

# **'from boys to men - two perspectives on initiation'**

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In the years 2011/12, an accompanying scientific study regarding the implementation of a mentoring project was conducted at the University of Zurich. The aim of this project is to offer adolescents support in questions of becoming a man by providing them with adult men as mentors; at the centre of this stood the act of male initiation in the form of a ritualized adventure weekend. On the basis of qualitative interviews that have been conducted with adolescents and mentors alike, it has been shown that this act of initiation is attributed with different meaning. From the mentors' point of view, the initiation is an important starting point for dealing with your biography, with structuring your reality and with your weaknesses and strengths. With the adolescents, on the other hand, it became mainly evident that becoming a man was regarded less as an act, i.e. the initiation, but rather as a process. Although, the initiation is regarded as important by the men primarily, the interview material makes it most evident that these adult men as well question their being-male constantly and possibly even more so than the adolescents, who would like to take more time for themselves in their development. These different perspectives demonstrate impressively how the same conceptions and processes are regarded and evaluated controversially in regard to a prospective and a retrospective viewpoint, respectively. There should be a critical analysis, if one and the same topic can be examined against the background of different generations meaningfully.