Paradigmatic gaps (“missing” inflected forms) have traditionally been considered to be the random detritus of a language’s history and marginal exceptions to the normal functioning of its inflectional system. Arguing that this is a misperception, Inflectional Defectiveness demonstrates that paradigmatic gaps are in fact normal and expected products of inflectional structure. Sims offers an accessible exploration of how and why inflectional defectiveness arises, why it persists, and how it is learned. The book presents a theory of morphology which is rooted in the implicative structure of the paradigm. This systematic exploration of the topic also addresses questions of inflection class organization, the morphology–syntax interface, the structure of the lexicon, and the nature of productivity. Presenting a novel synthesis of established research and new empirical data, this work is significant for researchers and graduate students in all fields of linguistics.

Andrea D. Sims is Associate Professor in the Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures at The Ohio State University. Her research interests include theoretical morphology, the morphology–syntax interface, the organization of the lexicon, and the relationship between lexical processing and morphological structure.
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INFLECTIONAL DEFECTIVENESS

ANDREA D. SIMS

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For my parents
and for Jason
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Preface

I first began working on inflectional defectiveness for my dissertation (Sims 2006), and this book is the inheritor of that thesis. The argument that I put forward in the following pages – that inflectional defectiveness is a systemic variant of normal inflectional structure that is rooted in the structure of the inflectional paradigm and the dynamic organization of the lexicon – already appeared in the dissertation, albeit in preliminary form, and so the core idea of the earlier work (its “soul,” if you will) carries forward into this work. At the same time, the project has taken a long path and very little of the actual material from the dissertation (its “corporeal body”) has survived the journey. My thinking about defectiveness, and about morphological theory in general, has developed and evolved considerably in the intervening time. Relevant new work has appeared and continues to appear, influencing my thinking and challenging me to rethink and push further. Finally, the present book has a broader scope than the dissertation, supporting a more expansive argument. As a consequence, readers who are familiar with the dissertation will find that this book bears little similarity to it.

Still, inflectional defectiveness remains interesting to me for the same reasons that I was drawn to the topic originally. Inflectional defectiveness is a situation in which we find no word-form, where by all accounts we expect to find some word-form. Given that the phenomenon seems to contradict the fundamental nature of inflectional morphology and fly in the face of speakers’ tendency to generalize, we might expect it to be all but impossible for paradigmatic gaps to arise, and when they do surface, we might expect them to be quickly smoothed out. Yet contrary to expectations, paradigmatic gaps do arise occasionally, and once they do, they can persist indefinitely. Why does this happen? And how?

Paradigmatic gaps (=instances of inflectional defectiveness) are often considered to be the flotsam and jetsam of language – superficial historical trash that washes up on the shores of inflectional systems. They seem at first to be merely the ragged edge of an otherwise smoothly functioning inflectional
system. Yet there are also data that tempt the linguist toward a deeper perspective. Why do gaps often follow the distribution of a morphophonological alternation? Or the distribution of a stem alternant? Why does defectiveness sometimes follow the distribution of a pattern of syncretism (or sometimes override a pattern of syncretism, or get overridden by a pattern of syncretism)? Over the last decade and more, evidence has accrued that defectiveness is not merely historical residue but rather is integrated with the core functioning of inflection.

Echoing a broader trend of investigating inflectional structure via phenomena that lie at its periphery, in this book I investigate why paradigmatic gaps arise in inflectional systems, why they persist, and how they are learned by new generations of speakers. Ultimately, I argue that far from being flotsam and jetsam, inflectional defectiveness offers deep insights into inflectional structure. I hope that the reader finds the material to be as rich and enticing as I have.

There are many people to thank, starting with my dissertation committee: Brian Joseph, Mary Beckman, and Dan Collins. Their guidance on the dissertation was invaluable, and despite the continued development of the project long after they had any official responsibility for it, I continue in this book to perceive their positive influence. Additionally, during a postdoctoral fellowship at Northwestern University I benefited from a productive and inspiring collaboration with Janet Pierrehumbert and Robert Daland. That collaboration produced the learning model that forms the core of Chapter 7, and I thank them greatly for their tangible contributions to that part of the study and also for the less quantifiable ways in which they were formative on my thinking. Similarly, Matt Goldrick deserves recognition for giving me a nudge in the right direction at the right time.

Many people provided valuable comments on parts or all of the book draft or on presentations of the work in progress. I thank in particular Farrell Ackerman, Adam Albright, Matthew Baerman, Jim Blevins, Olivier Bonami, Raphael Finkel, Andrew Hippisley, Brian Joseph, Jeff Parker, Andrew Spencer, Greg Stump, Adam Ussishkin, two anonymous reviewers of the book proposal, and one anonymous reviewer of the full manuscript. Their differing perspectives helped me to sharpen my own thinking and improved the quality of both data and argument. I also thank the following people who served as language consultants, or who helped me to acquire and make sense of data: Yuliia Aloshycheva, Hope Dawson, Merja Hollenbach, Lily Liaw, Agi Risko, Giorgos Tserdanelis, Loukas Tsitispis, and Savas Tsohatzidis. (I apologize to anyone whom I may have inadvertently omitted.) I thank Helen Barton, Commissioning Editor for Linguistics at Cambridge University Press, for her support of this project and guidance. Any remaining errors, omissions, or stupidity in the following work are entirely my own.
During the writing of this book, I presented parts of the work in a number of venues. I wish to thank the organizers of the following workshops, conferences, and speaker series for invitations to present the work in progress:

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# Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>first person</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>second person</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>third person</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABES</td>
<td>abessive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>accusative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACC2</td>
<td>second accusative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>allative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANIM</td>
<td>animate / animacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUX</td>
<td>auxiliary</td>
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<tr>
<td>CF</td>
<td>count form</td>
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<td>COM</td>
<td>comitative</td>
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<td>DAT</td>
<td>dative</td>
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<td>DEF</td>
<td>definite</td>
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<td>DESD</td>
<td>desiderative</td>
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<td>DIR OBJ</td>
<td>direct object</td>
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<td>DU</td>
<td>dual</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>feminine</td>
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<td>future</td>
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<td>genitive</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td>entropy</td>
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<td>HNC</td>
<td>Hellenic National Corpus</td>
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<td>I</td>
<td>mutual information</td>
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<td>ILL</td>
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<td>indirect object</td>
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<td>INF</td>
<td>infinitive</td>
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<td>xx</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
List of abbreviations

INS  instrumental
LKN  Lexikótis koinís neoeillínikís
LNEG Lexikótis néas ellínikís glóssas
LOC  locative
LOC2 second locative
M    masculine
N    neuter
NEG  negation
NOM  nominative
NPST non-past
NUM  number
OED  Oxford English Dictionary
PART partitive
PASS passive
PF   paradigm function
PFV  perfective
PL   plural
POSS possessive
PPP  past passive participle
PRS  present
PST  past
PURP purposive
RECP reciprocal
RNC  Russian National Corpus
SBJ  subject
SG   singular
VOC  vocative
β    beta parameter (strength of analogy)
σ    set of morphological-paradigm feature values
τ    set of syntactic-paradigm feature values