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A human capital-based framework of career, well-being, and social information reasons for managerial lateral job assignment preferences

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Abstract

Research on job assignments has generally assumed employees will accept assignments when offered. In this study, we examine managerial preferences for potential job assignment opportunities conceptualized using human capital theory to provide a holistic understanding of this phenomenon. Using two pilot studies, we refine the list of reasons managers use when forming lateral assignment preferences. In the main study, we collected data from a representative sample of more than 1200 managers in a large US organization who provided preferences for all possible assignment locations (about 40) in their regions and reported reasons for their preferences. Results showed career development reasons (e.g., promotion potential, opportunity to learn) and social information reasons (e.g., location manager, customers) attracted managers to assignments, and health and well-being reasons (e.g., commuting, stress) repelled managers. There were several differences in these relationships by managerial level such that health and well-being reasons were more important than career development reasons for lower-level managers than higher-level managers, who seemed to generate their preferences based more evenly on both types of reasons. We ask whether gender moderates the relationship between health and well-being reasons and preferences and find little support. We also explore whether manager racioethnicity moderates the relationship between community racioethnicity and preferences and find a few differences. Most findings were replicated when predicting actual movement 2 years later. Results suggest managerial preferences should consistently be considered in job assignment research and that organizations should obtain and use preference data when making internal staffing decisions.

KEYWORDS
career development, human capital theory, lateral job assignments, preferences

1 | INTRODUCTION

Organizations use lateral job assignments as a way to address staffing needs (De Pater et al., 2009; Dragoni et al., 2009) and develop managers (Campion et al., 1994; Dragoni et al., 2011)—the latter of which is key because managers often view their employees' human capital as investments to improve organizational outcomes (Ployhart et al., 2011). Despite valuable scholarship, we have devoted little theoretical or empirical attention to job assignment preferences and decisions from the incumbent employee perspective (Noe & Barber, 1993). Practically speaking, using job assignments for staffing and development is limited by whether employees accept them. Further, with continued job-to-job transitions across organizations (United States Census Bureau, 2021), many are finding it difficult to

retain and manage their talent effectively (Rotolo et al., 2018; Vaiman et al., 2021). Accomplishing this requires consideration of employee preferences, offering career advancement opportunities to those who seek (and merit) them, and identifying new ways to "sell" assignments to employees.

Managers hold beliefs regarding lateral job assignment opportunities and their associated features (e.g., bonus potential, commute, coworkers). These beliefs, in turn, influence preferences for those job assignments, which affects the likelihood of acceptance, if offered. Researching lateral job assignments is important because it complements the fixation on external hiring in the job choice and career development literatures (e.g., Chapman et al., 2005). This is important because external hiring comes with immediate costs, such as time and resources to find talent, as well as long-term costs. For example, Bidwell (2011) found that it takes external hires—who initially cost more than internal hires—3 years to perform at the same level in the same job as internal hires. *Lateral job assignments* refer to hierarchically—and often functionally—equivalent positions within different contexts in the same organization. Lateral assignments offer potential development through novel situations or greater or different responsibilities. Lateral job assignments are dissimilar from external hiring in a number of important ways and therefore require focused scholarship. First, organizational processes and performance expectations are known. Second, organizational reputation and brand, which are key drivers of external recruitment success (Allen et al., 2007), are immaterial in managerial evaluations of lateral assignments. Third, the socialization process is significantly shorter. Finally, lateral assignments often arise at the intersection of an organization's need to fill a position and the opportunity to develop an employee (Campion et al., 1994; De Pater et al., 2009; Dragoni et al., 2011), whereas hiring is driven solely by the need to fill an opening. Moreover, unlike promotions, tasks remain largely the same and rarely are there pay increases. What changes are features surrounding the job that we contend influence assignment attraction.

Researching lateral assignment is also important because it brings to light the value of lateral transfers as conduits of career development. While some organizations may resist the use of transfers because it can be seen as simply shifting an opening from one location to another and not solving a staffing need, and workers may be hesitant to move for a job that is not a promotion, organizational practices and research studies have nevertheless demonstrated lateral assignments as valuable opportunities. For example, in the organization in the current study, lateral assignments to larger locations offer development through greater responsibilities over more employees, merchandise, and sales (see Section 3.1 for more information on the research context). Their managerial hierarchy and use of lateral assignments as development opportunities is similar to other organizations (e.g., Enterprise, n.d.; Abbott Laboratories, n.d.; Pilot Flying J, n.d.; Milwaukee Tool, n.d.). This effect is also empirically supported in the literature. Campion et al. (1994) found that job rotation rate correlated with business knowledge and skill outcomes at $r = 0.27$ ($p < 0.05$) and promotion rate at $r = 0.37$ ($p < 0.05$) (see also De Pater et al., 2009; Dragoni et al., 2009).

This research contributes to the job assignments literature in three ways. First, we draw attention to job incumbents who are candidates for internal openings and under-researched (for exceptions, see Bidwell, 2011; Bidwell & Mollick, 2015; Noe & Barber, 1993). The little research on this group shows the short- and long-term benefits of internal hiring. For example, DeOrtentiis et al. (2018) found that internal movements offer potential unit-level value creation because they have organization-specific human capital. Moreover, allowing career development opportunities (such as lateral assignments) within the organization can reduce voluntarily turnover by improving job embeddedness (Kraimer et al., 2011). As such, this research presents practical insights for organizations to effectively staff from their internal talent pool.

Second, we adapt human capital theory to develop a holistic framework of attributes for lateral assignment preferences (and movement), which includes three categories—career development, health and well-being, and social information—that theoretically influence investment-related behaviors (Becker, 1993). Pieces of this framework have been tested independently (Noe & Barber, 1993; Noe & Wilk, 1993); however, examining them in concert affords theoretical clarification as to the key drivers of preferences and eventual movement. For example, lateral transfers may yield changes in culture and climate, coworkers, and commuting distance that may repel employees. By adapting and testing a comprehensive framework, we improve the generalizability of our findings to an array of occupations and industries where employees weigh the costs and benefits associated with accepting new opportunities at the same hierarchical level (e.g., working on a new project team, developing a new product).

Finally, we explore gender and racioethnicity as potential moderators. Evidence is mixed as to whether women would be more or less likely to prefer a lateral assignment. Women are often still primary caregivers (Bauer et al., 2021) creating the assumption that women managers may be less willing to prefer and accept assignments that disrupt their home lives such as those with longer commutes or more overtime. However, it is unrealistic—and a missed opportunity—to assume those preferences do not change over time and it would greatly benefit an organization to know when preferences change. We also examine whether manager racioethnicity plays a role in preference formation for locations in predominantly similar communities. While research suggests people will choose to be around similar others (Tsui et al., 1992) and that this could improve productivity, scholarship also suggests that novel experiences can facilitate skill development (Dragoni et al., 2011) also leading to increased productivity. Equipped with knowledge on managerial preferences and how they may or may not differ by gender and racioethnicity, there may be actions executives can take to promote diversity.

We use preferences and actual movements as distinct criteria. While we show that preferences relate to actual lateral movement where those opportunities occurred 2 years later, preferences are central to our theorizing because we focus on work-related factors available to executives charged with managing talent. Also, preferences are not limited by the availability of job openings. Openings are influenced by myriad features unrelated to our theory (e.g., turnover,

needs of the business), which create unreliability and range restriction reducing predictability. As we have learned from other literatures on employee mobility (turnover; Tett & Meyer, 1993), great insight can be gained from examining features leading to intentions not only to avoid the methodological limitations but because intentions can be influenced proactively. Nevertheless, actual movement is practically important and included to further validate our framework. We do not view preferences as a mediator because openings often occur at locations that are not necessarily preferred by the manager, and organizations rarely, if ever, collect information on refused job assignments. Thus, only partial mediation is likely.

2 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 | A human capital theory framework of perceived job assignment attributes

Human capital theory is used to explain career decision-making patterns of individuals as they relate to economic outcomes. Originally, Becker (1962) proposed that individuals' choices were driven by whether they were likely to result in enhanced productivity (and earnings). Becker additionally argued that human capital exists in at least four forms, each of which can enhance productivity: (1) on-the-job training, (2) schooling, (3) emotional and/or physical health, and (4) information regarding the social systems with which one interacts and the social relationships that result. In the current study, these map on to *career development* reasons for lateral job assignment preference, *health and well-being* reasons, and *social information* reasons (see Figure 1). This categorization is reflected in other research assessing lateral movements (e.g., Noe & Barber, 1993) and also emerge as relevant to other types of job switches, such as turnover (Campion & Mitchell, 1986; Maertz et al., 2003; Maertz &

Kmitta, 2012). Given the focus of this research is on current employees, prior qualifications to get hired, like schooling, are not relevant to employee preferences.

2.1.1 | Career development reasons

The first type of human capital we consider is on-the-job training, which includes generalized occupation-specific training and specific skills necessary to perform the job (e.g., reducing theft in retail). As Becker (1993) noted, "Many workers increase their productivity by learning new skills and perfecting old ones while on the job" (p. 31). We focus on career development rather than strictly on skill development because many non-skill reasons afford career development, such as opportunities for bonuses and future promotions. We argue perceived opportunities for development become reasons employees use to prefer or not prefer potential assignments. We call this category *career development* reasons.

To develop one's career is to gain additional knowledge and skills, move upward, and attain greater pay and status (Noe & Wilk, 1993). In their model of job mobility, Ng et al. (2007) proposed that career transitions can be disruptive and are followed by adjustment periods where new skills are generated. Lateral movements are potential career disruptions. That is, the opportunities for work-related growth by accepting lateral assignments disrupt stability, which motivates developmental efforts (Campion et al., 1994; Dragoni et al., 2011; Eby & Russell, 2000). Accepting transitions requires accepting change, as well as enduring the extra effort. Thus, career development is central to employee decisions about accepting transitions in order to compensate for the disruption.

Through a set of pilot studies in the large retail organization under study, we developed two types of career development reasons based on human capital theory and organizational context: direct and
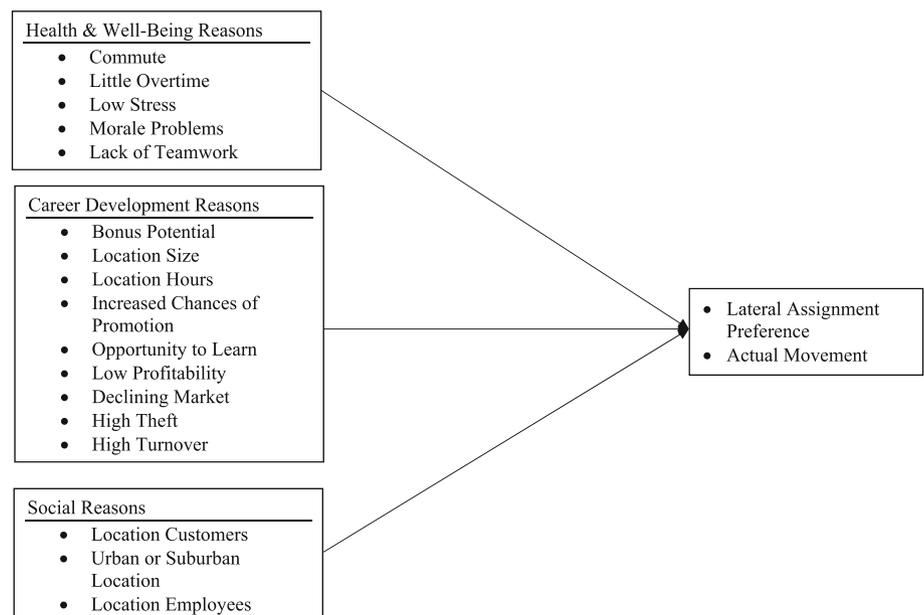
FIGURE 1 Framework of reasons for managerial lateral job assignment preferences

Health & Well-Being Reasons
- Commute
- Little Overtime
- Low Stress
- Morale Problems
- Lack of Teamwork

Career Development Reasons
- Bonus Potential
- Location Size
- Location Hours
- Increased Chances of Promotion
- Opportunity to Learn
- Low Profitability
- Declining Market
- High Theft
- High Turnover

Social Reasons
- Location Customers
- Urban or Suburban Location
- Location Employees

- Lateral Assignment Preference
- Actual Movement

indirect reasons. Direct reasons, such as opportunities to learn and bonus potential, present a shorter, clearer path to development. Location characteristics are also important because, for example, the larger the location and the more hours the location is open (24-h vs. non-24-h), the greater the bonus potential and responsibility for managers. These direct reasons are often most cited and easiest to identify. In past research, compensation (Chapman et al., 2005), opportunities for advancement (Brett et al., 1993), and more responsibility and prestige (Markham et al., 1987) predicted job acceptance.

In contrast, indirect reasons require managers to navigate immediate challenges for long-term gains. For example, locations in this organization with low profitability, high theft, and high turnover provide opportunities to develop skills through handling tough circumstances (Courtright et al., 2014). This may lead to promotions and higher pay because successfully navigating these allow managers to demonstrate promotability to senior management. For example, Dragoni et al. (2011) found that accumulated work experience was related to an executive's ability to think strategically about market opportunities and achieve organizational goals. They argued executives master skills through repetition and critical thinking by encountering novelty. Exposure to, and the responsibility to fix, adverse circumstances (e.g., high turnover rates) develops their problem-solving repertoire (Mumford et al., 2000).

On-the-job training is not necessarily standardized, which, in part, demonstrates the value of lateral movements. For example, larger locations require more responsibility—a larger employee base, more products, more customers, and generally more to control. Meanwhile, locations with higher theft rates require managers to generate competencies such as conflict resolution when managing theft directly, or improving their leadership by empowering workers to address and manage theft. Thus, we propose:

> **Hypothesis 1a.** *Career development reasons are positively related to a manager's preference for a lateral job assignment and actual movement to a lateral job assignment.*

2.1.2 | Health and well-being reasons

The second form of human capital is emotional and/or physical health and well-being. Becker (2007) has argued that researchers have neglected the role of health and well-being in human capital theory over more traditional economic and organizational investments such as career development and education. While economists who have considered health and human capital generally focus on explicit medical expenditures and the management of enduring physical challenges (e.g., ailments, addiction; Becker, 2007), we extend this thinking to less extreme health and well-being experiences. That is, the everyday lives of workers involve features that impact their well-being. For example, required overtime costs time, which can adversely affect an individual's recovery from work or take time away from family thereby

reducing their well-being and ultimately their productivity. Research shows that worker well-being has notable consequences for productivity (Riketta, 2008). For example, Oswald et al. (2015) found that an experimental manipulation to increase happiness increased productivity in a piece-rate system, while real-work shocks like bereavement reduced productivity. When considering lateral assignments, we expect job incumbents to evaluate job attributes' potential to reduce their well-being, which could ultimately reduce their productivity. As such, we categorize these job assignment attributes as *health and well-being reasons*.

Because these job features threaten well-being, and thereby human capital, managers are likely repelled from preferring lateral assignments with these attributes. For example, an employee's commute can cost significant time and money (Hofmeister, 2003). While research has suggested that commuting can be used to mentally prepare oneself *for* work or allow for decompression *after* work, scholars have generally found that commuting is associated with stress (Zhou et al., 2018). Further, challenging workplace conditions, such as poor teamwork or low morale can reduce worker well-being and hinder productivity. All of these pose potential losses to worker health and well-being, and we expect reasons in this category to therefore share negative relationships with preferences and actual movement. Thus, we propose:

> **Hypothesis 1b.** *Health and well-being reasons are negatively related to a manager's preference for a lateral job assignment and actual movement to a lateral job assignment.*

2.1.3 | Social information reasons

The third form of human capital we consider is information regarding social systems (Becker, 1993). In particular, we focus on managers' perceptions regarding social attributes of lateral job assignments because they have implications for whether a worker believes they will be able to increase their productivity (and eventually their economic gain) in a given social environment. We call these *social information reasons* and they include the customers, managers, and hourly employees of a job assignment location. Research shows that social factors influence an employee's lateral assignment decisions (Gould & Penley, 1985; Noe & Barber, 1993). For example, information provided by social connections relates indirectly to salary and promotions (Seibert et al., 2001), or directly to promotability ratings (Seibert et al., 2017). Research also shows that supervisors and coworkers play important roles in a worker's productivity (Lazear et al., 2015; Mas & Moretti, 2009) suggesting these factors are crucial in a worker's evaluation of a lateral job assignment, according to human capital theory. Thus, we propose:

> **Hypothesis 1c.** *Social information reasons are positively related to a manager's preference for a lateral job assignment and actual movement to a lateral job assignment.*

2.1.4 | Relative importance of reasons for preferences

Not all reasons are likely to be of equal importance. According to human capital theory, investment decisions are made based on perceived benefits and costs, as well as outcome certainty (Becker, 1993). For example, a manager would likely perceive the certain cost of a commute, which can reduce well-being, as more salient than potentially uncertain benefits such as increased chances of promotion or higher levels of social similarity with customers. In her study on job relocation, Prehar (1998) content analyzed employees' reasons for accepting or rejecting relocations and found that promotions, opportunities for advancement, and a pay increase were the most commonly cited reasons (also see Eby & DeMatteo, 2000). However, Prehar also found that employees considered trade-offs between such benefits and the cost of moving geographic locations and familial disruption, such as spousal preference. Taken together, health and well-being reasons are more predictive of preference than career development reasons. Therefore, we hypothesize:

> **Hypothesis 2a.** *Health and well-being reasons are more strongly associated with a manager's preference for a lateral job assignment and actual movement to a lateral job assignment than career development reasons.*

While health and well-being reasons will likely exhibit a stronger relationship with preference than career development reasons, career development reasons are likely to be more predictive than social information reasons. Research suggests features related to development (e.g., opportunities to learn) are stronger predictors of job attraction than socially oriented characteristics (e.g., coworkers) (Uggerslev et al., 2012). Thus, we hypothesize:

> **Hypothesis 2b.** *Career development reasons are more strongly associated with a manager's preference for a lateral job assignment and actual movement to a lateral job assignment than social information reasons.*

2.2 | Potential moderating effects of gender and racioethnicity

2.2.1 | Gender and health and well-being reasons

Evidence suggests opportunities for advancement vary between women and men (Eagly, 1987; Ullrich et al., 2015). Women, on average, are more likely than men to face nonwork demands that interfere with career (Parasuraman et al., 1996) and therefore traverse a more difficult path to career success (Lyness & Thompson, 1997). For example, Pleck (1977) argued that family life is allowed to disrupt a woman's work more often, while work is allowed to interfere with a man's family life more often (also see Ullrich et al., 2015). Yet, much of this research focuses on constraints due to social expectations and neglects women's *preferences*. Some have found that women are no less willing to relocate than men

(Brett et al., 1993; Brett & Reilly, 1988) and that female applicants may place more weight on certain characteristics (e.g., compensation, advancement) than men (Chapman et al., 2005). Still, others have revealed significant gender differences in accordance with historic divisions of labor (van der Velde et al., 2005). Given the mixed evidence, we ask:

> **Research Question 1.** Does gender moderate the relationships between health and well-being reasons and preference for a lateral job assignment and actual movement to a lateral job assignment?

2.2.2 | Manager racioethnicity and community racioethnicity

Employee race similarly has important implications for work-related decisions. Early research found employees were less willing to move to dissimilar communities such that employees in rural communities preferred to relocate to rural than urban communities (Noe & Barber, 1993). As a partial explanation, relational demography scholars have found nonracial minorities had less psychological attachment to diverse work units (Tsui et al., 1992), which may yield weaker preferences for assignments in diverse locations. Moreover, research shows that the demographic distance between individuals and those around them can have important implications for workplace behavior (Avery et al., 2012). That is, individuals tend to be attracted to those who they perceive to be more similar to them. Human capital theory may afford an extension to this line of reasoning. In many retail organizations, product offerings are determined in part as a function of location. Features of the location determinant of products include the racioethnic makeup of the location community. For example, locations in predominantly Hispanic communities may offer certain brands (e.g., Goya Foods). Managers may prefer assignments in locations with racioethnic alignment because they view it as one where they can be most productive due to familiarity with the location-specific products. However, it may also be the case that managers would seek experiences that expose them to novel opportunities (i.e., experiences outside their racioethnicity) to accumulate knowledge and skills that may improve their promotability (Dragoni et al., 2011). Given the mixed evidence, we ask:

> **Research Question 2.** Does manager racioethnicity moderate the relationships between a community's predominant racioethnic group and preference for a lateral job assignment and actual movement to a lateral job assignment?

3 | METHODS

3.1 | Research setting

The study took advantage of an organization-initiated opportunity to collect data on managerial preferences for internal job assignments.

Senior management in the large US-based retail organization wanted to understand managerial preference for lateral assignments for several reasons. First, preferences for lateral assignments were essential to inform staffing and career development systems. As openings occurred due to a range of reasons such as promotions, turnover, and growth, it was important to know who would be willing to fill positions. A single vacancy could create multiple movements to backfill. Lateral assignments offered opportunities for career development through a number of pathways: managing larger locations often meant increased responsibilities due to more employees, more merchandise, more sales, and greater bonus potential (for location managers); managing 24-h locations similarly meant more employees and more sales; managing locations with poor teamwork or morale provided opportunities to improve important people management skills; and lateral assignments place managers in newer environments that require adaptation and learning.

Second, the organization used lateral assignments to develop managers for promotion. Research has shown that novel and challenging assignments can be developmental (e.g., Dragoni et al., 2011; McCall et al., 1988) and whether managers worked in challenging locations was considered in performance appraisals (e.g., Schleicher et al., 2018). Managers in this sample were assessed according to five competencies—developing talent in others, business and financial acumen, leading and directing change, facilitating teamwork, and empowering others—in light of the particular challenges they faced at their location.

Third, while this organization did not record turndowns (turning down an offer), we understood these occurrences to be quite high, which thwarted their efforts to develop their managerial pipeline and made staffing more difficult. Understanding factors relevant to assignment preferences was critical to succession management. Similarly, lateral movements offered a method to balance workloads across locations, especially by moving management trainees. Finally, this organization often hired management trainees in waves, not necessarily as a single opening occurred. Meaning, during the year as positions opened (e.g., because someone left or need for more managers at a location), the only option was to move managers around. In addition to these reasons, management commissioned the current study because these staffing decisions were potentially creating diversity trends in assignment locations that could be interpreted as the choice of upper management rather than the preference of employees.

The organization was divided into more than 200 geographic regions, with approximately 35 locations per region. Job tasks were identical at each location, but the locations differed on attributes relevant to the research hypotheses, as explained. All of the jobs within each region were commutable by car and would not require moving homes. Commuting could take anywhere from a few minutes to an hour. Weekly overtime ranged from 0 to 8 h. The research method consisted of asking each manager to consider all the lateral assignment locations in their region one at a time, indicate the preference to transfer to that location, and select the most and second most important reason for that preference. We first conducted two pilot studies to ensure we included a comprehensive list of reasons for lateral assignment preferences in the main study.

3.2 | Pilot studies

We conducted two pilot studies to delineate reasons for preferences. In Pilot 1, we developed the methodology by presenting managers with a list of locations in their region, asking their preferences to transfer to each location, and then asking their reasons for their preferences. The list of reasons was based on the human capital theory literature with insight from subject matter experts (regional managers and corporate staff, who were the future users of the data). The overall response rate was 71% and the total sample was fairly large ($N = 186$ from 4 regions). The survey methodology was effective in measuring preferences because: (1) there was variation in preferences for job assignment locations, (2) there were a large number of reasons for preferences, (3) there were rarely more than two reasons, though they could list more than two, and (4) there were other reasons for preferences than those in the initial list. Pilot 2 supported the findings of Pilot 1 and refined the list of reasons. Because respondents had indicated "other" reasons in Pilot 1, Pilot 2 determined the nature of these by requiring respondents to provide a written description if they selected "other" reasons. The response rate was 66.4%, yielding a sample of 190 managers in 2 other regions. A content analysis was conducted on the "other" reasons and modifications were made to the list of reasons.

Because the research was conducted for business management purposes, the reasons for preferences were limited to those that were legitimate and legal for an organization to consider and discuss with employees when making assignments. By the same logic, it also focused on more objective factors that were not as subjected to interpretative differences and could be used to reliably classify locations. As such, reasons did not include factors such as number of children, home responsibilities, and home address. Focusing on the factors management can legally consider is a notable strength of this study in terms of its practical applicability. We collected 24 reasons that fully operationalized our framework of career development, health and well-being, and social information reasons to explain job preferences in this setting. To confirm categorization, two coauthors independently sorted the reasons into the three categories with 90% interrater agreement. Managers were also presented with an "other" option in the main study described below. Other reasons were reported only 5.1% of the time. Write-in comments explaining the reasons typically either listed one of the reasons above or explained the reason selected. Thus, the data in the main study did not suggest deficiencies in the list of reasons.

3.3 | Main study procedure and sample

Data for the main study were collected from different regions than the pilot studies, so no manager participated in the main and pilot studies. As noted, we asked managers to consider all the other lateral job assignment locations in their region one at a time, indicate the preference to transfer to each of those locations, and select the most and second most important reasons for preferences. We assumed that

their current location would be the referent because the implication in evaluating their preference for other locations is that they would leave their current location. Had this been ambiguous, it would have surfaced during the pilot studies.

Not all managers identified a second reason. Except for one of our tests of Hypotheses 2a and 2b, we used only the primary reasons to test the hypotheses. Replications of our hypotheses using only the secondary reasons yielded the same results, only weaker in magnitude.

The primary instructions to participants were as follows:

Instructions to participants: This survey is intended to help [Organization Name] better understand the preferences of managers for store assignments. The goals of the study are to (a) learn how individual choices for store assignments differ among managers, and (b) to inform the use of store assignments for career development.

This survey will not influence your future store assignments in any way. Your name is required to track survey responses and to associate the data with your store and other background information. The results will be compiled by an outside vendor and will be reported on a group basis only.

This research setting was ideal to study job assignment preferences for many reasons. First, the topic and the data collected were important to respondents. Managers realized this was a rare opportunity to have confidential input as to how the organization would offer assignments in the future through an improved staffing and managerial development system. Thus, they were motivated to respond and do so accurately. Second, managers were familiar with features of other locations in their region because they would often coordinate with other locations (e.g., purchasing or sales promotions), go there on temporary assignments, and share and compare information with other locations. Further, the organization assisted in developing the reasons for the pilot and the main studies to ensure the list included reasons the managers would know. Third, the study examined a wide range of job attributes and types of employees to provide a strong test of each hypothesis. Finally, although the study was limited to a single organization and job type, this had the advantage of controlling for differences between organizations and jobs as alternative explanations that could confound the interpretation of the findings.

Approximately 25 of the 200 regions were selected for the main study to represent the entire company in terms of locations, growth, range of customers, and other factors. Within each region, we included all locations in that region. For each location, we surveyed the location manager and randomly selected either an assistant manager or a management trainee. The final sample included 1231 managers: 237 (19.25%) management trainees, 151 (12.27%) assistant managers, and 843 (68.48%) location managers. Response rates were 43%, 65%, and 95%, respectively. The sample included 413 (33.55%) women, 189 (15.35%) Blacks, 274 (22.26%) Hispanics, 699 (56.78%) Whites, 60 (4.87%) Asians, and 9 (0.73%) who did not report racioethnicity. These percentages exceeded labor market availability for comparable jobs for women and each minority subgroup. Average tenure was 11.43 years (SD = 7.02).

Data were analyzed at the lateral job assignment preference level. Each of the 1231 managers provided preference ratings and up to two reasons for those preferences. The number of locations rated ranged from 10 to 40 with an average of 35. We tested hypotheses by managerial level. The final sample sizes predicting preference was 6303 for management trainees, 3935 for assistant managers, and 24,839 for location managers. Of the 1231 managers in the full sample, 701 (56.95%) could be matched to job movement data with 323 (26.24%) moving in the subsequent 2 years and 217 (17.63%) moving *and* having rated the store to which they moved. Of the 217, only two were management trainees and 28 were assistant managers, rendering any statistical analyses predicting movement impossible. However, 187 location managers moved, so we were able to test each hypothesis using actual job movement on this subgroup. While actual movements of the three management levels in this organization is more evenly distributed, the skewed distribution in our sample is due to the differences in response rates such that more location managers responded than management trainees or assistant managers. Given this, the final sample size for predicting actual movement was 20,296 for location managers.

3.4 | Measures

Preference for a lateral job assignment was operationalized as managers' ratings on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = "Not Preferred: I would not prefer to go to this store under any circumstances," 2 = "Less Preferred: I would only prefer to go to this store if I had no choice," 3 = "Neutral: I would go to this store if asked," 4 = "Preferred: I would prefer to go to this store," and 5 = "Most Preferred: I would very much prefer to go to this store"). The prompt read, "For each location listed below, please indicate your preference for working at that location, and your primary and secondary reasons for your preference."

Data on *actual job movement* were collected by the organization as part of normal personnel records and indicate where a manager was located 2 years after the survey. These movements refer to true lateral movements and not promotions. A 2-year lag was selected to allow sufficient time for enough managers to move, but to be soon enough that preferences and reasons would likely not change. Locations were coded 1 for the location to which the manager moved 2 years later and 0 for the locations to which the manager did not move 2 years later.

Lateral job assignment reasons were developed from the pilot studies. Reasons were coded 1 if a manager selected it as a reason for the preference for a location and 0 if they did not. Reasons were binary coded, but not dummy coded against a referent category because participants were presented with all reasons and the inference is between selecting a reason and not selecting a reason. This method of measurement is in line with previous scholarship assessing lateral assignments (Noe & Barber, 1993) as well as other career switches such as turnover (Maertz & Kmitta, 2012). *Career development reasons* included bonus potential, location size (large, medium, small), location hours (24-h, non-24-h), nontraditional location (e.g., limited services

provided, unusual location), increased chances of promotion, opportunity to learn, low profitability, declining market, high theft, and high turnover. *Health and well-being reasons* included commuting, little required overtime (reverse prediction), low stress (reverse prediction), morale problems, and lack of teamwork. *Social information reasons* included location customers, urban/suburban locations, and other managers and hourly employees at the location. Although some reasons appear positive and others negative, they were worded as they emerged from the pilot studies to be understandable to participants, and their direction will be considered in the hypothesis tests. Specific features about the customers, location, and other workers of potential assignments were not germane to the current study. Instead, what was pertinent was whether managers considered social information reasons as attributes when developing their preference.

Gender was coded a 1 = female and 0 = male. Race was dummy coded (1 = Black, 0 = Not Black for "Black" variable, 1 = Hispanic, 0 = Not Hispanic for "Hispanic" variable, and 1 = White, 0 = Not White for "White" variable). The organization provided the racioethnic makeup of the community (*community racioethnicity*) of each location. This information was from census data and used for product planning purposes. We created three variables based on the racial demography of the location area. *Predominantly White locations* were communities with a White majority (generally more than 80%). *Predominantly Black locations* were communities with a large percentage of Blacks (generally more than 40%). *Predominantly Hispanic locations* were communities with a large percentage of Hispanics (generally more than 40%). These definitions were based on the company's classifications. The sample included 22.04% White, 10.91% Black, and 12.51% Hispanic communities. The remaining 54.54% of communities were composed of a balanced mix of racioethnicities and were not included in the analysis of Research Question 2. Each of these variables was dummy-coded as 1 if the location was predominantly that race and 0 if it was not. *Tenure* was measured in years and used as a control. We did not control for regions because managers were asked to report preferences and reasons only for locations within their region. However, we tested it as a control and the results did not change. We also controlled for gender and race when they were not of interest to a hypothesis test.

3.5 | Analytic strategy

The data were naturally nested within manager requiring hierarchical linear modeling (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). The manager and their characteristics—gender, race, and tenure—represented Level 2. Given each manager provided up to 40 ratings, job assignment location represented Level 1 and location preferences, reasons for those preferences, and actual movement also represented Level 1. Using MPlus (version 8), we tested Hypotheses 1 and 3 using two-level models with random intercepts at Level 2 for preference and actual movement. Employing a random intercepts model is appropriate because it allows for the intercept to vary to account for differences across managers (Level 2) when estimating the direct effect of reasons (Level 1)

on preferences (Level 1). We modeled preferences by managerial level in separate models, though we present them in the same tables to save space. Actual movement for location managers was run in separate models. We tested Hypothesis 2 using relative importance analysis to assess the relative impact of each predictor (reasons) on the criterion (preferences) (Tonidandel & LeBreton, 2015). We also used chi-square difference tables as another test of Hypothesis 2. Data were also nested within managers' current locations, however, only up to two managers per location were randomly surveyed, so there were not enough data points per location to sufficiently test a three-level model. We did not control for current location because the commute variable acted as a proxy. When controlling for current location, results did not change except for those regarding commute, which then became nonsignificant.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Descriptive statistics

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among study variables. The mean *preference for lateral job assignment* across all managers and all locations is 2.03 (SD = 1.20) out of 5, suggesting most managers do not prefer other assignments. The distribution of this variable is: 48.87% = "not preferred," 16.12% = "less preferred," 22.14% = "neutral," 8.63% = "preferred," and 4.23% = "most preferred." Seventy-one percent of managers rated some locations as 1 and some as 5, and 92% of managers rated some locations as 1, 2, 4, or 5, suggesting they differentiated well among locations. Many of the reasons show a low frequency of usage, ranging from 0.1% to 6.7%. However, the standard deviations are large compared to means, suggesting some reasons are used with much greater frequency. The most frequently used reason is commute, which was used more than 50% of the time.

4.2 | Preliminary analyses

The intercorrelations afford four observations. First, reasons are low to moderately correlated, which should reduce the risk of multicollinearity. Second, correlations between predictors and criteria provide preliminary support for our hypotheses. For example, commute (health and well-being) was negatively related to preferences ($r = -0.49$, $p < 0.01$), opportunity to learn (career development) was positively related with preferences ($r = 0.20$, $p < 0.01$), and suburban location (social information) was positively related to preferences ($r = 0.09$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting support for Hypothesis 1. Third, correlations illustrate differences in gender and race, suggesting potential support for the moderation Hypotheses 3. Finally, the correlation between preference for a lateral job assignment and actual movement is significant ($r = 0.06$, $p < 0.01$). The size of this correlation is reduced by range restriction in movements, and illustrates that actual movement is influenced by factors other than preferences (e.g., openings).

TABLE 1 Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Level 2 variables																			
1. Gender (0 = male, 1 = female)	0.34	0.47																	
2. Tenure	11.43	7.01	-0.11**																
3. White	0.60	0.49	-0.09**	0.02*															
4. Black	0.16	0.37	0.10**	-0.07**	-0.54**														
5. Hispanic	0.24	0.42	0.02*	0.05**	-0.68**	-0.25**													
6. Management trainee	0.19	0.39	0.12**	-0.31**	-0.17**	0.03*	0.16**												
7. Assistant manager	0.12	0.33	0.03**	-0.14**	-0.03*	0.06**	-0.02	-0.18**											
8. Location manager	0.68	0.46	-0.12**	0.36**	0.16**	-0.07**	-0.13**	-0.72**	-0.55**										
Level 1 variables																			
9. White location	0.19	0.39	-0.01**	-0.04**	0.10**	0.03**	-0.14**	-0.02**	-0.02**	0.03**									
10. Black location	0.09	0.28	-0.01	0.03**	0.03**	0.09**	-0.12**	-0.04**	-0.01	0.04**	-0.15**								
11. Hispanic location	0.12	0.33	0.00	0.02*	-0.12**	-0.08**	0.21**	0.06**	-0.01	-0.05**	-0.18**	-0.11**							
12. Bonus potential	0.07	0.25	-0.07**	0.07**	0.05**	-0.02*	-0.03**	-0.13**	-0.06**	0.15**	0.03**	-0.02*	-0.02**						
13. Large location	0.02	0.13	-0.01	0.02*	-0.05**	0.03**	0.03**	-0.03**	-0.02**	0.03**	0.00	-0.02*	0.00	-0.04**					
14. Medium location	0.02	0.13	-0.01*	0.02*	-0.05**	0.02**	0.04**	-0.03**	-0.01	0.03**	-0.01	0.00	0.01	-0.03**	-0.02**				
15. Small location	0.03	0.17	-0.02**	0.05**	-0.02**	0.01	0.02*	-0.06**	-0.03**	0.07**	-0.01	0.00	0.01	-0.05**	-0.02*	-0.02**			
16. 24-H location	0.02	0.14	0.01	0.00	-0.02*	0.00	0.04**	-0.01	-0.01	0.02*	-0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.04**	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.03**		
17. Non-24-h location	0.02	0.15	0.00	0.03**	-0.04**	0.02*	0.03**	-0.01	-0.04**	0.03**	0.00	0.00	0.02**	-0.04**	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.02**	
	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18. Nontraditional location	0.01	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.02**	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02*	-0.02*	0.03**	-0.04**	-0.03**	-0.03**	-0.02**	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02**	-0.01*	-0.01*
19. Chance of promotion	0.01	0.11	-0.01*	-0.03**	-0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.08**	-0.06**	-0.01**	-0.01	0.00	-0.03**	-0.01	-0.01**	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.02**
20. Opportunity to learn	0.02	0.13	0.01**	-0.06**	-0.04**	-0.0	0.05**	0.02**	0.04**	-0.05**	0.00	-0.01*	0.00	-0.04**	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.02**
21. Low profitability	0.03	0.16	-0.04**	0.05**	0.00	-0.03**	0.02*	-0.07**	-0.04**	0.09**	-0.02**	0.00	0.01	-0.04**	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.03**	-0.02**	-0.03**

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
22. Declining market	0.01	0.07	−0.01*	0.03**	0.00	0.00	0.00	−0.03**	−0.02**	0.04**	−0.02**	0.01	0.00	−0.02**	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01*
23. High theft	0.02	0.14	0.00	0.04**	0.00	−0.01	0.01	−0.03**	−0.01	0.03**	−0.07**	0.14**	0.06**	−0.04**	−0.02**	−0.02**	−0.03**	−0.02**	−0.02**
24. High turnover	0.00	0.04	0.01	0.01	−0.01	0.01	0.00	−0.01	0.01	0.00	−0.01	0.02**	0.01	−0.01	0.00	0.00	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01
25. Commute	0.53	0.50	0.01	−0.07**	0.09**	−0.03**	−0.07**	0.10**	0.01*	−0.09**	0.05**	−0.03**	−0.03**	−0.28**	−0.14**	−0.14**	−0.18**	−0.15**	−0.16**
26. Little overtime	0.00	0.06	0.01	−0.01	0.00	0.01	−0.01	−0.01*	−0.02**	0.02**	0.00	−0.01*	−0.01	−0.02**	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01
27. Low stress	0.00	0.06	−0.01*	−0.01*	0.00	0.00	−0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02**	−0.01	−0.01	−0.02**	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01
28. Morale problems	0.00	0.03	0.00	−0.01*	−0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	−0.01*	0.02**	−0.01	−0.01	0.00	0.00	−0.01	−0.00	0.00
29. Lack of teamwork	0.00	0.03	0.01**	−0.01	−0.02**	0.00	0.02**	0.01	0.00	0.00	−0.01	0.01	0.00	−0.01	0.00	0.00	−0.01	0.00	0.00
30. Location customers	0.02	0.16	0.00	−0.01	−0.02**	−0.01	0.03**	−0.02**	0.00	0.03**	−0.02**	0.00	0.04**	−0.04**	−0.02**	−0.02**	−0.03**	−0.02**	−0.02**
31. Urban location	0.02	0.15	0.00	0.00	−0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	−0.02**	0.02**	−0.04**	0.11**	0.01*	−0.04**	−0.02**	−0.02**	−0.03**	−0.02**	−0.02**
32. Suburban location	0.01	0.09	−0.01	0.01*	0.00	0.01*	0.01	−0.02**	0.01	0.01	0.07**	−0.02**	−0.02**	−0.03**	−0.01*	−0.01*	−0.02**	−0.01*	−0.01*
33. Manager of location	0.01	0.12	−0.01	−0.04**	−0.01*	−0.01	0.02**	0.07**	0.11**	−0.14**	0.00	−0.02**	0.01*	−0.03**	−0.02**	−0.02**	−0.02**	−0.02**	−0.02**
34. Mgmt trainee and asst. mgr.	0.00	0.03	0.01	−0.02**	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.03**	0.00	−0.02**	0.00	−0.01	0.00	−0.01	0.00	0.00	−0.01	0.00	−0.01
35. Hourly employees	0.00	0.05	0.00	−0.01*	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	−0.01	0.00	−0.01	0.00	−0.01*	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01
36. Preference for job assignment	2.03	1.20	−0.02**	−0.05**	−0.05**	0.00	0.05*	−0.05*	0.05**	0.00	0.05**	−0.08**	−0.01	0.23**	0.18**	0.11**	−0.03*	0.13**	0.00
37. Actual job movement	0.01	0.09	0.01	−0.02**	−0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.03**	−0.031*	0.01	−0.00	0.00	0.02**	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	−0.01

	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
19. Chance of promotion	−0.01																		
20. Opportunity to learn	−0.01*	−0.01**																	
21. Low profitability	−0.01*	−0.02**	−0.02**																
22. Declining market	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01*															
23. High theft	−0.01*	−0.02**	−0.02**	−0.02**	−0.01*														
24. High turnover	0.00	0.00	0.00	−0.01	0.00	−0.01													
25. Commute	−0.09**	−0.11**	−0.14**	−0.17**	−0.08**	−0.15**	−0.04**												
26. Little overtime	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	0.00	−0.01	0.00	−0.06**											0.00
27. Low stress	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01*	0.00	−0.01	0.00	−0.07**	0.00										

TABLE 1 (Continued)

	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
28. Morale problems	0.00	0.00	0.00	−0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	−0.03**	0.00	0.00									
29. Lack of teamwork	0.00	0.00	0.00	−0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	−0.03**	0.00	0.00	0.00								
30. Location customers	−0.01	−0.02**	−0.02**	−0.03**	−0.01	−0.02*	−0.01	−0.17**	−0.01	−0.01	0.00	0.00							
31. Urban location	−0.01*	−0.02**	−0.02**	−0.03**	−0.01	−0.02*	−0.01	−0.16**	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	0.00	−0.02**						
32. Suburban location	−0.01	−0.01*	−0.01*	−0.02**	−0.01	−0.01*	0.00	−0.10**	−0.01	−0.01	0.00	0.00	−0.02**	−0.01*					
33. Manager of location	−0.01*	−0.01*	−0.02**	−0.02**	−0.01	−0.02*	0.00	−0.13**	−0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	−0.02**	−0.02**	−0.01				
34. Mgmt trainee and asst. mgr.	0.00	0.00	0.00	−0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	−0.04**	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	−0.01	−0.02**	0.00	0.00			
35. Hourly employees	0.00	0.00	−0.01	−0.01	0.00	−0.01	0.00	−0.05**	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	−0.01	−0.01	0.00	−0.01	−0.01		
36. Preference for job assignment	−0.01	0.15**	0.16**	−0.04**	−0.01	−0.05**	−0.01	−0.49**	0.07**	0.08**	0.00	−0.01	0.09**	0.02**	0.09**	0.12**	0.01*	0.04**	
37. Actual job movement	0.00	0.01	0.02**	−0.01	0.00	0.01*	0.00	−0.04**	0.03**	0.01	0.00	0.01*	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	−0.01	0.00	0.00	0.06**

Note: Sample sizes range from 22,967 to 49,240.

** $p < 0.01$;

* $p < 0.05$.

Restriction in the movement variable limits analyses of actual movement. When considered as a proportion of all possible movements to all locations ($N = 23{,}085$), the number who moved and rated the location to which they moved ($N = 217$) represents 0.94% of the cases, which will impact the regressions.

We conducted two preliminary analyses to examine the relationship between reasons managers reported and actual movement before we used regression to predict preferences and movement. First, we found that managers reported significantly higher preference ratings for the location to which they moved compared to the locations to which they did not move ($M = 2.74$ vs. 2.15, and $SD = 1.28$ vs. 1.22, respectively, $t[10{,}638] = 7.01$, $d = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests a much stronger relationship between preference and actual movement 2 years later than the correlation of 0.06 because correlations are severely suppressed when marginal frequencies are so low. Second, we evaluated differences in frequencies of reasons reported among managers who moved. Managers reported career development reasons more frequently for locations they moved to (53.71% vs. 37.21%, respectively), and reported health and well-being reasons more frequently for locations they *did not* move to (54.82% vs. 36.00% respectively; $\chi^2[1, N = 9402] = 24.784$, $p < 0.01$). This illustrates an overall relationship between reasons and actual movement, and also provided initial support for Hypotheses 1a and 1b.

4.3 | Hypothesis and research question testing

Because our data set includes managers at three levels—management trainees, assistant managers, and location managers—we tested all hypotheses at each managerial level to offer greater precision in our findings. Hypothesis 1a predicted that career development reasons would be positively related to preference for, and actual movement to, a lateral job assignment. This hypothesis was largely supported. As shown in Table 2, the following reasons were positive and significant for managers at all three levels: Bonus potential, large location, medium location, 24-h location, increased chances of promotion, and opportunity to learn. The negative and significant coefficients for high theft are not supportive of our hypothesis. We theorized that these reasons are indirectly related to career development as managers will be responsible for turning the locations around and will gain important career-related skills doing so. Despite the opportunity to develop, these factors are not positively related to preference. Notably, whereas management trainees and assistant managers preferred small locations ($\beta = 0.04$, $p < 0.01$, $\beta = 0.05$, $p < 0.01$), location managers did not ($\beta = -0.03$, $p < 0.01$). This was likely because only location managers received bonuses and bonuses were based in part on location size. In all, career development reasons explained 13% of variance in assignment preference for management trainees, 20% for assistant managers, and 23% for location managers. Table 2 shows the odds ratios of actual movement for location managers (odds ratio > 1 means an event is more likely to occur and an odds ratio < 1 means an event is less likely to occur). Bonus potential and medium location supported the hypothesis such that use of these reasons were

associated with a greater chance of actually moving to those locations. Practically speaking, this means that locations for which managers cited these reasons are between 133 and 154 percent more likely to be moved to than locations for which managers did not use these reasons. While small location negatively related to preference, the odds ratio of small location (odds ratio = 2.33, $p < 0.01$) suggests that locations for which managers cited small location as a reason were more likely to be moved to than locations for which managers did not cite small location. This is illustrative of how, due to limited openings, managers may be moved to locations they would have otherwise preferred less.

Hypothesis 1b predicted health and well-being reasons would be negatively related to preference and actual movement. This hypothesis was largely supported. As shown in Table 3, for all three managerial levels, commute and morale problems were negatively and significantly related to preferences. Consistent with the notion that if a location threatens well-being, then managers will be *less likely* to prefer that location, and if a location *does not* threaten well-being, then managers will be *more likely* to prefer that location, the positive coefficients for little overtime for all managers ($\beta = 0.04$, $p < .01$; $\beta = 0.04$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.05$, $p < 0.01$), as well as the positive coefficient for management trainees and location managers for low stress ($\beta = 0.05$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.04$, $p < 0.01$) are supportive of the hypothesis. Altogether, health and well-being reasons explained 34% of the variance in preferences for management trainees, 45% for assistant managers, and 29% for location managers. We also predicted that

TABLE 2 Multilevel models of career development reasons predicting lateral job assignment preference and actual movement using multivariate regression

Variables	Management trainees Preference[a]			Assistant managers Preference[b]			Location managers Preference[c]			Actual movement[d]
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	Log odds
Level-2										
Intercept	1.91**	0.09	3.45**	2.01**	0.13	3.69**	1.92**	0.05	3.73**	−4.89**
Tenure	−0.02**	0.01	−0.15**	0.01	0.01	0.10	−0.01**	0.00	−0.15**	−0.02*
Gender	0.00	0.08	0.00	−0.18	0.10	−0.16	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.16
Black	0.07	0.11	0.05	0.01	0.13	0.01	0.02	0.06	0.01	0.27
Hispanic	0.13	0.09	0.12	0.09	0.11	0.07	0.15**	0.05	0.12**	0.24
Level 1										
Career development reasons										**Odds ratio**
Bonus potential	1.83**	0.45	0.06**	1.29**	0.17	0.21**	1.30**	0.05	0.34**	2.42**
Large location	1.26**	0.19	0.13**	1.32**	0.15	0.14**	1.60**	0.07	0.21**	1.92
Medium location	1.51**	0.15	0.13**	1.18**	0.16	0.14**	1.01**	0.08	0.13**	2.54*
Small location	0.49**	0.15	0.04**	0.39**	0.13	0.05**	−0.17**	0.05	−0.03**	2.33**
24-location	0.61*	0.24	0.08*	1.13**	0.16	0.13**	1.31**	0.07	0.18**	1.79
Non-24-h location	0.81**	0.28	0.11**	0.82**	0.23	0.07**	0.18*	0.07	0.03*	0.32
Nontraditional location (specialized services)	−0.11	0.18	−0.01	0.13	0.36	0.01	0.11	0.15	0.01	1.73
Increased chances of promotion	1.51**	0.25	0.16**	1.61**	0.14	0.26**	1.98**	0.11	0.15**	2.63
Opportunity to learn	1.56**	0.12	0.22**	1.50**	0.10	0.22**	1.35**	0.09	0.15**	1.70
Low profitability	−0.08	0.28	0.00	0.27	0.18	0.02	−0.24**	0.05	−0.04**	1.00
Declining market	−0.43	0.22	−0.01	0.34	0.32	0.01	−0.12	0.07	−0.01	2.53
High theft	−0.60**	0.11	−0.06**	−0.30*	0.15	−0.04*	−0.35**	0.04	−0.05**	3.01**
High turnover	0.37	0.58	0.01	−0.82**	0.07	−0.04**	0.06	0.17	0.00	−
Variance in intercept	0.30**	0.04		0.29**	0.05		0.26**	0.02		
Error variance	1.04**	0.04		0.93**	0.04		0.89**	0.02		
Level 1 R^2	0.13**	0.02		0.20**	0.02		0.23**	0.01		
Level 2 R^2	0.03	0.02		0.04	0.04		0.03*	0.01		

Note: B = unstandardized coefficient; β = standardized coefficient. Gender is 1 = female, 0 = male. Black is 1 = Black, 0 = all else. Hispanic is 1 = Hispanic, 0 = all else. Race referent is White.

*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$.

[a]Level 2 N = 221, Level 1 N = 6136.

[b]Level 2 N = 137, Level 1 N = 3834.

[c]Level 2 N = 737, Level 1 N = 23,141.

[d]Level 2 N = 577, Level 1 N = 18,850.

health and well-being reasons would negatively relate to actual movement. This was partially supported. Locations for which managers cited commute as a reason were 57% less likely to be moved to than locations for which managers did not cite commute (odds ratio = 0.43, $p < 0.01$). Similar to predicting job assignment preference, the coefficient for little overtime (odds ratio = 4.85, $p < 0.01$) supports the hypothesis. The remaining reasons were not statistically significant. In sum, Hypothesis 1b is largely supported for preferences and partially supported for movement.

Hypothesis 1c predicted that social information reasons would be positively related to preference and actual movement. This hypothesis was partially supported. As shown in Table 4, for managers at all levels, location customers, suburban locations, and manager of the location were positively and significantly related to preferences. Moreover, all social information reasons mattered to management trainees. In all, social information reasons explained 7% of the variance for management trainees, 5% for assistant managers, and 2% for location managers. We also predicted social information reasons would positively relate to actual movement for location managers. None of the relationships were statistically significant. In sum, Hypothesis 1c is partially supported for preference and unsupported for actual movement.

In Hypothesis 2a, we predicted health and well-being reasons would relate more strongly to lateral job assignment preference than career development reasons. We tested this using relative importance analysis and found support across managerial levels. As shown in Table 5, health and well-being reasons explained more variance in preference than career development for management trainees (24.42% vs. 8.44%, respectively) and assistant managers (30.97% vs. 9.69%), but the proportion of variance explained by both categories was more similar for location managers (18.64% vs. 16.26%) suggesting that career development reasons are more important for location managers than lower-level managers. This is probably because those who are promoted to location managers are those who seek career development opportunities in order to grow their careers, which is why they were promoted to location manager.

In Hypothesis 2b, we predicted that career development reasons would more strongly relate to lateral job assignment preference than social information reasons. We also tested this using relative importance analysis and we found that this was supported across managerial levels (Table 6). Notably, the discrepancy between career development (22.28%) and social information reasons (3.15%) was much larger for location managers than other managers, again suggesting that location managers are more influenced by perceptions

TABLE 3 Multilevel models of health and well-being reasons predicting job assignment preference and actual movement using multivariate regression

Variables	Management trainees Preference[a]			Assistant managers Preference[b]			Location managers Preference[c]			Actual movement[d]
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	Log odds
Level 2										
Intercept	2.93**	0.08	6.07**	3.07**	0.10	6.86**	2.78**	0.05	5.75	−4.27**
Tenure	−0.02**	0.01	−0.18**	0.00	0.01	−0.05	−0.02**	0.00	−0.22**	−0.02*
Gender	−0.10	0.07	−0.11	−0.14	0.09	−0.15	−0.03	0.04	−0.03	0.13
Black	−0.09	0.11	−0.07	0.03	0.11	0.03	−0.05	0.06	−0.04	0.24
Hispanic	0.02	0.07	0.02	0.01	0.09	0.01	0.09	0.05	0.07	0.17
Level 1										
Health and well-being reasons										**Odds ratio**
Commute	−1.34**	0.06	−0.57**	−1.50**	0.06	−0.67**	−1.16**	0.03	−0.53**	0.43**
Little overtime	0.88*	0.35	0.04*	1.28**	0.49	0.04**	0.82**	0.13	0.05**	4.85**
Low stress	0.81**	0.20	0.05**	0.37	0.23	0.03	0.59**	0.12	0.04**	1.15
Morale problems	−1.13**	0.27	−0.04**	−1.13**	0.23	−0.03**	−0.97**	0.17	−0.03**	−
Lack of teamwork	−0.98**	0.34	−0.03**	−1.17	0.87	−0.03	−0.88**	0.15	−0.03**	4.89
Variance in intercept	0.22**	0.03		0.20**	0.04		0.22**	0.01		
Error variance	0.85**	0.04		0.70**	0.04		0.87**	0.02		
Within-level R^2	0.34**	0.03		0.45**	0.03		0.29**	0.01		
Between-level R^2	0.05	0.03		0.03	0.03		0.05**	0.02		

Note: B = unstandardized coefficient; β = standardized coefficient. Gender is 1 = female, 0 = male. Black is 1 = Black, 0 = all else. Hispanic is 1 = Hispanic, 0 = all else. Race referent is White.
*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$.
[a]Level 2 N = 1 Level 1 N = 6136.
[b]Level 2 N = 137, Level 1 N = 3834.
[c]Level 2 N = 737, Level 1 N = 23,141.
[d]Level 2 N = 577, Level 1 N = 18,850.

of career opportunities than management trainees (13.10% vs. 8.98%) and assistant managers (16.65% vs. 5.56%).

We also index the relative importance of reasons by their frequency of use. As a secondary test of Hypotheses 2a and 2b, we analyzed whether when managers used two categories to formulate their preference for a lateral job assignment, they were more likely to use health and well-being reasons as a primary reason than career development reasons, and they were more likely to use career development reasons as the primary reason than social information reasons. We conducted a chi-square test to analyze this. This hypothesis is supported across all three managerial levels (Table 7), $\chi^2(4, N = 36,636) = 6770.22$, $p < 0.01$: for management trainees, $\chi^2(4, N = 23,901) = 2046.68$, $p < 0.01$ for assistant managers, and $\chi^2(4, N = 137,307) = 1,622,295.03$, $p < 0.01$ for location managers. For management trainees, 38.02% of the primary reasons reported were health and well-being, 7.35% were career development, and 5.07% were social. For assistant managers, 32.26% of the primary reasons were health and well-being, 10.96% were career development, and 9.36% were social. Finally, for location managers, 30.22% of the primary reasons were health and well-being reasons, 18.37% were career development reasons, and 3.91% were social. Together, Hypotheses 2a and 2b are supported.

Finally, we posed two research questions to understand whether and how demographic variables effect lateral assignment preferences. In Research Question 1, we asked whether gender moderates the relationship between health and well-being reasons and preference and actual movement. Two interactions were significant across managerial levels (Table 8; Figure 2). Gender moderated the relationship between morale problems and preferences ($\beta = 0.04$, $p < 0.01$) such that male management trainees who indicated morale problems preferred that location less than female management trainees. Gender also moderated the relationship between little overtime and preferences ($\beta = -0.02$, $p < 0.01$) such that male location managers who indicated little overtime preferred that location more than female location managers.

In Research Question 2, we asked whether and how managerial race would moderate the relationship between community racioethnicity and lateral job assignment preference and actual

TABLE 4 Multilevel models of social information reasons predicting job assignment preference and actual movement using multivariate regression

Variables	Management trainees Preference[a]			Assistant managers Preference[b]			Location managers Preference[c]			Actual movement[d]
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	Log odds
Level 2										
Intercept	1.90**	0.08	3.42**	2.14**	0.12	3.82**	2.13**	0.05	3.69**	−4.66**
Tenure	−0.01*	0.01	−0.12*	0.01	0.01	0.08	−0.01**	0.00	−0.16**	−0.02
Gender	−0.02	0.08	−0.02	−0.25*	0.11	−0.22*	−0.03	0.05	−0.02	0.14
Black	0.07	0.12	0.05	0.12	0.14	0.09	0.06	0.07	0.04	0.30
Hispanic	0.20*	0.09	0.17*	0.11	0.12	0.08	0.21**	0.06	0.15**	0.27
Level 1										
Social information reasons										**Odds ratio**
Location customers	0.53**	0.14	0.07**	0.63**	0.14	0.10**	0.57**	0.09	0.09**	1.78
Urban location	0.57*	0.22	0.08*	0.31	0.19	0.04	−0.14	0.08	−0.02	0.90
Suburban location	1.20**	0.23	0.08**	0.89*	0.40	0.09*	1.05**	0.11	0.09**	–
Manager of the location	1.27**	0.14	0.21**	0.81**	0.14	0.17**	1.15**	0.18	0.07**	–
Management trainees and assistant managers of the location	0.64*	0.30	0.04*	−0.68**	0.18	−0.02**	0.13	0.33	0.00	–
Hourly employees of the location	1.54**	0.31	0.08**	0.51	0.37	0.03	0.93**	0.21	0.04**	–
Variance in intercept	0.30**	0.03		0.29**	0.04		0.32**	0.02		
Error variance	1.10**	0.04		1.06**	0.05		1.09**	0.02		
Within-level R^2	0.07**	0.01		0.05**	0.01		0.02**	0.00		
Between-level R^2	0.04	0.03		0.07	0.05		0.04**	0.02		

Note: B = unstandardized coefficient; β = standardized coefficient. Gender is 1 = female, 0 = male. Black is 1 = Black, 0 = all else. Hispanic is 1 = Hispanic, 0 = all else. Race referent is White.
*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$.
[a]Level 2 N = 221, Level 1 N = 6136.
[b]Level 2 N = 137, Level 1 N = 3834.
[c]Level 2 N = 737, Level 1 N = 23,141.
[d]Level 2 N = 577, Level 1 N = 18,850.

movement. We tested this in three multilevel regression analyses with three different community racioethnicities by managerial level (Table 9; Figures 3–5) and found a few significant differences. Black management trainees preferred Predominantly Black Communities more than White and Hispanic management trainees. There were no differences among management trainees for Predominantly Hispanic Communities; however, White management trainees preferred Predominantly White Communities more than Black management trainees, but not Hispanic management trainees. The only difference in preference for assistant managers was for Hispanic communities such that Hispanic assistant managers preferred Predominantly Hispanic Communities more than White assistant managers, but not Black assistant managers. Finally, Black location managers preferred

Predominantly Black Communities more than White and Hispanic location managers. Hispanic location managers preferred Predominantly Hispanic Communities more than White location managers, but not Black location managers. White location managers preferred Predominantly White locations more than Black location managers. Two interactions were significant regarding actual movement of location managers. Black location managers were more likely to move to Predominantly Black Communities than White location managers (odds ratio $= 0.10$, $p < 0.01$), but not Hispanic location managers (odds ratio $= 0.13$, $p = 0.09$). Finally, White location managers were more likely to move to Predominantly White Communities than Black location managers (odds ratio $= 0.13$, $p < 0.01$), but not Hispanic location managers (odds ratio $= 0.47$, $p = 0.91$).

TABLE 5 Relative importance analysis comparing health and well-being and career development reasons by managerial level

	Management trainee[a] Raw relative weight	Assistant manager[b] Raw relative weight	Location manager[c] Raw relative weight
Tenure	0.33%	0.16%	0.58%
Gender	0.14%	0.27%	0.02%
Black	0.03%	0.04%	0.04%
Hispanic	0.18%	0.13%	0.20%
Total	0.68%	0.60%	0.84%
Career development reasons			
Bonus potential	0.20%	0.53%	4.59%
Large location	1.35%	0.97%	2.76%
Medium location	1.12%	0.78%	0.76%
Small location	0.11%	0.23%	1.02%
24-H location	0.24%	0.36%	1.72%
Non-24-h location	0.28%	0.18%	0.35%
Nontraditional location (specialized services)	0.19%	0.11%	0.12%
Increased chances of promotion	1.42%	3.01%	1.52%
Opportunity to learn	2.67%	2.55%	1.41%
Low profitability	0.03%	0.10%	1.09%
Declining market	0.06%	0.03%	0.12%
High theft	0.76%	0.64%	0.77%
High turnover	0.01%	0.20%	0.03%
Total	8.44%	9.69%	16.26%
Health and well-being reasons			
Commute	23.49%	30.28%	17.84%
Little overtime	0.28%	0.22%	0.38%
Low stress	0.56%	0.38%	0.36%
Morale problems	0.05%	0.07%	0.03%
Lack of teamwork	0.04%	0.02%	0.03%
Total	24.42%	30.97%	18.64%
R^2	33.54%	41.26%	35.74%

Note: Percentages are raw weights relative to total R^2. Gender is 1 = female, 0 = male. Black is 1 = Black, 0 = all else. Hispanic is 1 = Hispanic, 0 = all else. Race referent is White.

[a]Level 1 $N = 6136$.
[b]Level 1 $N = 3834$.
[c]Level 1 $N = 23,141$.

TABLE 6 Relative importance analysis comparing career development and social information reasons by managerial level

	Management trainee[a] Raw relative weight	Assistant manager[b] Raw relative weight	Location manager[c] Raw relative weight
Tenure	0.31%	0.22%	0.48%
Gender	0.03%	0.35%	0.01%
Black	0.01%	0.08%	0.01%
Hispanic	0.24%	0.14%	0.25%
Total	0.59%	0.79%	0.75%
Career development reasons			
Bonus potential	0.32%	1.25%	8.74%
Large location	2.30%	1.79%	4.27%
Medium location	1.92%	1.60%	1.50%
Small location	0.23%	0.10%	0.08%
24-H location	0.46%	0.84%	2.97%
Non-24-h location	0.56%	0.42%	0.02%
Nontraditional location (specialized services)	0.01%	0.00%	0.01%
Increased chances of promotion	2.49%	5.62%	2.18%
Opportunity to learn	4.66%	4.76%	2.28%
Low profitability	0.02%	0.09%	0.12%
Declining market	0.00%	0.08%	0.00%
High theft	0.12%	0.04%	0.11%
High turnover	0.01%	0.06%	0.00%
Total	13.10%	16.65%	22.28%
Social information reasons			
Location customers	0.84%	0.86%	1.20%
Urban location	0.62%	0.20%	0.11%
Suburban location	0.86%	0.92%	1.12%
Manager of the location	5.79%	3.51%	0.57%
Management trainees and assistant managers of the location	0.24%	0.03%	0.01%
Hourly employees of the location	0.63%	0.04%	0.14%
Total	8.98%	5.56%	3.15%
R^2	22.67%	23.00%	26.18%

Note: Percentages are raw weights relative to total R^2. Gender is 1 = female, 0 = male. Black is 1 = Black, 0 = all else. Hispanic is 1 = Hispanic, 0 = all else. Race referent is White.

[a]Level 1 $N = 6136$.
[b]Level 1 $N = 3834$.
[c]Level 1 $N = 3141$.

4.4 | Supplementary analyses

We ran several analyses to offer additional insight into assignment preferences. Tables for these analyses can be found in the Online Appendix. First, we analyzed all three categories of reasons together in a multilevel model (Table A1), as well as a relative importance analysis (Table A2). While most of the relationships found in our tests of Hypothesis 1 remain—where we tested each category of reasons independently—two trends changed. First, social information reasons are no longer as important to management trainees or assistant managers. Second, fewer reasons predict actual movement for location

managers, though directionality of the significant predictors is the same as the results for Hypotheses 1a and 1b such that bonus potential and little overtime attract location managers and commute repels them. The results from the relative importance analyses remain stable between our test comparing two categories in Hypothesis 2 and our supplemental analysis examining all three categories simultaneously.

Second, we explored whether there would be gender differences in how career development and social information reasons were used to generate lateral assignment preferences. For career development, one interaction was significant at each managerial level (Table A3, Figure A1). Women management trainees were more likely to indicate

TABLE 7 Contingency tables of the frequencies of reason use by reason category by managerial level

	Health and well-being	Career development	Social information	Total
Management trainees				
Used as primary	4643 (38.02%)	898 (7.35%)	619 (5.07%)	6160
Used as secondary	1485 (12.16%)	896 (7.34%)	710 (5.81%)	3091
Did not use at all	6084 (49.82%)	10,418 (85.31%)	10,883 (89.12%)	27,385
Total	12,212	12,212	12,212	36,636
Assistant managers				
Used as primary	2570 (32.26%)	873 (10.96%)	746 (9.36%)	4189
Used as secondary	877 (11.01%)	1008 (12.65%)	553 (6.94%)	2438
Did not use at all	4520 (56.73%)	6086 (76.39%)	6668 (83.70%)	17,256
Total	7967	7967	7967	23,901
Location managers				
Used as primary	13,833 (30.22%)	8407 (18.37%)	1788 (3.91%)	24,028
Used as secondary	3410 (7.45%)	8283 (8.10%)	2057 (4.49%)	13,750
Did not use at all	28,526 (62.33%)	29,079 (63.53%)	41,924 (91.60%)	99,529
Total	45,769	45,769	45,769	137,307

Note: Grand total is larger than previously reported total *N* because managers could rate location preference using up to two reasons.

TABLE 8 Multilevel model of the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between health and well-being reasons and job assignment preference and actual movement using multivariate regression

	Management trainees Preference[a]			Assistant managers Preference[b]			Location managers Preference[c]			Actual movement[d]
Variables	**B**	**SE**	**β**	**B**	**SE**	**β**	**B**	**SE**	**β**	**Log odds**
Intercept	2.99**	0.09	6.07**	3.07**	0.10	6.82**	2.78**	0.05	5.73**	−4.23**
Tenure	−0.02**	0.01	−0.18**	0.00	0.01	−0.05	−0.02**	0.00	−0.22**	−0.02*
Gender	−0.23*	0.11	−0.23*	−0.15	0.10	0.16	−0.01	0.06	−0.01	0.03
Black	−0.08	0.11	−0.07	0.03	0.11	0.03	−0.05	0.06	−0.04	0.23
Hispanic	0.01	0.07	0.01	0.01	0.09	0.01	0.09	0.05	0.07	0.16
Health and well-being reasons										**Odds ratio**
Commute	−1.43**	0.08	−0.61**	−1.49**	0.08	−0.66**	−1.15**	0.03	−0.52**	0.39**
Little overtime	0.44	0.31	0.02	1.29**	0.49	0.04**	1.08**	0.15	0.06**	2.54
Low stress	0.87**	0.24	0.05**	0.29	0.26	0.02	0.55**	0.14	0.03**	–
Morale problems	−1.98**	0.17	−0.07**	–	–	–	−0.96**	0.19	−0.03**	–
Lack of teamwork	−1.67**	0.37	−0.05**	–	–	–	−0.91**	0.18	−0.03**	–
Gender × commute	0.20	0.13	0.08	0.00	0.12	0.00	−0.04	0.06	−0.01	1.27
Gender × little overtime	0.66	0.57	0.02	–	–	–	−0.64**	0.24	−0.02**	2.82
Gender × low stress	−0.34	0.38	−0.01	0.38	0.42	0.01	0.15	0.26	0.01	–
Gender × morale problems	1.51**	0.30	0.04**	–	–	–	−0.05	0.38	0.00	–
Gender × lack of teamwork	1.00	0.56	0.03	–	–	–	0.07	0.32	0.00	–
Variance in intercept	0.22**	0.03		0.70**	0.04		0.22**	0.01		
Error variance	0.85**	0.04		0.20**	0.04		0.87**	0.02		
Within-level *R*²	0.34**	0.03		0.45**	0.03		0.29**	0.01		
Between-level *R*²	0.09	0.06		0.03	0.04		0.05**	0.02		

Note: B = unstandardized coefficient; β = standardized coefficient. Gender is 1 = female, 0 = male. Black is 1 = Black, 0 = all else. Hispanic is 1 = Hispanic, 0 = all else. Race referent is White.
*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.
[a]Level 2 N = 221, Level 1 N = 6136.
[b]Level 2 N = 137, Level 1 N = 3834.
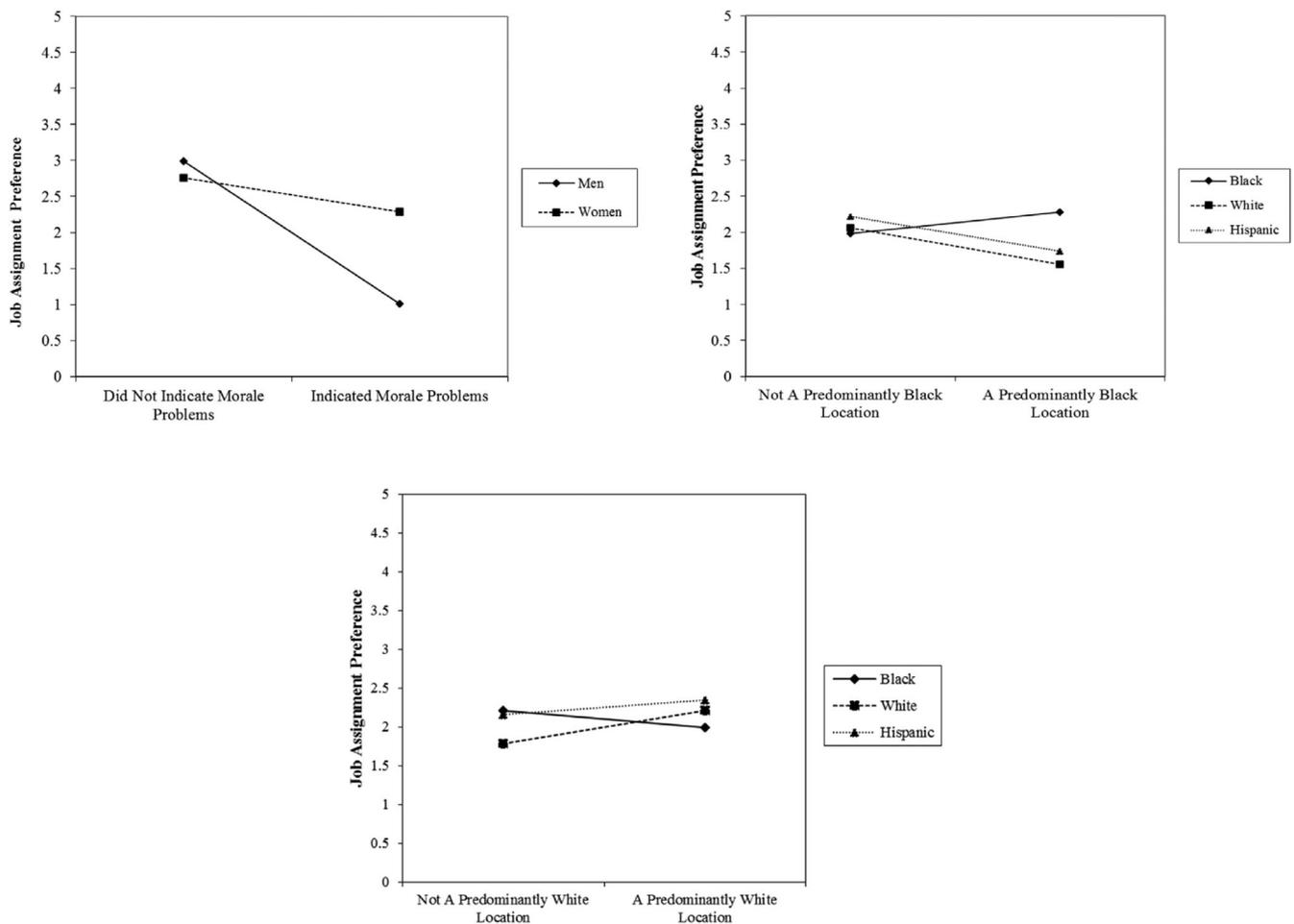[c]Level 2 N = 737, Level 1 N = 23,141.
[d]Level 2 N = 577, Level 1 N = 18,850.

FIGURE 2 Moderation effects on lateral job assignment preference for management trainees: Gender × morale problems, managerial race × predominantly black location, managerial race × predominantly white location

low profitability as a reason for preferring a location ($\beta = 0.02$, $p < 0.01$). Women assistant managers ($\beta = 0.05$, $p < 0.01$) and location managers ($\beta = 0.03$, $p < 0.01$) were more likely to indicate medium location as a reason for preferring a location. However, the nonsignificant interactions in this test may be the important finding. Women managers were generally no more or less likely to select different reasons for preferences, offering support for the notion that gender differences are weakening (Mathews & Hamilton, 2016). For social information reasons, only one interaction was significant: Gender moderated the relationship between urban location and preference for management trainees ($\beta = -0.09$, $p < 0.01$) such that women management trainees were less likely to prefer a location when they used urban location as a reason than men management trainees (Table A4, Figure A2). Women and men did not differ in their use of social information reasons to generate preferences among assistant managers or location managers.

5 | DISCUSSION

The predominant assumption in managerial lateral job assignments research is that if a job is offered, the manager will accept it (De Pater et al., 2009; Dragoni et al., 2009). Yet, rarely have scholars tested this assumption. Using human capital theory, we evaluated the reasons managers reported for their preferences for lateral assignments. We theorize reasons can be classified into three categories—career development, health and well-being, and social information—and that these reasons either repel managers from, or attract managers to, assignments. Each category explained meaningful variance in preferences. Moreover, health and well-being reasons shared a stronger relationship with preference than career development reasons, which shared a stronger relationship than social information reasons, and managers formulated preferences based on a sequencing of these categories of reasons. We found differences in the importance of each of the categories by managerial level. For example, health and well-being reasons were more important than career development reasons for management trainees and assistant managers than location managers, whose preferences were based more evenly on these reasons, possibly reflecting a more career orientation consistent with their greater career success. Further, social information reasons mattered more to trainees. In our exploratory analysis of whether preferences differed by gender or racioethnicity, we found women managers were not more likely than male managers to use health and well-being reasons.

TABLE 9 Multilevel models testing the moderating effect of manager race on the relationship between community racioethnicity and job assignment preference and actual movement using multivariate regression

Variables	Management trainees Preference[a]			Assistant managers Preference[b]			Location managers Preference[c]			Actual movement[d]
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	Log odds
Predominantly Black location										
Level 2										
Intercept	1.98**	0.15	3.19**	2.38**	0.18	3.78**	2.32**	0.09	3.67**	−5.33**
Tenure	−0.02*	0.01	−0.13*	0.00	0.01	0.01	−0.02**	0.00	−0.17**	−0.02
Gender	−0.03	0.10	−0.02	−0.25*	0.12	−0.19*	−0.01	0.06	−0.01	−0.06
White	0.08	0.14	0.06	−0.04	0.17	−0.04	−0.01	0.09	−0.01	0.95
Hispanic	0.24	0.14	0.19	0.04	0.20	0.03	0.15	0.10	0.09	1.29*
Level 1										Odds ratio
Predominantly Black location	0.30*	0.14	0.10*	−0.07	0.16	−0.03	−0.24**	0.08	−0.10**	4.26*
White × Black location	−0.80**	0.17	−0.19**	−0.26	0.20	−0.08	−0.37**	0.09	−0.14**	0.10**
Hispanic × Black location	−0.78**	0.27	−0.12**	−0.37	0.28	−0.03	−0.44*	0.17	−0.05*	0.13
Variance in intercept	0.37**	0.05		0.38**	0.05		0.39**	0.02		
Error variance	1.11**	0.06		0.95**	0.06		0.97**	0.02		
Within-level R^2	0.03**	0.01		0.01	0.01		0.06**	0.01		
Between-level R^2	0.04	0.03		0.04	0.04		0.03*	0.01		
Predominantly Hispanic location	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	Log odds
Level 2										
Intercept	2.22**	0.15	3.55**	2.05**	0.20	3.34**	2.36**	0.09	3.84**	−3.93**
Tenure	−0.02*	0.01	−0.16*	0.00	0.01	−0.01	−0.02**	0.00	−0.18**	−0.02
Gender	−0.03	0.10	−0.03	−0.21	0.12	−0.16	0.00	0.05	0.00	−0.03
White	−0.13	0.14	−0.10	0.27	0.17	0.22	−0.16	0.08	−0.13	−0.54
Black	−0.06	0.16	−0.04	0.26	0.21	0.18	−0.14	0.10	−0.08	−0.60
Level 1										Odds ratio
Predominantly Hispanic location	−0.01	0.14	−0.01	0.62**	0.13	0.29**	0.09	0.10	0.04	0.77
White × Hispanic location	−0.22	0.20	−0.07	−0.78**	0.21	−0.27**	−0.24*	0.11	−0.08*	0.60
Black × Hispanic location	−0.22	0.20	−0.04	−0.39	0.20	−0.08	−0.03	0.17	0.00	–
Variance in intercept	0.38**	0.05		0.35**	0.05		0.36**	0.02		
Error variance	1.13**	0.06		0.95**	0.06		1.02**	0.03		
Within-level R^2	0.01	0.01		0.05*	0.02		0.00	0.00		
Between-level R^2	0.03	0.03		0.05	0.05		0.04*	0.02		
Predominantly White location	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	Log odds
Level 2										
Intercept	1.78**	0.10	2.72**	2.09**	0.17	3.26**	1.82**	0.06	2.80**	−5.28**
Tenure	−0.02*	0.01	−0.14*	0.00	0.01	0.00	−0.01**	0.00	−0.14**	−0.02
Gender	−0.04	0.10	−0.03	−0.22	0.12	−0.17	0.00	0.05	0.00	−0.03
Black	0.43**	0.17	0.25**	0.29	0.18	0.19	0.27**	0.08	0.15**	1.10*
Hispanic	0.38**	0.12	0.28**	0.47**	0.16	0.30**	0.51**	0.07	0.32**	1.08**
Level 1										Odds ratio
Predominantly White location	0.43**	0.10	0.20**	0.33**	0.12	0.17**	0.58**	0.04	0.29**	2.80**
Black × White location	−0.65**	0.18	−0.18**	−0.38	0.20	−0.12	−0.37**	0.09	−0.09**	0.13**
Hispanic × White location	−0.24	0.19	−0.06	−0.76**	0.19	−0.18**	−0.41**	0.10	−0.08**	0.47
Variance in intercept	0.38**	0.05		0.36**	0.05		0.38**	0.02		
Error variance	1.11**	0.06		0.95**	0.06		0.97**	0.03		

(Continues)

TABLE 9   (Continued)

	Management trainees Preference[a]		Assistant managers Preference[b]		Location managers Preference[c]		Actual movement[d]
Within-level R^2	0.04[*]	0.02	0.04	0.02	0.07[**]	0.01	
Between-level R^2	0.10	0.05	0.13	0.07	0.12[**]	0.03	

Note: No Black location managers moved to predominantly Hispanic locations in our data set. Black managers are the referent for the predominantly Black location models, Hispanic managers are the referent for the predominantly Hispanic location models, and White managers are the referent for the predominantly White location models. B = unstandardized coefficient; β = standardized coefficient. Gender is 1 = female.
*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$.
[a]Level 2 N = 215, Level 1 N = 2852.
[b]Level 2 N = 134, Level 1 N = 1905.
[c]Level 2 N = 741, Level 1 N = 11,164.
[d]Level 2 N = 582, Level 1 N = 9338.
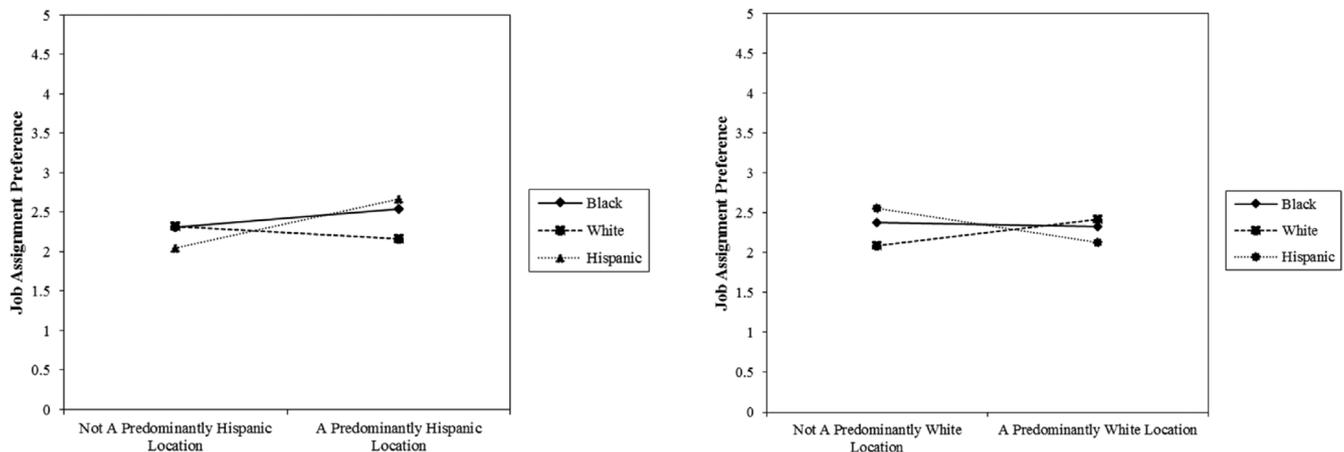
FIGURE 3   Moderation effect on lateral job assignment preference for assistant managers: Managerial race × predominantly Hispanic location

However, racioethnic similarity was related to preference and actual movement to locations.

5.1 | Theoretical implications

Considering lateral job assignment decisions from the perspective of incumbents rather than the organization has broad theoretical implications. First, this study extends the literature by positioning managerial preferences and reasons for those preferences as critical, but often overlooked, factors in career development and internal staffing scholarship. Research suggests staffing decisions are largely in the hands of senior management (De Pater et al., 2009), yet whether a manager is reassigned generally depends on whether or not the manager *accepts* the job. In this study, we show preferences are important to understanding whether managers will accept lateral assignments, and that the formulation of preferences is a nuanced, yet predictable, phenomenon. We highlight the importance of considering preferences in addition to actual movement, similar to research on turnover intentions (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Our findings provide an overarching framework for managerial lateral assignments that is likely generalizable to non-managers given the research supporting the developmental and

promotional benefits for managers and non-managers. It is likely that these findings are also generalizable to promotional decisions. Indeed, the literature on job rotations shows that the relationship between job rotations and promotions is meaningful (Campion et al., 1994, $r = 0.37$, $p < 0.05$, between job rotation and promotion rate; Kraimer et al., 2011, $r = 18$, $p < 0.05$, between participation in high-potential program and promotion rate). Theoretically, the factors that influence lateral assignment acceptance likely continue to play a role in promotional situations, but would be less important (share a weaker relationship) because promotions are accompanied by a pay increase and that would be more important than many of these factors tested in this research.

Second, we adapt human capital theory to generate a holistic framework of reasons for lateral assignment preferences. These reasons are categorized according to ways managers invest in their human capital development derived from human capital theory: career development (on-the-job training), health and well-being (emotional and/or physical health), and social information reasons (information regarding the social systems and social relationships). While parts of this framework have been tested previously, we test them in concert, which affords an assessment of how certain factors repel managers (health and well-being) from lateral job assignments, while others
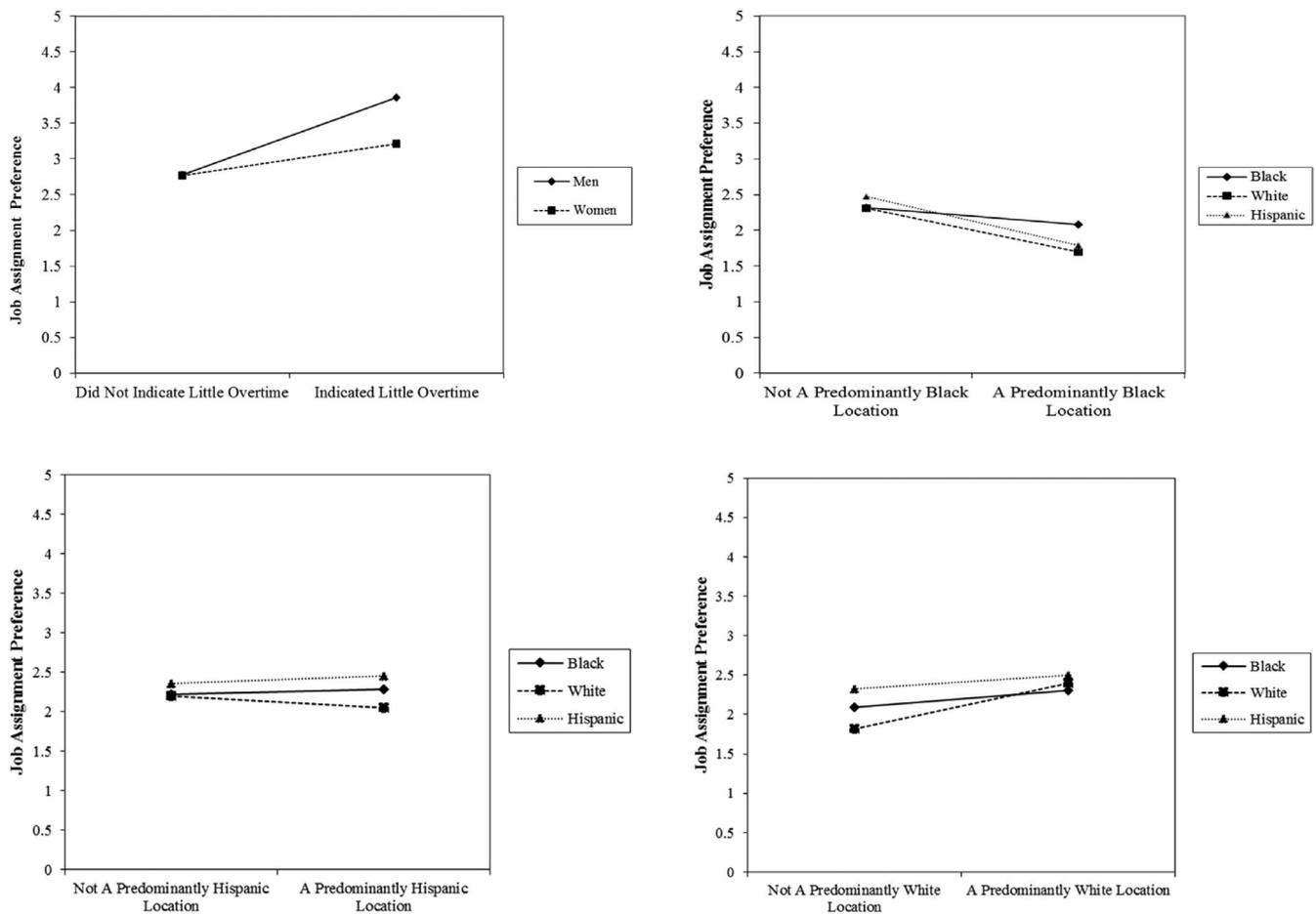
FIGURE 4 Moderation effects on lateral job assignment preference of location manager: Gender × little overtime, managerial race × predominantly black location, managerial race × predominantly Hispanic location, managerial race × predominantly white location

attract (career development and social information). Further, we demonstrate how these categories are arranged in terms of their relative importance, with those eliciting threats to reduce health and well-being as more important than those that may have greater career benefits. These findings are in line with human capital theory such that managers will be more influenced by features that threaten productivity losses than gains (Becker, 1993).

Finally, we found only a few differences in assignment preferences by gender. This importantly extends Eagly's (1987) social role theory by challenging assumptions made during staffing about women's nonwork lives. Regarding racioethnicity, community similarity was important for preferences, and it was important for movement for Black and White managers, though the effect was small. This is critical for senior management to know because remaining within one's racioethnic community might prevent development through assignments outside their community. Opportunities for career development may exceed an individual's preference to work with similar others, suggesting they might accept, if offered. Further, we extend traditional comparisons between Blacks and Whites by including Hispanics and help address the dearth of research on Hispanics in the workplace (Roth et al., 2017).

5.2 | Practical implications

First, senior management should collect information on managers' preferences for lateral assignments every 2 years, similar to the organization in this sample. Ideally, this information could be maintained as part of a skills inventory to inform succession planning. For example, results from such an inventory should contribute to regular conversations with employees about what they prefer, what skills they need to develop, how these differ, and what opportunities exist to attain both. Moreover, higher level managers should use this information to market job assignments that require moving locations with managers to mitigate perceptions of well-being reductions. Managers may accept a job even if it does not align with their preferences if they are aware of the potential future payoffs. For example, an assistant manager may not want to move to a location that adds 15 min to the commute each way. However, the opportunities for learning may be greater than their current location, providing the assistant manager a chance to develop to be promoted and senior management a bargaining tool to fill the job assignment.

Second, senior management may use these findings to tailor lateral assignment offers to managers. We found there are some notable
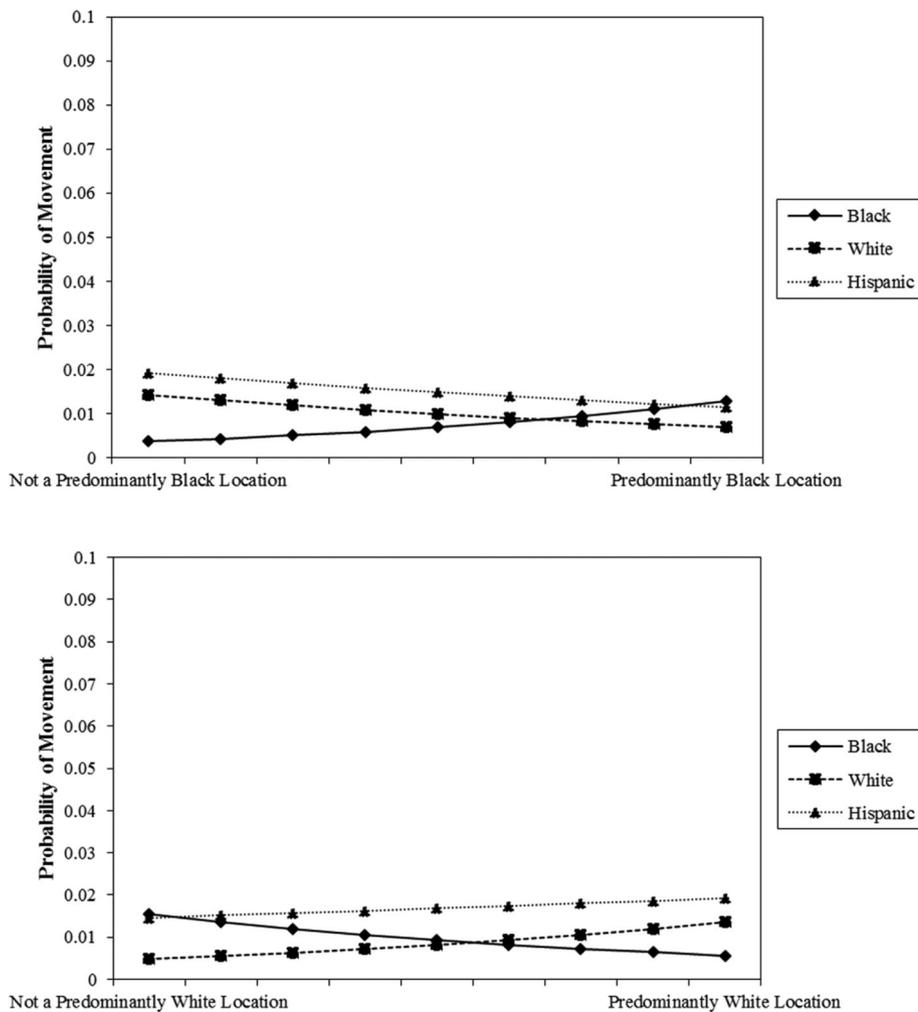
FIGURE 5 Moderation effects on actual movement of location manager: Managerial race × predominantly black location and managerial race × predominantly white location. Y-axis is rescaled from 0–1 to 0.0–0.01 to be able to visualize the effect. Used 0 as low value of moderator (manager racioethnicity) and 1 as high value of moderator to plot all three racioethnic groups

differences in what informs preferences between lower-level managers (management trainees and assistant managers) and location managers. For example, lower-level managers are more influenced by health and well-being reasons. By strategically framing assignments as less threatening to a trainee's or assistant manager's well-being, they may be more likely to accept the offer. Similarly, framing assignments as opportunities to learn due to location size (e.g., larger locations generally mean more responsibility) may improve the chances that a location manager would agree to a lateral assignment. Further, of the managerial levels, trainees' preferences were more influenced by social information reasons than other types of managers. This could perhaps be used as a motivator to increase the chances a management trainee would accept a lateral assignment.

Finally, we found systematic differences in preference for locations in communities that are predominantly Black, Hispanic, or White based on managerial race. Managers generally preferred a location consistent with their racioethnicity. Senior management needs to be aware of how relational demography operates in their organizations (Tsui et al., 1992) that may inadvertently appear as intentional by senior management (e.g., in an audit of the organization's diversity) and present potential legal liabilities, but is in part a function of managerial preference.

5.3 | Potential limitations and future directions

Several limitations should be noted. First, the context of our study was one organization within one industry and we looked specifically at managers. This may reduce the generalizability of a study's findings, but it also controls for extraneous causes of preferences and movement related to differences between organizations. Our findings may be best suited to inform lateral assignment decisions in large organizations, like the one in our sample, where there may be more opportunities to move (unlike medium or small organizations) and where they share the dual goal developing managers to generate a leadership pipeline as well as address staffing vacancies. Further, research has long shown that using lateral assignments to develop leaders is a common practice in large organizations across a variety of industries (McCall et al., 1988). Nonetheless, future research should examine the extent to which our findings generalize to other organizations operating in different industries, nonmanagerial positions, and organizational sizes. Moreover, it is possible that despite our use of previous scholarship, pilot studies, and coordinating with the organization, managers may not have known every detail of a location making them unable to reflect appropriately on some of the reasons on our list. Future research should continue to

develop the reasons in our framework. Moreover, analyzing actual movement was difficult because actual movement as a proportion of all possible locations was 0.94% of the sample. As such, future research should track managers for a longer period of time to increase variance.

Follow-up research should also gather data on whether job assignments were offered (and to whom) and characteristics of managers. Whether a manager actually moves to a new job assignment depends on a number of organizational and individual factors, such as, for example, whether a position is offered and/or the ability of a family to accommodate a move. Social information reasons pertaining to family were not gathered because this research was conducted for management purposes, limiting reasons to those that are legal for the organization to consider. As such, follow-up research could more widely consider factors related to a worker's nonwork life that play important roles in dictating work-related decisions such as spouses or partnerships, children, extended family, and embeddedness in local communities. Similarly, information regarding a manager's personality may be theoretically relevant to an expanded framework of lateral assignment preferences that future scholars could test.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Research data are not shared.

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