What it takes to be a man: understanding African masculinities in the context of African-Australian marriage migration

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Abstract

In this paper, I aim to make sense of African masculinities and feelings of (non)belonging in an Australian context by using a framework of 'intimate borders'. I look at how political, social and cultural borders and boundaries influence feelings and understandings of what it means to be a man among African men who came on spouse visas as partners of Australian Anglo-Saxon women in the last decennia. I analyse their imaginaries of integration into Australian society, their expectations and lived realities from the moment their journey started until well after their citizenship ceremony. The narratives indicate that their migration journeys uproot their sense of self and notions of what being a man should entail. I suggest that both marriage and migration are two major life events that combined, create an identity crisis leaving men confused, stripped of their cultural garb. Faced with a new dependency on their spouse and changing gender roles, as well as prejudices, racism and other barriers, being African and simultaneously trying to fit and feel Australian seems to be an impossible quest. While public opinion may consider marriage migrants as perpetrators who 'only do it for the visa' and file for divorce as soon as they acquired permanent residency, I argue that many among these African men do genuinely try to build a new life and successful marriage. The arguments I use are based on ongoing fieldwork among African-Australian couples in Adelaide since October 2014 for my PhD research on 'intimate borders'.

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Introduction

In the contemporary global world in which free movement of goods, capital, services and information is praised and promoted, the movement of people, especially from the Global South to the Global North is increasingly restrictive (e.g. Fassin 2011). Australia's "non-discriminatory" immigration policy is welcoming those who can contribute economically, but limits movement of people without skills. The partner category visas are becoming subject to critical inspection, as marriage migration is seen as a weak link in Australia's migration policies (Jupp 2002).[1]

Foreign spouses, in this case African spouses to Australian citizens, seem to threaten Australia in various ways: they may immigrate to take advantage of the system, may become a financial burden, but also they are a threat to Australia's moral framework as they may marry for the 'wrong' reasons and by doing so make innocent Australians victims.[2] Spouse migration turns into a lengthy bureaucratic struggle through which bi-national couples have to prove the genuineness of their relationship in order to reduce the number of sham marriages (cf. Fernandez 2013, Neveu Kringelbach 2013). As described below, such processes effectuate a dependency of the foreign spouse on the Australian sponsor, which, in the case of African male marriage migrants, has a negative influence on their feelings of belonging, of being a man, and consequently, on their relationships with their Australian partners.[3]

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[1] In the Global North, marriage migration is perceived as an ambiguous practice. Ideas about 'mail order' brides, sex tourism and trafficking prevail and foreign spouses are distrusted, as they would have reasons other than romantics for marriage. As a result, a private matter becomes subject to public opinion and treated accordingly in the public space of governmental institutions (Constable 2009, Eggebo 2013, Beck-Gernstein 2007).

[2] See for instance http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/01/29/marriage-scams-uncovered-amid-crackdown-partner-visa-fraud (25 August 2015)

[3] This paper is based on on-going fieldwork I am conducting as part of my PhD research on "intimate borders' in Adelaide since October 2014. I conducted interviews and had informal conversations with 29 (ex)couples; individuals who are or have been in an African-Australian relationship. Some of them were still in the process of applying for a visa; others have been married for years. Some couples have met in Australia and applied for a spouse visa onshore, others met in Africa and had to apply for a visa in Africa. Methods of data collection are participant observation, informal conversations, interviews, and group discussions not only with (ex)spouses, but also with Africans and Australians directly involved with mixed couples, such as family members, friends, and professionals.

In this paper, I aim to make sense of African masculinities and feelings of (non)belonging in an Australian context by using a framework of 'intimate borders'.[4] I look at how political, social and cultural borders and boundaries influence feelings and understandings of what it means to be a man among African men who came on spouse visas as partners of Australian women in the last decennia.[5] I analyse their imaginaries of integration into Australian society, their expectations and lived realities from the moment their journey started until well after their citizenship ceremony. The narratives indicate that their migration journeys uproot their sense of self and notions of what being a man should entail.[6] I suggest that both marriage and migration are two major life events that combined, create an identity crisis leaving men confused, stripped of their cultural garb. Faced with a new dependency on their spouse and changing gender roles, as well as prejudices, racism and other barriers, being African and simultaneously trying to fit and feel Australian seems to be an impossible quest.[7]

