The Effectiveness of Doxxing: Evidence from the Second Ku Klux Klan*

Noah MacDonald†

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Between 1915 and 1925, nearly four million men joined and left the second Ku Klux Klan, a "benevolent, ritualistic, social, and fraternal order" with prejudices against recent immigrants, Catholics, Jews, and Black individuals (Simmons, 1923). At its height, the Klan held formidable political power, garnered over $75 million in annual revenue, and boasted one in ten White, Protestant American men as members. Despite its pervasiveness, the Klan also had outspoken adversaries, including Chicago's American Unity League (AUL). The AUL was founded on June 21, 1922 and dedicated to the eradication of the Klan locally and nationally. Its unique weapon was the newspaper *Tolerance*, which published weekly issues listing the names, addresses and occupations of Klansmen across the country, essentially serving as an early outlet for doxxing — the act of publicly releasing someone's personal information as a form of retaliation.

This paper seeks to understand the effects of revealing Klan membership status on the exposed individual's standing in the community. In the inaugural issue of *Tolerance*, AUL Chairman Patrick H. O'Donnell wrote that "many Klansmen are in business or the profes-

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†Emory University. noah.macdonald@emory.edu

sions and are dependent largely upon patronage of those groups they classify as alien," and believed that exposing these prejudices to members' clientele would be detrimental to their careers and the Klan's survival. Anecdotal evidence shows that *Tolerance* was quite effective in achieving its goals. For example, Augustus E. Olsen, President of the Washington Park National Bank in Chicago, was forced to resign in October 1922 after the publication if his name in *Tolerance* led many of his Irish and Jewish depositors to withdraw their funds (Jackson, 1967). I test the prevalence and effectiveness of consumers' potential boycott response by linking exposed Klan members listed in *Tolerance* issues and unexposed Klan members identified from archival sources to the decennial censuses and tracking their trajectories over time. Specifically, I test if exposed Klan members change occupations or migrate more or less often than their unexposed counterparts, two outcomes I can clearly measure using variables from the decennial censuses.

The ideal data to answer this question would consist of complete rosters of Klan members from a variety of locations (counties), where half are randomly exposed in *Tolerance* and the rest remain unexposed. I could then link these individuals to the 1920 census and beyond and estimate a standard two-way fixed effects model of the form

$$Y_{ict} = \beta(Exposed_i \times Post_t) + \gamma_c + \phi_t + e_{ict} \tag{1}$$

where β represents the differential change in migration or occupation switching for Klan members who were exposed relative to those who remained unexposed. However, because the AUL typically published the info of all Klan members they identified in a particular location, there are very few areas with the within-county variation in exposure required to inform our estimate of β: In the data I've collected so far, only Marion County, IN and Denver County, CO contain both exposed and unexposed members. Therefore, I supplement this approach by comparing the trajectories of Klan members from counties where the AUL acquired and published membership rolls (excluding Denver and Marion) to members from

counties where all members remained unexposed in a standard 2×2 difference-in-differences framework. To address concerns of comparing Klan members' trajectories across counties in this 2×2 DiD, I also employ a third specification that compares exposed Klan members from a particular county to residents that were eligible for membership in the second Klan: native-born White, Protestant men. While each of these approaches are imperfect, the full set of results will hopefully paint a cohesive picture on the effects of being outed as a Klan member on an individual's later-life outcomes.

To date, I've collected names from 49 weekly *Tolerance* issues and a special midweek issue listing every Klan member from Marion County, IN, totaling 17,207 exposed members across all issues. I've also compiled information on unexposed Klan members from Denver, CO, Knoxville, TN, and a number of cities in Indiana, totaling just over 30k observations. I'm currently matching these individuals to the full-count 1920 census from Ruggles et al. (2024a,b) using a method similar to the manual linking in Fetter et al. (2024). I link primarily based on name and state of residence, but also include residential address and occupation when available. I then link these individuals forward and backward to the 1910-1950 censuses using established links from the Multigenerational Longitudinal Panel (MLP) project (Helgertz et al., 2024) and the Census Tree (Buckles et al., 2023; Price et al., 2021).

This work contributes to several literatures, including the economic analysis of the Ku Klux Klan (Ang, 2023; Bazzi et al., 2023; Fryer and Levitt, 2012) and the consequences of social exclusion and socially responsible consumption (Broccardo et al., 2023; Kaufmann et al., 2024; Ramos-Toro, 2023). Importantly, it is also the first quantitative analysis of the effectiveness of doxxing, following recent qualitative work on the impact of modern-day doxxing (Amarasingam and Galloway, 2024). The historical setting of my paper allows me to go beyond the scope of this work by utilizing administrative data to quantify the long-run effects of exposure instead of relying on individual victims' testimonials of short-run effects.

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