



Evaluation Data Report

Play, Evolution, and Sociality Working Group

Meeting One: November 30-December 2, 2011

Pamela Bishop
Program Evaluation Coordinator
National Institute for Mathematical and Biological Synthesis
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Play, Evolution, and Sociality Working Group, Meeting One Evaluation Data Report

Evaluation Design

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation of the working group was both formative and summative in nature, in that the data collected from participants was intended to both gain feedback from participants about the quality of the current working group and also to inform future meetings. Several questions constituted the foundation for the evaluation:

1. Were participants satisfied with the working group overall?
2. Did the meeting meet participant expectations?
3. Do participants feel the working group made adequate progress toward its stated goals?
4. Do participants feel they gained knowledge about the main issues related to the research problem?
5. Do participants feel they gained a better understanding of the research across disciplines related to the working group's research problem?
6. What impact do participants feel the working group will have on their future research?
7. Were participants satisfied with the accommodations offered by NIMBioS?
8. What changes in accommodations, group format, and/or content would participants like to see at future meetings?

Evaluation Procedures

An electronic survey aligned to the evaluation questions was designed by the NIMBioS Evaluation Coordinator with input from the NIMBioS Director and Deputy Director. The final instrument was hosted online via the University of Tennessee's online survey host mrlInterview. Links to the survey were sent to the 14 working group participants on December 7, 2011. Reminder emails were sent to non-responding participants on December 15 and 19, 2011. By January 3, 2012, 12 participants had given their feedback, for a response rate of 86%.

Evaluation Data

Respondent Satisfaction

Figure 1. Satisfaction with content and format of the working group

Scale: -2 = "Strongly disagree" to 2 = "Strongly agree"

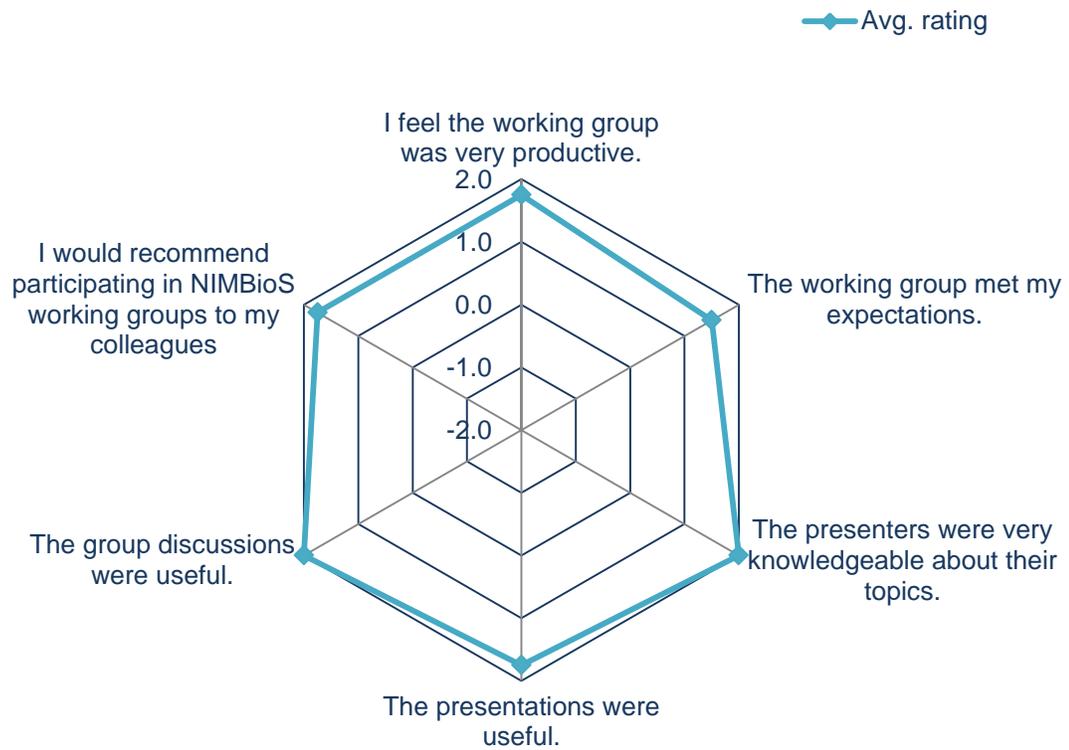
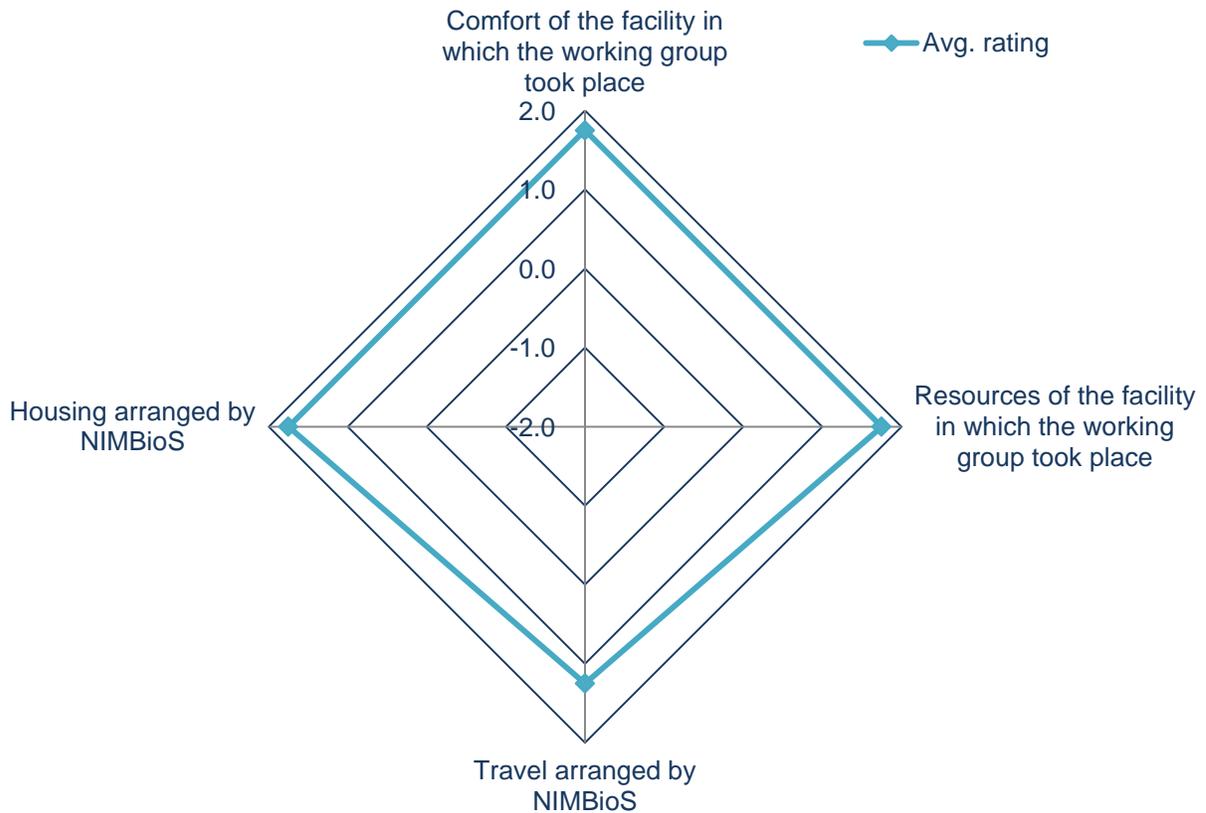


Figure 2. Satisfaction with working group accommodations

Scale: -2 = "Very dissatisfied" to 2 = "Very satisfied"



Suggestions for NIMBioS to improve the resources and/or accommodations available to working group participants:

As a vegetarian, I found the breakfasts and lunches wanting; there were lots of carbs, too much sugar (in the AM) and insufficient protein available.

