



Kinship Constellations in the Narratives of Unaccompanied Refugee Minors in Norway

RESEARCH

GUNIKA RISHI

**Author affiliations can be found in the back matter of this article.*

HUP HELSINKI
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

ABSTRACT

Kinship emerges as a constellation of relational ties for young adults who arrive in Norway as unaccompanied refugee minors, shaped by migration, separation, and the uneven terrain of family reunification. Drawing on long-term ethnographic fieldwork and narrative interviews with 14 young adults, the article presents three scenes that show how kinship is reconfigured through chosen networks, diasporic connections, and enduring family ties.

Chosen kinship appears in relationships with peers, caregivers, and trusted adults who become anchors of continuity in uncertain environments, while diasporic networks develop through shared histories, linguistic and regional ties, and community spaces. Familial relationships persist but are marked by separation, shifting responsibilities, and care that unfolds transnationally, showing that the young adults' biological ties are also remade throughout their migration journey.

Across these scenes, kinship appears as a dynamic terrain shaped by institutional constraints, affective longings, and the everyday labour of creating and sustaining ties in a new social landscape. The findings call attention to how rigid, legally defined models of family fail to recognise the lived realities and social worlds of the young adults and underscore the need for migration policies that recognize the relational constellations the young adults build for themselves.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Gunika Rishi

Department of
Interdisciplinary Studies
of Culture, Norwegian
University of Science and
Technology, Norway
gunika.rishi@ntnu.no

KEYWORDS:

Kinship, family
reunification,
unaccompanied refugee
minors, migration,
ethnography, Norway

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Rishi G. Kinship
Constellations in
the Narratives of
Unaccompanied Refugee
Minors in Norway. *Nordic
Journal of Migration
Research*. 2026; 16(1):
9, 1–19. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33134/njmr.959>

Samir: [...] and then my father asked me to call them [...]

Author: But didn't you mention earlier that you had lost contact with your parents in Afghanistan?

Samir: Yes, my biological father was killed, and I have lost contact with my mother. But this is my Norwegian father, whom I met at the asylum center when I first arrived in Norway. He has been very kind to me, and his family is so wonderful [...] He also taught me fishing and gave me driving lessons.

Samir, a 17-year-old from Afghanistan whom I met at a Norwegian secondary school, shared his story of leaving Afghanistan at the age of 13 years after the militia took his biological father in the middle of the night. After an exhausting three-year journey through numerous borders and refugee camps, Samir finally reached Norway, only to lose contact with his mother shortly after. He recounts how UN agencies tried to trace her by visiting the address he provided in Afghanistan and circulating her photograph in the neighbourhood. Unfortunately, all attempts were unsuccessful. With no family members left to reunite with, Samir continues to grapple with the weight of this loss, describing his past as 'a long, tiring journey with no end in sight.' Now close to graduating from his first level in school, he speaks with anticipation about visiting the family¹ he built with a social worker.

This vignette opens space to cast an eye on how migration reshapes understandings of family but also affects the everyday lives and relationships of young adults. Many, like Samir, navigate the family-reunification process with varied experiences and outcomes ([Anschütz & Mazzucato 2022](#)). Family reunification is a right granted to Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URMs; unless required for context, I will hereafter refer to them as young adults or youth²) after a certain period following their residency approval in Norway. For many young adults, this procedural right is a profound aspiration to reconnect with loved ones and restore a sense of belonging ([Wernesjö 2015](#)). However, the process often lays bare the structural and emotional complexities of family relations. These pressures build on disruptions already caused by forced migration, where uncertainty, distance, and prolonged separation unsettle existing relationships. Legal, financial, and temporal barriers further compound these earlier ruptures, often at moments when family ties may already be stretched or transformed. Forced migration, therefore, unfolds within relational worlds altered by displacement and the everyday demands of transnational family life ([Andrikopoulos & Duyvendak 2020](#)).

Previous research on URMs and family reunification in Norway highlights the vulnerability created by bureaucratic hurdles, restrictive policies, and the immediate challenges of displacement, including trauma and loss, as well as insights from the perspectives of service providers ([Engebrigtsen 2003](#); [Johansen & Tørrisplass 2024](#); [Lidén et al. 2017](#); [Tørrisplass 2022a, 2024](#)). More recently, studies have begun to foreground young adults' own experiences of family separation, reunification, and the reorganisation of family life after arrival ([Bergset et al. 2025a](#); [Johansen & Bendixsen 2025](#)). Yet, we still have limited understanding of how the young adults themselves make sense of these processes, how they narrate the shifts and strains that displacement introduces into their relationships, and how reunification is lived at the level of everyday practice. This raises critical questions: How do unaccompanied refugee minors navigate and reconfigure kinship within the constraints of restrictive migration policies? What insights do such experiences offer about the lived impacts of

state procedures, and how might they inform broader understandings within migration studies? Exploring these intersections offers a window into the deeply personal and political dimensions of migration and family reunification in the lives of young adults.

By positioning myself at this intersection, I attend to the entanglements of kinship by engaging with the diverse experiences of 14 young adults navigating different situations and stages of family reunification to understand how they adapt and form meaningful relations shaped by their personal histories within the social, cultural, and legal frameworks of Norway. I provide a contextual understanding of the bureaucratic processes surrounding URMs and family reunification in Norway in the next section. In the subsequent sections, I commit to anti-colonial and indigenous thinkers to remind us that kinship and belonging are not static categories but are constantly being renegotiated in the lives of young refugees. Lastly, I capture the multiple layers of love and kinship in the section 'Re-Membering Relations,' which highlights the ways in which young refugees build their relational constellations. I conclude with a reflection on how these relational practices challenge dominant narratives about family, belonging, and integration, calling for policies and approaches that recognize and support the ways in which young adults create meaningful connections.

UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINORS AND FAMILY REUNIFICATION IN NORWAY

When a minor departs from their home country without their parents or a guardian to seek asylum in another country, they are designated as an Unaccompanied Minor Asylum-seeker (UMA) by immigration or relevant state authorities, in accordance with The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is the primary legal framework that places the responsibility on states for the design of care services for UMAs ([UNHCR 1989](#); see article 22 for more). Norway hosts varying numbers of UMAs each year; for example, in 2015, the country saw a record high of over 1,000 unaccompanied refugee minors, the highest figure to date ([SSB 2017](#)). In 2023 and 2024, a total of 826 asylum applications of URMs were lodged in Norway, with the greatest number being from Syria, Eritrea, and Afghanistan ([The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration 2024](#)). Upon arrival, they undergo an asylum process that includes age verification, interviews, and assessment of their need for protection conducted by the National Police Immigration Services. Once UMAs are granted permission to stay in Norway, they are administratively reclassified as URMs and are resettled in a Norwegian municipality. Once the URM is granted a residence, they can apply for family reunification³ for their biological parents and siblings.

