



ABSTRACT

There is growing evidence of younger women's involvement in organizations that espouse violent extremism, yet little is understood about what motivates them to join such groups. This paper attempts to contribute to the conversation on women's involvement with radicalized (male) youth in a "movement" context drawing from their personal accounts of participation.

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RADICALIZATION OF YOUTHFUL WOMEN: THE PLACE OF CONSANGUINITY AND ROMANCE:

A Case Study of Women Members of “Mungiki” Movement of Kenya

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CONTEXTUALIZING WOMEN INVOLVEMENT IN MOVEMENTS THAT ESPOUSE EXTREMISM

There is growing evidence of in particular younger women’s involvement in organizations that espouse violent extremism within religious and social movements. Media reports largely depict such women as victims of men with extremist inclinations who apply psychological and physical manipulation among different forms of coercive methods. Younger women below eighteen (and as young as below thirteen) have been reported as increasingly playing the part of suicide bombers for Boko Haram.¹ The AFP news agency noted that:

*“Losing swathes of territory to the Nigerian army, Boko Haram jihadists have since July started using young women and girls as suicide bombers by hiding explosives in their loose fitting clothes. The radical Sunni group has also used the tactic in Cameroon, Chad and Niger –countries that have already enforced bans on veils this year” The Republic of Congo has also banned the veil.*²

Still, women have been documented in situations where they voluntarily become members of organizations with extremist ideologies where they, among others; shelter activists and fighters of such organizations; form the fighting regiments including on suicide missions; and provide nourishment, emotional comfort and social support to mostly male brethren and spies. Even in these roles the general understanding is that women’s involvement has to do with their filial or intimate relationships with mainly men in their lives. It is also becoming evident from mostly social media based exchanges that like the men, the spirit of adventure among youthful girls living within conditions of religious-gender restrictions may explain their increased involvement to free themselves from strictly prescribed feminine roles.

¹ An Islamic violent extremist sect in West Africa currently reported to be linked to the so-called “Islamic State”

² Quoted from Daily nation 24th December 2015- Charles Onyango Obbo

Even as their numbers increase relatively little is understood and agreed about what motivates (young) women to join groups with violent extremist ideologies. The stereotypical understanding of women as having a tendency to employ their femininity to nurture life using persuasive as opposed to violent means partly informs the difficulty at explaining their assumed roles in violent extremism. Abigail R. Esmán says most women converts to Islam in the UK are attracted by cultural effects such as the modest dress and Islamic lifestyle that clearly defines a place for women removing ambiguity on the same in say Christian teachings (on women), however, the metamorphosis to “terrorist” is more complex and less easily explained—even though research shows that, in many cases, the women are pressured by their (male) partners³. In her pioneering study of self-identified reasons for migrating *Muhajirats* (female western migrants to ISIS) Caroline Hoyle finds out that women who travel to Syria and Iraq either do so with male companions or husbands or make the trip alone⁴: “Of those that travel alone, three primary reasons have been identified: grievances, solutions and personal motivations”.⁵ The women perceive major grievances to be:

*“Oppression of Muslims throughout the world and often post gruesome and distressing images of violence against Muslims on their Twitter profiles and blogs. Many images show children who have been injured in the violence, many without limbs and severely disfigured. These different conflicts across the world are presented as part of a larger war against Islam by non-believers.”*⁶

The solution is the envisaged Caliphate (Islamic state) that makes it imperative for those with them to fight those that are opposed to them or those that do nothing:

*“Female migrants are not just rejecting the culture and foreign policy of the West; they are also embracing a new vision for society. They hope to contribute to this society, governed by a strict interpretation of sharia law. In this way, ISIS’s territorial gains and state-building project are crucial in attracting the women, who can see they have an important role to play in the new society”.*⁷

³ Abigail R. Esmán The Growing Terror Threat From Radical Women Converts *Special to IPT News* October 17, 2013

