When people communicate, they often adapt their interaction styles to one another. For example, they may match each other’s behavior, synchronize the timing of behavior, or behave in opposite ways. This volume analyzes these dyadic interaction patterns and builds a case for a new theory of adaptation. Interaction Adaptation Theory draws the soundest principles from previous theories while being responsive to current empirical evidence. To develop this theory the authors summarize a broad range of theories that seek to predict and explain adaptation patterns such as synchrony, mirroring, matching, reciprocity, compensation, convergence, and divergence. These summaries include examination of the evidence supporting each theory, operational issues, statistical analysis procedures, and definitions of terms used, before presenting new data that incorporate these methodological considerations. It concludes by suggesting new research directions that would test the theory in order to bring the research full circle and connect interaction patterns with outcomes.
Interpersonal adaptation
Interpersonal adaptation
Dyadic interaction patterns

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This book is dedicated to the University of Arizona’s Department of Communication – to the community of scholars that forms its corpus and to the ideas and ideals that are its spirit.
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Preface

Sometimes a great notion springs up at you. Many of the conclusions in this book arose that way. Other times, an idea sidles up, nudging you time and time again from the periphery. That seems to better fit how this book came about.

The first seed was probably planted at Michigan State University, where the climate, if inhospitable to the body, was highly conducive to interpersonal explorations. There, Judee taught a graduate seminar called Theories of Interpersonal Intimacy. The seed germinated at the University of Arizona, with the aid of the warm desert sun and further graduate seminars, titled Dyadic Interaction Processes and Theories of Intimacy Exchange. But it truly began to take root when the three of us, now working as a research team, realized that no single volume or article could offer us a comprehensive analysis to guide our own theorizing and research in this at once exciting and frustrating area.

And so the book grew, with much nurturing, weeding, and pruning from a host of student “gardeners” – people like Jerry Hale, Dave Buller, Milt Shatzer, Mary Diez, Rodney Reynolds, Lynn Aho, Beth Le Poire, Aileen Buslig, Renee Kingle, Patricia Rockwell, Michael Payne, Jamie Comstock, Cindy White, Pamela Koch, Eusebio Alvaro, Leu Strope, Kristen Burge, Mike Voloudakis, Megan Sheehan, and Carol Hensley – whose penetrating questions, summaries, editings, and critiques provided essential nutrients and to whom we owe a debt of gratitude. Among these students, two deserve special acknowledgment for their special insights, cogent criticisms, and edifying editorial suggestions: To Laura Guerrero and Walid Afifi, we extend our special thanks and appreciation.

Our efforts were buoyed not only by our students and colleagues locally but by many other colleagues here and abroad. Among them was Joe Cappella, long-time fellow gardener toiling in the same fertile interaction and involvement soil, who provided a most helpful review that
Preface

led us to reexamine our new theory and to tackle once again issues of indeterminacy and falsifiability. Also helpful were David Kenny and Judith Hall, who read earlier versions of article submissions and/or book chapters and who offered invaluable commentaries on the methods we were recommending or employing. Their insights were joined by many other anonymous reviewers on this volume and on various projects related to it. Others due our thanks include Julia Hough, our Cambridge University Press editor, who, in addition to offering her own editorial suggestions, also allowed us time for our thinking to mature. We hope, like good wine, that the additional fermentation and distillation periods have resulted in a richer product. And fellow editor Catherine Max, who extended a most timely invitation to review a sociolinguistics manuscript on mutualities in dialogue that proved to be additionally enriching. Finally, three co-authors on two separate research projects – Beth Le Poire, Robert Rosenthal, and Doug Kelley – contributed significantly to some of the research reported in Chapters 9 and 10.

One would think with so many great minds tending this crop of theories and methods that the harvest by now would be rich. Indeed, the yield has been high – at least in our estimation – but this is a labor-intensive endeavor and much work remains to be done. And so we hope that in the future many others will join the ranks and that, through many seasons, ever-improving strains of interpersonal adaptation theories and methods will spring forth.