The young adults encounter several significant challenges when seeking family reunification. One major obstacle is the strict age limit, which requires that all necessary information and documentation for the application be submitted to the immigration authorities before the URM turns 18 years of age ([Immigration Act 2016 § 28](#)). Navigating the requirements around the age limit can be overwhelming due to the tedious administrative procedures involving extensive documentation, long waiting periods, and coordination with multiple agencies for extensive documentation. The youth must provide proof of identity, age, family ties, and the family's location. This often includes birth certificates, marriage certificates (for parents), and photographs. In situations where there is uncertainty about the applicant's age, X-rays of wisdom teeth may be requested ([Directorate of Immigration \(UDI\), n.d.](#)). Additionally, if documents verifying biological family relationships are missing or have been

destroyed due to conflict, DNA testing may be conducted to prove these relationships ([Immigration Act 2020 § 87](#)). For the youth, these requirements can cause delays that can result in applications being incomplete by the time they reach the age cutoff, effectively disqualifying them from reuniting with their families. This rigid timeline fails to account for all these complexities, thus creating additional stress and uncertainty for already vulnerable young adults. Additionally, the financial burden is substantial, with application fees reaching 10,500 NOK (≈890 Euros) per adult in 2023. Combined with the cost of travel tickets, this often makes reunification financially unattainable for many families or places significant pressure on youth to work long hours while attending school to save money.

While these policies are primarily designed for adults seeking family reunification, they impose profound hardships on the youth who, as individuals under 18 years old, are recognized as minors within Norway's welfare system. Those who are granted family reunification and bring their family to Norway go from being alone in Norway, with the challenges it brings, to becoming part of a family that needs a lot of help and support ([Tørrisplass 2022b](#)). This can mean that the authority structures in the family are reversed, and that the youth might struggle to reconnect with their parents or become responsible for their parents ([Barros-Lane et al. 2022](#); [Hean et al. 2024](#); [Tørrisplass 2022a](#)).

While family reunification is a legal right in Norway, the process is fraught with challenges. Bureaucratic delays, financial obstacles, and strict eligibility criteria require them to navigate complex systems demanding adult-like administrative and emotional labour. Although recognised as minors within Norway's welfare system, they are simultaneously expected to act as agents of family reconstruction ([Tørrisplass 2024](#)).

For those who succeed in bringing their families to Norway, reunification can introduce new pressures. Young adults often shift from living independently to becoming part of a family that requires extensive support in an unfamiliar society ([Tørrisplass 2022b](#)). This shift may reverse authority structures within the household and place young people in positions of responsibility for their parents, leading to challenges in reconnecting or renegotiating roles ([Bergset et al. 2025b](#)). These dynamics illustrate how reunification can produce both continuity and rupture. For some, it strengthens belonging and re-establishes a sense of familial stability ([Sabouni 2024](#)). For others, strained or distant relationships may persist, complicating the idealised notion of 'reunification' and revealing the emotional and practical demands placed on young adults.

Despite growing empirical attention, we still know little about how young refugees in Norway interpret and navigate the relational shifts sparked by prolonged separation, displacement, and the bureaucratic conditions of reunification. This gap reflects a broader tendency to treat family as a fixed biological unit and to assume care flows predictably down generational lines. Such assumptions have shaped policy and scholarship alike, flattening the more fluid, negotiated, and context-dependent forms of relatedness that emerge in the lives of young refugees.

KINSHIP IN MIGRATION STUDIES

At its core, kinship broadly refers to being connected or related to others ([Franklin & McKinnon 2001](#)). Migration research has often uncritically relied on state-defined categories of family, including rigid definitions of family structures while overlooking

the complexities of mobility, particularly the ways it transcends formal pathways like ‘family reunification’ (Moret et al. 2021). Such frameworks frequently reduce family to a static, nuclear, and heteronormative unit, failing to account for the fluid, negotiated, and dynamic practices of kinship that emerge in migratory contexts (for more, see Phillimore et al. 2023; Rytter 2012). For instance, the state’s focus on formal, legalistic definitions often disregards extended kin networks, chosen families, or informal caregiving arrangements that play a critical role in the lives of the young refugees.

By integrating kinship into migration research as a fluid and relational concept, we can better understand the ways in which the youth forge connections, navigate systems of exclusion, and sustain relationships in the face of uncertainties. This conceptual shift reframes URM as not as isolated individuals within state frameworks but as relational actors engaged in ongoing kin-making. A similar concept is explored in Saidiya Hartman’s *Lose Your Mother* (2008), where she examines the ruptures and recoveries of kinship in the aftermath of slavery, introducing the concept of an ‘afterlife’ of dispossession, where kinship is fractured by displacement yet reimagined in the face of loss. This concept provides a valuable lens to understand how young adults, separated from their biological families, navigate the creation of chosen families and communities of care. While Hartman’s work on the transatlantic slave trade differs in context, it resonates with young refugees’ struggles to rebuild kinship, both shaped by the shared experience of displacement and loss. From this vantage point, kinship becomes a mode of survival: an active practice through which young adults reconstitute community in spaces where traditional family structures are distant, uncertain, or longed for (Carsten 2000, 2003). This perspective challenges the rigidity of state-defined family categories and foregrounds the agency of the young adults (also see Bonjour & Cleton 2021).

