Acknowledgments

For nearly a decade this Ph.D. research and writing project has traveled with me wherever I went. I am indebted to countless people and extend my gratitude to them all, but realize that I can here only acknowledge some by name and by no means can I do justice to all who have assisted and supported me in this process. While I am delighted to acknowledge those who made this project possible, it goes without saying that I alone remain responsible for any errors and shortcomings.

I thank my supervisors Annelies Moors and Anita Hardon. Anita has been particularly helpful in encouraging me to publish my work on deafness, and to keep it as my main research focus. I am thankful to Annelies for investing her confidence in me all along; she gave me maximal autonomy to design, conduct and write my dissertation. Her measured interventions kept me attentive to the complexities of writing in politically sensitive contexts.

My deepest gratitude goes to all those among the Negev Bedouin who hosted and supported me, corrected my spoken Arabic, taught me the local sign language and shared their insightful perspectives with me; without them I would never have learned enough to write any of this. I am indebted to all those whose reflections I quote here, including those who do not appear with their original names in the text. I cannot find a way to properly thank all those who had the patience to bear with my ignorance and inquiries, and those who generously shared- at times scarce - time, space and food.

In particular, I am profoundly grateful to my host family among the Al-Sayyid. Over the past decade and a half, I spent extended periods of time living at the home of Hajja Sarah Muhammad Al-Sayyid. With much wisdom, humor and endless generosity she, her sons, daughters and daughters-in-law as well as her husband and co-wives, have each in their unique way embraced me into their families making Al-Sayyid my home-base. In particular, I cherish the friendship and wisdom of Kamelah, 'Abed, Sabriya, Watha, S'idi, Hitam, Noha
and Yusuf Mar'i, Na'imah Musa, Miryam and Fathiya Mansour, and 'Abir Ramadhan; they guided and corrected me, helping me to understand the expectations that informed the space that allowed me to live amongst them. I owe much to “my brother” Ibraheem Mar'i Al-Sayyid, as a child, he carefully spelled Arabic words in my notebooks and, when he later studied abroad, we shared reflections, news from "al bilaad" and the dilemmas that come with short intensive visits while taking part in social life from a distance. With her sharp observations, endless questions, and gracious signing that captured my heart, young but opinionated Hadil often corrected my signing and offered signed commentary to almost every event. I thank them for letting me into their lives. They will forever remain part of mine. I am also grateful for the friendship, generosity and many insightful discussions with 'Abd-El-'Aziz Salem, Saleh 'Abd-El-Qader, Ibraheem Halli, Tahanee Jaaber, Jum’a Mansour of the Al-Sayyid as well as Suheir and Taufiq Al-Atrash, Sarah Al-Atrash, Nasim Al-Qrenawi, Halima Abu-Kaf, Amal Elsane Alh'jooj, Um-Hani, Rina and Rania Oqby. I also thank other colleagues and friends back home, for their support during intensive fieldwork visits, for never ceasing to hope this project would come to an end, and - most importantly- for not letting our friendship fade despite my absence.

In Amsterdam I was lucky to find an academic home at the Amsterdam School (later Institute) for Social Science Research at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) that also provided much of the financial and institutional support to write this dissertation. I thank Hans Sonneveld, Miryam May, Anneke Dammers, José Komen, Teun Bijvoet and Hermance Mettrop for their always-friendly support in practical matters. Special thanks are due to Muriel Kiesel of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the UvA: with her calm persistence she got me through the last bureaucratic labyrinths.

At the ASSR, I was especially fortunate to gain the collegiality and friendship of Amade M’charek, Daniel Kojo Arhinful, Song Ping, Mohammed Waked, Malini Sur, Anouk de Koning, Irfan Ahmad, Marie Lindegraad and Marten Boekelo, all of whom became much more than colleagues. Ze d'Abreu, Rachel Spronk, Barak Kalir and Marina de Regt were there from the very start and became close friends, always ready to read premature drafts and push me ahead with their excellent comments and sensible encouragement. I also thank Nadia Fadil and Seda Altug for our wonderful and fruitful writing retreats, together with Rachel, Ze, Miriyam and Sonja, these were the best
combination of hard work, long walks, good company and intellectual stimulation.

Special thanks also go to Amer and Shazia, Ruya, Rukun and Arzu: their hospitality and company (with always inspiring talks, laughs and food) helped me keep a sane balance between work and "life", even if these are never really distinct given our odd occupations. I cannot begin to explain how much I cherish the friendship of Miryam Aouragh, Sonja van Wichelen and Marc de Leeuw who despite their promising academic careers in faraway places, continue to be sources of intellectual and emotional support with always insightful and constructive observations and warm friendship. Additionally, as a re-migrant (as the Dutch might say) I found many of these friends provided me with alternative inburgeringscursussen that were particularly insightful for making sense of the Dutch sociopolitical landscape.

The scarcity of anthropologists studying deafness has made the few I have met, as well as others studying (sign) language and deafness, especially precious. Meeting Michele Friedner, Annelies Kusters, Barbara LeMaster, Bencie Woll, Virginia Volterra, Vincent de Rooij, Jacomine Nortier, Angela Nonaka, Yudith Yoel, Victoria Nyst, Anja Hiddinga, Stuart Blume, Niko Besnier and Frances Gouda was a great encouragement for me and I thank them for sharing their critical thinking with me and responding to my work. I am indebted to many of them for constructively criticizing earlier versions of one or more of my articles, and encouraging me to rethink and tighten my arguments. The friendship, intellectual support, and always good advice of Lonia Jakubowska -with whom I shared the experience of doing fieldwork in the Negev- meant a lot to me. We also share a mentor, Emanuel; I thank Emanuel Marx for the numerous ways he has inspired me to become a better researcher, and for his always warm encouragement and genuine inquiry into my wellbeing.

I could not have finished this "odd" labour called writing without the help of Susan Stocker, I thank her for the generous and invaluable time she invested with her sharp mind in improving my writing by applying her unusual editorial skills; especially I treasure her extraordinary enthusiasm and sincere encouragement. I am grateful to Franklin Tjon Sie Fat for kindly offering to compose the kinship diagrams for chapter four, meticulously transforming several versions of my own drawings. I thank Marina and Anja for translating the summary into Dutch. For last minute design of the cover, I
thank Liat Linker, I salute her and all those juggling motherhood and other callings.

My daughter Naomi was born in Amsterdam and brought into my life the greatest happiness of all. Her sharp observations and radiant social skills make her a born fieldworker; she has already joined me for numerous intensive and delightful fieldwork visits. The last phases of writing were more challenging for us both, but we were so lucky to have Let Pothuis, Ruth van Andel and occasionally my parents, around for her delight and my relief. During stressful times of teaching and writing, my family in Deventer also offered us “rural retreat”, riverside walks and tranquil weekends in the home of my dear aunt, Margreet Heringa together with my cousins and nephews. Amsterdam would not have been home without the always welcoming home of my dear Kisch family; Ilan, Esther, Zina, Aroon and Ina.

My final and dearest gratitude goes to my parents, Hanan and Guurt, my sister Tirtsa, brother Jonathan, and to Anat and my lovely nephews and nieces for their loving support. I especially thank my parents for cultivating in us the value of intellectual engagement and social commitment. This dissertation is dedicated to them.