

Negotiating Adulthood. Different Generations of Men in Rural Kwazulu, South Africa.

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The social role of youth is an issue that, in the last twenty years, has become a key point of the political agenda of many African nations. In South Africa, the consequences of segregationist politics, market economy, and migrations, have profoundly shaped the social and cultural role of youth, both in urban and rural contexts. Moreover, the end of apartheid has opened a new period of wide transformation.

Based on my ethnographic research in kwaMashabane, a remote South African rural area, this paper analyses how the social role of male youth is shaped by national state policy and by local dynamics. Moreover, I will focus on the relationship between models of adulthood, and the strategies that youth adopt to cope with conflicts and continuities. This analysis will show how post-apartheid freedom and the constraints of the local social structure are negotiated, and how society is coping with the complex relationships between cultural reproduction and social change.