When the young adults leave their home countries, the decision is often driven by factors such as conflict, persecution, or the pursuit of safety and opportunities, yet it remains deeply entangled with kinship. Even in their absence, familial networks play a crucial role in shaping their migration trajectories, influencing decisions about where to go and how to navigate the journey (Andrikopoulos & Duyvendak 2020). The connections that the youth carry from their home countries and make during their journey and after the resettlement provide emotional, economic, and social support, but migration also profoundly transforms kinship practices, stretching relationships across borders and redefining notions of belonging and care (Carsten 2020). Once they attain refugee status, migration policies define what constitutes a *family* for the young adults, thus directly determining who gets to reunite and which relations are counted as eligible for reunification with loved ones. Lee (2013) presents families as a socially constructed and often fictive concept, deliberately shaped to reinforce broader ideas such as national identity or racial and ethnic collectives. She highlights how family is not a fixed or universal category but rather one that is constructed, invented, and frequently contested. This dynamic nature of family becomes particularly evident in the experiences of young refugees, whose connections and relationships are profoundly influenced by migration policies, especially those governing family reunification. These policies often define and limit who is considered *family*, forcing young refugees to navigate and sometimes reconfigure their understanding of kinship within these imposed frameworks. Lee’s (2013) analysis underscores how such constructs both enable and constrain the possibilities for belonging and connection, shaping the lives of young refugees in critical ways. Scholars writing on transnational families have similarly shown how mobility reorders relational expectations, redistributing

forms of care and responsibility across distance and circumstance rather than along generational or biological lines (for example, [Brandhorst et al. 2020](#); [Näre 2020](#)).

Early anthropological understandings of kinship were built on the assumption that biological descent and neatly bounded family units formed the core of social life ([Nibbs 2013](#)). These approaches treated culture as coherent and totalized, leaving little room for the varied social, emotional, and cultural bonds that shape how people make and sustain relationships across different contexts ([Crapo Kim 2024](#); [Peletz 1995](#)). Disengaging from this idea of culture as a seamless whole, there have been advancements in kinship and family studies that have undergone significant transformations. By using Marxist, feminist, and historical approaches, along with exploring queer kinship and new reproductive technologies, we gain a clearer and more detailed understanding of kinship systems ([Collier & Yanagisako 1987](#); [Peletz 1995](#); [Taguchi & Majumdar 2021](#)). New kinship studies examine the tactical dimensions groups and individuals use to secure material, symbolic, and emotional gains ([Crapo Kim 2024](#)). These approaches have highlighted the intersections of kinship with race, gender, power, class, and other social structures, enriching our understanding of the complexities of human relationships, especially within migration research.

Taken together, these interventions do more than broaden what counts as family. They challenge the assumption that kinship is anchored in biological substance or neatly ordered household forms, arguing instead that it is produced through the practices, attachments, and negotiations that hold life together ([Carsten 2000, 2003](#)). This shift positions kinship not as a stable category but as something continually made and remade, shaped by care, dependency, strategy, and power ([Sahlins 2013](#)). Within migration research, this perspective is crucial. Displacement, legal uncertainty, and the asymmetries of asylum systems do not simply alter existing kin networks: they compel a reworking of what kinship can be and how it is recognised, including the creation of ties that may sit outside state-sanctioned family forms ([Weston 1997](#)). Approaching kinship this way allows us to see how young adults generate and inhabit forms of relatedness that stretch, unsettle, or exceed the categories assumed by states and classical anthropology. It is this reassembly of kinship, rather than its alternative forms, that guides my reading of the material that follows.

NARRATIVE ENCOUNTERS AND METHODOLOGICAL CARE

My research is grounded in semi-structured narrative interviews, centered on the life stories of 14 young adults (nine boys and five girls) aged 16–22 years originating from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Sudan, and Syria. Conducted over a period of six months, each participant was met four to five times on average, during which they narrated different parts of their lives. These narratives are interwoven into the broader thematic and temporal patterns that collectively shape the experience of a lifetime ([Bertaux 1981](#); [Rosenthal 1993](#)). This approach allowed for a rich and layered exploration of their life stories, offering both depth and diversity in understanding their experiences. The interviews were conducted in Urdu, Norwegian, and English and were transcribed in English by the author. All the participants arrived as URM and now hold a residence permit in the country. However, they were at various stages of the family-reunification process; some had submitted applications, others faced rejection, some had opted not to apply, and others had successfully reunited with their families. This diversity reflects a wide range of situational experiences and personal narratives. The age, gender, and country of origin of participants will not be disclosed to safeguard their privacy and confidentiality.

I met most of the youth in schools, which serve as key spaces where they spend a significant portion of their day. The schools not only mark the beginning of their educational journeys but also become central to their social interactions. As a daily site of encounter, the school offered continuity, comfort, and familiarity that fostered trust over time. Casual conversations often began in hallways, after class, or during lunch breaks, gradually evolving into deeper reflections. This everyday proximity allowed for a slow, relational approach to research, where conversations could unfold organically, shaped by the young adults' rhythms and readiness to share. In addition to schools, I also interacted with the youth in various social settings, including community events and activities organized by local municipalities. These gatherings provided valuable insights into their everyday lives and interactions, offering a broader understanding of how they navigate their social worlds beyond the classroom. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing participants the freedom to define their own experiences and perspectives (Merriam 2009: 90).

My early interactions with the youth frequently revolved around shared interests that served as a common reference point, such as music, Bollywood movies, cricket, or food. Although I started by attending classes and helping them with classwork, I eventually began spending time with them outside the classroom during class breaks and lunch periods in social arenas within the school. This also allowed me to interact with students from different classes at the same time. Soon, students would approach me, curious about my work and reasons for being there. As my conversations with a few of the young adults grew deeper, they began to share more personal life stories, and conversations about family and friends became more frequent. The repeated meetings allowed me to build trust, encourage deeper storytelling, and create space for their narratives to evolve, reflecting Behar's (2003) methodological reminder that ethnographic engagement is grounded in relational trust and ethical care. I would often ask if there was a time they would like to sit down and talk in more detail, allowing them the space to share their experiences when they felt comfortable. These moments outside the classroom, during breaks and lunch periods, became opportunities for them to open up about their journeys, hobbies, dreams for the future, the challenges of separation, the complexities of reunification, and the joy of finally reuniting with their loved ones. These conversations provided invaluable insights into their personal journeys, with family serving as both a central theme and a point of emotional connection. Through these exchanges, I found that the idea of family was often tied to both hope and hardship, deeply shaping their lives and perspectives.

In analysing the youth's stories, I drew on narrative analysis, treating the vignettes they shared as distinct accounts with their own characters, settings, and trajectories (Brannen 2013). The analytical process was iterative and combined narrative and thematic approaches. Drawing on Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic framework, I identified recurring themes across the interviews, such as kinship, belonging, temporality, and hope, while remaining attentive to the unique narrative forms in which these themes appeared. Rather than searching for linguistic patterns or discursive regularities, I focused on how the stories traced the entanglement between personal experience and the structures governing family reunification. Differences in legal status, country of origin, and timing of arrival shaped the narrative arcs in ways that revealed how the same policy environment generated unequal possibilities and affective landscapes. These variations were analytically important, as they showed how the same policy framework produced different possibilities, constraints, and emotional registers. The narratives did not converge into a single trajectory.

