# CHOICE OVERLOAD AMONG CHILDREN

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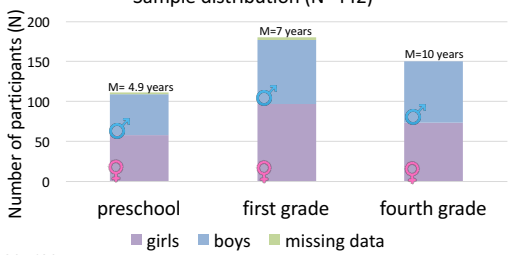
## Introduction

- Children make decisions from a very young age, and are exposed to large sets of alternatives in supermarkets, toy stores, etc.
- Studies have examined how assortment size affects choice satisfaction among adults, but not how it affects children
- Choice overload effects (lower satisfaction or choice avoidance when too many options are given) were found among adults under certain conditions, and assumes to relate to task's cognitive demands
- Children's cognitive system is inferior to adults' in both capacity and complexity and hence may be more vulnerable to the choice overload effect
- Our research examines whether, and to what extent, children would experience choice overload, and how it changes with age.

**Hypotheses:** Set size would affect children's post-choice satisfaction, but would be negatively moderated by age (older children showing smaller overload effects)

## Methods

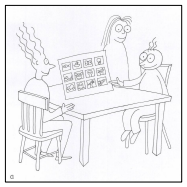
Sample:

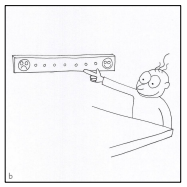


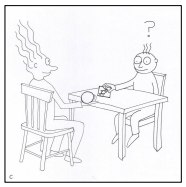

Measures:

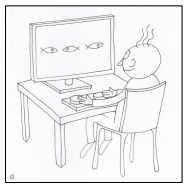
- Visual analogue scale for satisfaction
- Willingness to exchange
- Cognitive ability (Inhibition) test:
  - Preschool: "Simon says"
  - School: Computerized Stroop-like task

## Procedure


Choosing an item


Satisfaction rating


Willingness to exchange


Cognitive ability test

## Design

| | | Age group | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Preschool | First grade | Fourth grade |
| Number of alternatives | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | 6 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | 12 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | 18 | | ✓ | ✓ |

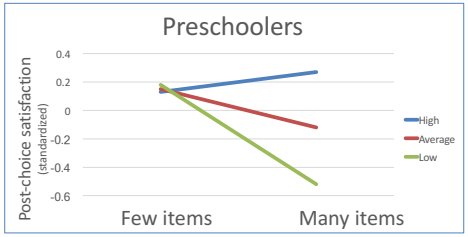
## Results

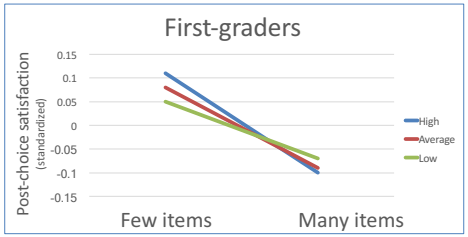
Cognitive ability as a moderator
to the influence of set size on post-choice satisfaction

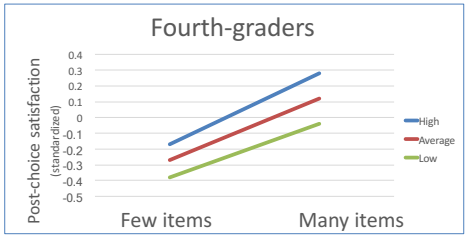
While preschoolers tend to be more satisfied when offered fewer (rather than many) items, 4th graders demonstrated the exact opposite trend and were happier when choosing from many options.

This effect of set size on children's post-choice satisfaction was moderated by cognitive ability.

The moderation pattern differed between age groups.




## Discussion

- Among Preschoolers and 4th graders, cognitive ability moderated post-choice satisfaction.
- Cognitive ability interacted with set size for preschoolers, but not for the older children. For 4th graders It showed a main effect
- For 1st graders, cognitive ability did not show a significant effect
- Measuring several cognitive abilities (e.g.: inhibition, regret etc.) may give a better resolution to this transition from "choice overload" effect to a "more is better" experience
- A better understanding of this crucial shifting in children's experience may shed light on the more complex appearance of the choice overload effect in adulthood
- The implications of our findings help understand the optimal way to display set of choices for different age groups and how to maximize choice satisfaction.

**For any questions please contact me at: hillaab@gmail.com**