said that “Mrs Tyler absolutely dominate[d] and [ran] the klan through Imperial Kleagle Clarke, and everything [was] done by her direction.” From: *The Ku Klux Klan: Hearings Before the Committee on Rules*, 16.

²³² McVeigh, “Structural Incentives for Conservative Mobilization: Power Devaluation and the Rise of the Ku Klux Klan, 1915-1925,” 1472. They wanted to “shield the sanctity of the home and the chastity of womanhood.” From: *Constitutions and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*, 10. Or: *Klansman's Manual*, Etheridge ed., 17.

²³³ *The Modern Ku Klux Klan*, Fry, 52.

²³⁴ *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1.08 (1923) 2.

²³⁵ *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1.06 (1923) 2.

could have only really be done by admitting women to the Klan.

3.2 The Case for Women to Become Members

It became more and more obvious that a female auxiliary would be established over time. The main reason why it finally happened in 1923 was the internal skirmish between William Simmons and Hiram Evans, the two main protagonists of the Ku Klux Klan. Nonetheless, it had been preceded by a variety of contrasting ideas about what the Klan should look like and what people it should include and why. Even though women, especially at first, were not of primary concern to the Klan, it needs to emphasized that there were many arguments in favor of female membership.

First, it was very important for Klan members to look as one homogeneous unit even if they had had their differences or had concentrated on different issues depending on the region. What made them weaker in the public eye was when they lacked the ability to control the movement from within.²³⁶ This is why Klansmen, for example, often voted the same way, just like those who opposed them. An author of one of the articles in the *Washington Bee* newspaper believed that “[t]he only way to kill the Ku Klux Klan and break up the solid South [was] for every Negro man and woman to register and vote the Republic ticket.”²³⁷ A plethora of KKK sources said the exact same thing about Klansmen and how cohesive they needed to be at all times. Even William Simmons emphasized that the organization had to “abide by the same social manners” and keep national unity.²³⁸ It was advantageous to accept women from this point of view because it made it seem as if there had never been a boundary between men and women in the Klan. This can be considered to a certain degree a successful propagandist method how to demonstrate that the Klan was able to overcome divisions and settle mutual differences.

It was certainly a good thing that many women had already been associated with the Klan. They had either supported their husbands and fathers or had constantly been doing other social activities. This argument came mostly from women who wanted to emphasize their importance and potentially legitimize themselves, but Klansmen often agreed.²³⁹ The fact they had aided Klansmen in a time of dire need during the Reconstruction was often emphasized and it certainly helped their cause. Such an interpretation struck a chord with many Klansmen who

²³⁶ *The End of the Ku Klux Klan*, Inu Esrov (Des Moines: Human Service Association) 2. From: <<http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/endkkk.pdf>>. Last accessed: April 7, 2018.

²³⁷ “The Task Before Colored Voters,” *The Washington Bee* (11 Sept 1920) 3.

²³⁸ *The Klan Unmasked*, Simmons, 202.

²³⁹ “Reasons Women Become Affiliated with Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,” *Bryan Daily Eagle* (15 Dec 1923) 2. Klansmen: *The Modern Ku Klux Klan*, Fry, 176.

believed it was now advantageous to have women on their side, which again shows that Klansmen and Klanswomen were selective when it came to historical facts in order to establish their point.²⁴⁰

As it pertains to the history of the Klan, Klansmen also stressed that women had kept many secrets and could be trusted because of their loyalty.²⁴¹ The function of this statement was that they had proven themselves and could therefore be helpful in the future. Moreover, the Klan hoped to use women to promote family values. Klansmen genuinely believed that the WKKK could steer their children and younger generations towards better life.²⁴² This is important because the Klan often highlighted the importance of children for the future.²⁴³ The Invisible Empire was also steadfastly in support of “traditional household” where the woman had the biggest influence over the child. Klansmen probably believed that by establishing a women's auxiliary, women would receive a bigger platform in certain respects. This proved effective because many women later indeed fought hard for better education for their children.

Moreover, women were also allowed to be more politically active after the 19th Amendment had been passed. “Granting women the right to vote [...] in 1920 made women attractive recruits” according to Kathleen Blee.²⁴⁴ The Klan feared, however groundless their worries might have been, that suffrage could become a priority over other and more pressing issues. Therefore, it became vital to include women actively in the process by controlling them.²⁴⁵ Klansmen were also cognizant of their political potential. They believed that “[w]omen with the ballot [would] help to vote down the walls of the convents and liberate the victims of their sex held here in galling bondage.”²⁴⁶

New membership also meant more financial income. Michael Newton claims that the Klan realized quite soon the potential profit from recruiting women.²⁴⁷ There is no reason not to believe him because Klansmen received financial or other benefits for every recruit they brought in.²⁴⁸ To create an affiliate organization for women was also effective in attracting new

²⁴⁰ They manipulated even normal political history when they needed or wanted to. Klanswomen claimed that Abraham Lincoln was actually against black Americans: Kerbawy, *Knights in White Satin: Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 61.

²⁴¹ “Ku Klux Klan Opens Its Ranks to Woman,” *Broad Axe* (20 Aug 1921) 1.

²⁴² *The Klan in Action*, 24-26.

²⁴³ *Principles and Purposes of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*, 8.

²⁴⁴ Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 169.

²⁴⁵ Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 31.

²⁴⁶ *Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty*, White, 131.

²⁴⁷ Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi*, 75.

²⁴⁸ They enjoyed prestige or a second-degree recognition, which meant they were closer to getting an office from the Klan in the future: Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 25. The same thing could be said about women who recruited other women: *Official Bulletin, (Women of the Ku Klux Klan)*, Gill ed., 4. They received their second

female, male, or even young members. It was appreciated when men tried to find other men who would support the common cause. The Junior order for children was supposed to attract friends as well as their parents. Young members were invited to sing about intermarriage and nativism.²⁴⁹ With women as official members, something similar was expected. It has been claimed that Junior and female auxiliary bolstered the group's claim that the Klan was a family-oriented organization.²⁵⁰ Women as members were more likely to persuade either their husbands or fathers to join as well or they had the opportunity to influence their children in such a way that they would later join the Klan. On the contrary, if their relatives had already been in the Klan, they themselves could have joined to augment the total membership. They were free to invite their female friends as well.

Other Klansmen also talked about how peaceful women were and appreciated their support of the Protestant cause.²⁵¹ The “second” Klan was a Protestant organization from its beginning and everything connected to religion was highly important, but on the other hand fraternal orders had traditionally been designated for men. The Klan needed new members to spread the idea of Protestantism as they understood it – as a bond which differentiated them from Catholic or Jewish immigrants – and who would offer help to other Protestants. They claimed that Protestantism was more than just religion because it had other aspects, such as the “spirit of independence, self-reliance and freedom which [were] the highest achievements of the Nordic race.”²⁵²

Even if non-Klan Protestants had opposed the aggressiveness of the Klan's propaganda, the Klan sometimes decided to aid them nonetheless because charity events made the organization more popular among the general public. Protestant ministers were actively involved in a variety of beneficial events because the Klan liked to employ “charismatic speakers to stoke the fires of interest”; and so could now be women.²⁵³ The Klan claimed that all Jews and Catholics were against them.²⁵⁴ For that reason, they wanted to use every single

degree after another ceremony: *Second Degree, Obligation, First Section: Property of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 1-4.

²⁴⁹ Michael Jacobs, “Co-Opting Christian Chorales: Songs of the Ku Klux Klan,” *American Music* 28.3 (2010) 375.

²⁵⁰ Hatle, Vaillancourt, “One Flag, One School, One Language: Minnesota's Ku Klux Klan in the 1920,” 363.

²⁵¹ “200 Ku Klux Klan Members in Robes Attend Service,” *The Washington Post* (25 Jan 1926) 1.

²⁵² *Major Problems in American History, 1920-1945*, 159.

²⁵³ Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, 5. The La Grande Klan, like many other chapters, promoted speeches of pastors: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 68.

²⁵⁴ *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1.08 (1923) 5. Leonard Moore claims that a few German Protestants joined the Klan because of its anti-Jewish and anti-Catholic propaganda: Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, 144. There were theories that even many Protestants, non-Klan members, believed that only those whose ancestors experienced “the freedom of tribal self-government and the liberation of the Protestant

honorable Protestant soul to fight with them against these “threats”.

Another reason why women were considered for potential membership was that Klansmen believed that their involvement could validate KKK's rhetoric. The Invisible Empire had talked for women and about women for a long time without actually having acknowledged their importance by allowing them to officially take part in the movement. Another step was to create a place for women in the Klan. There were voices claiming that the rhetoric of the KKK regarding women was popular among some from the general public. One contemporary detractor of the Klan wrote that their “preaching for the purity of the women made them lovers among those who wished to preserve the home.”²⁵⁵

Another argument for women was the pressure they had already put on Klansmen to be accepted as members, whether intentionally or not. A few secret women's orders used to have the same (or very similar) robes as the Klan. Their appearance had often times led to bemusement among the general public. Outsiders could not have possibly known whether these women had somehow been associated with the Klan or not.²⁵⁶ More explicit pressure however came from more notorious Klan associates; Mrs. Tyler comes to mind for instance. She thought women had already done enough and deserved to be on equal footing with male members.²⁵⁷ Mrs. Tyler was a famous figure in the KKK structures, albeit not popular among everyone, so her opinions definitely resonated because she was so polarizing.

Despite all these ideas and thoughts which either played or possibly could have played part in the fact that the auxiliary for women was established in 1923, the main reason for why it was finally founded simply was that it became more convenient for the Klan to have the auxiliary than not. The Klan now seemed larger and also resembled a family-oriented organization, which is something Klansmen had wanted for a long period of time. After all, they described themselves in their newspapers as a family organization.²⁵⁸ As has already been mentioned, William Simmons's effort to set up the new auxiliary can be viewed as the proverbial final nail in the coffin. New leaders had to react and did so by setting up a new auxiliary themselves. Simmons's attempt was put to a stop and women who had previously joined

Reformation were fully American.” More in: Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990) 242. There were other groups or fraternal organizations that were strongly anti-Catholic like the Klan. For example, the members of the American Protective Association swore not to ever vote a Catholic: Lieberson, *A Piece of the Pie: Black and White Immigrants Since 1880*, 105.

²⁵⁵ *The Trail of Serpent*, Likins, 16. Even though it was an exaggeration, there probably was some merit behind his words.

²⁵⁶ “Look Like Women's Ku Klux Klan,” *The Marble Hill Press* (28 Dec 1922) 6. Or: “Women Using Klan Outfits,” *The Los Angeles Times* (12 Jul 1922) 12.

²⁵⁷ “Says Women Flock to Join the Klan,” *The Grand Forks Herald* (19 Sep 1921) 6.

²⁵⁸ They emphasized the importance of children etc.: *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1.08 (1923) 2.

Simmons were integrated with the new and official Women of the Ku Klux Klan auxiliary.

Judging from this, it is obvious that the voices for and against active involvement of women in the Klan existed and that they were quite diverse. The Klan with its rituals had formerly resembled a traditional Protestant organization for which only male membership had been deemed appropriate.²⁵⁹ On the other hand, it had become really tempting over time to include women, which is why they were included in the end. It is very telling though that the change was facilitated and triggered by an internal struggle between the former Klan leader and the new establishment. This struggle precipitated later problems and difficulties with the new auxiliary. The KKK sought to model the WKKK on the Klan and its structures and, despite its rhetoric, attempted to make it dependent on the male organization – which is what many women obviously wanted to avoid. Slowly but surely it became obvious that coexistence of these two seemingly independent – but in reality interconnected – groups would be more difficult than it may have seemed. However, the differences of opinions before the auxiliary had even been set up clearly shows that this struggle was not unexpected.

²⁵⁹ Already mentioned at the beginning of the chapter 2.4: Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 388.

4. Women Want to Be Involved: Why and Which?

4.1 Why the Klan: Divisiveness Embraced

First, it is important to realize that there is not just one reason why women wanted to be involved in Klannish activities. Their motives depended on their work experience, location, education, religion, family background, connections, friendships and other factors. They may have enlisted to support their husbands, but also because they encountered trouble at home. They possibly had the same reasons as men, but they frequently differed in their approach as well. Women also often placed emphasis on aspects which were more “gender specific.”²⁶⁰

It is essential to realize what the Klan was and what it represented. Unlike the Reconstruction Klan, it was not “born in rage of slaveholders over losing their property” or as a reaction to the encroachments of the federal government on the rights of land owners.²⁶¹ Even though it had started as a fraternal order, it quickly became a social movement in the 1920s. The Grand Wizard Hiram Evans claimed that the real strength of the Klan was that there were “many millions who [...] never joined, but who th[ought] and fe[lt]” like Klansmen.²⁶² As a “conservative” organization, the KKK fought against alcoholism, explicit sexuality, corruption, laziness, Catholic teachers, Jews, black Americans, or immigrants. Many men and women found the Klan appealing as a result of its wide range of interests. The Klan also strived to unite its membership through a variety of social activities; picnics, parades, or sport activities to name just a few.

When trying to talk about why women were interested in what the Klan was doing, it is vital to be conscious of how well the Klan worked with interpreting history and politics in harmony with their interests. They viewed almost everything which either deviated from the general consensus or was new as bad or dangerous for the society and traditional structures, such as the family. They were very vocal and their arguments were often convincing and compelling in how they simplified them. For example, people who believed in the theory of evolution were mocked derisively by Klansmen and labeled as those who “firmly believe[d]

²⁶⁰ Blee, “Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement,” 58.

²⁶¹ “The Birth of a Nation on Insult to the North Declares,” *Cleveland Gazette* (11 Mar 1916) 1. On the other hand, its critics said that this was exactly the reason why it was even more reprehensible than its predecessor because of the context of the Civil War which had been a polarizing period: “The Ku Klux Klan a Paradox,” Joseph Silverman, *The North American Review* 223.831 (1926) 282-292. From: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25110228?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>. Last accessed: April 7, 2018. Thomas Pegram has written the following: “[...] but the context of the 1920s movement was significantly different. In its wide, if short-lived, appeal, its power at the local and state level, and its embattled proximity to a changing American mainstream, the phenomenon of the New Era Klan movement remains historically distinctive.”

Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 220.

²⁶² “The Klan's Fight for Americanism,” Evans, 2.

that man and monkey [were] true kindred spirits.”²⁶³

The Klan also strongly opposed immigration and viewed the incoming people as a dire threat. The Invisible Empire harangued the government for not dealing with immigrants effectively. The KKK newspaper outlet, *Imperial Night-Hawk*, suggested that the Klan needed to take leadership in the fight over immigration otherwise the U.S. would become a “dumping ground” for the “heterogeneous element seeking admission to [their] shoes.”²⁶⁴ The anti-immigrant feelings of American society in the early 1920s are well-documented and explain why the U.S. government increased restriction on immigration in 1921 and 1924.²⁶⁵ Both Klans undoubtedly supported the public attitude behind these restrictions.

They purported that they were an organization which abided by the law of the country and their supporters believed them.²⁶⁶ Yet, they were much more radical than Congressmen. They suggested that the immigration should be completely stopped for at least ten years.²⁶⁷ In other words, their sentiment was compatible with that of the political elites because they also believed that immigration needed to be minimized, but wanted to take it a step further. In other words, to associate oneself with the Klan was an opportunity to display frustration with the policy of Congress, which was not radical enough. The way they saw it, people who were unable to even speak proper English took job opportunities from them and their families.

At the end of the day, both the female and male Klan admitted only white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, whereas many of these immigrants were Catholics.²⁶⁸ (W)KKK members claimed the Klan was exclusive because it was “patriotic to the last and highest degree.”²⁶⁹ They disseminated propagandist insinuations about how a large portion of criminals was composed

²⁶³ *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 24.

²⁶⁴ *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1.22 (1923) 2.

²⁶⁵ Holley, “A Look Behind the Mask: The 1920s Ku Klux Klan in Monticello, Arkansas,” 143. “It was the Klan's acrid anti-foreign rhetoric and openly virulent opposition to immigration that characterized its politics in the 1920s.” From: Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, 48. There were many citizen organizations which supported restriction of immigration, e.g. the Immigration Restriction League: Handlin, *The Uprooted* 257. Some feared that the Klan could become an important element in the 1924 election as a result of their anti-immigrant propaganda. “A great many Americans, many of them leaders, [...] believe[d] that the amount of immigration [...] create[d] in many communities a balance of power politically.” From: “Klan May Prove Important Factor in 1924 Presidential Campaign,” *Battle Creek Enquirer* (02 Sep 1923) 22. Or: “Immigration Reappears as a Pressing Problem,” *The Topeka Daily Capital* (6 Dec 1922) 8.

²⁶⁶ “Democracy or Invisible Empire?” *Current Opinion* (1 Nov 1923) 521. Or: “In other words, the Klan believes in keeping the laws and in enforcing the laws – the Prohibition law as well as others.” From: *Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty*, White, 158. Women of the Klan were extremely proud of their law system, history and the Constitution: *America for Americans: As Interpreted by the Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 2.

²⁶⁷ *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1.22 (1923) 2.

²⁶⁸ *The Klan Unmasked*, Simmons, 13. The WKKK: “Women Separately Organized But Leaders Are Affiliated,” *The Bridgeport Telegram* (06 Oct 1924) 10.

²⁶⁹ *The Klan Unmasked*, Simmons, 55. With Evans as leader, it became more accessible to the average citizen: Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, 95.

of foreigners and immigrants.²⁷⁰ They even sung songs in which immigrants were referred to as “traitors” or “wolves”.²⁷¹

The WKKK wanted to limit immigration in the same manner as its male counterpart. They supported the KKK, but by using a slightly different symbolism than the male organization. They talked about “feminine responsibility”, which translated into topics like immigration quite smoothly.²⁷² Women of the Klan, arguably inspired by Klannish rhetoric, claimed that immigrants kept their children out of American public schools.²⁷³ Men talked the same way, but women thought more about being “patrons” of the home and their children. At the same time, they wanted foreigners to be educated, but not in the same schools or classrooms as their children. They clearly stated that a certificate “of naturalization [did] not make an American” because “mental inheritance, correct conception of the U.S. government, basis of religion” and the knowledge of “the American Language” were all a must for every citizen of the United States of America.²⁷⁴ The way they saw it, these qualities could be gained and instilled only through a rigorous educational process.

The issue of immigration shows that men and women had very similar viewpoints on the “other” even if had they placed their main focus on slightly different aspects or used distinct symbols and rhetorical devices. In the end, the group was family oriented. Unity was essential, especially in the same household. Klansmen were very pleased when they could publicly demonstrate that men and women were on the same side of the conflict. The KKK demanded reverence for American womanhood from its “knights” and women of the Klan consequently believed that the Klan was to America what women were to the home and family.²⁷⁵ Therefore, many women joined the WKKK because of its anti-immigrant and pro-women propaganda. Kathleen Blee says that KKK pamphlets, newspapers and other writings were so effective

²⁷⁰ *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klönvokation*, 251.

²⁷¹ Jacobs, “Co-Opting Christian Chorales: Songs of the Ku Klux Klan,” 372.

²⁷² The term “feminine responsibility” from: “Reasons Women Become Affiliated with Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,” *Bryan Daily Eagle* (15 Dec 1923) 2.

²⁷³ *The Klan Unmasked*, Simmons, 70.

²⁷⁴ *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klönvokation*, 149. The “American Language” as a term was a phrase the Klan used. It was basically a pun. After all, they liked to play with language, e.g. many KKK terms started with the letter “K”: *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klönvokation*, 247. Or they used special phrases to greet themselves: Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan in American Politics*, 18. They confronted French-speaking Americans in Maine: Mark Richard, “This Is Not a Catholic Nation: The Ku Klux Klan Confronts Franco-Americans in Maine,” *The New England Quarterly* 82.2 (2009) 285-303.

²⁷⁵ Women: *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klönvokation*, 121. Men: *Klansman's Manual*, Etheridge ed., 17. They claimed that their actions were “a stand for the purity of the home, for morality, for the protection of [their] mothers, [their] sisters, [their] wives, [their] daughters.” From: *Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty*, White, 159. Morality, virtue and honor were important to WKKK members. They could be banished from the Klan if they had done something in the past to disgrace the virtue of women: Kerbawy, *Knights in White Satin: Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 46.

because they were provocative and offered little explanation. They promised to “maintain racial, religious, and ethnic superiority”, to “preserve nationalistic pride” and “provide excitement.” Funnily enough, they failed to mention how.²⁷⁶ Oscar Handlin claims that placing the blame on outsiders without providing any objective facts was very enticing even for nonmembers, let alone among already radicalized Klansmen or Klanswomen.²⁷⁷

The language or rhetoric was important. The Klan used “paranoid modes of expression” with success in their newspapers or pamphlets.²⁷⁸ In other words, they talked about the outside “world” (e.g. Catholics or black Americans) as evil or corrupt in order to strengthen their own identity. Their statements were often mere exaggerations in which outsiders were viewed as an obvious threat, just take the *Imperial Night-Hawk* for example. According to the author of one its articles, an attacked member of the Klan had “died because he was American”. The author stated that the Klan needed to act otherwise the U.S. was to be “saturated with aliens”.²⁷⁹ Potential members of the WKKK probably lacked unbiased sources or did not trust them as much as they did with those which were presented to them by Klansmen. Immersion in an environment where such exposure happened on a daily basis led to the fact that they lacked empathy for the “other” as a result.

One should not forget that most women wanted to enroll because they were acquainted with someone who had already been associated with the Klan and who had told them about its activities and goals. As Kathleen Blee has shown, it is and always has been generally much easier for members to introduce their families to activist groups than to recruit new members from the outside.²⁸⁰ Klanswomen trusted family members more than people they did not know, especially when their relatives had written evidence (e.g. newspaper, pamphlets or advertisements) with which they could support their, however untrue or biased, arguments. Those from the KKK who shared stories about the Klan with women provided them only with their point of view, which was obviously distorted, subjective, prejudiced and misleading.

The Klan's divisiveness, the differentiation between “us” versus “them” or “us” against the “other” was highly effective in recruitments or in justifying the existence of the movement. It was applicable in many different contexts. Immigrants were seen as threats to the American

²⁷⁶ Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 114. Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*, 77. Members of the Klan could not really confront them because they lacked unbiased sources.

²⁷⁷ “The debates about outsiders and immigrants familiarized Americans with the conception of permanent biological differences among humans.” From: Handlin, *The Uprooted* 247.

²⁷⁸ The term by: Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, 68.

²⁷⁹ American not only in the sense of his ancestry, but also regarding his religion and political views: *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1.22 (1923) 2-5.

²⁸⁰ Blee, *Democracy in the Making: How Activist Groups Form*, 61.

labor. Catholics were viewed as a threat to American children or schools and both with Jews were considered a threat to “Americanism”. The writings and statements of the Klan bolstered the sense of commonality, belonging, brotherhood and family among its members. The potential threat coming from the “other”, whether immigrants, Catholics, or just critics of the Klan, forced many women to join the group to defend their families against various accusations or suffered wrongs and to “promote family togetherness.”²⁸¹

But the exact opposite could have happened as well. Kathleen Blee conducted many interviews with former Klanswomen in the past. Her research has shown that stories of women who joined the WKKK “against the wishes of their husbands and families” were common.²⁸² The *Washington Post* informed of a husband who allegedly broke up with one woman because she had joined the Klan.²⁸³ Quite a few Klansmen wanted their wives to focus on their children and household instead of politics. They did not want them to participate in the Klan activities because they wanted to be active on their own without their help. Others complained that the Klan was run the way it was not supposed to. For example, possibly up to eight hundred WKKK members decided to separate from one local Klan because they felt that their entitlement to free speech or press was being abridged.²⁸⁴

Where the WKKK certainly agreed with Klansmen, at least in theory, was alcohol. Both supported the existence of the 18th Amendment, which prohibited the sale of alcohol. Arthur Schlesinger believed that rural America sought to maintain racial and moral purity against city immigrants through the Ku Klux Klan.²⁸⁵ This is probably an overstatement, but it demonstrates that some of the things the Klan stood for were supported by nonmembers as well. Many Protestant ministers also agreed with the Klan's agenda regarding alcohol.²⁸⁶

²⁸¹ The phrase used by: Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 2.

²⁸² Blee, “Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement,” 65.

²⁸³ His name was Frank Kacerosky and he was a businessman: “Wife in the Ku Klux, Man Seeks Divorce,” *The Washington Post* (05 Nov 1925) 1.

²⁸⁴ “Connection With the Klan Is Severed,” *Evening Independent* (12 Mar 1924) 7.

²⁸⁵ Arthur Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998) 98. This is a huge simplification because the Klan was as popular and also as hated in the cities as in rural areas. On the other hand, many people who lived in rural areas supported the Klan's crusade against alcohol and immigration. The anti-alcohol rhetoric of the Anti-Saloon League was very similar: “Two Years of Prohibition: An Unbiased Report,” *The Ogden Standard-Examiner* (29 Jan 1922) 32. On the other, hand the cooperation between the Klan and Anti-Saloon League, which was founded in 1893 in Ohio, was complicated according to Thomas Pegram. The League used more legal political means and renounced the violence, vigilantism and nativism of the Klan: Thomas Pegram, “Hoodwinked: The Anti-Saloon League and the Ku Klux Klan in 1920s Prohibition Enforcement,” *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 7.1 (2008) 89-93. But there also were organizations which opposed the Klan like the Knights of Columbus: *Does the U.S.A. Need the K.K.K.?* Fred Bair (Girard: Haldeman-Julius Company, 1928) 18. From: <<https://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/doesusaneed.pdf>>. Last accessed: April 10, 2018.

²⁸⁶ “The Rev. P. C. Fletcher Says Organization Can Exert Powerful Influence,” *Daily Arkansas Gazette* (27 Feb 1922) 3. However, there were some clergymen who thought Prohibition was not a success: “Clergyman Says

Kenneth Jackson wrote that the Klan's campaign "against moral laxity earned for it the allegiance and support of many women."²⁸⁷ WKKK members wanted to help their husbands or brothers who were addicted to alcohol.²⁸⁸ The way they saw it, liquor threatened the very existence of family, which was a fact that simply must have attracted the attention of the Klan. They attacked those who violated the law and sold alcohol because otherwise wives and children of the drunkards would have been the ones to pay the price.

Klanswomen also endorsed other women who were willing to publicly denounce alcohol.²⁸⁹ According to Kathleen Blee, a very common "way" for women to the WKKK was through earlier temperance movements. She has used Daisy Barr, the Imperial Empress of the WKKK in Indiana, as an example. Barr opted for the Klan because of its anti-alcohol ideals.²⁹⁰ The WKKK sometimes even cooperated with members of the anti-alcohol Women's Christian Temperance Union. They paid tribute together to a high WKKK officer Mrs. Cook who had allegedly been shot by bootleggers because she had openly confronted them.²⁹¹ Women of the Klan also saw a connection between the issue of immigration and alcoholism. They complained that many immigrants earned money by selling alcohol during the Prohibition.²⁹² Klanswomen openly expressed discontent over the fact that immigrants kept breaking the law of the United States and endangered their families.

On the other hand, many critics of the Klan claimed that the idea of the purity of the home without alcohol seemed nice in theory, but that almost all Klansmen "were living impure lives themselves."²⁹³ Therefore, alcoholism and low morals were yet another issue where the rhetoric of the Klan differed from reality. Not only enemies of the Klan claimed that Klansmen were hypocrites. Even some Klanswomen were disgruntled with how many WKKK or KKK members behaved. Two hundred WKKK members in California reportedly promised to "purge the organization from dishonesty" and affiliated themselves with a local male chapter which was, in their opinion, "clean" and pure.²⁹⁴ It is very likely that it was them who spoke about their grievances to the press.

Prohibition Law Is Not a Success," *The News Journal* (20 Jul 1926) 14.

²⁸⁷ Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 19.

²⁸⁸ *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonsvokation*, 118.

²⁸⁹ "Women of Ku Klux Klan Endorse Corbette Fight Against Vice," *The Morning News Review* (30 Jul 1924) 1.

²⁹⁰ Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 108.

²⁹¹ "Ku Klux Services Held for Woman Dry Leader, Slain," *The Washington Post* (11 Sep 1925) 3.

²⁹² Goldberg, "The Ku Klux Klan in Madison, 1922-1927," 35. The Klan said that any foreigner who would oppose the National Prohibition Act should be deported: *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonsvokation*, 251.

²⁹³ *The Trail of the Serpent*, Likins, 26. The Klansman Ray Cook was arrested on a Prohibition charge, which further embarrassed the Klan: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 135.

²⁹⁴ "Women Join Klan Revolt," *Los Angeles Times* (12 Jul 1922) 12.

Instances of perpetrated violence against women or against men also shows the hypocrisy of the KKK or, even though on a much smaller scale, the WKKK. Both groups complained that many men did not treat women with respect, yet Klansmen treated many women even worse than that. The Klan attacked women who were not living the way women were traditionally supposed to. They hated it when women did not care for their children enough or when they were not loyal to their husbands. However, their belligerent reaction did not go unnoticed. One woman was lashed by the Klan. Another one was tied to a barrel and ordered to admit a scandal she had allegedly committed.²⁹⁵ Both Klan orders also turned its attention to husbands who had either cheated on their wives or who were regarded as enemies of the Klan. It did not occur to the Klan that the wife would suffer even more as a consequence. One such woman bemoaned the fact that Klansmen had murdered her husband.²⁹⁶ There is no denying that their actions were sometimes clearly out of line.

The critics of the Klan strongly opposed these violent attacks and the media happily wrote about their complaints. Dallas citizens, for example, signed a petition against the ruthless methods of the KKK.²⁹⁷ The opponents of the Invisible Empire claimed that the Klan overreacted most of the time. They also complained that many women supported violence of the KKK by either exaggerating on purpose or by lying about what had happened to them. According to them, Klansmen were trying to avenge something that was “only the fictions of an evil mind.”²⁹⁸

Women of the Ku Klux Klan did not differ in their sentiments from Klansmen very much even though their methods were not always the same. They were not as violent as men, but there were instances when they showed their aggression.²⁹⁹ There was talk of forming a KKK branch in 1922 to confront men “who [did not] do nice things males [were] supposed to do.” They probably suspected that men would fear such an organization. They were probably right. Quite a few men decided to talk to the media because they feared that the organization would target them.³⁰⁰ The most astonishing act of violence from the female auxiliary was publicly reported in 1923 in Oklahoma. The location is actually not that surprising because the Klan in

²⁹⁵ Barrel: “Klan Linked to Flogging of Woman in Alabama,” *New York Herald Tribune* (11 Jun 1927) 3. The lashed woman: “Klan is Blamed for Lashing White Woman,” *Afro-American* (25 Jun 1927) 1.

²⁹⁶ “Klan Leader Killed Husband, Says Widow at Harrin Inquest,” *The Sun* (4 Sep 1924) 1. Another man was targeted because he had failed to support his family. From: MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, 4.

²⁹⁷ Four hundred citizens were reported to have signed it: “Dallas Citizens Condemn Klan,” *San Antonio Light* (2 Apr 1922) 1.

²⁹⁸ “Race Riot in This City” *Washington Bee* (2 Aug 1919) 3.

²⁹⁹ Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 15. Blee, “Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement,” 68.

³⁰⁰ “York Women May Form Ku Klux Klan Branch,” *Hanover Evening Sun* (18 Oct 1922) 1.

Oklahoma was “famous” for kidnapping or flogging people in the 1920s.³⁰¹ Twelve women captured two men. The four heaviest allegedly sat on the duo and held them until the police arrived.³⁰² The article could have been an outright lie, but it was not the only instance of Klanswomen's ruthless aggression.

Women were targeted as well, if not more. Some members from one of the “predecessors” of the WKKK, the Ladies of the Invisible Empire, were reported to have whipped and beat up one woman.³⁰³ It probably happened because of the woman's alleged frivolous behavior. The WKKK and the KKK both had distaste for “flappers”, to them a generation of women with lax morals colored by modern culture. This paints a disturbing picture in that even women were not afraid to employ violent methods against people they considered immoral, albeit rarely. As Nancy MacLean puts it, both Klans were hostile to sexual emancipation, but were not always a foe of women's equality.³⁰⁴ Of course, Klansmen were fond of equality only when it was somehow advantageous for them.

However, the vast majority of women did not join the Klan for its violent methods. Many wanted to be active because they had previous experience with other societies or organizations. It was an opportunity for them to find new friends or to take part in various social activities the Klan organized. It has been argued that the Klan “succeeded on the local level because of the role it played as a social organization [...]. The Klan's weekly meetings easily could have been mistaken for those of any popular fraternal or civic group.”³⁰⁵ Many future Klanswomen believed that by joining the Klan they could do something good for the society they lived in. Klanswomen were tempted to believe that they could improve school education or get new job opportunities for their husbands by limiting immigration. To join the Klan was an opportunity to give back to the community they knew. They were influenced by the propaganda of the Klan, but were often misinformed. Kathleen Blee herself admits that many women were either “confused” or “led astray” by men.³⁰⁶ Some enlisted only to realize later that the Klan was not what they had thought.³⁰⁷

In spite of that, many were satisfied with what the Klan was and what it stood for.

³⁰¹ Newell Bringhurst, “The Ku Klux Klan in a Central California Community: Tulare County During the 1920s and 1930s,” *Southern California Quarterly* 82.4 (2000) 368. Or: “Night-Riding Reformers,” *The Outlook* (14 Nov, 1922) 1-8. Oklahoma as a violent KKK realm: Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 49-52.

³⁰² “Women's K.K.K. Raids Still and Captures 2 Men,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (25 Jun 1923) 1.

³⁰³ “Woman Beaten, Says Abduction to Lady K.K.K.,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (14 Sep 1922) 14.

³⁰⁴ MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, 116.

³⁰⁵ Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, 94. Or: Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 114.

³⁰⁶ Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 129. She believes this is a tendency to this day.

³⁰⁷ The same thing happened to men as well: “From Former Klansman,” *Evening Public Ledger* (24 Sep 1921) 4.

Especially quite a few Protestant groups and organizations affiliated themselves with the Klan to some degree, most notably the League of Protestant Women, the Daughters of America, and various female KKK mutations.³⁰⁸ Many women who decided to be involved with the Klan had been associated with the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).³⁰⁹ According to Kelli Kerbawy, the first WKKK leader, Lulu Markwell, had been the leader of the WCTU chapter in Arkansas for twenty years. Kerbawy also names a variety of other prominent WKKK members who used to be WCTU members.³¹⁰

The WCTU worked with black Americans, but cooperation with the Klan was theoretically possible because the Klan claimed that it was not an anti-black movement in the same way it purported it was not anti-Catholic.³¹¹ But the WKKK's actions and what its members were willing to publicly share indicate otherwise. One Klanswoman stated that marriage between whites and “negroes [was] worse than murder” and that the only way to prevent it would be by death penalty.³¹² Such brutal rhetoric was by no means exceptional even though Klansmen were more likely to cite dislike of blacks as a reason for supporting the Klan than women.³¹³ Nonetheless, there can be no doubt that the WKKK officially supported white supremacy in the sense that the group wanted separation of races and was strongly against interracial marriages.³¹⁴

Their rhetoric also depended on the region. The WKKK's focus in Portland was

³⁰⁸ Some of the organizations mentioned in: “Ku Klux Klan Kloncilium Backs Evans' Rule,” *The Washington Post* (3 Jun 1923) 1.

³⁰⁹ However, probably only those who were more radical because the WCTU, unlike the Klan, had black members and worked with immigrants: Blee, “Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement,” 68. The WCTU claimed that seventy five percent of the law enforcement problem was due to immigration and therefore the organization needed to “teach both native and foreign born total abstinence, Prohibition and respect for the law.” From: Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, 34. The WCTU received some support from the Klan in Oregon for example: Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 86.

³¹⁰ Like Myrtle Cook, Lillian Rouse, Lillian Sedwick and others. Ellen Curtis wanted to join the WCTU “but refrained due to her husband's drinking problem”: Kerbawy, *Knights in White Satin: Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 26. Barnes also mentions this connection: Barnes, “Another Look Behind the Masks: The Ku Klux Klan in Bentoville, Arkansas, 1922-1926.” 200. Or: Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 113-115.

³¹¹ They claimed that these groups were anti-Klan instead and that they had to react: “Thousand Here Listen As Klan Called Organization Built Up on Americanism,” *Santa Ana Register* (12 Aug 1924) 6. They said that the fact they supported white supremacy did not mean they were enemies of other races. But they also wanted to uphold the “White Race”. From: *Ideals of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 2.

³¹² “Marrying of Whites and Negroes is Worse Than Murder, Says Klan Woman,” *The Pittsburgh Courier* (7 Feb 1925) 3. They claimed that the “Klan [was] not anti-negro: it [was] the negro's friend.” But also that “[t]he Klan [was] eternally opposed to the mixing of the white and colored races.” From: *Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty*, White, 159. One of their most important documents also stated that the Republic was established by and for white men and women and should not fall “into the hands of an inferior race.”: *Ideals of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 4.

³¹³ Seltzer, Lopes, “The Ku Klux Klan: Reasons for Support or Opposition Among White Respondents,” 105.

³¹⁴ “Reasons Women Become Affiliated with Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,” *Bryan Daily Eagle* (15 Dec 1923) 2. They also wanted separation of church and state: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 61.

primarily on the purity of race according to Kenneth Jackson.³¹⁵ It is difficult to assess how big the Klan in Portland was though because, judging from newspaper articles from that time, the WKKK probably was not very active in the area.³¹⁶ The auxiliary had either a very limited membership or was not as effective and powerful as in Indiana or Ohio. Women in most other regions claimed that they were not racists, but reality was much different.

Indiana is an interesting case study because of how large the Klan was in the state. Although there are many reasons why women joined the Klan in Indiana, Kathleen Blee says that “we must be careful not to invent” them.³¹⁷ In other words, personal issues or troubled family histories could have been but did not have to be the reason why women decided to “enter” the organization. Blee also claims that the form of their activism was mostly defensive.³¹⁸ This is certainly connected to how they understood the world as being only “either” versus “or”, hence their perspective of “us” versus “them”. From their point of view, they only reacted to what the “other” had been doing all along. These women felt that their relatives and the entire country was in danger. This thought process led them to the conclusion that their families were worse off than in the past. Blee believes that it was their decision to blame the party responsible for their downfall that made them seek more extreme alternatives.³¹⁹ They simply believed they had no other choice but to do so.

On a more general level, it is important to realize that “[f]ear is highly salient in the racist movement.”³²⁰ Fear of immigration, Catholicism or simply of “others” were the main reason why women decided to join forces with Klansmen who had promised active confrontation. Even though it would be a mistake to call the Klan strictly a racist movement, it is undeniable that many members strongly believed that Anglo-Saxon Protestants were superior to Asian immigrants or black Americans. One of the key WKKK documents clearly stated that “this blood [should not be] polluted, but kept pure as a sacred heritage and thereby advance [...] where purity, Christianity, peace and prosperity reign[ed] supreme. This [was] one of the ultimate desires of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan.”³²¹

The Klan promoted the ability of “average citizens to influence the workings of society

³¹⁵ Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 220.

³¹⁶ The Klan in Ohio was probably one of the biggest in the country: Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 175. Or: “Klan and Church,” *Atlantic Monthly* (Nov 1923) 4.

³¹⁷ Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*, 29.

³¹⁸ Being a racist made them uneasy: Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*, 51. Their perspective was that they reacted to the world around them. They believed that they were not the aggressors, but the ones who had to defend themselves.

³¹⁹ Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*, 97.

³²⁰ Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*, 19.

³²¹ *America for Americans: As Interpreted by the Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 3.

and government.”³²² This has arguably always been a good recruiting tool the KKK uses to this day. The Klan spread and inflicted these fears through its propaganda, which played a huge factor in recruitments. The fact that many women had already known someone in the Klan or that they had prior experience with similar movements was very important as well. Many men and women did not know what to expect from the Klan and tried it out of sheer curiosity or entertainment. Others were interested because they believed that they could have pushed certain agenda through only if they had affiliated themselves with the organization.

4.2 What Types of Women Decided to Take Part?

The question “why women” begs automatically the question “what types of women”. Both are obviously intertwined and cannot be completely separated from each other. To find the correct answer to the second one is extremely difficult, even more difficult than to explain the first. The vast majority of primary sources did not discuss the background of WKKK members. Their focus was restricted to WKKK’s agenda or on crisp sensational stories.³²³ Anti-Klan sources and newspaper articles criticized the Klan in multiple respects, but also did not usually furnish the reader with any information about the trajectory of their path. They placed emphasis on the flaws of the movement, how and why what the (W)KKK was doing was wrong. They also reported on how many Klan members approximately took part in a parade, but failed to provide the reader with specific information about the typical life of a Klansman or Klanswoman.

However, one can agree with Kathleen Blee who claims that “[k]lanswomen still used a rhetoric of women's subordinate status and collective interests [...] mixed with racial, ethnic, religious and other appeals which defended the idea of white, Protestant American (native-born) women and men.” This enabled the WKKK to mobilize women from a “[v]ariety of employment and family backgrounds.”³²⁴ Women certainly had to be Protestant and native-born white Anglo-Saxons of American citizenship. WKKK members believed that Catholics were not loyal to the U.S. Constitution and that they took orders from foreign governments.³²⁵ Therefore, it is very difficult to imagine a Catholic or even non-American woman wanting to take part in the movement since they were hated so much. Historians have even shown that

³²² Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, 11.

³²³ Michael Emery, Edwin Emery eds. et al, *The Press and America*, vol VIII, 270. Already suggested in the introduction of this thesis.

³²⁴ Blee, “Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement,” 68.

³²⁵ “Reasons Women Become Affiliated with Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,” *Bryan Daily Eagle* (15 Dec 1923) 2. Or: *Ideals of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 3. Or: “Protestantism must be supreme: that Rome shall not rule America.” From: *Major Problems in American History, 1920-1945*, 158.

even though many women were active in the Klan despite living in areas with a clear white majority, their rhetoric suggested a clear disdain for minorities or immigrants.³²⁶

There were some exceptions, but it is important to know that they were exceptions and nothing more. Craig Fox claims that three foreign-born men were admitted to the Klan in 1924, arguably because they were willing to pay the fee and because they seemed “harmless”.³²⁷ The idea behind it also could be that their admittance might have served as a vindication. Critics complained that the Klan was explicitly racist and extremist and this was a propagandist opportunity to prove them wrong. After all, the Klan claimed its message was not one of hate, but one of love and harmony.³²⁸ However, stories of this type led to a plethora of accusations. One of them was that the Klan was led by Catholics in multiples states even though this had nothing to do with reality.³²⁹

Therefore, even if women had decided to admit a few non-Protestant members, which is highly unlikely nonetheless, it does not change the fact that the Klan was a Protestant organization. It also has nothing to do with how many Klanswomen were really aggressive towards immigrants or black Americans. One former WKKK officer bemoaned that it was too easy to join the order and that even bootleggers were involved in the Klan.³³⁰ She was right to a certain degree because the strictest rule was to pay the fee. Other conditions, e.g. to be a good Protestant and American, were very vague. Complaints about the quality of membership and other allegations cropped up from time to time, but it is questionable whether they were necessarily always true. They often came from the side of disappointed members or those who felt the Klan had betrayed its creed. On the other hand, newspaper advertisements which advised women to join the Klan were quite common.³³¹ It is not known how effective they were

³²⁶ Indiana being a good example. New York was a complete opposite because it was full of foreigners or Jews, but the Klan was not very successful in that area: Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 177.

³²⁷ Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, 110. Thomas Pegram stated that there were allegedly two Catholics and someone of Jewish descent in the Klan in Louisiana and possibly someone of foreign descent in Utah: Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 33. It was not, in theory, impossible even for a Catholic woman to become a part of the WKKK movement because the WKKK did not necessarily require its members to be affiliated with any particular church even though it was believed that every member should be Protestant. The main condition was to be of dependable character which basically meant to be Protestant: *Official Bulletin (Women of the Ku Klux Klan)*, Gill ed., 6-15. In theory, it was possible to hide their true religion and pretend like they were Protestants. Mormons were not considered Protestants also: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 96.

³²⁸ *A Fundamental Klan Doctrine*, 3.

³²⁹ “Klan Declared Catholic-led in Many States,” *The Sun* (28 Jun 1928) 1.

³³⁰ Her name was Carol Miller and she was allegedly followed by another two hundred WKKK members. She also claimed that the WKKK and KKK leadership was corrupt: “Now the Women Bolt the Klan,” *The Courier-News* (24 Mar 1926) 1. Other sources say similar things about the corruption in the KKK: “Recent Klan Called Frameup in Receivership Suit,” *The Indianapolis Star* (01 Jan 1923) 10.

³³¹ Such as: “All women interested in Women's Ku Klux Klan, write for information [...]” From: “Announcements,” *The Morning News* (14 Nov 1923) 12. The Klan thought that “many more citizens would join

as far as recruitments were concerned, but they certainly allowed the Klan and the WKKK to feel as omnipresent as possible. One thing is absolutely clear. These accusations showed discombobulations and inner tensions within the WKKK and ultimately within the entire movement.

Craig Fox in his *Everyday Klansfolk* also proves on multiple regional membership charts that it is a myth that solely “economic losers of the era” were involved in Klannish activities. Areas like Newaygo county had almost as many white collar as blue collar workers. Fox says that highly “trained professionals seemed unafraid and unashamed of affiliating with the Invisible Empire.”³³² Lawyers, teachers, clerks, ministers and salesmen were all members of the Klan in Knoxville, Tennessee.³³³ The Imperial Wizard Hiram Evans was a dentist.³³⁴ Leonard Moore has written that those who joined the Klan “represented in significant numbers every region of the state, every type of community, and virtually the entire socio-economic spectrum” and that the members “came from all walks of life.”³³⁵ It is true that few men of wealth or elite education affiliated with the Klan, but some did.³³⁶

Most Klanswomen, especially outside big cities, described themselves as housewives and the rest worked in workplaces traditionally reserved for women.³³⁷ This is hardly surprising since the Klan called for traditional womanhood, which meant that women were supposed to be at home raising children and doing housework. This needs to be counterposed to the fact that even educated women enrolled. For instance, some teachers were associated with the

our organizations if they were properly approached [...]“ From: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 38. Advertisements in the newspaper media were quite popular at that time: *The Press and America*, Emery et Emery, 296.

³³² Newaygo County is in Michigan: Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, 85-87. Leonard Moore agrees: Klansmen were not “marginal men who were concerned solely with the idea that they had been displaced in American life by ethnic minorities” because they “represented a wide cross section of white Protestant society and that their concerns could be traced to a complex array of social pressures and changes.” Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, 11.

³³³ Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 63. Barnes, “Another Look Behind the Masks: The Ku Klux Klan in Bentoville, Arkansas, 1922-1926.” 191. Dentists were members of the La Grande Klan in Oregon: *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Horowitz, 126-127. In Richmond, there were about three times less high white collar workers than low collar in the Klan, but they were there: Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, 117. Lawyers or doctors were Klansmen in other areas also: Roger Hux, “The Ku Klux Klan in Macon, 1919-1925,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 62.2 (1978) 156-157. David Horowitz, “The Klansman as Outsider: Ethnocultural Solidarity and Antielitism in the Oregon Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s,” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 80.1 (1989) 19.

³³⁴ Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 3.

³³⁵ Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, 45.

³³⁶ Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 240. The typical Klansmen “appeared less economically secure than the norm for his class”, but was better off than most blacks and many whites, yet he still felt vulnerable. From: MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, 59.

³³⁷ Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, 94.

WKKK.³³⁸ This is not shocking at all for two main reasons. First, the position of the teacher was a relatively typical job for a woman and for that reason female teachers were supported by the Klan. Secondly, education was considered one of the biggest priorities. Klansmen celebrated anyone and any teacher who was willing to do something for the next generation, at least as long as the teacher supported similar agenda as the Klan.

As has already been mentioned, the Klan was also a family organization. For example, ninety two percent Klansmen in Athens, Georgia were married and more than two thirds were fathers according to Nancy MacLean.³³⁹ Most women became members only after (and because) their husbands had enrolled. It could not have been the other way round because the Klan was at its peak just one or two years after the WKKK had been founded. Many men had already been members by that time, their wives only followed them. Other women were interested because of their brothers, fathers or other family relatives.³⁴⁰ Single women were often present in the WKKK as well, but it seems probable that even they knew someone who had already been a member simply because such form of recruitment was much quicker, easier and simply more common.

The Klan was an activist movement. Its members wanted to mobilize people in their communities. This was typical for many other activist groups as well.³⁴¹ Many Klanswomen were also members of other groups, organizations or movements. David Chalmers has written that “[t]he Klan had appealed to many women who had been active in their communities. Some of them had fought in the great Prohibition and women's suffrage campaigns [...]”. He has arrived at the conclusion that the “Klan drew political activists” as a result.³⁴² Anne Scott claims that women, especially (former) members of various church organizations, routinely cooperated with each other and their organizations were often interrelated.³⁴³

First of all, many of the future Klanswomen had been involved in unofficial Klan affiliates before the WKKK was founded in 1923. Secondly, many had been active in other Protestant organizations. This will not take anyone aback since many Americans, women included, were used to being involved in their community.³⁴⁴ Kelli Kerbawy also stresses the

³³⁸ Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, 96.

³³⁹ MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, 10.

³⁴⁰ Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 150.

³⁴¹ Anne Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1991) 183.

³⁴² Chalmers, *Notes on Writing the History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 63. Masatomo Ayabe, “Ku Kluxers in a Coal Mining Community: A Study of the Ku Klux Klan Movement in Williamson County, Illinois, 1923-1926,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 102.1 (1998) 88.

³⁴³ Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History*, 85.

³⁴⁴ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 117. They were also used to helping others in their community: Handlin, *The Uprooted*,

religious aspect: “[t]he most common denominator in women's involvement was church affiliation.”³⁴⁵ It was asserted in one newspaper article that a WKKK organizer Daisy Barr transferred seventy five thousand members of the Queens of the Golden Mask, for which she had previously worked, to the WKKK in Indiana.³⁴⁶ The number seems to be a huge stretch, but there may have been some overlap. Thirdly, the Klan placed emphasis on so many issues and tried to tackle them, from immigration and bad morality to womanhood and education, that it was only logical that many people or activist groups found at least something appealing about the KKK and WKKK.

Despite all the aforementioned reasons why various women decided to join the Klan, there were two factors more important than the rest. First, the Klan was very good at disseminating propaganda among its supporters. Its rhetoric was crowd-mobilizing and replete with persuasion. It was also very simple in the fact that it worked with the notion of “duality” of one central group (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant) against marginalized groups which clearly differed. Kathleen Blee summarized it best when she wrote the following: “[s]imilarly, the mainstay of the 1920s Klan was not the pathological individual: rather the Klan effectively tapped a pathological vein of racism, intolerance, and bigotry deep within the white Protestant population.”³⁴⁷

Oscar Handlin believes that the harm from what was said by the Klan came not because it was based on eccentricities, but because the content was full of “extreme statements of beliefs long on the margin of acceptance by many Americans.”³⁴⁸ Klansmen and Klanswomen blamed their problems on Immigrants, Catholics, Jews or black Americans and always put stress on one of these depending on their current struggles. What also distinguished them was the fact that they took everything as read. They simply accepted given statements or slogans as absolute truth.

Secondly, their families were an important basis of recruitment because many of their relatives had already been involved in Klannish activities when women became eligible for membership in the WKKK. The Klan was very effective in establishing the sense of brotherhood and “sisterhood” through its structure and rhetoric. Lastly, many were just curious

232. Ayabe, “Ku Kluxers in a Coal Mining Community: A Study of the Ku Klux Klan Movement in Williamson County, Illinois, 1923-1926,” 89-90.

³⁴⁵ Kerbawy, *Knights in White Satin: Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 7.

³⁴⁶ “Charge Against Woman Pastor,” *The Call-Leader* (03 Jan 1924) 6. She also was a founder of the Indiana YWCA: Kerbawy, *Knights in White Satin: Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 28.

³⁴⁷ Blee, “Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan,” 606. The differences between its rhetoric and actions have puzzled historians over the years: Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 221.

³⁴⁸ Handlin, *The Uprooted*, 250.

and decided to join the organization, albeit only for a while. Social activities were very popular among Klansmen and Klanswomen, but they do not really say much about why people became involved; they mostly explain why they found the group's activities entertaining and why some remained in the movement for a longer period of time. Instead, beliefs and ideology of the Klan – which in many aspects (except their radicalism) did not differ from many Protestant or other community organizations – were much more effective to convince others to enroll.

The majority of those who joined the Klan did not have elite education, but to say that all Klansmen or Klanswomen lacked education or were “dumb” would be a huge simplification.³⁴⁹ Most were just frustrated with the socio-economic situation and looked for their way out. The Klan offered them the opportunity to focus on their frustrations as well as on other people who struggled in the same vein they did. (W)KKK leaders promised action and allowed members to express their grievances in an environment which was supportive of them and which held the same worldview as they did. The Klan was appealing in that it divided the world “along the imagined lines of race, sex and age.”³⁵⁰ However, the Klan was able to deliver and satisfy most of its members only for a little while before it disintegrated as a result of corruption and a ton of scandals. The twofold face of the Klan offered only a short solution, nothing more.

³⁴⁹ Especially taking into consideration that education in the 1920s was much more limited than it is today even though, for example, the number of high schools increased dramatically over the years: Christine Erickson, “We Want no Teachers Who Say There Are Two Sides to Every Question: Conservative Women and Education in the 1930s,” *History of Education Quarterly* 46.4 (2006): 489.

³⁵⁰ MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, 75.

5. The Importance of Women for the Movement

5.1 Their Work

Klansmen stressed that the Klan was a family-oriented organization and, therefore, had to integrate women into various social activities. The Invisible Empire placed emphasis on activism as well. The Klan believed that every American man and woman needed to perform some sort of useful work.³⁵¹ The word “useful” in this context meant that all members of the (W)KKK were supposed to come to terms with their role in the movement, in their families. It goes without saying that they needed to pledge their allegiance to the “Protestant” United States of America. For that reason, Klanswomen were mainly expected to take care of their families, behave like loving Protestant Christians and recruit new members.

This is why the WKKK focused on education so much. One of the first pages of their publication *America for Americans* stressed the qualities the U.S. education supposedly had over other countries.³⁵² On the other hand, the (W)KKK did not feel about the system as confidently as in the past. They strived to protect their families and ensure that the future of their children would be bright. They did not want them to attend the same schools as children of Catholics or Jews. Moreover, they hoped that one day their children would join the Klan.

As far as school education was concerned, Klan members complained that public schools were being threatened by the very existence of “un-American” Catholic parochial schools. They supported this claim with statistics. They stated in 1924 that there were 6,388 Catholic elementary schools with almost two million pupils.³⁵³ According to the historian McVeigh, their estimate could not have been far from the truth. He claims that there were almost nine thousand Catholic schools in the U.S. at that time, which was more than in the past.³⁵⁴ The Klan came down heavily on Catholic teachers and Catholic schools for not having been able to integrate immigrants and for their failure to instill American values.³⁵⁵ Paradoxically, McVeigh continues, just like WKKK members mostly fought against immigration in areas with a limited number of immigrants, their activities against parochial schools were more likely to occur in states with a high percentage of students enrolled in public schools.³⁵⁶

³⁵¹ “Citizenship for our American young women includes the essential duty of motherhood, and for our young men the duty of the creation and support of a family.” The quote is from: *The Klan Unmasked*, Simmons, 282.

³⁵² More in: *America for Americans: As Interpreted by the Women of the Ku Klux Klan*, 2.

³⁵³ *Catholic, Jew, Ku Klux Klan: What They Believe Where They Conflict*, George Clason ed. (Chicago: Nutshell publishing co., 1924) 48. From: <<https://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/catholicjewkkk.pdf>>. Last accessed: April 7, 2018. They complained about it for example in Indiana: “Klan and Church,” *Atlantic Monthly* (Nov 1923) 5-6.

³⁵⁴ McVeigh, *Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 119.

³⁵⁵ McVeigh, *Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 119-126.

³⁵⁶ McVeigh, *Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 178.

Klanswomen and Klansmen demanded that a department of education should be set up because they believed it would grant more national aid to public schools and, therefore, weaken the parochial school as an institution.³⁵⁷ Even though they failed in this regard, Klanswomen certainly boasted about every single achievement they “accomplished”, the topic of education was no different. The *Official Bulletin* of the WKKK proudly reported in 1927 that in “a Kansas town of 25,000 population, a Klanswoman [was] director of Religious Education.”³⁵⁸ They wanted to “return” the Bible to schools and were willing to do everything in their powers to achieve it.³⁵⁹ Having Klanswomen or Klansmen in more or less important positions was one way how to get there.

However, Klanswomen were so vocal about the issue that nonmembers complained that the (W)KKK wanted to control schools. One woman even complained that they wanted her to join the movement. The media quickly picked up her story and reported it.³⁶⁰ “Aliens” were correct to a large extent. Both Klan branches indeed wanted to have influence over how education was being run. Their reasoning was simple. Good public schools needed to thrive if moral and Protestant Anglo-Saxon America was to survive. They did quite a lot to achieve it as some historians have shown. They visited public schools to distribute Bibles, attempted to get Catholic or non-American teachers fired, pushed for racial segregation in schools, or tried to run for school boards to push their agenda through.³⁶¹

School education was of the utmost importance to the WKKK, but extracurricular “moral education” played its part as well. Klansmen set up the so-called “Junior” order for boys not old enough to join the Klan in 1924 and Klanswomen soon followed their lead by establishing “Tri-K Klub” for younger girls.³⁶² The reason was simple. These women wanted

³⁵⁷ *Catholic, Jew, Ku Klux Klan: What They Believe Where They Conflict*, 48. Or: Laats, “Red Schoolhouse, Burning Cross: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and Educational Reform,” 328. The U.S. Department of Education was established much later (in the late 1970s).

³⁵⁸ *Official Bulletin (Women of the Ku Klux Klan)*, Gill ed., 4. Whether that was true or not is very difficult to find out, but according to Kenneth Barnes one Klanswoman was president of the School Improvement Association: Barnes, “Another Look Behind the Masks: The Ku Klux Klan in Bentoville, Arkansas, 1922-1926.” 200.

³⁵⁹ They demanded that the Bible should be read in school each and every day: Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 19. The effort: “We are prepared to do all in our power to protect and promote the welfare of the Public School System.” From: “Women Separately Organized But Leaders Are Affiliated,” *The Bridgeport Telegram* (06 Oct 1924) 10. They protested against secularization and against theories of evolution. They were not the only ones. The Scopes trial, in which the high school teacher J. Scopes was accused of teaching human evolution, attracted a lot of attention in 1925: Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, 168-248.

³⁶⁰ “School Control Sought by Klan,” *The Atlanta Constitution* (26 Oct 1924) 1.

³⁶¹ Blee, “Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement,” 70. Laats, “Red Schoolhouse, Burning Cross: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and Educational Reform,” 338. Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 117.

³⁶² 1924: *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonyokation*, 74. They voted to do so already in 1923: Kristina DuRocher, *Raising Racists* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2011) 83-85. The fee for the Junior order was three dollars: Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, 100.

to educate younger girls or teenagers outside the classroom about womanhood and Americanism. One WKKK officer was reported to have said that it was their “purpose to bring the young women of today who [would] become the mothers of tomorrow into a sense of responsibility [...] if the womanhood of America [was] to be kept clean.”³⁶³ In other words, they wanted their children to “think right.”³⁶⁴ This, of course, meant that they had to be raised according to the rigid beliefs of their parents.

Yet, nobody knows how many children were in the Junior or Tri-K Klub. It can only be suggested that the number was limited because both were founded shortly before the Klan's sharp drop in membership and popularity. Also mostly children of the members were initiated (or forced to join by their parents), but children of nonmembers not so much. Kathleen Blee adds that children who were in the Klan were supposed to help attract their parents to join if they had not already done so.³⁶⁵ However, it is difficult to see how these children were not mostly exceptions because the majority of parents would not have allowed their children to be associated with the Klan unless they had become members themselves.

The *Ashbury Park Press* reported that one hundred and seventy five young boys entered the Junior Klan while another three hundred were watching the spectacle.³⁶⁶ Whether it was reported accurately or whether the Klan just put on a show to confuse the public and the press is a whole different issue. Kathleen Blee says that the Kokomo chapter in Indiana counted four hundred boys in a city with two and a half thousand WKKK and seven and a half thousand KKK members.³⁶⁷ Again, nobody knows whether these numbers are correct or not because the press often did not possess the correct information. In addition, the Klan tended to lie about the total membership or attendance numbers, often just like the press. The numbers of the Tri-K Klub are even a bigger mystery. It is highly likely that there were not as many girls initiated, but it is difficult to back it up with facts except for the fact that the WKKK was nowhere near as widespread as the male Klan. But it is known that even they sometimes marched in parades with their mothers.³⁶⁸

Parades, ceremonies and inaugurations, picnics or funerals were all events which emphasized the importance of women in the KKK movement. Simply, the “WKKK, like the KKK, specialized in ritual and spectacle” in order to strengthen solidarity among members and

³⁶³ Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi*, 76.

³⁶⁴ Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, 100.

³⁶⁵ Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 162.

³⁶⁶ “175 Boys Enter Junior K.K.K. Rank,” *Ashbury Park Press* (27 Dec 1923) 1.

³⁶⁷ Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 158-159.

³⁶⁸ DuRocher, *Raising Racists*, 85.

to increase recruitment.³⁶⁹ Their “function” also was to put the difference between them and outsiders on display. According to Kathleen Blee, weddings, funeral services and christening ceremonies “served [...] to create a sense of the totality of the Klan world and to present a politically palatable alternative.”³⁷⁰ The inclusion of women made the entire experience more complete, believable and even enjoyable. It was important to demonstrate the unity to other members as well as to the outside world especially when it was being questioned in view of multiple scandals.

Many of the festivals, rallies or picnics were based on anti-Catholic propaganda or on anti-vice activities.³⁷¹ Not everyone knew that though. It could have seemed like a harmless activity to some people. Sometimes women had their own events or parades and other times women and men took part at the same time. Ceremonies or picnics prepared by women who supported the Klan were nothing new. Elizabeth Tyler, whose chief interest was baby hygiene, had already organized a “Better Babies” Parade before the WKKK was even established.³⁷²

Charity events were maybe even more important than marches in steering public opinion. Women were very active in this regard and tried to be as visible as possible. Klanswomen were reported multiple times to have delivered baskets with food to “bring happiness to Protestant households.”³⁷³ They also made public donations to Protestant church.³⁷⁴ These contributions were probably sincere. After all, to be unselfish was their principle; the motto of the Klan was “Non Silba Sed Anthar” – not for self, but for others.³⁷⁵ But Kathleen Blee claims that their efforts were “directed at worthy individuals” or organizations.³⁷⁶ In other words, their work must have made sense for them and the Klan.

Indeed, they were mostly involved in donations which were more tactical than anything else. It was claimed in *The Eagle* that Klanswomen had given twenty five dollars to a black church.³⁷⁷ The article could easily be dismissed as a sensational story or as an hoax. But the Klan claimed it was all-loving and this was just another example of how they sought to prove

³⁶⁹ Blee, “Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement,” 69.

³⁷⁰ Blee, “Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement,” 69.

³⁷¹ Blee, “Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement,” 69-70.

³⁷² Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan in American Politics*, 6.

³⁷³ They dressed up as Santas during Christmas: “Klan Help Santa in His Work,” *Altoona Mirror* (26 Dec 1923) 22. Kathleen Blee says that they even brought milk to public school children: Blee, “Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement,” 70.

³⁷⁴ “Klanswomen Act as Santa Claus,” *Jackson County Banner* (31 Dec 1924) 1. Or: “Klan Women Give 15 Dollars to Church Fund,” *Woodland Daily Democrat* (29 Jun 1926) 1.

³⁷⁵ *Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*, 7. MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, 85.

³⁷⁶ Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 142.

³⁷⁷ “Ku Klux Klan Visits Negro Church Meet 25 Dollar Donation,” *The Eagle* (09 Jun 1923) 2.

it and how to clear their name. Their help was sometimes less “direct” than that though. On one occasion, the WKKK promised to give a reward provided someone's lost daughter was found.³⁷⁸ In general, one can assume that Klanswomen gave away money or food quite often because the minutes of the male Oregon Klan, the KKK paper *Imperial Night-Hawk* and primary sources of the WKKK show how much they cared about their fellow Protestant citizens and also that they wanted to maintain a respectable public image in order to recruit new members or remain united.

At the core of their work lied something which could be described as “defense” of the Klan's ideology. They cooperated with women from other groups or organizations, especially with members from church and anti-alcohol movements. They were ardent Protestants who cast aspersions on Catholics and Jews. Their relationship with black Americans was, at best, complicated. The issue they fought against the most was immigration and Catholicism. Male Klan viewed these people, to them enemies or aliens, in the same vein – if not worse. They claimed the Invisible Empire preached love, but they clearly held these people in contempt.

Lastly, just as they wanted to help other Protestants, they were ready to go against non-Protestants. Klanswomen were active in multiple boycotts organized by Klansmen.³⁷⁹ Rory McVeigh said that the Klan organized “economic boycotts against businesses that owned or employed immigrants, Catholics, Jews” or sometimes even women.³⁸⁰ The way the Klan saw it, women were supposed to fulfill their traditional gender role in the household instead of working for a businessman. Tom Rice and David Chalmers have expanded on this by saying that Klanswomen even spread vile rumors about non-Klan businesses.³⁸¹ Funnily enough, the (W)KKK stated that boycotting was illegal and that the Klan did not advocate boycotts. On the other hand, they also said that it was their privilege to do business by preference with fellow Klansmen.³⁸² The paradox and hypocrisy is obvious. Kathleen Blee believes that this approach was mostly effective in smaller cities or communities because it was often advertised through local newspapers.³⁸³ So, even if they had not been actively involved in the boycott, they supported Klansmen who were.

³⁷⁸ *Official Bulletin (Women of the Ku Klux Klan)*, Gill ed., 3.

³⁷⁹ “The Klan's Fundamental Evil,” *El Paso Herald* (19 Feb 1923) 15. Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 15.

³⁸⁰ McVeigh, “Structural Incentives for Conservative Mobilization: Power Devaluation and the Rise of the Ku Klux Klan, 1915-1925,” 15.

³⁸¹ Tom Rice, “The True Story of the Ku Klux Klan: Defining the Klan Through Film,” *Journal of American Studies* 42.3 (2008) 481. Chalmers, *Notes on Writing the History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 19. Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 169.

³⁸² *Thirty-Three Questions Answered*, 18-19.

³⁸³ Blee, “Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement,” 71. One such example: “Klansmen and Klanswomen,” *The Richmond Item* (06 Oct 1924) 4.

5.2 Women and Legitimacy of the Movement

All the work women carried out for the Klan solidified the Ku Klux Klan, just as the sheer existence of the WKKK did. According to Craig Fox, the Klan was “everywhere” owing to its wide range of interests. There was “no escaping the Klan” especially in “the rural small towns in which it had taken root.”³⁸⁴ The fact that rallies played part in its visibility goes without saying. The Klan simply needed to incorporate men as well as women to become a true “social organization.”³⁸⁵

This is why women often paraded with men in the past despite not having been actual members at that particular juncture. Among other things, it created confusion because journalists and their readers could not have possibly known whether these women were an integral part of the Klan or not.³⁸⁶ Their presence made the spectacle more intimidating. In addition, women in robes attracted attention. Members of the Klan had a decent opportunity to boast about their numbers when they saw reports claiming that thousands of Klanswomen had paraded through a certain city even though these numbers must have been overestimates.³⁸⁷ From this perspective, any publicity was viewed in positive light. Even though there were not as many Klanswomen or women supporting the Klan as there were men, their existence and support still made the Klan seem larger, more powerful and omnipresent. Nancy MacLean has clearly stated that their sheer “[n]umbers [...] created a legitimacy of their own.”³⁸⁸

Charity and solidarity displayed by women was supposed to present the Klan as a peaceful and loving movement. In other words, “[e]xamining the Ku Klux Klan during the 1920s reveals how bigotry can insinuate itself into harmless everyday activities – parades, church suppers, weddings, and picnics.”³⁸⁹ Leonard Moore adds the following: “[s]ocial activities planned specifically for the women's and junior organizations provided additional opportunities for the Klan to present itself as a respectable community group.”³⁹⁰ The WKKK

³⁸⁴ Also: “The Klan was in business, it was in politics, in church, in the fraternal lodges and social clubs, in the diners, the billiard halls, the cinemas, the post offices, in the schoolhouses, and even at home.” All from: Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, 113.

³⁸⁵ Every major Klan demonstration and rally included an appearance by Klanswomen. All from: Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, 100.

³⁸⁶ “Look Like Women's Ku Klux Klan,” *Marble Hill Press* (28 Dec 1922) 6.

³⁸⁷ The *Joplin Globe* reported that three thousand Klanswomen paraded in Texas in June 1923. From: “3,000 Klan Women Parade in Texas,” *Joplin Globe* (09 Jun 1923) 1. It could have been true (even though highly unlikely), but it is important to bear in mind that most of these estimates were very inflated and exaggerated. Nobody from the spectators counted the exact numbers.

³⁸⁸ MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, 10.

³⁸⁹ Hatle, Vaillancourt, “One Flag, One School, One Language: Minnesota's Ku Klux Klan in the 1920,” 370.

³⁹⁰ Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, 101. Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 22.

encouraged this type of behavior by not being overtly physically aggressive or violent unless it was absolutely necessary in order to defend themselves or unless it was an exception. They tried to defuse the situation more often than not.

Moreover, Klanswomen “strengthened the group's claim that it was a family-oriented organization that promoted sociability.” Some historians believe that the Klan's “power was devastating precisely because it was so well integrated into family life.”³⁹¹ One WKKK officer formulated it best when she said that the “great danger [was] not in our enemies,” but in weakened friends and families driven to desperation.³⁹² It obviously helped their cause that they were active in so many areas intertwined with daily life. For instance, wives and mothers of local Klansmen took part in “missionary societies of their churches.”³⁹³ Not only did they want to prove through activities of this type that they were ardent Protestants, but also that they deeply cared about their local community. At the end of the day, as Craig Fox has so eloquently put it, the robes were not at the heart of the KKK, but the ordinary lives of the communities were.³⁹⁴

The minutes of the local Klan in Oregon prove it as well even though the transcript comes only from the meetings of the male Klan. The source indicates that Klansmen paid the utmost attention to the life in their neighborhood, whether it was politics, racial and social issues, or local economy. However, it is also true that they often connected local issues to macro-political problems. They often blamed any decreases in economic productivity in the area on immigration or Jews and inequality in education on Catholics.³⁹⁵ At the same time, they told others that they had “nothing against any individual or group of citizens.”³⁹⁶ As some already mentioned primary sources of the WKKK suggest, women did not feel much differently.³⁹⁷

In reality, they may have cared about their communities even more. Unlike Klansmen they were not as violent and talked more about providing good education for their children. Although they faced various allegations and some of their leaders were sued, the controversies which surrounded WKKK individuals were not as problematic. In addition, Klanswomen often were the primary organizers of social events, such as picnics, weddings or other important festivities. Their work legitimized them in the eyes of the general public, but especially in the

³⁹¹ Hatle, Vaillancourt, “One Flag, One School, One Language: Minnesota's Ku Klux Klan in the 1920,” 363.

³⁹² “Reasons Women Become Affiliated with Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,” *Bryan Daily Eagle* (15 Dec 1923) 2.

³⁹³ MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, 8.

³⁹⁴ Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, 113.

³⁹⁵ McVeigh, *Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 66.

³⁹⁶ “200 Ku Klux Klan Members in Robes Attend Service,” *The Washington Post* (25 Jan 1926) 1.

³⁹⁷ Men: *A Fundamental Klan Doctrine*, 3. Women: *Women of America! The Past! The Present! The Future!*, Gill,

eyes of the male Klan. Klansmen wanted women to be active and support their cause. On the other hand, they wanted to preserve their dominance over women – which they did.

Klanswomen were as radical as Klansmen in many respects. Strange as it may be, their beliefs and opinions solidified the Klan to a certain degree, too. It is not that difficult to imagine that even some nonmembers despised people who were not born in the United States, but who lived in the country notwithstanding. Some Protestants certainly did not like Catholics even though their rhetoric did not necessarily have to be so brutal. The KKK took advantage. An author of one of the articles in the Klan paper from Indiana, the *Fiery Cross*, confidently believed that the Invisible Empire was “the crystallization of a sentiment, or thought of ages, that ha[d] taken concrete form.”³⁹⁸

The Klan often quoted others when they shared the same or similar opinions, for example about immigration, as the Klan.³⁹⁹ It was written in 1923 that “[i]f the Ku Klux Klan [was] against the Jews, so [were] half of the good hotels.” The Klan immediately reprinted this audacious and incisive statement in their *Dawn* journal according to David Chalmers.⁴⁰⁰ They reacted in this manner on a regular basis to demonstrate that they were not a hate group and that they did not differ from others that much. However, they wanted to show that they were willing to take action. One pastor criticized those who were passive by saying that the root of the biggest problem was “the failure of a great mass of Christian people to take sides.”⁴⁰¹ This explains why some radical Protestant clergymen supported Klansmen despite their flaws or bad reputation. Some of them had also been recruited directly by the Klan and offered free membership and the position of a Kludd, an official Klan chaplain.⁴⁰² Klansmen and Klanswomen, unlike many others, were not afraid to take matters into their own hands and were loud and ardent defenders of the Protestant cause.

Most of their contemporaries would have steadfastly disagreed with an assessment of this sort and would have refuted it right away. They viewed the Klan as a group full of lunatics and radical bigots. Their attacks were directed mostly at men though. The fact that the Klan incorporated women and that women supported Klansmen was used by the Klan to make the organization seem more peaceful and less violent or radical. However, Klansmen also used women to their own advantage. D.C. Stephenson, the Indiana Klan leader, later owned up to

³⁹⁸ “The Klan A Crystallization of Thought Held for Ages,” *The Fiery Cross* (28 Sep 1923) 12.

³⁹⁹ *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, 1.34 (1923) 2.

⁴⁰⁰ Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 1.

⁴⁰¹ “Prohibition’s Deadliest Enemy Is Subject of Sermon by Dr. Belk,” *The Orlando Sentinel* (18 May 1926) 10. He referred to Prohibition, but other pastors applauded Klansmen for their active approach.

⁴⁰² Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 34.

the fact that some women had been “maintained and used to trap men who opposed the Klan.”⁴⁰³ To make it more convoluted however, critics of the Klan complained that women exaggerated and “fabricated” assaults upon other women which had never happened.⁴⁰⁴

It is true that rhetoric of many Klanswomen was often filled with hatred and vitriol just like that of Klansmen. Therefore, women legitimized the Klan in two ways. First, they organized or at least took part in seemingly peaceful events such as charity meetings or picnics to have fun. By doing so, they presented the Klan as a nonviolent community organization. Secondly, they tried to protect their families and communities against what they regarded as potential threats and were not reluctant to be radical when doing so.

Their legitimacy was strengthened by the fact that Klansmen kept repeating that the WKKK would be (or later was) a separate body. It could have seemed to the outside world as if they had held no influence over the women's organization. It was a lie, but “outsiders” cannot not have known that. It became more obvious only when Klanswomen and some Klansmen began arguing among themselves when they felt that the WKKK was not as independent as had been promised. As disputes among Klanswomen themselves and between the KKK and WKKK became more and more public, the legitimacy of the auxiliary started to evaporate. But until then, albeit only for a little while, Klanswomen “were the legitimators of the Klan, the covert manipulators of electoral plots [sic!], the cultural organizers of a Klan world, and the force behind the attempt to 'Protestantize' the public schools of the 1920s.”⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰³ “Klan Used Women to Trap Enemies Says Stephenson,” *The Washington Post* (03 Apr 1928) 3.

⁴⁰⁴ “Race Riot in This City” *Washington Bee* (2 Aug 1919) 3

⁴⁰⁵ Blee, “Women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan Movement,” 70. The phrase “covert manipulators of electoral plots” simply means that they could change the outcome of, especially local, election by voting for the same candidate of swaying others to vote for that candidate.

6. Later Klan Interpretations: Women a Rarity? No Regrets

6.1 Klanswomen Interpret Their Role in the 1920s: Kathleen Blee's Interviews

Kathleen Blee conducted multiple interviews in the mid-1980s with women from Indiana who used to be in the WKKK in the 1920s. She concluded that it was very difficult for them to elucidate why they had decided to become members. They usually talked in more depth only when they were pressed to do so simply because they did not find anything extraordinary about the Klan and did not understand why Blee was asking those questions.⁴⁰⁶ This is not shocking at all. After all, their writings reflected similar patterns.⁴⁰⁷ They viewed themselves and other members as normal and typical representatives of Protestant America. Blee is of the opinion that women who did not trust her often said that they had been forced to join the Klan.⁴⁰⁸ It is possible that they did so not to look as extremists or maybe because they really believed that their surroundings had put a lot of pressure on them. They also stated that it had been necessary to join in order find a shelter from civil dangers.⁴⁰⁹ They remembered the experience with pride and swiftly denied any allegations suggesting that the Klan had perpetrated violence.

However, their rhetoric was still radical and divisive. They spoke about the contrast between “us” and “them”. Some women even said that “all the better people” had been in the Klan.⁴¹⁰ The interviewees also failed to comprehend why later generations viewed the Klan so negatively. They often stressed that the 1920s KKK had no longer been the Reconstruction Klan, just like today's Klans claim they are not the organization from the late 1860s.⁴¹¹

Kathleen Blee has come to a conclusion that “[w]hat distinguishe[d] the words of these racist women [...] [was] not their conclusion that the family [had been] dying but their choice of the party responsible for its downfall.”⁴¹² Klanswomen thought that other groups or people had been responsible for their failures. The Klan had become their “second” family as a result. Something similar was recorded by Klan detractors in the 1920s.⁴¹³ Many of them believed that the Klan simply needed a scapegoat because they were not able to explain their struggles in more complex terms.

One woman directly told Kathleen Blee that “[o]nce you g[o]t into the KKK, it bec[ame]

⁴⁰⁶ Blee, “Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lesson From Oral Histories of the Klan,” 601.

⁴⁰⁷ *Women of America! The Past! The Present! The Future!*, Gill, 3.

⁴⁰⁸ Blee, “Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lesson From Oral Histories of the Klan,” 602.

⁴⁰⁹ Blee, “Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lesson From Oral Histories of the Klan,” 602.

⁴¹⁰ Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 1-3.

⁴¹¹ On the other hand, they were and often still are proud of their Reconstruction predecessor: *Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*, 15-16. Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 4.

⁴¹² Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*, 97.

⁴¹³ *Ku Klux Klan*, Julia Johnsen ed., 48. *The Modern Ku Klux Klan*, Fry, 81.

your whole family.”⁴¹⁴ A different and at that time supposedly still active Klanswoman said that “It [was] not so much that I [was] in the Klan [...] the Klan [was] in me.” Members started to depend on the Klan, which made it more difficult to pull away and eventually abandon the organization.⁴¹⁵ On the other hand, other stories of thousands of people who had joined the Klan to leave it shortly afterwards tell a different story. The examples they provide would suggest that at least some women always had a choice, but they either did not want to change or they internally believed that it was impossible.

Also, it is true that once someone gets in, it is virtually impossible to defect and clear one's name. The Klan will always know who they are. However, this issue is more modern. It is much easier for Klan leaders to control membership in today's world than it was in the 1920s when the membership fluctuated so much and when there was no advanced technology. In addition, it is true that nonmembers can discover the secret past of those who previously joined.⁴¹⁶ But this phenomenon is also mostly tied to more recent Klans than to the (W)KKK in the 1920s.

Secondly, the Klan was very effective when it came to propaganda or falsifying information. They utilized very catchy terms or slogans. One Klanswoman said that “[o]nce you start[ed] listening to white music, becoming familiar with the lyrics, you repeat[ed] them, you start[ed] to believe them.”⁴¹⁷ Blee's interviews only confirm what written primary sources suggest. The common feeling of brotherhood or sisterhood among members was strengthened by various slogans, titles and phrases beginning with the letter “K”, or offensive language which further radicalized members. Klansmen to this day use the same tactics to secure their position as defenders of the honest and moral America.

Nonetheless, the fact is that most WKKK members Blee talked to said that their

⁴¹⁴ Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*, 130.

⁴¹⁵ Blee, “Becoming a Racist: Women in Contemporary Ku Klux Klan and Neo-Nazi Groups,” 693. Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 156.

⁴¹⁶ David Duke could be used as an example. He became leader of one of the Klans in the 1970s and is to this day introduced as a former Grand Wizard: Glenn Kessler, “Donald Trump and David Duke: For the Record,” *The Washington Post* (Mar 1, 2016). From: <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2016/03/01/donald-trump-and-david-duke-for-the-record/>>. Last accessed: April 7, 2018. For casual members, the scope of the problem would have been much different than for somebody as famous as Mr. Duke, but the basic tendency would have remained the same.

⁴¹⁷ She also said the following: “The more you associate[d] with a certain crowd of people, the more you start[ed] to adapt their sense of style.” All from: Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*, 168. The phrase “white music” probably refers to music with anti-black rhetoric and sentiment. Some of their songs: *Musiklan* (Little Rock: Imperial Headquarters, 1926). From: <<http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/pdfgen/exportPDF.php?bibid=2107206&solrid=3577033>>. Last accessed: May 11, 2017. Other songs mentioned in: Jacobs, “Co-Opting Christian Chorales: Songs of the Ku Klux Klan,” 371.

experience with the Klan had been or still was a positive one is of the utmost importance.⁴¹⁸ The fact that these women were unable to comprehend how someone from Indiana would not share their racist views shows that they were unable to see things from a different perspective than their own. This mode of thinking, easily identifiable in Klannish pamphlets or in multiple transcripts of their meetings, was simply a reflection of the Klan's ideology, which had been very condescending and transparent because it had clearly identified divisions between “us” and “them” or “the other”. Both Kathleen Blee and Rory McVeigh claim that this simplified rhetoric is exactly why the Klan was so powerful in the past.⁴¹⁹ There is no reason not to believe them.

6.2 Women Neglected: Present-Day Interpretation

Women of the Ku Klux Klan have not regained the influence, albeit limited, they once had. First of all, the number of Klansmen and Klanswomen rapidly decreased in the late 1920s and its membership increased a bit only after the end of the Second World War. The peak of the post-WWII Klan came in the 1960s during the so-called Civil Rights Movement era. Historians estimate that the Klan could have had up to forty thousand members in the mid-1960s, but that the number decreased rapidly to maybe a dozen thousand in the late 1960s.⁴²⁰ The numbers have never gone up after that.

The Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization which battles racial and social injustice, estimates that there can be between five and eight thousand Klansmen in the USA today.⁴²¹ Even this number could potentially be an overestimate. Why? The Klan is in disarray.

⁴¹⁸ Blee, “Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lesson From Oral Histories of the Klan,” 601.

⁴¹⁹ Blee, “Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lesson From Oral Histories of the Klan,” 602. McVeigh, “Structural Incentives for Conservative Mobilization: Power Devaluation and the Rise of the Ku Klux Klan, 1915-1925,” 1492.

⁴²⁰ Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, 364. It is, again, questionable how relevant or exact the number is. The Anti-Defamation League estimated in 1979 that there were ten thousand KKK members: Seltzer, Lopes, “The Ku Klux Klan: Reasons for Support or Opposition Among White Respondents,” 95.

⁴²¹ This number from: <<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/ku-klux-klan>>. They are the most renowned expert group in the U.S. that deals with extremism. They publish an estimate of membership each year. The problem is that they are outsiders, which means that their estimates may be inaccurate. However, they are the only ones who really have experience in the field and others, for example writers for newspapers, use their data. Their last reports so far: Mark Potok, “The Year in Hate and Extremism”, *Intelligence Report* (Feb 15, 2017) <<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2017/year-hate-and-extremism>>. Last accessed: April 7, 2018. Mark Potok, “The Year in Hate and Extremism”, *Intelligence Report* (Feb 11, 2018). <<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2018/2017-year-hate-and-extremism>>. Last accessed: July 17, 2018. It is not without interest that the organization is not very popular with most Klans. The leaders of the Dixie Klan has referred to them as “chameleons” and as a “vile” group: <<https://kkkuniteddixiewhiteknights.com/the-chameleon/>>. Last accessed: 03 Feb, 2017. Unfortunately, the link is no longer valid as of 15 March, 2018.

Even the SPLC has recently noticed that Klannish events were poorly attended in 2017.⁴²² Furthermore, Klansmen do not update their websites, which seem “dead”. Every single photograph or video will show only a few Klansmen, certainly never more than twenty or thirty at the same time. The counter-argument, which Klansmen routinely use, could be that Klansmen want to stay in the shadows.⁴²³ Yet, many leaders have been willing to be recorded during Klan ceremonies or activities with other members, which counters such an argument.⁴²⁴

Furthermore, as far as membership is concerned, they claim that it is better to have fifty trustworthy members than five thousand who are not reliable.⁴²⁵ Yet, they avidly recruit new members online and their conditions are lenient.⁴²⁶ One can judge from this that they want to grow and be more relevant. Their approach was very similar in the past. In addition, and Klansmen agree to this day that this has been an issue, the Klan split into multiple competing groups after the Second World War.⁴²⁷ It has proven to be very difficult to unite the movement because the leaders either compete with one another or they subscribe to a slightly different ideology.⁴²⁸ Some are more inclusive, some more traditional (restrict membership to white Anglo-Saxon Protestants) and some have been influenced by the far-right and Nazi movement.

Again, the Klan in the 1920s was more popular and influential exactly because it was able to involve everyone, women included, and, therefore, looked as one coherent group. But the Invisible Empire has been unable to accomplish such a feat ever since. Also, the Klan is basically confined to the South, especially to states like Texas or Louisiana.⁴²⁹ Another problem is that the Klan carries an onus of its dark history, whether already distant or more recent. Black Americans became the main focus of its interest after the Second World War, but Jews and homosexuals soon followed. Furthermore, many Klans have been associated with radical

⁴²² Potok, “The Year in Hate and Extremism”, 2018.

⁴²³ *Stormfront*, 02-18-2017, 08:54 AM, <<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1030046-64/>>. The forum was last accessed: July 22, 2018.

⁴²⁴ *KKK: Beneath The Hood (Full Documentary) – Real Stories*, June 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmkEKreI_Wo>. Last accessed: Feb 14, 2018. Or: *Inside The Ku Klux Klan: KKK Explain Their Plan For Expansion*, June 2014

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5D10Y_35p98&t=408s>, Accessed Feb 14, 2018. Or: *The Invisible Empire: the KKK and Hate in America*, September 2016,

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKZs2bZOHHM&t=1458s>>, Last accessed Feb 14, 2018.

⁴²⁵ *Stormfront*, 02-19-2017, 10:50 AM, <<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1030046-71/>>.

⁴²⁶ They usually demand the so-called entry fee. The applicant needs to fill out a form with his or her name, address and sign that they are American and that they support what the KKK represents. After this process, they can be finally admitted. For example: <<http://kuklosknights.com/www.kuklosknights.com/index.html>>. Last accessed: January 2, 2017.

⁴²⁷ <loyalwhiteknights.com>, Last accessed: Mar 15, 2018.

⁴²⁸ Quite a big split occurred in 2016: <<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/ku-klux-klan>>.

⁴²⁹ Potok, “The Year in Hate and Extremism”, 2017.

extremist groups like Neo-Nazis since the 1960s at the latest, which has led to some controversies among less radical KKK supporters.⁴³⁰

This is all very relevant as it pertains to Klanswomen. First of all, modern Klanswomen have not been allowed to establish their own auxiliary unlike their predecessor from the 1920s. In other words, they take part in a group dominated by men without any special privileges or opportunity to, at least partly as in the 1920s, make important decisions on their own. This is a significant problem and, according to Kathleen Blee, has left some women dissatisfied with the limited role they have been assigned.⁴³¹

Secondly, the downfall of the Klan as it pertains to membership logically means that female membership began to crumble as well after the mid-1920s. In reality, there may be only a few hundred (probably even less) Klanswomen in the entire country as of right now. Today's Klansmen, or those who call themselves Klansmen to be more exact, admit that women do not take part as much as they should or could.⁴³² Klansmen still try to recruit them because they are key for stabilizing the movement. Female members make the group look more “normal” or common to the outside world.⁴³³ How active and efficient they really are in recruiting them is a different story. It has been argued that Klansmen have mostly failed, among other reasons, owing to the fact they have been unable to “make themselves appear more normal, less threatening.”⁴³⁴

When someone decides to join, the likely reason is that they believe in the message of the Klan. The message, for whatever reason, attracts men much more than women. Kathleen Blee suggests that women are in general less active in violent extremist groups.⁴³⁵ The phrase “Ku Klux Klan”, conversely, automatically elicits thoughts of violence. Even though this is all probably true, it may not be the most important reason. It is certain that personal contacts with KKK members were important in the past and there can be no doubt that they still are. The reasoning for why someone should join the Klan is still based on the idea of defense. Women

⁴³⁰ Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*, 196-197.

⁴³¹ Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*, 105.

⁴³² Some claim that many women join their husbands (which is true) and that the number of men and women is almost the same (which is hardly true because they are rarely featured in videos, speeches or news and do not seem to take active part in the rallies as much as men): *Stormfront*, 02-02-2017, 03:42 AM <<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1030046-72/#post13941912>>. Only few join on their own: *Stormfront*, 02-19-2017, 07:17 PM <<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1030046-72/>>.

⁴³³ Blee, “Becoming a Racist: Women in Contemporary Ku Klux Klan and Neo-Nazi Groups,” 682. Plus they do not have any criminal records: Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*, 7.

⁴³⁴ Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*, 154.

⁴³⁵ Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*, 50.

either feel insecure or they want to defend themselves against the “other”.⁴³⁶ Such women are unafraid to join extreme groups to achieve this goal.

Most women who decide to join are just “followers lurking behind husbands and boyfriends.”⁴³⁷ They follow their family members because they live in a certain environment or area where it is expected that they will support them; or they have just decided to follow them on their own. It was not that different in the past, but when women had their own auxiliary, they either joined on their own or they were those who recruited their fathers, brothers or husbands a bit more actively. They had a platform where they shared the opportunity to present their ideas or demonstrate their confidence and self-reliance.

In other words, the goals and the structure of contemporary Klans suit men much more than women. The Klans of the new millennium do not address women's issues very often. They claim that they “must stand true to [...] our brothers and sisters and family”, but they mostly focus on advocating anti-Jewish/anti-homosexual hatred. Funnily enough, they are strongly against such negative branding and deny any connection to other violent hate groups.⁴³⁸

One of the local Klans, the Ku Klos Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, claims that men and women “can attain equal ranks in our organization.”⁴³⁹ The key word is “can”. Its leaders are all men. Even though the website offers a short introductory history of the Klan, there is not a single mention of the role women have had in its history. The same thing could be said about the Loyal Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. The only part where women are more explicitly mentioned is: “[b]eing a Klansman or Klanswoman (L.O.T.I.E) is a tough lifestyle to live [...]. It is a great honor for a White man or woman to become a citizen of the Invisible Empire.” Of course, families are “welcome to attend” because, for example, “the rallies are like a back yard BBQ, for WHITES ONLY [...]. You will learn about the true history of the Klan and not the government controlled media nonsense.”⁴⁴⁰ This points to the fact that the Klan still hosts social events to strengthen the sense of belonging. Women are invited to take part, but what they can achieve outside of these events is probably very limited.

Traditionalist American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan strive to actively defend women,

⁴³⁶ Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, 2.

⁴³⁷ Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 125. One woman told Kathleen Blee that she was impressed by people who could stand up for themselves and not be ashamed of it and later persuaded her husband to join as well: Blee, *Inside Organized Racism*, 104. Multiple documentaries made by people who spent some time with Klansmen basically confirm this view.

⁴³⁸ <<http://kuklosknights.com/www.kuklosknights.com/index.html>>, Last accessed: Mar 15, 2018.

⁴³⁹ It is the seventh reason on their list of why people should join them.

<<http://kuklosknights.com/www.kuklosknights.com/index.html>>, Last accessed: Mar 15, 2018.

⁴⁴⁰ These quotes all from: <loyalwhiteknights.com>, Last accessed: Mar 15, 2018.

but without women. They believe that men are those who should be active.⁴⁴¹ Their perspective on women reflects the one which many Klansmen shared in the early 1920s, especially those who did not want to allow Klanswomen to have an independent auxiliary. They even demand changes in how their children are being taught, which is something mostly Klanswomen fought for in the past.⁴⁴² Even though they claim that they are a “very traditional 2nd Era-like klan”, they say nothing about the history of the female auxiliary in the 1920s.⁴⁴³ The web page of the Church of the National Knights of the Ku Klux Klan does not provide much more information about the WKKK. It only confirms that “special” auxiliary for women “was formed, as the KKK itself was a White male social and fraternal organization.”⁴⁴⁴

On the other hand, the Original Knight Riders, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan provide slightly more information about the women's auxiliary from the 1920s. However, they are not very original because they only cite Robert Gill, a former WKKK leader.⁴⁴⁵ Nevertheless, they have at least acknowledged the importance of the WKKK movement in the 1920s. Most other Klans have not openly done so on their websites. However, it is interesting that most call female members “L.O.T.I.E.S.” (abbreviation for Ladies of the Invisible Empire) because, strictly speaking, this refers to a female auxiliary that was founded before the official WKKK auxiliary in the 1920s.⁴⁴⁶

The problem is that various local Klans do not have internet sites or they have been taken down.⁴⁴⁷ In addition, it is quite easy to imagine that some members do not have internet connection because they simply do not trust the outside world. Others live in rural areas and simply do not need to be active online very much. Therefore, only a limited number of members voices their opinions online. This makes it much more difficult to track down how many members are active within the Klan and what their agenda is.

Klansmen have to recruit on the local level, where reclusive people know one another, more than they had to do before. Kathleen Blee believes that modern government surveillance

⁴⁴¹ From: <<http://traditionalistamericanknights.com>>, Last accessed: Mar 15, 2018.

⁴⁴² <<http://traditionalistamericanknights.com>>, Last accessed: Mar 15, 2018. They demand less technology, more Christianity.

⁴⁴³ <<http://traditionalistamericanknights.com>>, Last accessed: Mar 15, 2018.

⁴⁴⁴ <<https://cnkkkk.wordpress.com/2016/10/20/church-of-the-national-knights-of-the-ku-klux-klan/>>, Last accessed: Mar 15, 2017.

⁴⁴⁵ *Women of America! The Past! The Present! The Future!*, Gill, 9. The rest from: <<http://www.originalknightriders.net/>>, Last accessed: Mar 15, 2018.

⁴⁴⁶ For example: <<http://americanchristianknights.com>>, Last accessed: Mar 15, 2017. Or:

<<http://www.originalknightriders.net/>>, Last accessed: Mar 15, 2017. It is possible that Klanswomen were called the same way in the 1920s and that the original name was symbolically transferred to WKKK members.

⁴⁴⁷ *Stormfront*, 02-18-2017, 08:54 AM, <<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1030046-64/>>.

and internet control have forced Klansmen to be more “wary” of outsiders. What they write online only confirms this point of view. Moreover, many have decided to act on their own rather than function in a bigger group which can be easily identified.⁴⁴⁸ What role women play in recruitment is difficult to decide, but highly likely much more marginal than men.

Another way how to learn more is to access the infamous white nationalist/supremacist *Stormfront* internet forum, an online discussion site. Self-proclaimed online Klansmen say that they are both “male and female” and that they are everywhere, but most messages are being posted by the same seven or so male individuals over and over again.⁴⁴⁹ What they say there is amazingly similar to the content of various KKK websites. Online users are very careful about what they want to say even though it is just an online forum. They answer only what they want to answer. Their language reflects their distrust of the outside world when doing so. Their knowledge about the role of Klanswomen in the 1920s is very limited as well. Klansmen just know that they were important for the movement, but that is about it. KKK members also claim that most women today join with their husbands and boyfriends, which would support Kathleen Blee's argument that the Klan of today is a male-dominated organization.⁴⁵⁰

To sum it up, today's Klanswomen are dependent on Klansmen even more than in the past. Today's Klan is dominated by men and women just serve their role as active wives or daughters and household caretakers. The Klan rarely explicitly mentions them, talks about them or stresses their importance. KKK members are glad if women take part, but it has to be within the confines of the movement because Klansmen are not supportive of any special female auxiliary. Despite the fact that Klansmen claim that today's Klans are not the 1860s Klan, Klansmen stress the longevity of the organization and are proud of its rich history and often boast about the huge numbers and popularity the Klan attained in the 1920s.⁴⁵¹ Nevertheless, they know only little about what Klanswomen did in the 1920s.

⁴⁴⁸ Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 18-20.

⁴⁴⁹ *Stormfront*, 02-18-2017, 06:15 PM, <<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1030046-65/>>. Of course there is even a possibility than one user can post from multiple accounts. But some of them have included photographs from attended events and some have had arguments online, so it should be safe to say that it is not just one member (or person) who posts everything. The infighting: *Stormfront*, 07-31-2017, 05:10 AM, <<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1030046-233/>>.

⁴⁵⁰ *Stormfront*, 02-19-2017, 08:17 PM, <<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1030046-72/>>. Or: *Stormfront*, 02-20-2017, 04:42 AM, <<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1030046-72/>>.

⁴⁵¹ Kathleen Blee claims that some white supremacists even bought her book about the 1920s Klan: Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 95.

7. Conclusion

Klansmen of the 1920s believed that women had previously been very helpful despite not having been official members of the organization. However, it had taken KKK's male leaders eight long years before they finally allowed women to join the organization. The new Klan faced many issues, from corruption and various allegations to scandals and inability to remain intact and operate as one homogeneous body. The entire Women of the Ku Klux Klan auxiliary can basically be understood as a case study of all of these issues which plagued the KKK from the very beginning, among other reasons because WKKK members had to face these obstacles as well. There is no denying that the meteoric rise of the KKK was influenced by the support received from women. At the same time, the rapid fall of the WKKK was influenced by what was going on inside the KKK. The Klan simply was a highly ambivalent organization.

At first, Klansmen were not sure whether the new women's auxiliary was to be an inherent part of the Klan or whether it would be better served on a more independent basis. Moreover, the WKKK was not even the first Klan-oriented organization for women. The man who had originally revived the Klan, William Simmons, outraged and upset that he had lost control of the Klan, established a women's order, known as Kamelia, before the new KKK leadership. Therefore, when new leaders of the Klan, represented by Hiram Evans, set up the WKKK in 1923, it was amidst an internal KKK struggle.

Evans claimed that Kamelia was so closely linked to the KKK that it had to be abolished as a result. On the other hand, the WKKK was supposed to be an organization for women, set by women and governed by women. Some Klanswomen may have believed in their sovereignty, but the new WKKK auxiliary was independent only in theory. The women's order immediately adopted the structure, titles, ritual forms and the principle of secrecy from the Klan. Unfortunately for the WKKK, Klanswomen also inherited the vast majority of issues that Klansmen were continuously facing.

However, it is hardly surprising that women were dependent on the male order. Klansmen were those who had allowed them to set up the WKKK in the first place. Secondly, men wanted to preserve their dominance and leading role in the movement. Women were supposed to obey with blind subservience. Thirdly, many Klanswomen were either wives, sisters or daughters of various Klansmen. Moreover, Klanswomen themselves were not sure what they wanted and did not always act in unison. Some raised considerable concern about the WKKK's dependence on the KKK, while other women claimed it was not associated with the Klan enough. The authority exerted by Klansmen over the WKKK was painfully obvious when

Robbie Gill became the leader of the women's order because she was married to an influential Klansmen.

In other words, the WKKK reflected the KKK's "dual nature", the discrepancy between rhetoric and reality, between what was proclaimed and what was really happening. A typical example is the total number of members. The KKK publicly stated that the organization had millions of members and hundreds of thousands of women. The truth was much more modest. Even though even experts such as Kathleen Blee claim that the WKKK's membership exceeded tens of thousands by far, it is essential to distinguish between an active member and someone who just joined to try it for whatever reason and then quit or ceased to be active. After all, membership in radical groups has always tended to be short-lived.⁴⁵²

Other examples could be used as well. The KKK and the WKKK claimed they were not racist or violent movements, but both, when not trying to spread propaganda about how peaceful they were, used completely different and more aggressive mode of rhetoric. Its meaning usually reflected the tension between "us" and "them" or "us" versus "the other". Even though Klanswomen only rarely committed acts of violence, their rhetoric was as harsh as that of Klansmen.