I felt very looked after. Keep on keeping on!

No ideas at the moment.

Views of Group Progress

Figure 3. Do you feel the working group made adequate progress, for its first meeting, toward finding a common language across disciplines in the research area?



Comments about finding a common language:

Yes, especially in the areas of phylogenetical analyses, in the research focusing on variability in human children play across cultures, and in other areas.

Working Group Format and Content

Figure 4. How do you feel about the format of the working group?



Suggestions for improving group format:

No comments

Figure 5. Do you feel the participating in the working group helped you understand the research happening in other disciplines in the group's topic area?



Comments about understanding research in other disciplines:

Definitely. The fact that researchers from various behavioral and mathematical disciplines could clearly see structural parallels and common points and that communication was mutually so enriching was one of the strongest aspects of the meeting. Neither terminology nor any technicalities posed real problems, in the opposite, it was clear that different conceptual approaches can complement each other and thus strengthen our understanding of play.

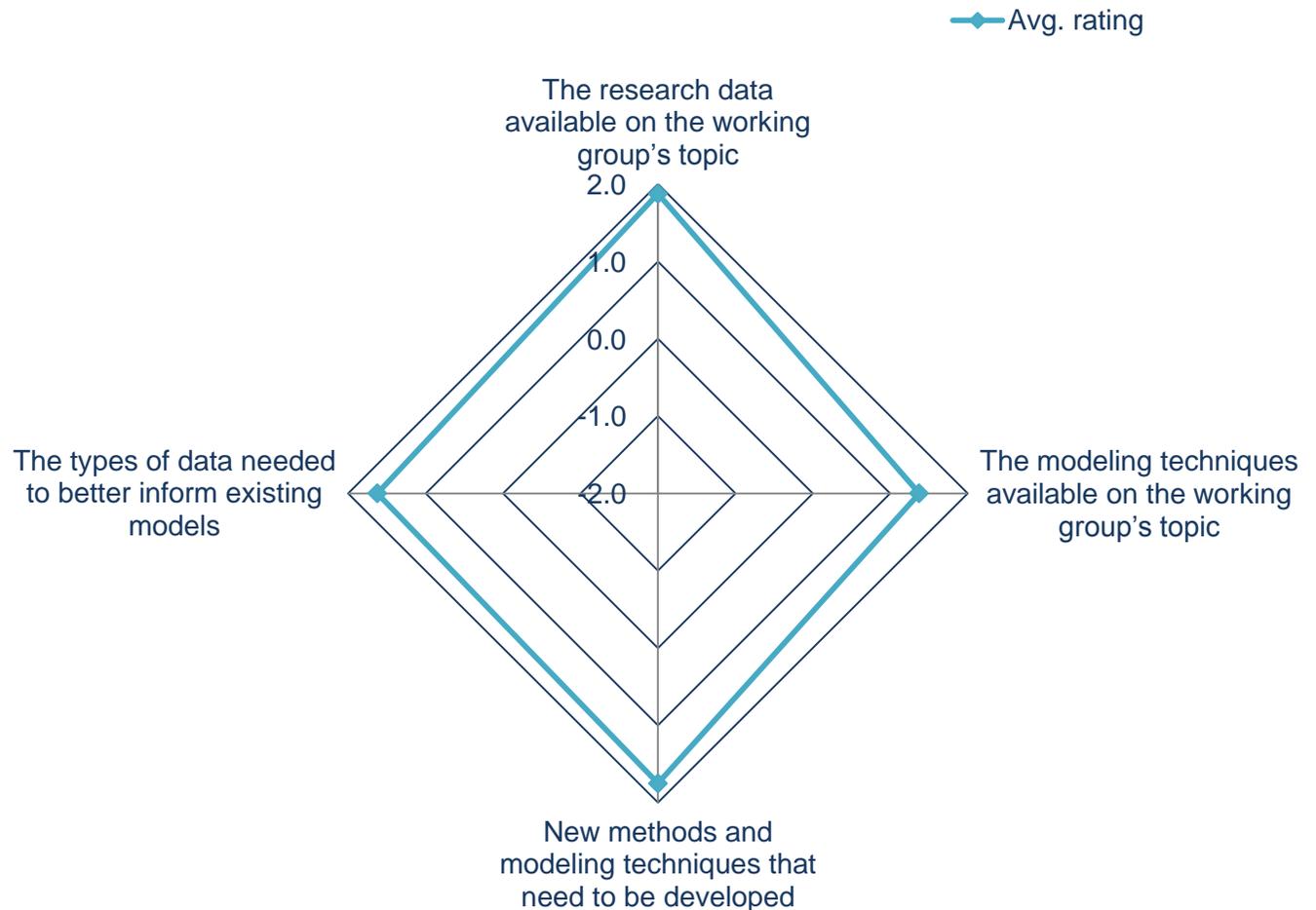
I felt that because the participants came from different research areas, we were all committed to making it work. And I was impressed at how well this worked, especially for the first meeting.