African masculinities

The study of men and masculinity became a popular part of gender studies in the 1980s.[8] In the next decade, amongst others through the publication of Connell's book *Masculinities* (1995), a general rejection arose of the idea that all men are, or need to

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[4] The concept of "intimate borders" seeks to develop an understanding of the ways in which bi-national couples deal with borders and boundaries both external as well as intrinsic to the relationship, and how such borders and boundaries overlap and affect each other. Borders, here, are to be found on three different levels: the geo-political borders and thus the migration policies and the visa application process; the boundaries of society, the daily movement and interaction of African partners in and with their social worlds due to their relationships and related migratory experiences; and the frontiers within intercultural relationships. These levels also help to gain insight in the praxis of the making public of an otherwise highly private zone, and the effects this has on the lived experiences of African-Australian couples.

[5] I focus on heterosexual relationships between black African men and Australian women of British, European and Middle Eastern descent.

[6] Although I have interviewed men who did not seem to have suffered a loss of self or manhood, the majority of African men did seem to struggle or have struggled in the past. While this paper focuses on the latter group, I want to underscore that this does not hold for *all* African men who came to Australia on a spouse visa.

[7] This research concerns a highly personal and emotional topic. It is about people who are just figuring out what they are doing themselves, right now. Everything is tentative and moving, literally and figuratively. Men's stories and 'answers to my questions' need to be seen in this light, as subjective and emotional snapshots. On top of this, many men did not have much experience with expressing themselves, their emotions, and/or did not see an interest in communicating their feelings and sometimes 'shameful' practices. Therefore, I want to underscore the temporariness and ambiguity of their stories, yet aim to describe what I think are similarities in the journeys of African men marrying and moving to Australia.

[8] But already in 1977, Tolson's book *The Limits of Masculinity* urged for a focus on men, amidst a strong general interest in feminism.

be, the same. Within a society, thus, different constructions of masculinity exist and it is important to recognise them, their relations, inequalities, and power struggles. Furthermore, the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" emerged; a dominant masculinity, seen as the cultural ideal, not only oppressing women, but also subordinating other masculinities. And while different masculinities coexist within a society, and the term 'masculinity' itself functions as an umbrella, comprising multiple, flexible, diverse and ambiguous masculinities, a hegemonic masculinity is ever present, albeit fluid and unstable. Factors such as race, class, religion and sexual preference are defining factors in masculinities (Morrel 1998). And as Morrell and Ouzgane state: "the concept [of masculinities] provides a way to understand the evident fact that not all men have the same amount or type of power, the same opportunities, and, consequently, the same life trajectories" (2005: 4).

Within an African context, only recently have social scientists shifted their attention to include African men. Studies on gender and development often only focused on women, and merely described men as those in power, subordinating women. Men being disempowered did not seem to be an option. Thus, African men have been ignored, overlooked, taken for granted, and seen as a hegemonic category. This has created a notion of African men as powerful 'winners', while in fact evidence shows that men have suffered greatly from the political and socioeconomic changes in Africa, due to colonialism and events in the post-colonial period, especially the 1980s crisis (Silverschmidt 2005).

Naturally, there is no such thing as *the* African masculinity (Morrell 1998; Ouzgane & Morrell 2005). Numerous masculinities are acted out in Africa, as self-evidently, Africa is hugely diverse continent, with many different countries, cultures, ethnicities, families, and individuals. Moreover, Africans are spread all across the globe as migrants, moving for various reasons and experiencing diverse living environments. Colonialism, Christianity, schools and urbanisation are among many factors influencing African masculinities. But that is not to say that pre-colonial notions and practices of masculinity have been swept away. Other factors such as class, capitalism and changes in the family continue to influence masculinities, indicating the fluidity and changing characters of masculinities (Arnfred 2004, Morel 1998).

However, as Morrel and Ouzgane describe in their introduction (2005: 7-8), there are some similarities, or communalities between men in Africa. First of all, they argue "all men have access to the patriarchal dividend, the power that being a man gives them to choose to exercise power over women". Secondly, they argue that African men share the legacy of colonialism and the current influence of globalisation. And lastly, African men are often seen as the ultimate 'Other'.

These three commonalities are of importance to this study, and link in with notions of African male sexualities. It is important to note here, as Arnfred (2004) describes, that Christianity had, and still has, a large influence on African genders and sexualities. The assumptions of heterosexuality, women as subordinate to men and male control over female sexuality, and the condemnation of sex outside marriage and sex for pleasure are dominant in many societies.[9]

Throughout (Western) history, black/African men have long been presented as inferior to white men, as uncivilized, highly sexualized and lustful, as objects, in order to underscore a narrative of white-supremacist patriarchy (Saint-Aubin 2005, Arnfred 2004).[10] As Fanon (1952/1986: 177) describes, people in Africa became black when Europeans colonialized them, and not only did they get their colour, but also their sexuality. Fanon describes how while we all know the sexual superiority of black people is an untruth; fear makes people believe it anyway. As such, race becomes, or has become, fetishized (in Ratele 2004).[11] As this study is about Africans in an Australian (Western) context, I argue that blackness and African masculinities and sexualities need to be positioned keeping this specific (hi)story in mind.

From my own observations and interviews with white Australians, male and female, African men, and the black male body can be cause for uncomfortable feelings, for sexual fears and arousals, and a general confrontation with the unknown.

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[9] Nevertheless, it is needless to say that this is not the *only* form of sexuality, and there are numerous examples underscoring the multitude of sexualities. For instance, on how sex and marriage in pre-colonial times did include sex for pleasure, as well as sex between unmarried adults (see for instance Guy 1987, Hunter 2002, Becker 2004). And nowadays, self-evidently, sex for pleasure and female agency are not unknown to Africans, and so are 'Western' notions or romance, companionship and marriage based on love (cf. Cole & Thomas 2009, Smith 2010, Spronk 2005, Thompson 2013).

[10] Since a few decades though, a growing body of literature on 'black masculinity' in Western contexts positions this form of masculinity as oppositional to 'white masculinity'. By doing so, such studies have successfully weakened stereotypes of black males that focussed on the body, physical strength and sexuality (Morrel 1998, cf. Hoch 1979, Westwood 1990).

[11] And see for instance the much cited and criticized work of Caldwell et al. (1989), on African masculinity.

Simultaneously, living in Australia influences men's own notions of being an African man. New ideas, norms of, and stereotypes about (African) men and masculinities, as well as notions of what it means to be a man from 'back home' may conflict or overlap, can create confusions and conflicting realities. Helle Valle (2004) speaks of 'dividualities' instead of individualities, pointing out that subjects have multiple perspectives, identifiers, and sexualities. 'Dividuality' thus depends on social contexts, and is therefore crucial for an understanding of African masculinities in an Australian context, as African men, as any other migrant or Australian, act out of, and practice a multitude of masculinities, all depending on backgrounds, religion, age, class, and many more factors.

Getting to stay, obtaining a spouse visa

Australian migration policies are becoming stricter each year. Currently, obtaining a spouse visa is a costly and timely affair.[12] The visa itself costs more than six thousand Australian dollars, as prices have been doubled earlier this year, and some couples are awaiting a decision on their application for over 24 months. Furthermore, the visa application form is complex and couples are required to 'proof' the genuine character of not only the relationship, but also the foreign spouse, through police clearance and a health check.[13]

Different visa subclasses are designed for onshore and offshore applications. Here I only focus on couples that made offshore applications. There are two routes for marriage and migration when outside Australia. One can apply for Visa Subclass 300 – Prospective Marriage (temporary), travel to Australia and marry the appointed Australian spouse within the nine months the visa is valid, apply for Subclass 820 – Partner (temporary), and two years after this application, apply for Subclass 801 – Partner (residence). Or, one can apply for Visa Subclass 309 – Partner (provisional). One can do this when legally married, intend to legally marry in the near future and prior to migration, or, when in a de facto relationship for at least the entire twelve months prior to the application date. Subsequently, if one is still in the same

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[12] https://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Visa/Fees (13 August 2015)
[13] Just as Jupp (2002) argues, visa categories, eligibility and other requirements are comparable to a maze, and impossible to comprehend without the help of a migration agent.

relationship two years after the first visa application, one can apply for the Subclass 100 – Partner (migrant) visa. Either way, as part of the eligibility requirements[14], the (prospective) spouses must provide evidence of knowing each other personally. Statements from both partners must be included in the application of the history of the relationship: how they have met, the date of the engagement or wedding, joint activities, or significant events in the relationship. Also, at least two statements should be given by family and/or friends who can attest the genuine character of the relationship and intentions of the spouses.

Most of the couples and African men I interviewed applied from outside Australia. Many of these couples have met in Africa, with some exceptions, as two couples met in Greece, one in China, and one in Malaysia.[15] Australian women worked or holidayed abroad and met their (future) husband. They travelled back and forth between the African country (or the third country) and Australia and eventually decided to apply for the visa.

In all cases, the Australian women were in charge of completing the application. Often, they were in Australia during the time of applying, and they had the cultural knowledge of filling in such forms. Men had to go for an interview, a health check and police clearance. When I asked men how they experienced the application process, they all replied that it was fine, that they were not worried, that everything went smooth. After all, many stated, they were sincere so what did they have to lose? Only one man mentioned that the moment he had to go for the health check he became very nervous, as he suddenly realized that if he had an illness, even AIDS, his whole life would be turned upside down, as he then would be denied the visa, and his life he had planned with his fiancée would be over.

But most men expressed no worries whatsoever, only the nuisance of missing days of work for a long travel to the clinics and the interview location, sometimes in

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[14] Such eligibility requirements for a Prospective Marriage are: one should be over 18 when applying; spouses should be of opposite sex; spouses should know each other personally (face to face, there should be evidence of meeting in person); one should 'genuinely intend to marry and live with the intended spouse'; and meet the health and police clearance requirements.
[15] Furthermore, one Australian woman met her ex-partner on a dating website, and after chatting and emailing for some weeks, visited him a couple of times in Malaysia where he lived, before they applied for a 820 visa.

another country.[16] And all men laughed when thinking back of collecting all the official statements, as none of them were able to get them the formal way; they all had to bribe someone to get their forms and information.

Men may not see the importance of delivering a detailed, correct and elaborative application form. However, it may also be that they preferred not to talk about that particular moment and how they felt. The Australian (ex)partners, on the other hand, remember this period as a highly stressful event in their lives. They regarded it as a part-time job, to fill in the forms and to collect all the right information. One woman told me she thought carefully about whom to ask to write the statutory declarations, and decided to ask people with highly regarded jobs, as to put more weigh on the scale. She also made sure to underscore her husband would not be of any burden to the state, as she and her family could provide him with a house and a job.

We made it – or did we?

When a visa is granted, from the date of the visa application a couple is required to be together for a minimum of two years before the foreign spouse can apply for permanent residency in Australia. During these two years, the foreign spouse is 'dependent' on his or her Australian partner. And while it seems that Australian women stress to get the visa, for the African partners the stressful period starts when arriving in Australia. Couples may at first think it is finally time to relax and to start their new lives, in reality, a new difficult period has just begun.

Many couples seem to realise they actually do not know their significant other as well as they thought. African men expected their partners to be different, Australia to be different. It seems that women were living a different lifestyle and having a different attitude and mind-set than when in Africa. It makes sense; different contexts and cultural ways – especially while on holiday – influence people's behaviours.[17] While in Africa women may have felt like they were open for anything, ready and

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[16] Some Nigerian men had to travel all the way to Pretoria, South Africa, to have the interview with an Australian Government official. Also, the Ebola crisis in Western Africa has delayed many visa applications from that region, as people were not able to obtain visas to travel out.
[17] See for instance work on expatriates (Fechter 2007), and sex and romance tourism (Brennan 2004, McEwen 2009, and Selänniemi 2003).

trusting to take their then-boyfriend's lead, in Australia their humdrum lives continue, and so do their worries about jobs, money, mortgages, and now also, being responsible for their newly arrived African partner. Women had less of such responsibilities in Africa, and those on holiday assumingly saved beforehand to make their trip worthwhile. This may have confused African men, who may have expected a similar holiday lifestyle in Australia. Thus from the men's perspective, the only familiar face for them in this new country has changed, leading to confusion and disappointment.

All men who broke up with their partners described them as controlling, mean and bossy. While none of the men ever used the words 'domestic violence' or 'abuse', men often elaborated on how unfair their ex-partners treated them. Women would be in control, and when he would question her or go against her, she would start to shout and threaten them with breaking up, which would make him have to leave Australia, and literally calling the Department of Immigration to get him deported. While this could be an emotional outcry in the heat of an argument, for men, this is a very real possibility, and a reason to keep quiet, to confirm to one's partner's ways.

Men felt that the visa requirement of staying together for two years put Australian spouses in a powerful position, something their partners at the time were surely misusing. One man from West Africa described how his ex would take his full salary, only giving him money to buy the petrol needed to drive to work and back. She did not allow him to go outside for any other reason than work, and when he actually decided to end the relationship and return home, she hid his passport. She furthermore forbid him to talk to his family on the phone, as she figured his sister must actually be his African wife. Since he did not know anyone else but her and her family in Australia, was not in a position to meet potential friends of his own, nor to argue with his wife due to the fear of being deported, he describes the first two years in Australia as *"an isolated hell"*.

In this case, as in many others, men were not in control of the finances, and were not in a position to sent money home. Whereas for many women the main priority was their household in Australia, and then to send the extras to his family, many men felt that first they wanted to send money home, and after this use what was left for their new home in Australia. One woman told me that even though her partner worked fulltime and she was on a pension, they still had to just eat plain spaghetti for

days in a row, because he sent so much money home. This is not to say that women did not support their husbands sending money to Africa, but they saw it as less of a priority.

Especially the (imagined) reversal of the male-female division of power, or gender roles, seems an issue. In Africa, men took the lead, in their context, their culture, and their language. Men seem to have imagined a continuation of this (im)balance, as they told me that in an ideal relationship, they, as men, would be the head of the household. Being completely dependent on one's spouse is the complete reverse of what they experienced, what they may have anticipated, what they imagined their relationship should be like. Not being able to make own friends, to find a proper job, to have family around, to find the way around the city, not being familiar with the infrastructure, lifestyle, or even Australian dishes seems to make men feel inadequate, powerless, defeated. Moreover, being legally fully dependent on one's spouse for living in Australia seems to be too much to bear. In this way, the hardships of creating a new life in Australia can be seen as a wife's responsibility and fault.

In contrast, men who are in lasting relationships all have successful and well paid jobs, and/or the feeling they can express themselves in sufficient ways. One man, for instance, who performs as a musician next to his dreadful full-time job with nightshifts in a factory. Both him and his wife expressed how difficult it was for him, when they just moved here. They met each other in Greece where they lived together for a year before she became pregnant. They decided to move to Australia, as here she has her family. He found Australia quiet, as if everyone is living behind closed doors. He found work quickly and has rarely been without, but always in factories. But his eyes lit up when he started to talk about his band. When they met he performed as a street artist, and she has always supported his passion for music. What keeps them together is their intellectual and creative connections, they explain, and their mutual interest in the others wellbeing. Interestingly, men like him did not show much interest in sending big amounts of money home. They seem to prioritize their household in Australia, and were even ambiguous about demanding family members back home.

In addition to levels of education as a factor influencing men's sense of belonging, I suggest that a feeling of purpose here, and freedom and confidence to

explore, as well as compatibility with one's partner are crucial to healthy relationships. As a relationship counsellor who often deals with African men who are or have been married to an Australian woman explained to me, both marriage and migration are life changing events, and to combine the two often leads to crisis. Even if men have intentions as good as they come, the double reinvention of the self after marriage *and* migration is often too much to take. Especially in a situation in which the spouse has practically all the power and will use it, too, it seems to be almost impossible to not lose a sense of meaning in one's life, a sense of self.

Welcome to Australia

The first two years in Australia seem like a rollercoaster ride for those who applied for a spouse visa offshore. The first six months were fantastic, often felt like a holiday in a super modern country full of fun trips and adventures. After that first period of excitement, a new episode follows, in which men face their new realities. This part of the world turned out not to be as wealthy as many imagined, and good jobs are hard to find, especially for those without any formal education. Moreover, racism is an issue, and men described how difficult it was to find a job as an African in an economy slow as that of South Australia. And as described above, relationships and partners are not as good as men hoped or imagined. Furthermore, feelings of loneliness, homesickness and of being overwhelmed by all the newness make the first two years extremely intense.

I found that either couples break up around the two year period in which permanent residency is granted – or they do not split up at all. Except for one, I did not encounter any ex-couples who split up after being together more than two years. All the men who separated from their Australian sponsor had left her with everything the couple acquired during their time together. Some had bought a house while together, but the men moved out without a fight. Men expressed that it was easier for them, as young and strong men, to start anew, than it would be for their exes, especially when there were children involved.

This period after the separation is a tough one, and seemingly, men have to start all over again, as if they just started yet another journey. One man, when looking

back at that period, told me it was the hardest part of his new life in Australia. He expressed how he felt homesick and defeated, wanting to party, go out and forget his sorrows by drinking and meeting women, but at the same time trying to meet his responsibilities of being a father now, and a wish to being able to provide for both his new family here, as well as those back home. He often felt that although he tried his best, he was a constant failure.

