

“I Will Paddle My Own Canoe”: Experiences of Unaccompanied Refugee Children

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ABSTRACT There is a dearth of information pertaining to experiences that unaccompanied refugee children encounter. The purpose of this paper is to explore the experiences of unaccompanied refugee children. The study was conducted using a qualitative case study of a school of refugees in South Africa. Its paradigmatic position was interpretive. Twelve unaccompanied refugee children were purposively selected to participate in the study. The study reported that unaccompanied refugee children face greater challenges compared to their accompanied refugee counterparts. They are denied basic human rights such as rights to education, healthcare and social services. This study concludes that a country like South Africa which is a signatory to the United Nations Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees should find new ways of accommodating unaccompanied refugee minors to ensure rights of refugees.