Instead, they revealed how kinship was lived, stretched, and reconfigured through uneven tempos, shifting expectations, and the pressures of distance and uncertainty. Ethical care guided every stage of this research, with attention to the vulnerabilities and agency of the young adults. Ongoing consent was taken at every stage, and anonymity safeguarded through the use of pseudonyms and contextual discretion. Beyond formal approvals from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, I approached ethics as an ongoing, relational practice; one that is attuned to power, trust, and the responsibility of representing life stories with care.

RE-MEMBERING RELATIONS

In this section, I share the stories of the young adults and how they create and maintain kinship in their lives. The findings are organized around three scenes that depict the many ways they rebuild a sense of belonging and community, as they navigate various stages of family reunification. While the scenes are analytically distinct, they draw on overlapping narratives from across the participant group, reflecting the interconnectedness of their experiences. I refer to them as ‘scenes’⁴ to signal a deliberate crafting of narrative fragments that capture the situated, affective, and contextual textures of the young adults’ lived worlds. To ensure respect for their openness and to protect their identities, this method also allows a degree of fictionalization by crafting composite characters and scenarios (Arjomand 2022). Dividing the findings into three thematic scenes enables a selective yet rich depiction of the data, aligning with an ethical commitment to care for what was shared and how it is represented.

SCENE 1: CHOSEN KINSHIP AND RELATEDNESS

I use the term ‘chosen kinship’ to highlight the agency and care involved in creating meaningful relationships beyond biological ties (Lee 2013; Taguchi & Majumdar 2021). In order to ground the discussion in this scene, I first return to my opening vignette of Samir, who lost both his parents before arriving to Norway. In the years following his arrival, Samir came to refer to a social worker he met at the asylum center as his ‘Norwegian father.’ This naming is not incidental; it marks a profound act of kin-making that exceeds biology and gestures towards rooting oneself relationally in a place that otherwise offered little familiarity or familial grounding.

In one of our conversations, I asked Samir how it helps having found a family here in Norway. He responded, ‘it’s the smaller things like sharing successes and having someone to call on a bad day or a [person] to spend the holidays together, but it’s also the fact that there is someone who witnesses you through the different seasons of life.’ Rather than a coping strategy, Samir’s experience reflects a reconfiguration of kinship on his own terms (Mason & Tipper 2008). It is a claim to belonging, to relational continuity, and to rootedness in a landscape where institutional care is often transient and impersonal. By calling the social worker his ‘father,’ Samir performs kinship as a relational act—one that he created. While studies in Norway show how citizens form kin-like ties with asylum-seekers as moral projects of care and belonging (see Mogstad & Rabe 2024), Samir’s story centers the agency of young refugees who create kinship through everyday relations of reciprocity and care. This form of ‘kinning’ reorients the meaning of *family* from a legal-biological model to one grounded in presence, recognition, and care (Howell 2003). It challenges the bureaucratic logic that tends to frame the young adults primarily through a deficit-dependency lens and instead

reveals how young people mobilize relationships that restore a sense of continuity in fragmented lives.

A different kind of chosen kinship emerges between Ahmet and Ali, whose relationship transcends friendship to that of a chosen brotherhood. Although both come from the same hometown, they first met in transit at a refugee camp—an in-between space marked by uncertainty and instability. In our conversations about family, Ahmet referred to Ali as ‘brother-like,’ explaining how their shared experiences had bonded them.

Ali: If I get a job, I then have contacts to help him [Ahmet]. If he needs money, I can give him a loan. He is good at math, so that helps me too. We couldn't reunite with our families, but he is my next of kin. I know if I die tomorrow, he would be the one to do the last rituals and also inform my family back home. (looks at Ahmet) That's going to be a lot of work for you, isn't? [both laugh]

Despite not being related by blood, their friendship has deepened into a bond they both described as family, supporting one another through the hardships of their journey from their home country to their navigation in Norway. Ahmet adds, ‘that his brotherhood with Ali has helped him face challenges of starting over in a new country and has made his experience less solitary.’

The vignettes above evoke [Hartman's \(2008\)](#) concept of collective identity, which emerges from shared experiences of displacement, violence, and the rupture of biological bonds. Their connection is not defined by blood or legal recognition but by enduring presence, loyalty, and emotional interdependence. This chosen brotherhood unsettles normative understandings of kinship by showing how meaningful familial roles are reconstituted in transit and exile through mutual care and shared life-worlds. By reframing their relations of who is their father or a brother, they reclaim the narrative and affective authority over their life story. This scene, thus, allows us to glimpse how the young adults carve out new relational constellations and strategies that carry both emotional weight while speaking back to the institutional logics that often define family narrowly.

SCENE 2: DIASPORIC KINSHIP NETWORKS

In this scene, I turn to use kinship to signify alliances that encompass ‘cultural and community relationships that bring people into deep and meaningful affiliation’ ([Osei-Kofi 2024](#)). Diasporic kinship, as I use it here, draws on [Hall's \(2018\)](#) understanding of diaspora⁵ as defined not by purity or essence but by heterogeneity, hybridity, and identities shaped through difference. It refers to the relationships and responsibilities that emerge within migrant and refugee communities, which are often grounded in shared journeys, regional or linguistic ties, faith, or the need for familiarity and care. In this context, many young adults form intimate networks of belonging with those who recognize their histories. What follows explores these constellations of kinship not only as sites of comfort and care but also as spaces of negotiation and ambivalence.

Omar is five years older than Hassan, and both come from the same country, sharing a history shaped by displacement and migration. Omar has lived in Norway for two years and has created a wide network of friends and acquaintances, giving him a sense of stability and belonging. Hassan, in contrast, was recently granted asylum and faces

additional challenges due to a physical disability. Neither of them applied for family reunification, and, in the absence of close family, they have found support in one another. Omar, with his resourcefulness and connections, has taken on a caregiving role for Hassan, helping him navigate the complexities of resettlement in a new country. Their relationship offers a glimpse into the kinds of diasporic kinship networks that form through shared histories, proximity, and the need for care. Omar explains:

I know how overwhelming it is when you first arrive in Norway...dealing with documents, navigating different departments, meeting various caseworkers, opening a bank account, attending endless appointments. It's a lot. So, if I can support a brother [someone from my country or community], I'm more than willing to help.

