

Deliberative Processes as a Tool for Stakeholder Engagement

Matthew C. Nowlin, PhD

Associate Professor of Political Science at the College of Charleston

Sea Grant Symposium May 2022



Deliberation and Wicked Problems

Overview of Talk

Wicked Problems

Deliberative Processes

Deliberative Mini-Publics

Two Applications

- Sea level rise in Charleston, SC
- Our Coastal Future Forum

Analysis of Language

Conclusion

Wicked Problems

Complexity and Stakeholders

- **Complexity:** clarity of problem and solution
- **Stakeholder relationships:** co-operation to conflictual
- Hard to address with expertise or advocacy approaches
- **Three approaches:** authoritative, competitive, or *collaborative*

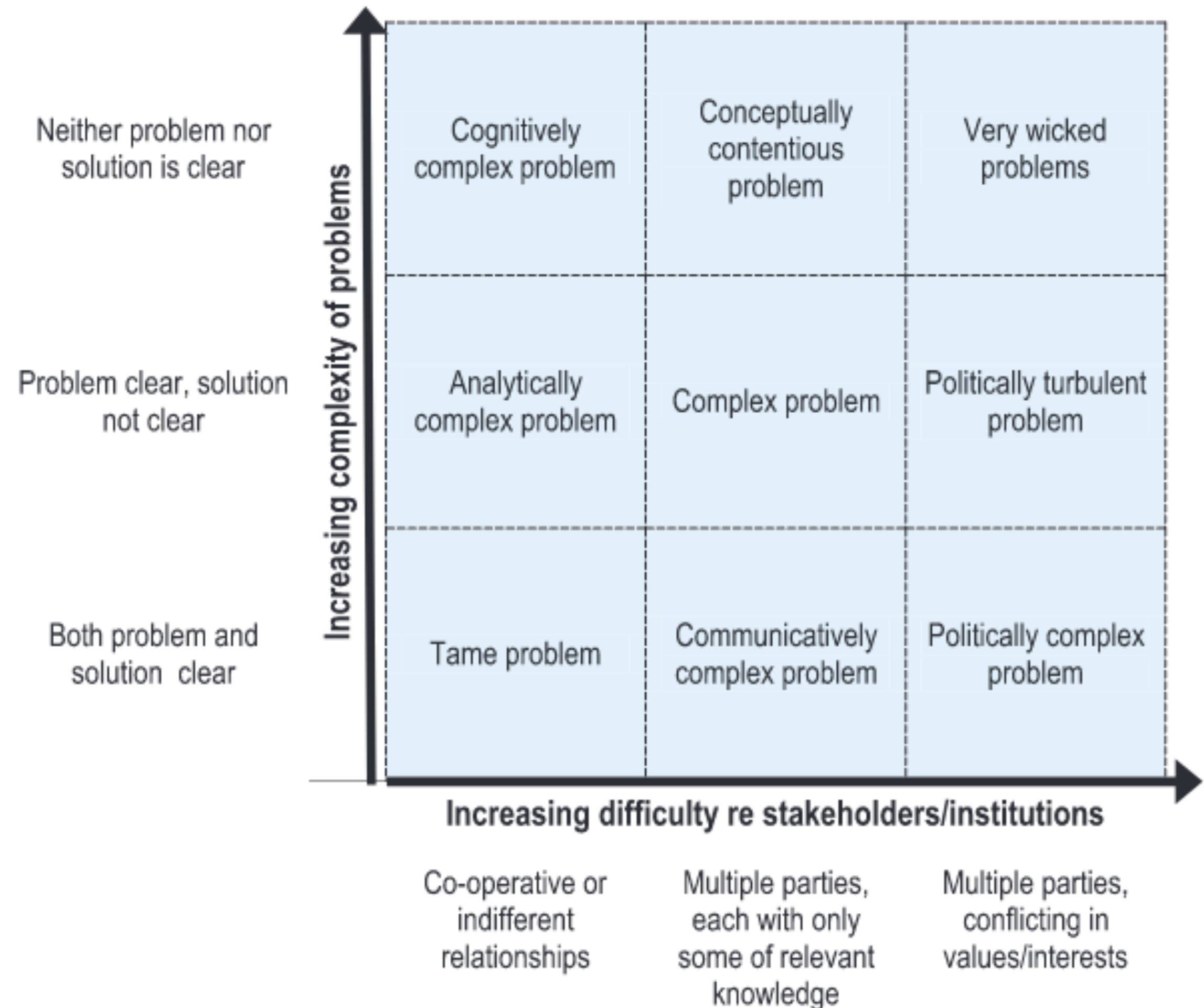


Figure 1. Alternative types of complex problems.