I was often told that 'survival in Australia is only for the toughest of African men' – by African men who managed themselves, I should add. Many men talked about the many freedoms to be found in the West. Here, men can enjoy the availability and easy access to alcohol, drugs and women – as it would be extremely easy for African men to pick up Australian women – together with a relative anonymity makes it easy to go astray. Back home in Africa, such things would not be so accessible. Moreover, it seems that knowing one is able to sleep with many women makes up for the loss of control and manhood experienced in the (previous) relationship.

One man explained that when he was new to Australia, he just wanted to play and enjoy as much as he could, without realizing there are negative outcomes. 'If you want your marriage to work', he explained, 'you have to stay strong and not be tempted by all the availabilities, you have to be responsible'. 'But', he added, 'the temptations are luring, especially in bars and clubs where Australian women who are interested in African men are numerous'. Indeed, some Australian women I spoke to were only looking for African men, since 'once you go black, you never go back'. And logically, some African men use this stereotype for their own benefits, using their 'Africanness' as a means of picking up women.[18] It seems to make sense that when one is going through though situations on a daily basis and on numerous levels, nightclubs are a good place to blow off steam and build up self-esteem.

Many men expressed they were still very stressed about life. They all struggled with the fact that their expectations and hopes were, and still are, so different from their lived realities. Living a healthy and balanced life seemed so difficult and energy consuming for many. As one man, for instance, who explains

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[18] In general, it seems that African men I spoke to feel Western women are 'easier' than African women, which may be due to cultural notions of love, sex and family ties. I feel this real or imagined freedom of Western women generates African men's interest in these women, but also incites a portrayal of Western women as not so respectable, subjects to objectification.

how just a healthy meal in a luxury, as he temporarily lives on a friend's sofa and thus has not got much space to take care of himself,

> *"All I have been eating lately is McDonalds. I just crave some greens. I sleep on the sofa now at my friend's house. I am happy I can stay there, but I really need something for myself now. I need my daughter to be able to come and visit me. But I do not have any money. My ex keeps nagging that I need to spend more time with her. I am saving and paying off some debts I have. I am thinking of getting an apprenticeship in a trade, so that I can earn a lot more in the future. But that would mean that for now I will have more time without any money. So I really do not know what to do. I feel as if I am back at scratch, as if I am standing still instead of moving ahead. My friends back home now all have good jobs. They think I am living* The Life *in the West, but look at me. And I need to keep sending money to my parents. I want to buy a house, settle down, and get my sister over, but I really do not see any of this happening any day soon."*

This quote touches the many stressful factors men face; the relationship with the ex-partner, children, money, savings, debts, finding a good job and aiming to secure a future, getting a house or permanent address, family obligations, pride and shame.

Conclusion

Marriage migration shakes African masculinities, and it may take years to reinvent oneself again. While some African men may think they have 'made it' the moment they move to Australia, in reality a whole other journey is just about to start. Building a new, married life in Australia with an Australian spouse is often experienced as much harder than men would previously have envisioned. African men married to Australian women often are in the unfortunate position that their new world is that of their spouse, and they themselves lack contact with Africans who have been in similar situations and who may share similar cultural backgrounds. Hence, feelings of loneliness and non-belonging increase.

Furthermore, a lack of education and difficulties finding a job make life even harder, as men are not able to provide, or have a meaningful daily routine. Moreover, no income means no ability to take care of family back home. It seems that feelings of being a man are closely related to the ability of providing for the family, and that in order to 'succeed' in married life in Australia, a shift in focus, in priority, must take place – from a focus on the family or household back home, to the new home in Australia.

But alongside the social and economic side of what it means to be a man, is the shift in gender roles and power balance between husband and wife. Not only is it highly likely that she is the breadwinner, she also possesses the cultural knowledge, and has her family and friends here. African husbands feel they have become 'useless', which affects their sense of self, their feelings of being a man. Moreover, the strict current migration policies requiring a two-year dependence on the Australian spouse increase the already highly unequal power balance between the spouses, making men feel more vulnerable and shaky. Thus, men feel they lose control over their lives. Seemingly, relationships often break down because of the pressures triggered by migration, and personal and cultural mismatches between the spouses, all of which cause feelings of self-doubt and loss of masculinity among the African spouses.

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