This ethnography is the first work to consider the role of clan in the Somali diaspora and the only book that considers women’s perspectives in addition to the traditionally recognized men’s perspectives on the topic of clan. The book is based on extensive fieldwork between 2000 and 2004 in the Helsinki metropolitan area. The comments of three research participants gathered in 2015 add a collaborative dimension and bring readers up to date on changes since the fieldwork period. It marks a departure from earlier kinship studies in Somalia, informed by structural-functionalism, by employing a practice theory approach to clan. Many Somalis are embarrassed by the notion that clan in any way affects their life abroad. They routinely blame cultural insiders and outsiders for its persistence as a source of both division and association. Cultural intimacy helps explain the cultural intricacies that shape Somalis’ contestation of clan. Daily life reveals the habitual, though understated efforts to construct clan and use clan networks to access and exchange capital and exposes networks as flexible and reveals innovative configurations and uses. Somalis consider clan alongside ideas of autonomy and gender equality and affinities toward clan relatives and nonrelatives. The book was written as a pedagogical tool, incorporating anthropological concepts and immersing readers in ethnographic research methods.
This chapter discusses movement in various forms: young Somalis away from family households, online interactions, to Finland drawn by the Finnish welfare state, and international travel including travel to Somalia and the Horn of Africa. While movement presents opportunities, dispersion threatens collective interests. That is especially the case for youth who seek autonomy by living independently from parents or guardian(s) and for others who embrace a Finnish lifestyle. For them, clan networks seem to be more of a constraint than an opportunity. This chapter highlights these tensions between family and clan obligations and autonomy, gender equality, remittances, morality, and Islamic practices and dress.

Clan and Cultural Intimacy
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in Somalis Abroad: Clan and Everyday Life in Finland

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This chapter provides an overview of Somali kinship studies and discusses why such studies have become marginalized within Somali studies. It is argued that cultural intimacy explains the intricacies that shape Somalis’ contestation of clan and the cultural intimacy of clan inhibits scholarship. A practice theory approach to clan is outlined and Bourdieu’s formulation of social capital serves as a foundation for understanding how clan is experienced and employed. The chapter discusses Somalis’ initial movement to Finland as accidental and later movement as a strategy to access benefits of the Finnish welfare state. The Finnish context is discussed, including xenophobia and racism, as well as strategies and challenges of conducting research including views of researchers.