I was surprised at how much progress was made. It didn't seem possible at the end of day 1 because the research we discussed was so diverse, but somehow (alchemy?), by the end of day 2, we managed to develop a common conceptual framework with clear ideas about how to proceed. I was struck by how every member of the group seemed interested in playing [with ideas] in a way that fostered cooperation -- coincidentally (perhaps), this is also one of the main issues we decided to pursue.

Figure 6. Learning about issues related to the working group's research problem

Scale: -2 = "Strongly disagree" to 2 = "Strongly agree"

As a result of participating in this working group, I have a better understanding of:



Most Useful Aspects of the Meeting

Being introduced to the data available in this area.

Bringing experimenters and theoreticians together.

For the first meeting, it was most useful just having us all there together to discuss and collaborate.

Free intensive discussion for such a long time, about only one topic "play".

It was incredibly useful to have people from so many different research perspectives and to together converge on one topic. It was extremely productive and interesting!

Meeting people interested in one topic, but having experiences from different fields, in one room and discussing during several days.

Most important was the opportunity to have two and a half day for working together within a unique group that brought together top play behavior researchers with top experts in modeling of behavior and evolution. With no formal tasks, we could focus of combining our ideas and expertize. We got personally acquainted to each other's' research topic and methods. Through brainstorming we identified two big questions we will work on and set up specific small teams to work on concrete tasks. For me, the three most important outcomes are: 1) We gained an invaluable comprehensive insight into the state-of-art of current play behavior research programs and mathematical modeling in the field. This effect would be impossible to achieve in any other way. 2) A specific collaboration was started. 3) An information network was established between the group members that will greatly enhance possibilities to exchange ideas and combine skills and thus start new lines of research.

The enthusiasm and cooperative spirit of the group as a whole.

Impact on Future Research Plans

Figure 7. Do you feel that the exchange of ideas that took place during the working group will influence your future research?



Comments about influence on future research:

Absolutely. The immediate effect is that I will work till the next meeting on a specific modeling task with another group member (Jeff Schank). Moreover, the communication within the group, both during the meeting and after it through email, has strengthened my motivation and sharpened my focus on several other research tasks in both theoretical and empirical play research.

I know better what it is that my models should capture.

It helped me to see what might be most important in the sea of findings that I've been working with and also helped me to consider new possibilities for my future research.

It's an area ripe with low-hanging fruit. Lots of hard-won and fascinating data but few proper phylogenetic analyses.

Yes. Both specifically and generally.

Figure 8. Did you develop unanticipated plans for collaborative research with other working group participants?



Comments about plans for collaborative research:

Analyses of a few existing datasets.

We will develop several models jointly

Yes, in a general sort of way -- with the whole group -- but not (yet) on a smaller scale.

Yes. With Jeff Schank, we will work on an agent-based model of play behavior effects on later social behavior during 2012. In a longer term, we discussed possible collaboration with Serge Pellis.

Figure 9. Do you feel the expectations for the next working group are clear (in the sense that you are leaving this meeting with a good idea of what your contribution will be at the next meeting)?



Comments about understanding what is expected of working group members:

Yes, I have a clear role in producing a specific model with Jeff Schank, contributing to the Animal play database and communicating and commenting on the other specific tasks that will run in parallel.

Suggestions for Future Meetings

Add an extra day to the meeting.

It worked just fine!

Nothing at the moment.

Nothing, it was excellent!

People scattered for dinners: having more group social interactions would be good.

Possibly more time in sub groups - maybe even for part of an evening.

Additional Comments about working group

A great experience

I think the recent NIMBioS working group meeting was the most productive, useful, and collaborative experience in my career to date. I am simply thrilled to be a part of it.

A very positive experience; I am delighted to be a part of it. Thanks to everyone involved.

Fantastic!

Great subject and fine colleagues.

I was a bit worried about it going in. It far exceeded my expectations.

It has been great! A wonderful occasion to expand our mental boundaries!

Looking forward to the next meeting. I'm unclear, however, as to how many whole group meetings we will have in total - 3?

There was great excitement by all members participating and most gratifying, the mathematicians in the group spear-heading developing new ways to tackle the subject matter. Indeed, we assigned each of the 5 to head a sub-group to develop models for circulation to the whole group. Bringing mathematics to the biology of play requires such an active role by the mathematicians, and if this momentum is maintained, the workshop could be very successful indeed.

Very friendly, very well organized, Gordon Burghardt and the other three co-organizers did a wonderful job during the preparation of the meeting and during the meeting itself! And meeting was very well supported by NIMBioS.

Appendix

Play, Evolution, and Sociality Working Group Evaluation Survey

Play, Evolution, and Sociality Working Group Survey

Thank you for taking a moment to complete this survey. Your responses will be used to improve the working groups hosted by the National Institute for Mathematical and Biological Synthesis. Information supplied on the survey will be confidential, and results will be reported only in the aggregate.

Please check the appropriate box to indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about this working group: (Very satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied, Very dissatisfied)

I feel the working group was very productive.

The working group met my expectations.

The presenters were very knowledgeable about their topics.

The presentations were useful.

The group discussions were useful

I would recommend participating in NIMBioS working groups to my colleagues.

Please check the appropriate box to indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

As a result of participating in this working group, I have a better understanding of:

(Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly disagree)

the research data available on the working group's topic

the modeling techniques available on the working group's topic

the types of data needed to better inform existing models

new methods and modeling techniques that need to be developed

Do you feel the working group made adequate progress, for its first meeting, toward finding a common language across disciplines in the research area?

Yes

No

Comments:

Do you feel the participating in the working group helped you understand the research happening in other disciplines in the group's topic area?

Yes

No

Comments:

Do you feel the expectations for the next working group are clear (in the sense that you are leaving this meeting with a good idea of what your contribution will be at the next meeting)?

Yes

No

Comments:

Do you feel that the exchange of ideas that took place during the working group will initiate or influence your future research?

Yes

No

Please explain:

Did you develop unanticipated plans for collaborative research with other working group participants?

Yes

No

Please explain:

What do you feel was the most useful aspect of the working group?

What would you have changed about the working group?

How do you feel about the format of the working group?

This was a very effective format for achieving our goals

This was not a very effective format for achieving our goals ->

The working group format would have been more effective if:

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the working group accommodations:

(Very satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied, Very dissatisfied)

Travel arranged by NIMBioS

Housing arranged by NIMBioS

Comfort of the facility in which the working group took place

Resources of the facility in which the working group took place

Please indicate any changes NIMBioS can make to improve the resources and/or accommodations available to working group participants:

Please provide any additional comments about your overall experience with the working group: