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School Segregation and Education Marketization

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Preference Compromise and Parent Satisfaction with Schools in Choice Markets:
Evidence from Kansas City, Missouri

***Recording available on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/KC2IBQ9zQkk> ***

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Abstract

Parents desire several features when choosing a school, but they often compromise on some preferences in favor of others. We develop a novel measure of aggregate preference compromise by examining the discrepancy between ideal preferences and those specified under real-world constraints. Relying on data from a representative sample in Kansas City, MO, we find that low-income and less educated parents and those from historically marginalized racial/ethnic backgrounds make a greater degree of preference compromise than other parents do. This is associated with lower satisfaction with chosen schools, suggesting that compromises matter. Less privileged families are also geographically more restricted in making school choices and have more limited access to better performing schools, which can aggravate preference compromises. Implications are discussed.