As [Tiilikainen et al. \(2023\)](#) also observed, peer-defined, same-gender kinship ties among young refugees tend to be more symmetrical and mutual—an observation that resonates with Omar and Hassan's relationship, which is framed through brotherhood and grounded in care, shared histories, and everyday support. Through them, I was also introduced to the local mosque, which takes responsibility within the community to introduce young adults to a network of support. During mosque visits, the youth observe faith-based practices that provide a sense of belonging and continuity, particularly during communal prayers and gatherings. Festivals, such as Eid, became occasions for fostering relationships, where food, stories, and shared rituals strengthened bonds across generations. Meetings with other community members revealed how mentorship and collective activities organized through various diasporic organisations in the city, like organizing charity drives or language classes, offered both practical assistance and cultural grounding, helping young adults navigate their new environment while preserving ties to their heritage.

A similar example is Mirza, who comes from a minority tribal community in her home country.

[...] we really have little to hold on to in terms of our heritage but the community of Hazaras [here] feels like a family because they tell me where I come from. I think if my mother would have been here, she would have told me these stories [of our tribal history] but now I get to listen to many aunties who might not be related to me through a DNA test but really are parts of my mother [...] all the things I would have asked or shared with my mother I do it with them. For example, my aunty spoke to my dad to let me go for a cabin trip with my class.

Within the context of the diasporic relationality, Mirza's relationship exemplifies how solidarity, presence, and mutual reliance create a sense of familial connection, even in the absence of biological kin. Drawing strength from this collective resilience, they form diasporic bonds as they come of age in contexts their families of origin may struggle to understand or support ([Tiilikainen et al. 2023](#)). While sharing stories of the aunties 'she likes,' she also mentions the ones who are 'like hawks' and 'show disdain in her choice of friendships, clothes, or places in the city she frequently visits.' This ambivalence and duality reflect the broader dynamics of diasporic kinship, where care and constraint operate simultaneously and where belonging is sustained through ongoing negotiation rather than uncomplicated solidarity.

These examples reveal how young adults actively cultivate belonging within diasporic networks. They form constellations of support that help them rebuild their lives, drawing strength from those who share their histories and understand their struggles. These relationships offer more than comfort; they provide emotional anchoring, practical assistance, and a sense of home, however provisional. Ultimately, the bonds formed through regional, tribal, or national connections reveal the strength of community as a surrogate for traditional familial relationships. What emerges across these stories is a dynamic and often ambivalent terrain of diasporic life.

SCENE 3: FAMILIAL KINSHIP

Although the narratives of belonging and relatedness often exceeded the boundaries of geography and genealogy, biological kinship persisted as a powerful axis through which the young adults articulated attachment, responsibility, and continuity. Its significance was both emotional and institutional, as it shaped who could be reunited, who was recognized as family, and whose ties were rendered legible to the state. I turn to familial kinship not to reinscribe its centrality but to examine how it is reconstituted within the social, temporal, and bureaucratic dislocations of migration.

Saif was one of the few whose application for family reunification had been successful. A quiet young man with a fondness for mathematics, he had arrived in Norway several years earlier as an unaccompanied minor. During one of our conversations, when Saif got to know that my family hadn't moved to Norway with me, he opened up about his experience of reuniting with his family. He describes it as follows:

The day I saw them at the airport, I couldn't stop crying. It was like a part of me that had been missing was finally back. I hugged my mom so tight; I didn't want to let go. My siblings ran to me, and we all just held each other. That moment gave me strength I didn't know I had [...] In our culture, family is everything. We're very tight-knit and having them here with me means the world.

Saif's emotions exemplify [Johansen and Studsrød \(2019\)](#) findings, which emphasize the central role of family in fostering emotional resilience and supporting everyday life. However, the joy of family reunification is often accompanied by challenges as the young adults reintegrate into a family unit that may have evolved in their absence ([Suárez-Orozco et al. 2002](#)). In Saif's words:

Imagine everything that you've known for the most of your life changes overnight. My parents are more than 50 years old. A good part of their life is lived. To re-learn basic things like taking a bus to building your community from scratch is very difficult and can be a very isolating and frustrating experience. When all of us [siblings] go to school they are left behind. I try to use whatever time I can spare between school and work to be with them, but it tires me too.

Saif's parents were once positioned as moral and practical authorities but are rendered dependent in a country where language, bureaucracy, and social norms are unfamiliar. The reunification required negotiations of roles, duties, expectations, and emotional bonds. Once reunited, Said found himself responsible for their well-being while he juggled school and numerous appointments. Reconnecting after years of separation proved challenging, as they all navigated changed roles and rebuilt trust ([Harris et al. 2010](#): 255).

The inversion of care within kinship structures shows the mutable moral economy of kinship, where traditional roles and obligations are continuously adapted to meet new material and affective realities. This reconfiguration is influenced by economic and social changes, ethical practices, and the need for ongoing support and recognition of kinship care arrangements. At the same time, Saif's insistence that 'family is everything' underscores that these shifts do not dissolve kinship's emotional authority; rather, they reaffirm it in altered form. Reunification, then, is not the return to a pre-existing family structure but the making of a new configuration of interdependence.

In Adil's case, he reunited with his sisters, but his mother continues to live in their home country. His relationship with his mother offers a glimpse into how transnational kinship is sustained and reconfigured across distance. Although their long-awaited family reunion briefly brought them together in Norway, Adil now maintains a close relationship with his mother from afar. Through regular communication and financial support, he continues to care for her, demonstrating how relational ties endure and adapt despite geographic separation.

I speak to her everyday sometimes more than twice. It's so easy with internet and phones today. In a few years, we do plan to meet mid-way, in another country (redacted). Until then I just try to take care of her and my relatives in any way I possibly can.

His account of daily calls and financial support illustrates how kinship endures through acts of transnational care. What scholars such as Baldassar (2007) describe as '*care circulation*'—the movement of emotional and material support across distance—for Adil, it becomes a way of maintaining belonging and moral responsibility towards his mother. In this configuration, migration does not sever kinship; it transforms its modalities. The flow of care reverses generational direction, as the son becomes the provider and emotional anchor for a parent left behind.

Saif and Adil, both, are more attuned to Norwegian norms and structures and thus, step into roles of translators, mediators, and providers and take responsibility that both strengthen and strain familial bonds. Both young adults embody how migration reconfigures family ties and redistributes them across generations, yet their experiences vary. Whereas Saif's reunification brought the challenges of co-presence and role inversion within the household, Adil's kinship extends across borders, sustained through digital communication and remittances. These vignettes remind us that familial kinship cannot be overlooked because it continues to anchor moral worlds, affective longings, and legal possibilities ([Mendoza Pérez & Morgade Salgado 2019](#)). Yet, what makes this kinship analytically compelling is in the ways it has been transformed and how these transformations enrich the very idea of kinship, showing it not as a stable system of descent but as a dynamic field continually remade through movement, absence, and return.

CONCLUSION: REIMAGINING KINSHIP IN MIGRATION STUDIES

The scenes above illustrate how young adults practise kinship through shifting ties, obligations, and attachments that stretch across borders and institutions. What holds these narratives together is not a stable definition of family but the work of maintaining ties in situations where roles, expectations, and access are

constantly rearranged. [Kauhanen and Kaukko \(2020\)](#) point out that systems caring for young adults often overlook essential needs like emotional support, family-like relationships, and being seen as individuals. In a similar vein, my findings suggest that the systems that ignore these non-biological bonds deepen feelings of isolation and marginalization among the young adults. Although they have the right to reside in a new country, legal and institutional frameworks restrict their ability to define their own support networks.

In response, they assemble kinship through choice, shared histories, and everyday presence. These ties cross continents and emerge in the spaces where they live, study, and navigate the asylum system. They unsettle the state's narrow categories while staying firmly anchored in their lived realities. These chosen and diasporic ties embody agency and are often more about solidarity than legality. Alongside these, familial kinship remains a dynamic field in which roles, responsibilities, and dependencies are continually reworked. Such experiences show how integration and mobility reshape the flow of care and authority, rendering biological kinship both enduring and mutable ([Thomas & Smith-Morris 2020](#)). Its persistence within the broader constellation of kinship reveals how love, obligation, and belonging are redefined through the uneven conditions of resettlement.

With each scene depicted in this article, I raise a concern that family-reunification policies, designed around rigid concepts of biological family, fail to capture the realities of kinship for young adults. These policies reduce the understanding of family to a nuclear model that is ill-suited to the complex relational worlds of young refugees. The failure of state-led migration institutions to account for adolescents' relational needs stands in sharp contrast to the kin structures the young adults build themselves ([Orellana 2016](#)). Policies framed around rigid family models ignore the fact that adolescents depend on kin relations to mature, find stability, and navigate uncertainty. The institutional landscape disrupts more than it supports, leaving young adults to create the connections they require for guidance and acceptance. Without acknowledging these constellations of kinship, policies risk reinforcing exclusionary practices that invalidate the emotional and social realities of affected young adults. Conversely, integrating these diverse kinship forms into policy discussions can promote more adaptive, culturally sensitive approaches that safeguard the rights and well-being of young refugees. This requires moving beyond bureaucratic formalism towards an ethics of care and relationality. Such frameworks can prevent restrictions that undermine the young adults' already fragile support systems and rather empower them to define and sustain their own kinship ties.

Additionally, support should include mental health services to address the trauma of separation and promote long-term stability. This study calls for a fundamental rethinking of kinship and belonging within refugee support frameworks, reflecting the diverse forms of connection the youth experience. This means acknowledging the significance of chosen family ties, the role of community networks, and the support systems that go beyond the traditional legal definitions of family. By centering the experiences of young adults, we can move towards policies that not only address legal status but also foster meaningful belonging. Such policies affirm their right to define family on their own terms and help create more inclusive frameworks that support both autonomy and care.

NOTES

- 1 I use italics for the word ‘family’ to question normative assumptions and highlight the diverse ways it can be understood and experienced.
- 2 To avoid the negative impact of categorization and to emphasize the individuality of the young individuals who are at different stages of their lives, I would not use the category URM and instead refer to them as ‘youth’ or ‘young adults.’ I fully recognise ‘URMs’ as a policy label with significant implications.
- 3 As of November 2024, while writing this paper, the Norwegian government announced plans to tighten family immigration regulations further. The proposed changes focus on limiting family reunification for the youth in situations where ‘it is not considered in the child’s best interest.’ The reasons mentioned to take these measures were ‘to address concerns such as child abduction and bigamy in Norway’ ([regjeringen.no](https://www.regjeringen.no) 2024).
- 4 Loosely inspired by [Kamala Visweswaran’s Fictions of Feminist Ethnography](#) (1994: 48), where she uses ethnographic ‘acts’ that converge to paint an epistemological ‘truth.’
- 5 Diasporic connections, while supportive, are not always uncomplicated. They often carry expectations of reciprocity, financial contribution, and collective responsibility that extend across borders and generations. Similarly, faith-based and ethnic communities may offer safety and solidarity, while also enforcing gender norms, cultural conformity, or political loyalties that some young adults seek to resist or renegotiate in Norway (for more, see [Wahlbeck 2002](#)).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In reality, research articles are seldom the work of a single author. I’d like to extend my thanks to Turid Sætermo, Guro Korsnes Kristensen, and Priscilla Ringrose at NTNU and Mridula Garg at UC Irvine for giving this manuscript the shape and strength it needed in its nascent stages. I’m also grateful to Olga Tkach and the two anonymous reviewers at *NJMR* for reading the text with care and engaging with it so thoughtfully. Most of all, I want to thank the young adults who shared their life stories with me and who continue to live the realities that this article only gestures toward. Their generosity, clarity, and openness grounds and guides this study.

FUNDING STATEMENT

This study is done as part of Project FAMREUN (Family Reunification and Unaccompanied Refugee Minors: Psychosocial Health, Integration and Support Services). The project is funded by The Research Council of Norway (2023–2027).

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Due to the sensitive nature of the data and the confidentiality agreements made with participants, the datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are not publicly available. Requests for access to anonymized excerpts may be considered on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with data protection regulations.

Rishi G
Nordic Journal of
Migration Research
DOI: 10.33134/njmr.959

15

AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS

Gunika Rishi

Department of Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway

REFERENCES

- Andrikopoulos, A. and Duyvendak, J.W.** 2020. 'Migration, mobility and the dynamics of kinship: new barriers, new assemblages', *Ethnography*, 21(3), pp. 299–318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138120939584>.
- Anschütz, S. and Mazzucato, V.** 2022. 'Reconceptualizing family reunification from a youth mobilities perspective: transnational youth between Ghana and Belgium', *Children's Geographies*, 20(2), pp. 160–173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2021.1919998>.
- Arjomand, N.A.** 2022. Empirical fiction: composite character narratives in analytical sociology. *The American Sociologist*, 55, pp. 436–472. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12108-022-09546-z>.
- Barros-Lane, L., Brabeck, K. and Berger Cardoso, J.A.** 2022. "Es Como Que no los Conociera": reunification of Unaccompanied Migrant Youth with Their U.S. Families', *Social Work Research*, 46(1), pp. 5–16. <https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/svab026>.
- Behar, R.** 2003. 'Ethnography and the book that was lost', *Ethnography*, 4(1), pp. 15–39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138103004001002>.
- Bergset, K., Debruyne, P., Van Acker, K. and Alvestad Reime, M.** 2025a. 'On the reconstruction of family life and 'institutional forms of parentification': unaccompanied minors' experiences with family reunification in Belgium and Norway', *European Journal of Social Work*, 28(5), pp. 1013–1026. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2025.2492852>.
- Bergset, K., Debruyne, P., Van Acker, K. and Alvestad Reime, M.** 2025b. 'On the reconstruction of family life and 'institutional forms of parentification': unaccompanied minors' experiences with family reunification in Belgium and Norway', *European Journal of Social Work*, 28(5), pp. 1013–1026. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2025.2492852>.
- Bertaux, D.** (Ed.). 1981. *Biography and society: The life history approach in the social sciences*. Beverly Hills: Sage. <http://archive.org/details/biographysociety0000unse>.
- Bonjour, S. and Cleton, L.** 2021. 'Chapter 13: Co-constructions of family and belonging in the politics of family migration', in *Governance and Politics of migration*. p. 161. <https://www.elgaronline.com/edcollchap/edcoll/9781788117227/9781788117227.00020.xml>. ISBN: 978-1-78811-723-4.
- Brandhorst, R., Baldassar, L. and Wilding, R.** 2020. 'Introduction to the special issue: "Transnational Family Care 'On Hold'? intergenerational relationships and obligations in the context of immobility regimes",' *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 18(3), pp. 261–280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770.2020.1787035>.

- Brannen, J.** 2013. 'Life story talk: some reflections on narrative in qualitative interviews', *Sociological Research Online*, 18(2), pp. 48–58. <https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.2884>.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V.** 2006. 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>.
- Carsten, J.** (Ed.). 2000. *Cultures of relatedness: New approaches to the study of kinship*. 1. publ. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Carsten, J.** 2003. *After Kinship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511800382>.
- Carsten, J.** 2020. 'Imagining and living new worlds: the dynamics of kinship in contexts of mobility and migration', *Ethnography*, 21(3), pp. 319–334. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138120940343>.
- Collier, J.F. and Yanagisako, S.J.** 1987. *Gender and Kinship: Essays toward a unified analysis*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press.
- Crapo Kim, R.S.** 2024. 'A feminist and decolonial approach to kinship: an ambiguous and ambivalent account', *Philosophy Compass*, 19(2), pp. e12961. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12961>.
- Directorate of Immigration (UDI).** n.d. Aldersundersøkelse Av Enslige Mindreårige Asylsøkere. Available at: <https://www.udi.no/ord-og-begreper/aldersundersokelse-av-enslige-mindrearige-asylsokere/>.
- Engebriktzen, A.** 2003. 'The child's – or the state's – best interests? An examination of the ways immigration officials work with unaccompanied asylum seeking minors in Norway', *Child & Family Social Work*, 8(3), pp. 191–200. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2206.2003.00280.x>.
- Franklin, S. and McKinnon, S.** 2001. *Relative values: reconfiguring kinship studies*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Hall, S.** (Ed.). 2018. 'The formation of a diasporic intellectual: an interview with Stuart Hall by Kuan-Hsing Chen [1996]', in **D. Morley (ed.)**. *Essential essays, volume 2*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 185–205. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478002710-010>.
- Harris, Y.R., Graham, J.A. and Carpenter, G.J.O.** 2010. *Children of incarcerated parents: theoretical developmental and clinical issues*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Hartman, S.V.** 2008. *Lose your mother: a journey along the Atlantic slave route*. 1. paperback edition. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Hean, S., Heaslip, V., Parker, J. and Tembjerg, P.** (Eds.). 2024. *Rebuilding family relations for children and youth separated from family*. 1st ed. Cham: Springer Nature. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-67106-7>.
- Howell, S.** 2003. 'Kinning: the creation of life trajectories in transnational adoptive families', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 9(3), pp. 465–484. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.00159>.
- Immigration Act.** 2016. *Act on the entry of foreigners into the realm and their residence here (immigration act)—chapter 4. protection—Lovdata*. https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2008-05-15-35/KAPITTEL_4#KAPITTEL_4.
- Immigration Act.** 2020. *Adgangen til å ta DNA-test i utlendingssaker er regulert i utlendingsloven § 87 [Proposisjon]*. Regjeringen.no; regjeringen.no. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/prop.-49-l-20192020/id2692248/>.
- Johansen, K. and Bendixsen, S.K.N.** 2025. 'Ambivalent recognition: young unaccompanied refugees' encounters with Norwegian society', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 28(1), pp. 17–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2023.2231360>.

- Johansen, K. and Studsrød, I.** 2019. “‘Help goes around in a circle’: young unaccompanied refugees’ engagement in interpersonal relationships and its significance for resilience’, *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care*, 15(4), pp. 249–261. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMHC-03-2019-0035>.
- Johansen, K. and Tørrisplass, A.-T.** 2024. ‘Pain, obstacles and care: unaccompanied minor and young refugees’ challenges related to family separation and reunification’, in **S. Hean, V. Heaslip, J. Parker, and P. Tembjerg (eds.)**. *Rebuilding family relations for children and youth separated from family*. Springer Nature, pp. 319–344. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-67106-7_14.
- Kauhanen, I. and Kaukko, M.** 2020. ‘Recognition in the lives of unaccompanied children and youth: a review of the key European literature’, *Child & Family Social Work*, 25(4), pp. 875–883. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12772>.
- Lee, C.** 2013. *Fictive kinship: family reunification and the meaning of race and nation in American immigration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Lidén, H., Stang, E.G. and Eide, K.** 2017. ‘The gap between legal protection, good intentions and political restrictions. Unaccompanied minors in Norway’, *Social Work & Society*, 15(1), pp. Article 1. Available at: <https://ejournals.bib.uni-wuppertal.de/index.php/sws/article/view/497>.
- Mason, J. and Tipper, B.** 2008. ‘Children and the making of kinship configurations’, in **E. Widmer and R. Jallinoja (ed.)**. *Beyond the nuclear family: families in a configurational perspective*. Lausanne: Peter Lang, pp. 137–139..
- Mendoza Pérez, K. and Morgade Salgado, M.** 2019. ‘Unaccompanied’ minors? Accompanied foreign minors, families and new technologies’, *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 20(1), pp. 121–136. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-018-0591-z>.
- Merriam, S.B.** 2009. *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.
- Mogstad, H. and Rabe, T.** 2024. ‘From asylum seekers to kin: the making and effects of kinship between Norwegian citizens and migrants’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 50(6), pp. 1489–1507. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2023.2183354>.
- Moret, J., Andrikopoulos, A., and Dahinden, J.** 2021. ‘Contesting categories: cross-border marriages from the perspectives of the state, spouses and researchers’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1625124>.
- Näre, L.** 2020. ‘Family lives on hold: bureaucratic bordering in male refugees’ struggle for transnational care’, *Journal of Family Research*, 32(3), pp. 435–454. <https://doi.org/10.20377/jfr-353>.
- Nibbs, F.** 2013. ‘Kinship at the intersection of lineage and linguistics: a study of Hmong relatedness in Western contexts’, *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 13(4), pp. 371–385. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2013.789041>.
- The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration.** 2024. *Anslag for antall søknader om beskyttelse (asyl) 2024–2025 per januar 2024*. UDI. Available at: <https://www.udi.no/statistikk-og-analyse/statistiknotater/anslag-for-antall-soknader-om-beskyttelse-asy-2024-2025-per-januar/>.
- Orellana, M.F.** 2016. *Immigrant children in transcultural spaces: language, learning, and love*. Milton Park: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315752617>.
- Osei-Kofi, N.** 2024. *AfroSwedish places of belonging*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.17957876>.

- Peletz, M.G.** 1995. 'Kinship studies in late twentieth-century anthropology', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, pp. 343–372. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.24.100195.002015>.
- Phillimore, J., D'Avino, G., Strain-Fajth, V., Papoutsis, A. and Ziss, P.** 2023. 'Family reunion policy for resettled refugees: governance, challenges and impacts', *Frontiers in Human Dynamics*, 5. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fhumd.2023.1075306>.
- regjeringen.no.** 2024. *Regjeringen foreslår å redusere antallet overføringsflyktninger fra 1 000 til 200* [Pressemelding]. Regjeringen.no; regjeringen.no. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/regjeringen-foreslar-a-redusere-antallet-overforingsflyktninger-fra-1-000-til-200/id3057429/>.
- Rosenthal, G.** 1993. 'Reconstruction of life stories: principles of selection in generating stories for narrative biographical interviews', *The Narrative Study of Lives*, 1, pp. 59–91.
- Rytter, M.** 2012. 'Semi-legal family life: Pakistani couples in the borderlands of Denmark and Sweden', *Global Networks*, 12(1), pp. 91–108. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2011.00325.x>.
- Sabouni, S.** 2024. The cost of belonging. *Berghahn Journals*, 31(1), pp. 310104. <https://doi.org/10.3167/aia.2024.310104>.
- Sahlins, M.** 2013. *What Kinship is-and is not*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- SSB.** 2017. Rekordmange nyankomne enslige mindreårige flyktninger. Ssb.No. <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/rekordmange-nyankomne-enslige-mindreareige-flyktninger>.
- Suárez-Orozco, C., Todorova, I.L.G. and Louie, J.** 2002. 'Making up for lost time: the experience of separation and reunification among immigrant families', *Family Process*, 41, pp. 625–643. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2002.00625.x>.
- Taguchi, Y. and Majumdar, A.** 2021. 'Kinship as fiction: exploring the dynamism of intimate relationships in South Asia', *Contemporary South Asia*, 29(1), pp. 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2021.1884661>.
- Thomas, E.B. and Smith-Morris, C.** 2020. 'Family and family-like relations for transnational migrants: ideals of care informed by kin, non-family, and religion', *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 42(3), pp. 344–362. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986320937435>.
- Tiilikainen, M., Fylkesnes, M.K. and McGregor, S.A.** 2023. 'Family-like relationships and wellbeing of young refugees in Finland, Norway, and Scotland', *Social Sciences*, 12(12), pp. Article 12. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12120667>.
- Tørrisplass, A.-T.** 2022a. «Dypet i livet mitt», *Tidsskrift for Velferdsforskning*, 25(4), pp. 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.18261/tfv.25.4.2>.
- Tørrisplass, A.-T.** 2022b. 7. «Når vi blir 18, er det ingen som spør etter oss.» Samarbeid mellom tjenester i overgangen til voksenlivet for enslige mindreårige flyktningjenter. In: *Mot bedre samarbeid?* (pp. 104–120). Universitetsforlaget. <https://doi.org/10.18261/9788215045030-2022-07>.
- Tørrisplass, A.-T.** 2024. 'Living in two worlds: an institutional ethnographic study of the family reunification process among unaccompanied minor and young refugee girls in Norway', *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 15(2). <https://doi.org/10.33134/njmr.711>.
- UNHCR.** 1989. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. OHCHR. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>.
- Visweswaran, K.** 1994. *Fictions of feminist ethnography*. NED-New edition. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttf31>.

- Wahlbeck, Ö.** 2002. 'The concept of diaspora as an analytical tool in the study of refugee communities', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 28(2), pp. 221–238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830220124305>.
- Wernesjö, U.** 2015. 'Landing in a rural village: home and belonging from the perspectives of unaccompanied young refugees', *Identities*, 22(4), pp. 451–467. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2014.962028>.
- Weston, K.** 1997. *Families we choose: lesbians, gays, Kinship*. New York: Columbia University Press.

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Rishi G. Kinship
 Constellations in
 the Narratives of
 Unaccompanied Refugee
 Minors in Norway. *Nordic
 Journal of Migration
 Research*. 2026; 16(1):
 9, 1–19. DOI: [https://doi.org/
 /10.33134/njmr.959](https://doi.org/10.33134/njmr.959)

Submitted: 13 January
 2025

Accepted: 12 December
 2025

Published: 21 January
 2026

COPYRIGHT:

© 2026 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons NonCommercial-NoDerivatives Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0), which permits unrestricted distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited, the material is not used for commercial purposes and is not altered in any way. See <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.

Nordic Journal of Migration Research is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Helsinki University Press.