Women were interested in the Klan for multiple reasons. First, the Klan's propaganda, in which divisive rhetoric was present, was certainly a factor. It persuaded others to believe that their world was being threatened. Many were of the opinion that to join the Klan was the best way how to combat their fears. As strange as it may sound, this could actually explain why most women joined in the North in states like Indiana and not in the South. Immigration or Catholicism was by no means an extreme threat in most of these areas, but Klanswomen believed it might become one in the near future. Most WKKK members also wanted to secure healthy lifestyles for their families. Others were infatuated with noble ideas like criticism of alcohol drinking.

Many remained active because they found the life in the Klan appealing. Various parades or picnics, charity work, school programs and events were entertaining and made their lives more enjoyable. Many women were also associated with other groups which organized similar events. They believed they were doing something positive for their communities while having fun at the same time. What cannot be denied is that more women were followers than initiators in the sense that they joined after their husbands or fathers. On the other hand, some entered the

⁴⁵² Blee, *Understanding Racist Activism*, 52.

Klan to find an escape route from their private life. Therefore, some women who joined the movement could have met other women who became members for a completely different reason, even for the opposite one. This again goes back to the dual nature and inner struggles of the Klan.

Most women who enlisted were not highly educated, but there were some exceptions. Sources suggest that even some teachers supposedly joined the WKKK. As many WKKK pamphlets show, women had to be Protestants. They also had to support traditional womanhood, which the WKKK associated with good morals and dedication to their families. The fact that not everyone acted the way they were supposed to was one of the reasons why the movement soon started to be engulfed in controversies.

As far as their work and role in the Klan was concerned, Klanswomen can be considered legitimizers of the entire movement. The Klan proclaimed itself to be a family-oriented organization. In order to look as one to the outside world, they had to include women in their public work and events. Women took active part in picnics, charity, in handing out Bibles or talking about schools, they participated in parades and so on. Instead of being violent, they tried to have positive impact on the community. It is indubitable that many of these events were organized or controlled by men, but not all of them. What also needs to be said is that despite the fact that these social happenings seemed often peaceful, they were not because they contained hidden and obscure agendas. Klanswomen and Klansmen offered their own goods because they did not want certain salesmen (mostly Catholic or Jewish) to prosper. They talked about unity, but their rhetoric and actions divided society. Help was directed, propagandist exceptions notwithstanding, only at those Americans they deemed appropriate.

For this reason, “outsiders” who were not associated with the movement viewed Klansmen and Klanswomen as lunatics, extremists, or as a certain attraction. Most “non-Klan” newspaper writers wrote about them scoffingly, yet with satisfaction because the Klan was a controversial topic which “sold”. Nevertheless, these writers were not members and lacked reliable inside information. They were able to write either only about what the Klan wanted them to know or about how many people showed up at Klannish parades and picnics. Sometimes journalists received help from frustrated or former members. Such form of access allowed them to describe some of the more notorious controversies. However, their perspective was immediately skewed and distorted as a result. It is also understandable that they mostly wrote about Klansmen.

Klanswomen were drawn to their attention usually only when they took part as active

attendees in rallies and marches or when they were caught up in a controversy. This is why journalists wrote about leadership changes or about outbursts of alleged violence. They also focused on rumors surrounding any potential establishment of a new WKKK auxiliary. Newspaper writers mostly lacked information about what types of women were involved and why. They did not know much about their real goals or agendas and certainly knew only little about their rituals and secret meetings. It could be argued, however, that by advertising them, they kept the Klan popular. Moreover, many official KKK or WKKK documents are now lost and their articles present a significant source which cannot be replaced.

Other important source comes from the work of Kathleen Blee. She interviewed multiple Klanswomen in the 1980s. They were careful and distrustful, but they were not ashamed of their past. They found their WKKK “tenure” entertaining and helpful. They maintained that intelligent and socially-oriented women had been in the Klan. The former WKKK members she talked to were not able to understand how could anyone have a different point of view. Kathleen Blee's oral history method obviously paints a different picture than most newspaper articles do. It is more detailed about the life within the Klan and says much more about what mindset these women had. However, it does not shed much light on what “outsiders” thought about them and how they viewed them.

Today's Klansmen are proud of their past and legacy of the 1920s. On the other hand, they do not advertise it very much. The reason is simple. They simply do not know very much about it. Some more knowledgeable realize that women were very active in the 1920s, but would not know much more than that when asked. They also have to be careful about how to present their past. They are often attacked as a violent group because of it – to which they reply they are no longer the Klan from the 1860s. In some respects, the basis of their rhetoric is similar as it was in the 1920s. They still feel threatened by “the other” and want security for their children, which is what they wanted in the past as well.

Nobody knows how many Klanswomen are in the Klan today, just like nobody really knew how many Klanswomen there were in the 1920s. One thing is certain. Men are even more dominant in the Klan than they were in the past. Women are mere followers. There is no separate WKKK order, today's Klanswomen are an integral part of the KKK movement. One legacy from the past remains though. Some Klans automatically refer to their female members as Ladies of the Invisible Empire (L.O.T.I.E.s). This name is based on a women's order founded after the First World War, one of the predecessors of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan. Whether most Klansmen know the details of the name is doubtful and unlikely.

There is no doubt that today's Klanswomen are on the “periphery” of the society as well as of the Ku Klux Klan. The WKKK from the 1920s should not be entirely viewed in that light. Klansmen regarded women as an important topic, in fact so relevant that they gave Klanswomen some autonomy within the KKK movement. Even though the authority of the WKKK was limited as well as its influence upon the Ku Klux Klan, at least its existence gave some members the opportunity to help people they regarded as weak or worthy of help. It was their chance to deal with hardship of everyday life as they viewed it.

Resumé

Ženská pobočka Ku Klux Klanu (tzv. Women of the Ku Klux Klan, čili WKKK) byla vytvořena až osm let po obnovení Ku Klux Klanu v roce 1915. Jejím ustanovení předcházely značné spory mezi mužskými členy o to, zda ženám do Klanu vstup povolit a pokud ano, pak v jaké podobě. Ku Klux Klan čelil mnohým obviněním z násilí, korupce, pokrytectví atp. Po vzniku WKKK se veškeré problémy jen znásobily, protože stejným obviněním začaly čelit i ženy, které se navíc začaly hádat s mužskými členy, i mezi sebou. Ženskou pobočku Klanu lze tedy chápat jako jistou sondu do problematiky, která poukazuje na vnitřní ambivalence celého hnutí.

Jinými slovy raketový vzestup Klanu je nutno vidět v souvislostech s možností žen se více aktivně zapojit. Druhou stranou mince je však to, že prudký pád celého hnutí souvisel se stále rostoucími vnitřními neshodami, přičemž ženy zde hrály značnou roli. Samotná vnitřní dualita hnutí je viditelná na samotném odsouhlasení vstupu žen do organizace. I přes různé názory jim byl vstup povolen teprve, až když se o jejich legitimizaci pokusil bývalý vůdce Klanu William Simmons, který ustanovil první oficiální ženskou pobočku pod názvem „Kamelia“. Noví vůdcové Klanu se tak ocitli pod tlakem, Simmonsem vytvořenou skupinu delegitimizovali, oficiálně ji zrušili a bývalé členky včlenili pod novou pobočku nazvanou „Women of the Ku Klux Klan“, kterou pro tento účel oficiálně vytvořili.

Nicméně se nedokázali shodnout na samotném fungování a kompetencích WKKK uvnitř celého hnutí. Na papíře byla organizace samostatná a plně soběstačná. Skutečná situace byla však naprosto rozdílná. WKKK bylo materiálně, personálně i v teoretické rovině různých rituálů naprosto odkázáno na mužský Klan. Některé ženy si začaly velice rychle na nastalý vývoj událostí stěžovat a požadovaly větší nezávislost. Jakýmsi symbolickým momentem byl v tomto ohledu den, kdy se novou vůdkyní stala manželka vlivného člena mužského Klanu místo členky, které to původně bylo slíbeno. Aby toho nebylo málo, některé ženy si naopak stěžovaly, že WKKK a KKK jsou až příliš oddělenými organizacemi a požadovaly změnu.

Úzký vztah obou skupin však nemůže nikoho překvapit, ostatně byli to právě mužští členové, kteří dovolili ženám, aby vůbec mohly hrát nějakou oficiální roli v Ku Klux Klanu. Navíc si jejich vůdci chtěli ponechat moc ve svých rukou, protože jim z toho plynul finanční zisk. Krom toho většina ženských členek pocházela z rodin mužských členů, ať už se jednalo o jejich dcery, manželky nebo sestry.

Existence ženské pobočky legitimizovala Klan v několika směrech. Za prvé díky nim vypadala organizace větší a početnější, především na severu, například ve státě Indiana. Na druhou stranu bylo Ku Klux Klan kvůli proměnlivému členství ještě obtížnější kontrolovat. Za

druhé Klan, který byl často napadán ostatními kvůli svojí agresi, nyní vypadal „navenek“ jako umírněnější hnutí. Jistým protiargumentem opět poukazujícím na vnitřní nestabilitu celého hnutí je to, že i ženy (především ty ve vedoucích pozicích) používaly značně agresivní slovník vůči „druhým“ (ať už katolíkům, židům, přistěhovalcům či Afro-Američanům) a samy čelily mnohým obviněním. Za třetí se ženy účastnily mnohých aktivit jako bojkoty, pikniky, soutěže či pochody. Pomohly tím vytvořit z Klanu více kompaktní hnutí, které by vypadalo jednotně nebýt různých nařčení, které šířili protivníci ale i bývalé členky a bývalí členové Klanu. Zároveň se účastnily charitativních akcí společně s muži, čímž se celé hnutí snažilo ukázat svou jednotu a rodinný charakter. Jistou vadou na kráse bylo, že ačkoliv mnohé akce byly nejspíše míněny upřímně, často se jednalo o pouhou propagaci anebo, například u bojkotů zboží, o stranění jedné skupině na úkor té druhé.

Ženy vstoupily do Klanu z několika důvodů. Rodinné či jiné známosti hrály velice důležitou roli. Tyto ale i jiné ženy byly ovlivněny rétorikou Klanu, která dokázala jednoduše, rychle a velice přesně označit viníka. Skupiny „těch druhých“ byly viněny za špatnou situaci, v níž se mnozí Američané, především ti, kteří holdovali zásadám staré éry, dle nich nacházeli. Jinými slovy tyto ženy věřily, že jim Klan pomůže najít a hlavně zajistit pocit bezpečí v rychle proměňujícím se světě, světě kterému nerozuměly. Další skupina žen se již v minulosti podílela na fungování organizací, které měly některé společné morální prvky s Ku Klux Klanem. Ostatní ženy toužily po větší emancipaci a kritika členů Klanu ohledně některých špatných mužských vlastností (opilství, nevěra) je donutila se také přidat. Některé se tedy přidaly, aby našly útočiště před svým soukromým životem, kdežto jiné se staly součástí, protože jejich známí již v Klanu byli.

Přesná čísla členek ani členů nejsou známa, navíc značně oscilovala. Je jisté, že většina žen i mužů byla členy jen chvíli. O to zajímavější je příběh těch, kteří se rozhodli zůstat. Život v Klanu a touha po nápravě lokálních komunit či celé Ameriky z nich udělala nejen členy a členky ve jméně, ale také v srdci – stylem života. Asi nepřekvapí, že většina členek byla z nižších vrstev, ale našly se i výjimky.

Zdroje o životě ženských členek jsou jen obtížně dohledatelné. Mužští členové o nich psali většinou jen ze své perspektivy, kde autoritativně vytyčili hranice jejich pravomocí a možností. Ženských autorek bylo jen minimum. Novináři se s chutí věnovali problematice KKK, protože se jednalo o téma, které bylo kontroverzní a snadno se prodávalo. Jenže jejich články se většinou týkaly mužů, kteří byli „viditelnější“ důsledkem své delší existence, většího počtu a také větší radikality z hlediska svých činů. Krom toho novináři podávali jen skoupé

informace a většinou značně zkreslovali. Důvodem bylo, že věděli jen velice málo o skutečném fungování celé organizace. Mohli popsat, kolik přibližně lidí se zúčastnilo některého z pochodů, případně jak v teorii mohl vypadat nějaký rituál. Málokdy ale věděli něco o společenském pozadí samotných členů. Pokud dostávali informace od členů, pak to většinou byli jen ti nespokojení, kde výpovědní hodnota byla mnohdy jen minimální. Ve skutečnosti často samotný titulek článku říkal více než celý zbytek textu. I přesto je vhodné, a kvůli nedostatku ostatních zdrojů dokonce nutné, novinové články jako zdroj brát vážně. Jasně totiž poukazují na to, s čím byli běžní Američané konfrontováni a co většina z nich věděla o Ku Klux Klanu. O pozadí samotných členek se však lze více dočíst v textech historičky Kathleen Blee, která metodou orální historie vyzpovídala několik desítek bývalých členek WKKK. Její interview naznačují, že měly minimální pochopení pro názory ostatních. Na druhou stranu toto lze dát do souvislosti s novinovými články, jejichž obsah vykazuje jen velice malé pochopení pro členy a členky Ku Klux Klanu.

Dnešní členové Ku Klux Klanu jsou sice hrdí na svou historii, ale příliš se o ní nezmiňují. Jejich znalosti jsou malé a dost zkreslené. Někteří jsou si vědomi klíčové role ženských členek ve dvacátých letech dvacátého století, ale neví nic více. Dnešní členky jsou marginalizovány ještě více než v minulosti, nenachází se ve vedoucích pozicích, a dokonce nemají ani vlastní pobočku. I dnes je zde viditelná dualita, rozdíl mezi teorií a skutečností. Mužští členové KKK sice tvrdí, že ženy jim aktivně pomáhají a že stále hrají klíčovou roli. Nicméně zároveň litují toho, že jich není více aktivních. Vnitřní nejistota ohledně ženských členek pronásledovala Ku Klux Klan v minulosti a pronásleduje jej i dnes.

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Plaindealer
Roswell Daily
San Antonio Light
Santa Ana Register
Savannah Tribune
St. Louis Post-Dispatch
The Aberdeen Weekly
The Akron Beacon Journal
The Amarillo Globe-Times
The Appeal
The Atlanta Constitution
The Baltimore Sun
The Call-Leader
The Des Moines Register
The Eagle
The Hutchinson Blade
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