⁴ Carolyn Hoyle, Alexandra Bradford and Ross Frenett, *Becoming Mulan? Female Western Migrants*

to ISIS
Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2015. Page 10

⁵ Ibid page 10

⁶ Ibid Page 12

⁷ Ibid Page 13

The personal motivation is to fulfill “*their mandatory religious duty (fard al-ayn) to assist this process- In addition to the promise of heavenly rewards, there are also rewards in this life which the muhajirat seek out*”.⁸

On the issue of violence, *muhajirat* celebrate the violence of ISIS, unequivocally and justify it according to their reading of Islamic Law and indicate a desire to inflict violence themselves.⁹ However “it is clear that women’s current role in ISIS is not to fight, but to support their husbands and raise their children to be the next generation of *mujahedeen*.”¹⁰ This means that the *Muhajirat* do not and may not operate outside of their subordinate role to men even while fighting for an equitable Caliphate.

On her part, Hawa Noor puts in perspective increased involvement of women as strategic positioning by in particular terrorist groups because women are usually not associated with violence and crime which makes it easy for them to conceal their role as active agents of terrorist units¹¹. She posits that women can act in all capacities required of a terrorist such as, suicide bombers, leaders of militant groups, recruiters and mission operatives. More strategically, their roles are enhanced by ability to act as sympathizers, mobilizers and supporters of radical ideology by offering encouragement, handling logistics such as hiding weapons, encouraging their sons and husbands to join the action, and defending their male relatives¹². It may appear that violent extremism appropriates both the stereotypes of the docile peaceful woman as a disguise while at the same time women’s real potential to multitask and take on diverse and contradictory roles (captured by Hawa above) but strictly under men’s control and direction within the movements.

FRAMING THE CONVERSATION IN THE CONTEXT OF WOMEN IN *MUNGIKI*

This paper attempts to contribute to the conversation on women’s involvement in groups that espouse violent extremism. The conversation shall go beyond the more familiar Islamic extremist groups to draw from study findings on women members of “*Mungiki*”¹³ a Kenyan largely male youth group with an extremist political mission that is embedded in a socio-ethnic ideology of countering historical

⁸ Ibid 14

⁹ Ibid 31

¹⁰ Ibid 31.

¹¹ Daily Nation Wed 28th October 2015.

¹² Hawa Noor, Daily Nation Wed 28th October 2015.

¹³ Mungiki is a term used to refer to a poor -youth movement by members of Kikuyu community of Kenya that started sometime in 1987.

oppression by the state and an orientation to violent expression as a means of achieving its ends. We shall, as much as possible, draw from what women in such movements have said about their participation. We shall be alive to the “elephant in the room” that women in male led extremist movements operate within restricted spaces of patriarchal ethos that consign them to subordinate supporting roles within the movements.

BRIEF BACKGROUND TO THE CONTEXT OF MUNGIKI MOVEMENT

It is generally recognized that *Mungiki* arose from genuine historical land dispossession grievances by sections of members of the poor among the Kenyan Kikuyu community. The land tenure reforms that involved introduction of cash crop production to African farmers and land tenure reform initiated by the British colonists in the 1950s (published in the “Plan to Intensify African Agriculture in Kenya”¹⁴) favored awarding of individual titles as opposed to pre-existing extended family and clan ownership. 1954 saw passage of the highly provocative Forfeiture of Lands Ordinance, (No. 11 of 1954), which empowered the colonial government to confiscate any land of “..persons leading or organizing armed or violent resistance against the forces of law and order”¹⁵. The ordinance was aimed at punishing people and families thought to be supporting *Mau Mau* revolt of 1952-1956¹⁶. In 1959, the colonial government enacted the Native Lands (Special Areas) Registration Ordinance, to legalize land stolen from perceived *Mau Mau* who previously held it under the African customary tenure system and given to loyalists¹⁷, home-guards their relatives and other mostly educated peasants. The reforms were used to create a “landed African gentry” in Central Kenya. The latter felt indebted to the colonial government while showing hostility to the dispossessed members of the community who were conveniently labeled as *Mau mau* sympathizers. The landed Africans were derogatorily referred to as “loyalists by their poor dispossessed kin”. Further the roots of *Mungiki* are traceable in the colonial government’s localized policies to deny education to the children of perceived *Mau Mau* sympathizers.

After independence, the Native Lands (Special Areas) Registration Ordinance of 1959 was re-enacted into the Registered Land Act, Cap 63, and Laws of Kenya thus sealing the dispossession of thousands of “*Mau Mau sympathizers*” while rewarding

¹⁴Collins Wanderi, *Mungiki: Legitimate or Criminal? African Executive 21-28th May 2008*

¹⁵ Page 3

¹⁶ In simplistic terms, *Mau Mau* was a largely peasant land freedom army in the central, Eastern, parts of Rift Valley and Nairobi among mostly members of Kikuyu, Embu and Meru communities that suffered large scale colonial displacement from their ancestral lands.

¹⁷ A term used to refer to Africans who cooperated with the colonial government to fight the *Mau Mau*.

loyalists permanently. By so doing, the Kenyatta¹⁸ independence government, rather than redress historical injustices committed by the colonialists- further entrenched them in the law consigning the now poor and dispossessed perceived *Mau Mau* sympathizers to a vicious cycle of poverty. *Mungiki* members claim to represent the unfulfilled aspirations of the *Mau Mau* of an alternative political dispensation¹⁹. Like the *Mau Mau*, the land question is central to *Mungiki* politics and the movement is built on dissatisfaction with the material deprivations of its constituency, which explains why it has been most successful in recruiting members from among squatters and urban slum dwellers who identify with the land grievances.

Mungiki dominated the Kenyan media from 1992 when reports of arrests and prosecution of its youths for illegal oath-taking allegedly against the government of then President Daniel Arap Moi²⁰. Reports of police torture of *Mungiki* members prompted criticism of government heavy handedness by local and international human rights groups. Hitherto *Mungiki* was largely perceived as an extremist cultural/traditionalist group seeking to restore their ethnic kikuyu traditions and practices²¹. Wanderi opines that *Mungiki*'s Ideological espousal of "pseudo-communist" ideals clothed in socio-cultural epithets of communal justice and equity was its main appeal to many landless, homeless and jobless youth²².

The 2002 general elections brought out *Mungiki* leaderships' dalliance in politics as a gang for hire in addition to extortionist crime in Nairobi and urban areas in central province. A newspaper analysis report says the criminal face of *Mungiki* evolved when *Mungiki* migrated from rural areas to the urban areas, absorbed criminal elements and transformed itself into an organized violent movement for hire by economic and political elite²³. The *Mungiki* leadership were reported (in the media) as making appearances at (the then) president Moi's statehouse and were said to be in a political marriage with the (then) ruling party KANU candidate, Uhuru Kenyatta²⁴. With the defeat of KANU and victory of the opposition NARC at the 2002 elections, *Mungiki* temporarily disappeared from the limelight, but were back in the news towards the end of 2006 and most of 2007

¹⁸ Jomo Kenyatta (1964-1978) was the first president of independent Republic of Kenya.

¹⁹ Quoted by Muthuma from Jean-Christophe Servant, "Kenya's Righteous Youth Militia;" "Landless in the Rift Valley," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 2005.

²⁰ Daniel Arap Moi Kenya's second president 1978-2002

²¹ Mutuma highlights the view in some literature on *Mungiki* as a religio-cultural movement calling for a return to African traditions and spiritualism as the means to the resolution of social problems, rejecting Christianity as corrupting to African values and mobilizing Kenyan masses to fight against the yoke of mental slavery

²² Wanderi , 2008 P,5

²³ Daily Nation, Wednesday, January 8, 2003 p.1, Saturday Nation, June 23, 2007 p.1

²⁴ Moi had publicly and in very controversial circumstances that fostered rebellion in his (ruling) party- KANU hand- picked Uhuru, son of the first president to succeed him

with reports of its criminal extortionist network and regular and violent confrontations with police and *Matatu*²⁵ owners, drivers and touts and with residents of slum dwellings mostly in the eastern side of the city. March 2007 saw *Mungiki* attack public service vehicles, beheading drivers and touts in Nairobi and parts of (then) Central Province of Kenya²⁶.

Media accounts of *Mungiki*'s killings of their rivals, attacks on the police and the killing of individuals opposed to their activities earned the movement overwhelming hatred and opposition" (Mutuma, 2008, P35). Anderson refers to *Mungiki* as a "marauding gang" that employs "strident violent, criminal and increasingly intimidator tactics."²⁷ Anderson further argues that *Mungiki* should be seen as a movement that has metamorphosed from its cultural-spiritual roots to a criminal vigilante group providing muscle for the politics of ethnic exclusion. He links the fear that non-Kikuyu Kenyans' have of *Mungiki* to its similarity to *Mau Mau*²⁸. It is worth mentioning that Anderson's reference to the fear of *Mau Mau* is not in the popular view of *Mau Mau* as freedom fighters but rather as something akin to terrorists who committed horrendous acts of violence on their own people and to white settlers.

At the height of the 2007-2008 post- election violence in Kenya, that pitted supporters of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) with those of Party of National Unity (PNU), ODM leaders alleged that the government (PNU) was mobilizing *Mungiki* to undertake attacks of its members in Nairobi and in the Rift Valley. The allegations were strengthened by reports that gangs of (Kikuyu) youths identifying themselves as *Mungiki* had mobilized to attack members of ethnic groups perceived to be ODM supporters in Nakuru and Naivasha²⁹. Media reports had it that President Kibaki's campaign team panicked over the trend of opinion polls, leading to PNU officials approaching *Mungiki* to secure their (violent) support³⁰. The "Human Rights Watch" report on the post-election violence in Kenya notes that *Mungiki* leaders made reference to a renegade wing of the group that was working with senior politicians of Kibaki's PNU³¹.

In March 2008, hundreds of (self-declared) *Mungiki* members demonstrated in Nairobi demanding the release of their leader, Maina Njenga (then in remand custody) and the registration of their political party, the National Youth Alliance that had been deregistered³². The police-*Mungiki* confrontation escalated in April

²⁵ Smaller passenger Public service vehicles

²⁶ See March press reports of the major dailies, *The Daily nation* and *The Standard*

²⁷ Anderson "Vigilantes," (2002), p. 534.

²⁸ Anderson, "Vigilantes," (2002), p. 536.

²⁹ Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Ballots to*

Bullets: Organized Political Violence and Kenya's Crisis of Governance (New York: 2008).

³⁰ "State 'Sanctioned' Kenyan Clashes", BBC News. March 5, 2008.

³¹ Human Rights Watch, *Ballots to Bullets* (New York: 2008), p. 45.

³² Headline news in all the dailies

2008 when Virginia Nyakio the wife of jailed *Mungiki* leader³³, along with her driver were executed after being abducted by what *Mungiki* said were members of the police force. The killing of Nyakio brought to the media limelight for the first time activities of women members of *Mungiki*.

OUTSIDERS SWORN TO KEEP SECRETS- THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN MUNGIKI

*... Women are outsiders they must be sworn to keep secrets. Women's role is to inform and advice on some aspects particular to their roles. Women help us to gather information and intelligence. They are our secret service. In our culture, women are regarded as outsiders. They are not pure in the eyes of God and therefore cannot participate fully. Why we don't involve them in the leadership of the movement is that there are several levels of women participation, because it takes long to trust a woman³⁴. Male *Mungiki* member of the leadership³⁵.*

From the narrative above (supported by other accounts from both men and women), men regarded themselves as the bona fide members of *Mungiki* who made the rules on membership and role. Type of membership was fundamentally determined by ethnicity and gender with ethnic males as insiders and women as outsiders who were necessary to the achievement of the wider objectives of the movement if well managed. The movement's ethos were informed by Kikuyu patriarchal traditions³⁶, beliefs and practices that privilege men as morally pure and downgrade women as unclean and untrustworthy meaning they had to be kept out of leadership over men and chaperoned in the roles that they were assigned for the good of the movement.

Narrative accounts of *Mungiki* members depict women occupying a well -defined place that is subordinated to men and male control: "Women are subordinates with clear roles"³⁷. Women are recognized as useful members but caution taken to protect the organization from perceived risks largely reckoned from stereotypes of women as cowards and untrustworthy. This view of women is deliberately traditional in line with the *Mungiki* initial objective of restoring traditions and with it the place of Kikuyu women and men that had been distorted by Christianity and

³³Maina Njenga

³⁴Narrative 17 Nairobi

³⁵ At the time of the research in 2011 *Mungiki* was a proscribed organization whose membership was legally criminalized- this means interviewees were afraid to give their true identities.

³⁶ As understood by *Mungiki* leadership

³⁷Narrative 14 Nairobi

modernity. There is thus an attempt to re-invent the ideal traditional image of a Kikuyu woman complete with circumcision initiation rites as the acceptable behavior from *Mungiki* women members.

Men and women were treated differently at recruitment and orientation into the movement- as the account below of the procedure shows:

- *There were women leaders called Nyakinyua- the wise elderly women, the nyakangei-married women but not as old and there was “reendi wa mungiki”-young unmarried women. Nyakinyua were the most respected. If a woman agreed to be recruited, she was taken to Nyakinyua who took her through the procedures and rules of the organization. The briefing entailed one being asked personal questions like whether she is circumcised. If not, they (Nyakinyua) would go to their male counterparts to seek directions. An initiation date was set and if the recruit was financially unable to support her initiation, contributions were made. There were special women who were to perform the rite and take care of her until she healed. After healing, there was a baptism ceremony titled “Maai na mwaki” (water and fire) which marks your recruitment as a member. Oathing was integral but it differed from the oathing rites undertaken by men³⁸.*

The male leadership delegated authority to trusted elderly women to initiate new members into the movement paying close attention to their sex³⁹ and gender⁴⁰. In the former they had to conform to circumcision requirements while latter to the expected roles of women as prescribed in the traditional Kikuyu society and as practiced in the movement. Even in their delegated authority and despite the *Nyakinyua* women being generally older (in age) than the then youthful male *Mungiki* leaders, they still had to consult in decisions they made such as regarding women who had not undergone circumcision.

Women and men narrative accounts attribute the status of women within the movement to socio-gender culture and traditions of the Kikuyu related to the nature and function of the *Mungiki* as accounts below explain:

- *“we leave men to conduct spiritual and sacred matters because of their status in our tradition”⁴¹.*
- *Movement, women cannot sit in meetings “as I said, they are not holy in the eyes of our God. They wait for men to get Gods directives on all matters”⁴².*

³⁸Narrative 5 Nairobi

³⁹ Biological make up as female

⁴⁰ Expected social roles as women

⁴¹Narrative 13 Nairobi

Further, most women attribute their membership to relationship to male *Mungiki* members as kin, or girlfriends or wives. Such relations are necessitated by the assumption that women are not to be trusted except when a man in a relationship with them can vouch for their character. Women members gave their reasons for joining the movement that include; the organization giving a sense of belonging to willing women, having friends/ people to talk to and the group supporting widows of fallen colleagues:

- *Some women join the group because their husbands are in it, others have the desire to join because of various benefit like feeling secure in the hands of members*⁴³

Influence of male relations is a notable factor by “experts”⁴⁴ as defining common patterns among female converts (in the UK), most of who convert because of a relationship to a Muslim man⁴⁵. That notwithstanding accounts of women among *Mungiki* membership often demonstrate individualized motivation beyond loyalty to a male relation that zeroes in on tangible benefits such membership may access. The account below by a woman member contextualizes such interest in membership to livelihood concerns:

- *“I personally joined to have smart friends; people who can stand for you during the time of need. To some extent, my expectations were met as I managed to start my own business through daily route connection. I opened a car wash that sustains me as a single mother and we don’t remit everything to leaders. We have our take too as we are the ones’ at risk every day in fact we just give a quarter”*⁴⁶.

Regarding what women roles are, narratives mention, investigative or spying duties and supporting the men⁴⁷. They may also be leaders but within certain limitations such as not participating in high level decision making meetings⁴⁸. However some men say women have “equal opportunity to grow and rise in rank and they are always treated well and they appreciate that”.⁴⁹ It was often repeated that all

⁴²Nairobi

Narrative 14 Nairobi

⁴³Narrative 13 Nairobi

⁴⁴ In trends among women who join radical Islamic movements in the West.

⁴⁵ Abigail R. Esman , *The Growing Terror Threat From Radical Women Converts*, *IPT News* October 17, 2013

⁴⁶Narrative 16 Nairobi

⁴⁷Narratives 10, 15 Nairobi

⁴⁸Narrative 10 Nairobi

⁴⁹Narrative 14 Nairobi

members regardless of gender have equal opportunity to grow and rise in rank⁵⁰ and that all members have equal opportunities to develop themselves. It depends on how one utilizes the opportunity that they get⁵¹. One lady said she commanded a lot of respect as a lady because of her courage and no one has ever said no to her demands⁵². Others mention that women earn their position by being the best secret keepers⁵³ they are very loyal⁵⁴ and because they admire movement unity and they “love bad boys”⁵⁵ and being contented with what they do and get⁵⁶. Accounts give women population in the movement to between 15 and 20 percent of the total.

Narrative accounts collected from Naivasha give an insight into the mostly complimentary role women members of *Mungiki* played in the 2007-2008 post-election violence (PEV) that rocked the town. The accounts also show *Mungiki* women adherence to the lower status that is apportioned to them within the movement even when working within an overall violent orientation. People considered enemies of the *Mungiki* generally did not see women as a threat and could drop their guard around them. They could confide in them and expect assistance from them to escape from the movement’s wrath. From narrative accounts of members it is clear that those women in *Mungiki* played a proactive role during the PEV. They cooked for the *Mungiki* men and acted as spies to know what the other community members were thinking and planning. They managed to do that undetected because the image of the *Mungiki* in most people’s minds was of men rather than women.

Mungiki women were used to find out whether “enemy” men were circumcised or not or identify the uncircumcised ones when they already knew⁵⁷. Sex workers attached to the movement were instrumental at spying on unsuspecting clients and informing the movement leadership on the plans of the known-adversaries as well as entice the men specifically targeted for killing into areas where they would be captured or killed easily when they had dropped their guard⁵⁸. Women members of *Mungiki* were also active at promoting “adherence to culture” by encouraging or coercing fellow women to undergo FGM as a way of cleansing themselves before

⁵⁰Narrative 14 Nairobi

⁵¹Narrative 10 Nairobi

⁵²Narrative 16 Nairobi

⁵³Narrative 10 Nairobi

⁵⁴Narrative 10, 15 Nairobi

⁵⁵Narrative 15 Nairobi

⁵⁶Narrative 11 Nairobi

⁵⁷Narrative 4 Naivasha- it has to be clarified that “Luo” generally referred to ODM supporters who went beyond ethnic Luo’s who were most likely circumcised according to their cultural observances.

⁵⁸Narrative 4 Naivasha

their God in the hard times facing the community so that the ethnic group would be forgiven its trespasses and enabled to conquer its enemies⁵⁹.

There are no accounts that show women taking part or being accessories of actual killings torture or molestation of “enemies”. There are however accounts of women to women violence such as of women participating in often forced circumcision of fellow women. It must be emphasized that the perpetrators do not regard FGM as a punishment or something meant to hurt- far from it, it’s something to be celebrated and the initiates congratulated for having shown their solidarity with the group.

Closely related was the revelation that women were assigned duties within the wider group strategy- however undesirable those duties were, they were justified by the greater cause the *Mungiki* understood to be serving. Despite the *Mungiki* movement being premised on observance of strict conservative moral code that came with obligations and observances, accounts were told of women members engaging in what (on the surface) appeared to be immoral conduct such as is the case when they entice “the enemy” sexually and even have intercourse with them as a weapon for disarming them or getting them into their trust so that they may spy on them. This brings out the irony of women members being punished when they associated voluntarily with outsider males but rewarded for doing the same as a service to the movement. Like the men in *Mungiki*, they are expected to subsume their individuality to the group but unlike the men their bodies and in particular sexuality is subject to external male control at the whims of their male relations or/ and movement leaders.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that women in *Mungiki* are separated from men by different initiation rituals, a female led command structure that only applies to them and that is largely subservient to the male hierarchy. An interrogation of group social norms relating to gender expectations, roles, and responsibilities of women and men shows no significant changes even though, unlike in the past, women are now engaging in violence sometimes alongside men. The same is apparent in the use of violence in interpersonal relations to achieve different goals, and the way that masculinity and femininity are redefined during times of conflict (such as 2007/ 8 post-election violence) to fulfil group objectives. Violence even by women in the context of “liberation struggle” is used in the perpetuation of gender roles and

⁵⁹Narrative 4 Naivasha

power hierarchies rather than as a means of liberating women and girls from the same.

Largely as a result of the above contradictions women in organizations controlled by men (such as *Mungiki*) that espouse extremist ideologies have conversations at four levels as outlined below. Internalized individual introspection conversations on their choice to defy specific socio-gender expectations of the wider society they belong to and to align with a group that is seen as an enemy of the mainstream, but more critical for them – a group that is seen as anti-women in its publicly known patriarchal conservative misogynistic ideology. In second place they have conversations among fellow women within the movement for purposes of understanding and clarifying their role as expected by the group code as well as to establish their place and identity within acceptable solidarity as women. Thirdly the women have conversations with “men in their lives” as relatives or lovers as well as male authority figures within the organizations who largely share an affinity with their men. The fourth layer of conversations involve the general community of people outside of the groups who generally dislike their ideology and methods of expressing it and in the worst of circumstances consider them as the enemy. This general community includes close relatives and (former) friends who feel betrayed and in danger of activities of such women in extremist groups. The alienation is greater where close relatives and associates see the group as a threat to them and by extension the whole society.

By operating as an appendage to a violent male dominated organization, women in *Mungiki* have to constantly affirm their place as “helpers” in the struggle of their men to subjugate a largely ethnic male consolidation of power using money and manipulation of state apparatus. Even with the consciousness that they bring to the struggle special skills which make them a necessary part of the equation, they still feel inhibited to claim a place within the top decision making levels that would enable them more directly influential in its governance. From the prevailing hegemonic male perspective, women in such movements may not rise above the defining consanguineous and romantic liaisons that define their engagement. However it is also noteworthy that despite virtually all the *Mungiki* women members interviewed being so by virtue of their relation to a male *Mungiki* adherent; women found their own reasons for continuing to be part of the group. In most accounts by women, they cited their own as opposed to group solidarity reasons as well as personal gains they had made often without reference to the men who enabled them to become members. What this implies is that women’s membership had in a materialistic way ceased to be an appendage of their male associates and benefactors. Put another way, women members over time became accountable to the leadership organs of the organization rather than subject to their “male relations” who become just a means to gaining membership.

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