Deliberative Processes

“Deliberation is the *thoughtful and reasoned* consideration of information, views, experiences, and ideas among a group of individuals”

— Nabatchi, Tina. 2012. “An Introduction to Deliberative Civic Engagement.” In *Democracy in Motion: Evaluating the Practice and Impact of Deliberative Civic Engagement*, eds. Tina Nabatchi, John Gastil, G. Michael Weiksner, and Matt Leighninger. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3–17.

Deliberative Mini-Publics

Independent and facilitated group discussions among a (near) random sample of citizens who take evidence from experts and interested parties

Small subset of the public that meets to consider policy issues

- Representative
- Informed
- Facilitators

Goals and outputs

- Improved understanding of the problem
- Improved understanding of the communities decision-making process
- Consideration of trade-offs associated with various solutions
- Make a recommendation

Sea Level Rise

Adaptation Approaches

- Four small groups met in fall 2015 and spring 2016
- 8 to 10 participants per group, ~30 overall
- Discussed strategies to address sea-level rise
- *Funded by the SC Sea Grant Consortium*



Our Coastal Future Forum

Climate and Coastal Issues

- Large event, ~100 participants, 8 small groups
- Met in October 2017
- Discussed biodiversity, offshore energy, environmental health
- *Funded by the Gulf Research Program in partnership with SC Sea Grant Consortium*



Analysis and Results

Language Used

Text Analysis

Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC)

- Dictionary based text analysis

LIWC summary variables

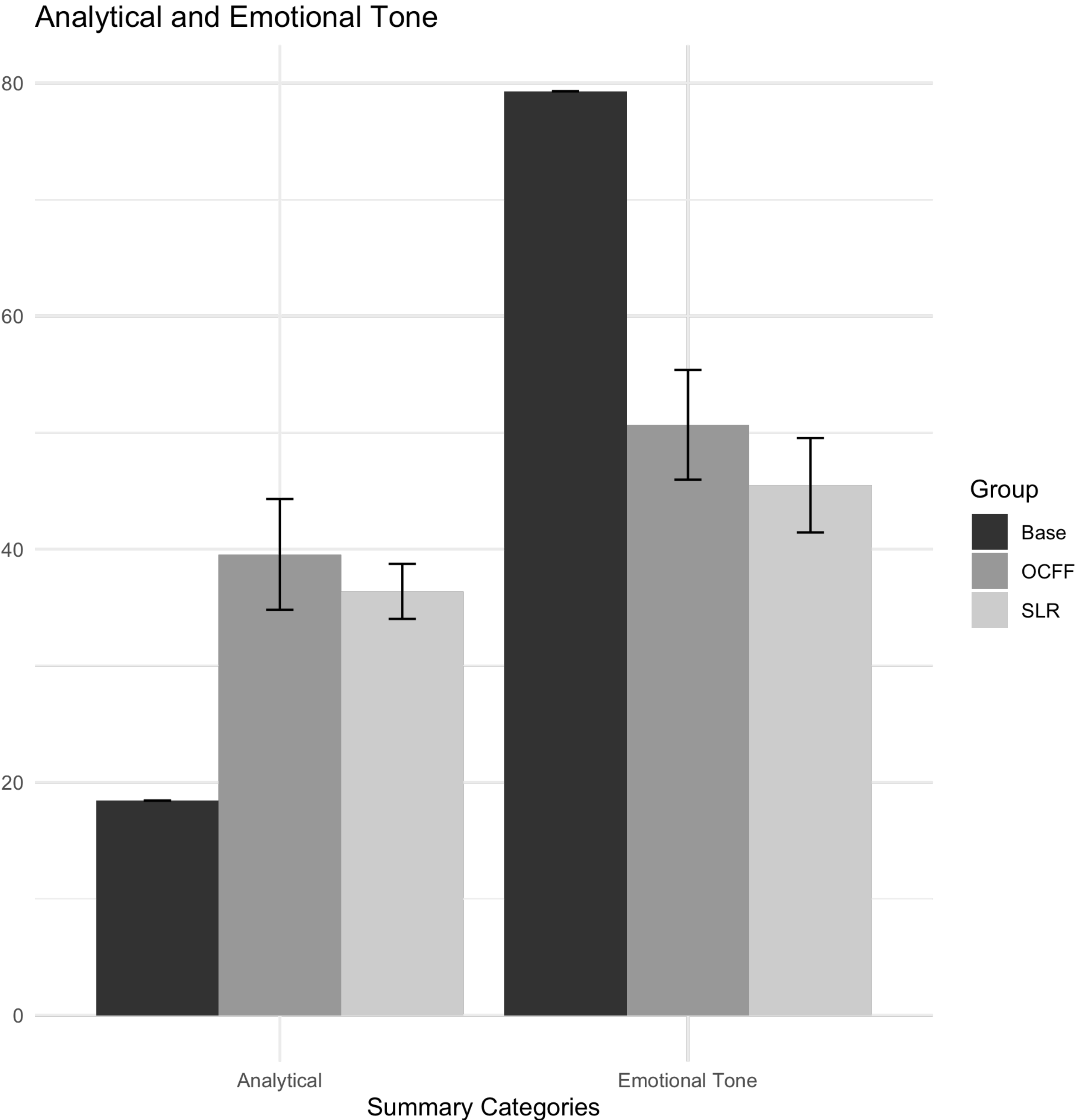
- Analytical
- Emotional Tone

LIWC processes

- Cognitive
- Affective

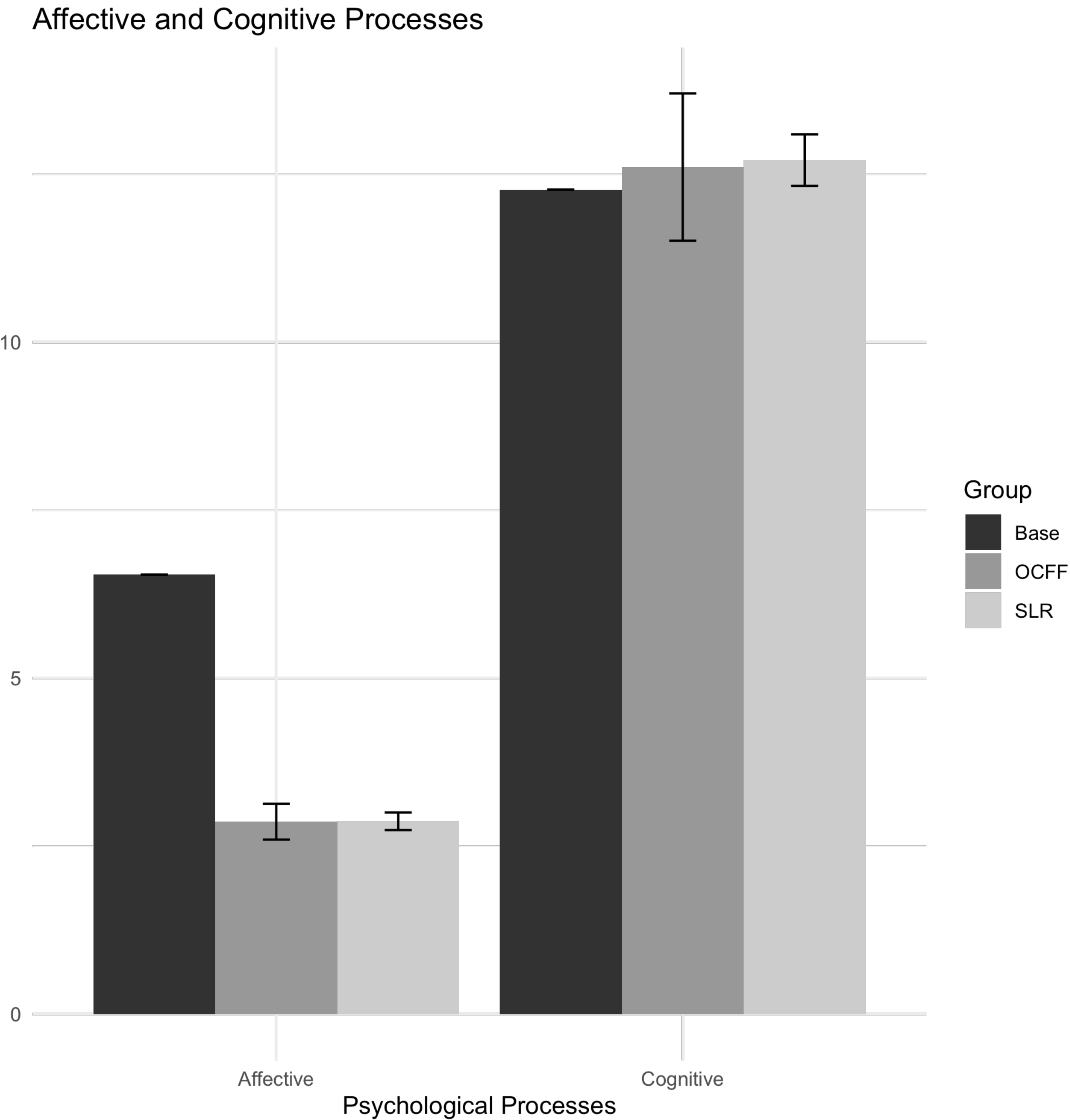
Results: Summary Categories

Analytical and Emotional Tone



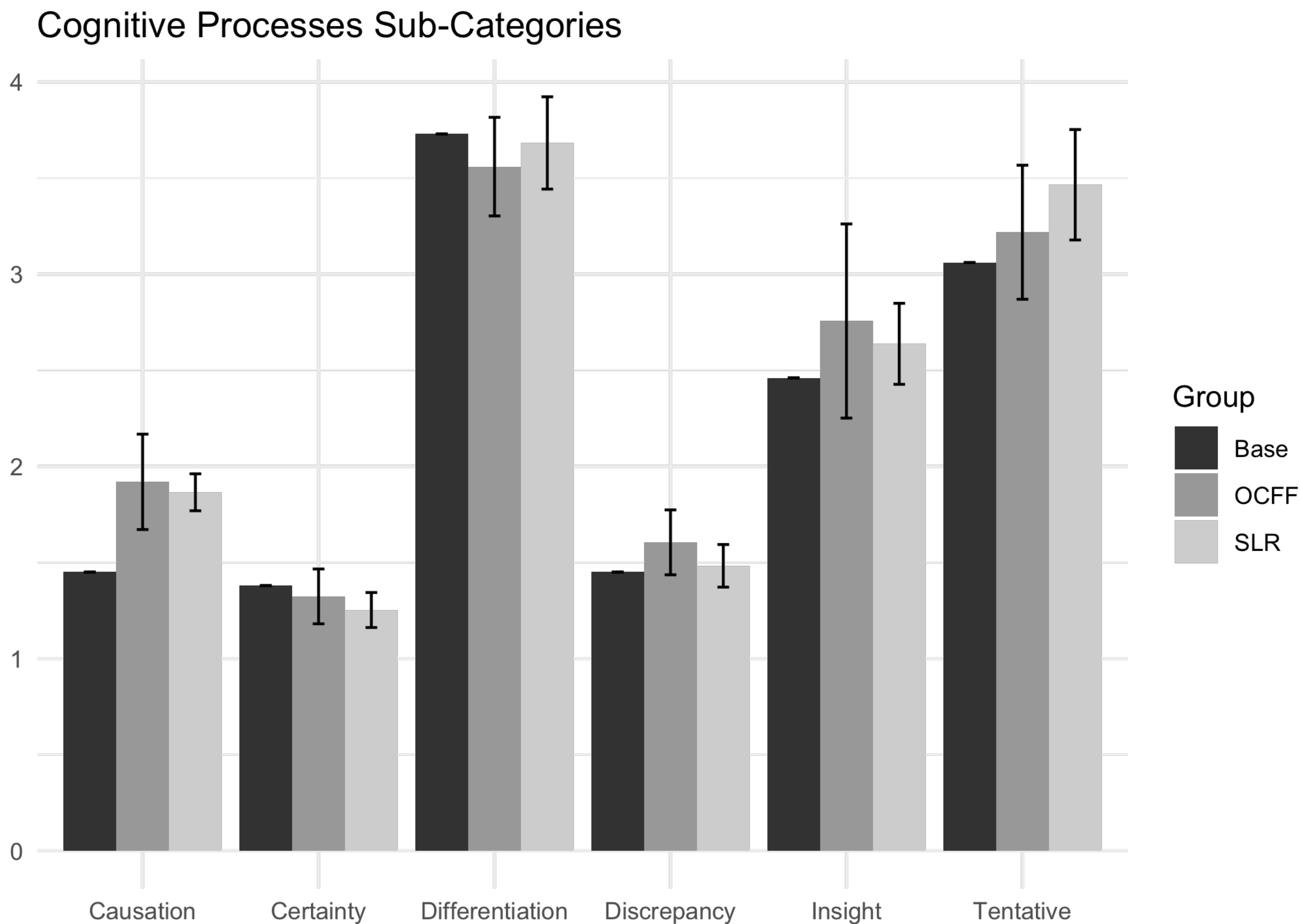
Results: Psychological Processes

Affective and Cognitive



Results: Cognitive Processes

Causation, Certainty, Differentiation, Discrepancy, Insight, Tentative



Conclusion

Deliberation participants used language that reflected analytical thinking and did not reflect affective processes

Overall, no differences in cognitive processes

- SLR: + causation
- OCFF: + causation, + insight, and + discrepancy

Suggestive that deliberative mini-publics can provide structures to encourage reasoned language as opposed to emotional language

Questions?

Contact Info:

Matthew C. Nowlin

nowlinmc@cofc.edu

www.matthewcnowlin.com

**Riley Center for Livable Communities
Charleston Resilience Network**



**COLLEGE *of*
CHARLESTON**

DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE