

Hiring by professional affiliation: The benefits and challenges of leveraging prospective hires' prior employment ties to improve matching and access to resources

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Abstract

Increasingly mobile careers mean that today's hiring firms encounter external prospective employees who hold professional affiliations with more organizations (e.g., former employers) and groups (e.g., project teams) than ever before. This trend invites attention to a collection of hiring practices in which a firm leverages prospective hires' professional affiliations to increase the firm's access to and facilitate the efficient selection of individuals in a particular labor market talent segment—hereafter, hiring by professional affiliation (HBPA). We review research on six HBPA practices: acqui-hiring, boomerang hiring, competitor poaching, formative affiliation hiring, liftouts, and supply chain hiring. Using Podolny's pipes and prisms metaphor, we show that research on HBPA has emphasized hiring organizations' efforts to (a) leverage prospective hires' focal professional affiliations as prisms to facilitate matching between the organization and new hires, and (b) leverage new hires' focal affiliations as pipes to access resources otherwise difficult to acquire. Transcending the focus of extant research on individual HBPA practices, we then develop propositions elaborating the conditions under which HBPA is likely to yield varied consequences for firms' workforce composition

and organizational capabilities—ranging from replicating the status quo to increasing workforce diversity and organizational capacity for innovation and change.

KEYWORDS

careers, hiring, recruitment, selection, status, strategic human capital

1 | INTRODUCTION

Increasingly mobile careers mean that today's organizations more often need to turn to the external labor market to meet their talent needs. With this increased individual mobility, hiring firms encounter prospective employees who hold professional affiliations with more organizations (e.g., former employers) (Bidwell & Briscoe, 2010) and groups (e.g., project teams) (Munyon et al., 2011) than ever before.

This juxtaposition invites attention to the increasing prevalence of hiring practices in which prospective employees' professional affiliations play a central role in shaping firms' hiring decisions—hereafter, hiring by professional affiliation (HBPA). HBPA encompasses a collection of hiring practices in which a firm leverages prospective hires' professional affiliations to increase the firm's access and to more efficiently select individuals in a particular labor market talent segment. HBPA practices include acqui-hiring, boomerang hiring, competitor poaching, formative affiliation hiring, liftouts, and supply chain hiring. In these practices, hiring decisions are influenced by the professional affiliation(s) held by prospective employees—an influence with far-reaching implications for both the selection (and exclusion) of particular candidates and for the resources that hiring firms acquire through these hiring processes.

Although a lack of systematic tracking of firms' use of HBPA makes a precise accounting of the prevalence of these practices difficult to obtain, anecdotal reports on specific HBPA practices reflect their growing importance in firms' hiring (and broader resource acquisition) processes. For instance, boomerangs comprised 4.5% of all external hires among companies on LinkedIn in 2021 (Dill, 2021), and research identified over 50% of acquisitions made by large technology firms in 2011 and 2012 as possible acqui-hires (Sawicki, 2015).¹

While emerging research offers insights related to particular HBPA practices, to date, research on these individual HBPA practices has been siloed, guided by distinct research questions characteristic of the varied theoretical and disciplinary perspectives of the scholars studying them. As a result, we currently lack a basis for deriving integrated insights from the cumulative knowledge developed across these fragmented research streams and are left with a myopic view of HBPA. In particular, because any single HBPA practice tends to represent only a portion of an organization's total hiring, this research has devoted scant attention to the broader implications of HBPA for hiring firms' workforce composition and resource stocks—implications which may more readily emerge from a more holistic consideration of HBPA as a category of hiring practices. Moreover, prior research has largely focused on the short-term benefits associated with individual HBPA practices, while also largely assuming that all organizations benefit equally across HBPA events. As a result, the existing literature offers a limited understanding of the more problematic aspects of HBPA and the contingencies that shape when these practices are likely to deliver their intended benefits.

Our purpose is thus to extend the literature on HBPA by providing both an integrative review of extant research and a set of propositions that offer a theoretical foundation to better understand when and how HBPA practices are likely to support different strategic and workforce goals of organizations. We begin by clearly defining HBPA and each of the six HBPA practices included in our review. We discuss how each hiring practice connects to our conceptualization of HBPA and how, as a group, these hiring practices relate to more frequently studied hiring practices such as open market external hiring and referrals. Given the siloed research on these practices, this first step offers a critical basis

for understanding the commonalities connecting these practices as a category and the boundaries separating them from more familiar hiring approaches. We also note the timeliness of this exercise: of the 149 papers included in our review, over half were published in the last decade and nearly a third were published in the last 5 years, reflecting increasing research interest in HBPA practices.

We then introduce a unified theoretical lens through which we review the current scholarship that articulates the intended benefits of various HBPA practices. Specifically, we adopt Podolny's (2001) metaphor of network ties as prisms and pipes in highlighting how firms leverage prospective hires' professional affiliations to achieve two distinct outcomes. First, firms leverage prospective hires' professional affiliations with the intention of better evaluating potential candidates, leading to improved quality and efficiency in the matching process (affiliations as prisms). Second, through HBPA practices, hiring firms are often afforded preferred access to valuable external resources associated with new hires' source affiliations that would otherwise be costly or difficult to attain (affiliations as pipes).

Building on this theoretical backdrop, we develop propositions that advance a more nuanced, balanced consideration of HBPA than is present in the literature. More specifically, we elaborate the conditions under which firms' use of HBPA is likely to yield varied consequences for workforce composition and organizational capabilities—ranging from replicating the status quo to increasing workforce diversity and organizational capacity for innovation and change—outcomes that may be viewed as more or less favorable across contexts. We further consider the post-hire stage of integration—both of new hires and of newly accessed resources—which is a critical, yet often overlooked requirement for the value of HBPA to be realized.

A key focus in our theoretical development is on the professional affiliations from which hiring firms source new hires. In particular, we suggest that the role of these affiliations in HBPA need not be limited to serving as prisms that facilitate more precise matching or as resource repositories accessed through transaction-oriented pipes created by an employee's movement to the hiring firm, as much of the extant HBPA literature might suggest. Rather, we argue that source affiliations may also serve as important sources of information, guidance, and support that help to facilitate the effective integration of new HBPA hires and newly accessed resources such that they may create greater value following the hiring process. From this standpoint, we suggest that high-quality relational ties connecting a hiring firm to a source affiliation may dramatically increase the return on HBPA—particularly in circumstances when the integration of new hires and resources would otherwise be difficult.

Our aim is to provide a foundation for scholars to more fully recognize and account for the role of professional affiliations in the hiring process. We elaborate how HBPA practices may be employed not only to achieve isolated hiring goals or to gain access to a particular set of resources, but as critical tools that can be wielded to support the (re)shaping of an organization's workforce and the reinforcement and/or transformation of an organization's capabilities. As we detail in the discussion, we also hope that our work encourages scholars and practitioners to adopt an expanded view of labor market matching, spurs deeper examination of how HBPA fits into firms' broader portfolios of hiring and resource acquisition strategies and motivates consideration of how HBPA relates to the role of educational affiliations in hiring.

2 | DEFINING AND IDENTIFYING HIRING BY PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATION

Hiring firms typically perceive external candidates as mobile repositories of skills, routines, and knowledge. As Corredoira and Rosenkopf (2010, 159) note, research adopting this perspective is “rooted in the notion of portable human capital [and] tends to find that hiring firms gain from importing these employees.” These gains may take several forms. External hiring enables firms to acquire new knowledge (Rosenkopf & Almeida, 2003; Song et al., 2003) and access influential social capital (Dokko & Rosenkopf, 2010). Firms can use external hiring to facilitate innovation (Rao & Drazin, 2002) and to jump-start efforts toward strategic change (Kraatz & Moore, 2002). It can be useful for acquiring new clients (Somaya et al., 2008) and for weakening competitors (Chacar & Coff, 2000). Firms may also perceive hiring as an exercise in impression management because it can provide status and legitimacy benefits by shaping how

external stakeholders perceive a firm (Finkelstein et al., 2009; Khurana, 2002). In this review, our focus on HBPA hones in on a set of hiring practices in which firms leverage the professional affiliations of prospective hires in an effort to capture one or more of these benefits.

From a hiring firm's perspective, the professional (i.e., employment-related) affiliations with which employees come to be associated over the course of their careers may meaningfully distinguish a worker or subset of workers from the broader labor market. First, professional affiliations are not formed at random; the attraction and selection process through which individuals are connected to particular affiliations distinguishes these individuals from candidates in the broader labor market. Second, a worker's affiliation may represent a pathway through which the hiring firm, by hiring a particular worker, can access resources associated with that affiliation. In this sense, a worker's affiliations may reflect information about the worker's value and potential contributions while also supplementing those contributions with resources that the affiliation makes available. Building on this premise, we elaborate the ways in which individuals' professional affiliations are relevant to firms' hiring decisions and outcomes.

We define HBPA as hiring practices that leverage prospective hires' specific professional affiliations to increase the firm's access to and efficient selection of external hires. In this definition,

- "professional affiliations" refers to the organizations, teams, and/or colleagues to whom prospective candidates develop associations through their work experiences;
- to "increase access" refers to increasing the relative representation of a particular labor market segment in the firm's prospective candidate pool and/or to strengthen the attraction of prospective candidates within a particular segment to the hiring firm;
- "efficient selection" refers to the reduction of information asymmetries resulting from (a) the matching that occurs in the process by which individuals are associated with a given affiliation (e.g., recruitment and selection) or (b) awareness of valuable resources to which a hiring firm may gain access through a prospective hire's focal affiliation.

In a review spanning the fields of management (e.g., HR and strategy), law, accounting, sociology, and economics, we identified the six HBPA practices defined below that have been the focus of empirical inquiry. In Table 1, we offer a further elaboration wherein we highlight the focal professional affiliation and offer an example of each practice in use.

(1) Acqui-hiring refers to the acquisition of a company primarily to gain access to the firm's employees (e.g., Chatterji & Patro, 2014; Coyle & Polsky, 2013).

(2) Boomerang hiring refers to hiring individuals who were previously employed in the hiring firm (e.g., Arnold et al., 2021; Swider et al., 2017).

(3) Competitor poaching refers to hiring directly from a product-market competitor (e.g., Aime et al., 2010; Gardner, 2005; Grohsjean et al., 2016).

(4) Formative affiliation hiring refers to hiring based on an individual's early-career affiliations with specific institutions, such as employment in a particular firm (e.g., Dobrev, 2005) or service in the military (e.g., Barley, 1998).

(5) Liftouts refer to hiring an existing team from another organization (e.g., Groysberg & Abrahams, 2006; Groysberg & Lee, 2009).

(6) Supply chain hiring refers to hiring directly from an organization's clients or suppliers (e.g., Carnahan & Somaya, 2013; Somaya et al., 2008).

Establishing HBPA as a category of hiring practices raises questions of (1) the role of intentionality in HBPA, and (2) the distinctiveness of HBPA practices relative to more established hiring practices such as open market and referral hiring—two interrelated points that we consider through the lens of when and how HBPA may inform different phases of the hiring process.

The relevance of prospective employees' professional affiliations in HBPA may materialize during recruitment and/or selection. Much HBPA research implicitly assumes that individuals' professional affiliations play a central role in recruitment. Certain HBPA practices are, by nature, intentional from the outset. Acqui-hiring and liftouts, for example, involve hiring many affiliated individuals at once, clearly intentional acts due to the coordination involved in

TABLE 1 Definition, relevant professional affiliation, and example of HBPAs practices

Hiring practice	Definition	New hire's relevant professional affiliation	Example	Matching	Access to resources
Acqui-hiring	Acquisition of a company primarily to the firm's employees (e.g., Chatterji & Patro, 2014; Coyle & Polsky, 2013)	Employment with the organization being acquired, professional ties with coworkers who worked together in that organization	Apple's acquisition of Drive.ai, an autonomous-car startup whose talent—rather than technology—Apple sought to add to its own autonomous car project	Scale benefits based on matching at the firm-to-firm (rather than firm-to-individual) level	Routines and knowledge embedded in newly hired employees and in their interdependent relationships
Boomerang hiring	Hiring individuals who were previously employed in the hiring firm (e.g., Arnold et al., 2021; Swider et al., 2017)	Previous employment relationship with the hiring firm	The return of LeBron James to the Cleveland Cavaliers after beginning his professional basketball career with the Cavaliers and then leaving to play for several seasons for the Miami Heat	Reduction of information asymmetries for both workers and firms due to previous relationships	Firm-specific knowledge and relationships rooted in prior experience in the organization
Competitor poaching	Hiring directly from a product market competitor (e.g., Aime et al., 2010; Grohsjean et al., 2016)	Employment relationship with hiring firm's product market competitor	Electronic Arts' aggressive tactics (including a "Now Hiring" billboard outside its competitor's offices) to hire programmers from rival game company, Radical Entertainment (Ahl, 2017)	Implications of prior matching based on industry- and strategic group-specific matching logics	Knowledge of competitor's trade secrets and routines
Formative affiliation	Hiring based on an individual's early-career affiliations with specific institutions, such as employment in a particular firm (e.g., Dobrev, 2005) or service in the military (e.g., Barley, 1998)	Early-career employment relationship	The observed preference of ManTech International, a cyber-security firm, to disproportionately hire workers who began their career in one of the U.S. military branches (Thimou, 2018)	Imprinting of norms and knowledge that may indicate fit in the hiring firm	Specific knowledge, social capital, or status spillovers conveyed through new hires' ties to early-career employers
Liftouts	Hiring an existing team from another organization (e.g., Groysberg & Abrahams, 2006; Groysberg & Lee, 2009)	Employment and professional relationships with prior employer and focal team	Uber's hiring of entire teams from Carnegie Mellon University's National Robotics Engineering Center (prior to the strategic partnership eventually formed between the two organizations)	Pre-existing fit among co-mobile teammates; screening based on team characteristics and dynamics	Team- and organization-level knowledge and routines carried or accessed from prior employer
Supply chain hiring	Hiring directly from an organization's current or prospective clients or suppliers (e.g., Carnahan & Somaya, 2013; Somaya et al., 2008)	Employment relationship with the supplier or client organization (e.g., B2B organization) from which they are hired	Hiring of senior financial reporting executives directly from a firm's external audit firm, a practice known within regulatory contexts as a "revolving door" (Cilkeman, 1998)	Knowledge of the hiring firm based on the prior firm's partnership	Improved relational capital in buyer-supplier relationship due to bridge provided by HBPAs

simultaneously hiring many or all members of the same unit. Yet, in some cases, a candidate's professional affiliations may not be relevant until the selection process. For example, while a firm may intentionally ask a former employee to return, a former employee may also apply for a job posted on the company's website without such prodding. In the latter case, the individual's affiliation with the hiring firm becomes known only when the hiring manager reviews the application and recognizes the candidate as a potential boomerang hire. Similarly, while firms may proactively poach an employee from a rival firm, firms may also receive unsolicited applications from employees of rival firms. The presence—but not the timing—of intentionality is integral to the classification of a hiring practice under the HBPA umbrella.

The above discussion also highlights that while the central role of a candidate's professional affiliation makes HBPA a conceptually distinct hiring category, in practice, HBPA may nonetheless intersect with other hiring approaches. The examples above show how HBPA may overlap with open market hiring, a practice that enables any candidate to apply for a job, including those with professional affiliations that are then considered at the selection stage. Similarly, a headhunter may present a hiring firm with a candidate who currently works for a supplier, or a current employee may recommend a friend who works for a competitor through a referral hiring program.² Regardless of whether a hire comes from the open market, an intermediary (e.g., a search firm), a referral, or another channel, HBPA occurs when prospective candidates' professional affiliations influence a hiring firm's efforts to increase access to and/or more efficiently select external candidates from specific sources. Finally, we delineate the boundaries of our definition of HBPA to include hiring decisions targeting only prospective hires' employment-related professional affiliations. In so doing, we exclude from our focus individuals' affiliations with educational institutions and industry associations that may also have places in individuals' careers but that may influence the hiring process in distinct ways.

3 | THE FUNCTIONING OF PIPES AND PRISMS IN HBPA

In Podolny's (2001) seminal work on networks, he notes that connections between individuals and/or organizations serve a dual purpose. On one hand, these connections function as prisms that affect how actors are perceived by others based on their social ties. In this sense, they serve an essential evaluative function, providing actors with a lens through which to assess the viability of others as potential partners. We posit that in the context of HBPA, professional affiliations often function in this way, as a prism through which hiring firms evaluate potential candidates as they search for candidates likely to "fit" their needs. In this capacity, HBPA benefits firms through effective matching.

On the other hand, such connections also function as pipes in that ties among actors allow resources to flow freely between them. We posit that in the context of HBPA, the professional affiliations of prospective candidates provide hiring firms with potential access to resources that may otherwise be out of reach. In particular, by hiring a prospective candidate with an affiliation possessing valuable resources, a hiring firm may be able to access these resources through—or as a function of—the employment relationship. In other words, the external hire's tie either creates or reinforces a pipe through which the hiring organization may tap into resources associated with the affiliation that would otherwise be difficult to attain. In this capacity, HBPA benefits firms via preferential access to resources.

In the following sections, we first elaborate on how professional affiliations operate as both pipes and prisms in the external hiring process through an integrated review of the related—but heretofore fragmented—research streams on each of the HBPA practices. We summarize key findings from this research in Table 2.³ In an effort to stimulate future work on this set of hiring practices, we then draw on theoretical insights from the knowledge- and the relational-based views of the firm and the organizational learning literature in offering propositions that highlight how and under what conditions HBPA may be more likely to perpetuate the replication of existing workforce compositions, resource stocks, and organizational capabilities versus contribute to increases in workforce diversity, resource novelty, and organizational capacity for innovation and change. We pay particular attention to the role of relational ties connecting hiring firms to new hires' source affiliations in overcoming anticipated challenges of information asymmetries, integration, diversity, and access to external resources.

TABLE 2 Benefits of HBPA by hiring practice

Type of benefit	Description	Key findings and examples	HBPA practices
Professional affiliations as tools in labor market matching			
Efficient screening of talent pool	Hiring firms are better able to find, attract, negotiate with, and ultimately hire higher quality matches that can create more value in their employer-employee relationships with relatively lower costs and risks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Boomers demonstrate early performance advantages over nonboomerang hires. - Boomers have more prehire information (i.e., characteristics of the colleagues) of the organization than do candidates from other recruitment sources (Williams et al., 1993) - Boomers have characteristics that are relevant for job success (Taylor & Schmidt, 1983). ■ Workers' early affiliations with high-status and prominent firms signal worker quality and skill development. - Affiliations to "academy" companies signal that workers have developed a high level of general and transferrable human capital (Lehmborg et al., 2009). - Workers receive more training early in their careers in large firms (Bidwell & Briscoe, 2010). - Early employment at an elite firm or academy company is predictive of fast-tracked careers when individuals move to other firms (Bidwell et al., 2015). ■ Hiring firms may seek applicants with military experience to ensure that they can work in a hierarchical environment (Kleykamp, 2009). ■ Liftouts enable the targeting of teams or groups of individuals who are already proven to be successful and high-functioning (Groysberg & Lee, 2009). ■ Liftouts may reduce the search costs of the hiring firm; compared to acqui-hiring, liftouts are more cost-efficient due to reduced "overhead" costs (i.e., acquisition premium for investors). - Spin-offs hiring co-workers from the parent firm survive longer by reducing initial search/recruitment costs (Rocha et al., 2018). 	BM FA LO
		Scale benefits	Hiring firms may benefit from large-scale gains in human/social capital through talent hired through HBPA either as a unit or over time.

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Type of benefit	Description	Key findings and examples	HBPAs practices
Professional affiliations as access to resources			
Knowledge	Hiring organization's increased access to the knowledge that a focal hire carries into the organization upon entry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Acqui-hiring may lead to the transfer of new and specialized knowledge, keeping up with technological progress, and exploiting technological synergies between the target (source) and the hiring firm. - Post-merger, inventors from the acquiring firm experience increased patent output and convey knowledge spillovers to inventors from the target firm (Li & Wang, 2021). ■ Boomerangs' contextualized and organization-specific knowledge of the (re)hiring firm may lead to increased performance early in their tenures. - Boomerangs outperform new hires early in their tenures due to their knowledge of the organization's social system (Keller et al., 2021). ■ "Lateral hiring" and "learning-by-hiring" may facilitate the transfer of knowledge and/or routines from the source firm to the hiring firm. - Hiring R&D scientists from competitors is a primary mechanism to capture knowledge spillovers from competitors and to boost innovative performance (Almeida & Kogut, 1999; Jain, 2016; Rosenkopf & Almeida, 2003). - Individuals moving between organizations may apply knowledge gained in one firm to another, thereby effectively transferring the knowledge across firms (Argote & Ingram, 2000). - Newer firms tend to recruit from competitors to source knowledge for new product development whereas older firms source talent from competitors to prevent obsolescence (Rao & Drazin, 2002). ■ Hiring workers with certain early-career experiences (i.e., working at large firms; high-status firms; military) allows the hiring firm to acquire the knowledge that these workers learned while working for those organizations. - Military serves as a source of highly technical skills—particularly in areas related to computing and electronics (Barley, 1998). ■ High-status firms are likely to attract high-quality human capital early in their careers (Bidwell et al., 2015). ■ Teammates from a previous employer (i.e., liftouts) represent potential sources of knowledge, capabilities, information, and routines that may benefit the performance of the hiring firm. - Spin-offs hiring co-workers from the parent firm survive longer by the knowledge transfer from the parent firm to the hiring firm (Rocha et al., 2018). - Hiring multiple employees increases the likelihood that the hiring firm will use their shared knowledge due to the greater collective impact of their entry and multiple access points to the knowledge they bring (Parrotta & Pozzoli, 2012). ■ Revolving door hires (e.g., in an accounting setting) may lead to increased market performance for the hiring organization. - The market values revolving door appointments more positively than other appointments (Seiger et al., 2008). 	AH BM CP FA LO SC

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Type of benefit	Description	Key findings and examples	HBP practices
Relational capital	Hiring organization's access to the relational capital developed in the course of a new hire's experiences with prior affiliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Employees of the hiring firm and the target firm may share their relational capital (i.e., client sharing), which may lead to synergy generation via relational integration (Briscoe & Tsai, 2011). - In an acqui-hiring context, the hiring firm benefits from the relational capital among acqui-hired employees, which enables them to leverage their expertise for new collective knowledge creation (Ranft & Lord, 2000). ■ Boomerangs' familiarity with the organization's social system allows them to engage in coordination and overcome internal resistance from organizational incumbents (Keiler et al., 2021). ■ Patterns of intra-industry mobility between clients, suppliers, and competitors have implications for relational capital, which affects business done between them as well as business in-sourced. - Hiring from a competitor may lead to increased business from the clients of that competitor (Broschak et al., 2020). - Supplier firms receive less outsourced business when buyers hire employees from the focal supplier's competitors (Carnahan & Somaya, 2013). - Hiring from/losing an employee to a potential client may lead to increased business from that client/reduced likelihood of termination of the relationship with the client (Somaya et al., 2008). ■ Hiring from a competitor may increase the likelihood of alliance formation between the hiring and source firm (Wagner & Goossen, 2018). ■ New hires' relationships with other employees who are simultaneously hired by the hiring firm create value through the transfer of colleague-specific human capital (Campbell et al., 2014) and increased availability of social resources to support new hires' socialization and integration in the hiring organization (Munyon et al., 2011). - Star performers who move with colleagues demonstrate a smaller and less prolonged performance decrease (Groysberg et al., 2008; Groysberg & Lee, 2009). ■ Hiring firms may receive favorable treatment from the source organizations from which they hire (e.g., less scrutiny from auditors) (Finley et al., 2019). 	AH BM CP FA LO SC
Status spillover	Status spillovers that may be enjoyed by hiring firms that attract employees with high-status affiliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Firms may engage in acqui-hiring to establish a presence in new markets by achieving status spillovers from a target firm with a substantial presence in the market (Geis, 2015). ■ Hiring from a competitor may lead to positive status spillovers even in the absence of performance (knowledge) spillovers. - When a firm hires a skilled employee from a prominent competitor, the move signals to consumers that the hiring firm's quality may be better than previously believed (Roberts et al., 2011). ■ Hiring from elite and reputable competitors signals quality and reinforces hiring firm status (Ertug & Castellucci, 2013; Hamori, 2010). ■ Hiring from high-status firms creates the basis for status spillovers via new hires, which reinforce the hiring firm's status or revamp its reputation (Bidwell et al., 2015; Rivera, 2016). 	AH CP FA

Abbreviations: AH, acqui-hiring; BM, boomerang hiring; CP, competitor poaching; FA, formative affiliations; LO, layoffs; SC, supply chain hiring.

3.1 | Affiliations as prisms: An integrative review

From a matching perspective, our central premise is that in the context of HBPA, prospective hires' affiliations serve as lenses that convey information about worker attributes and reduce information asymmetries in the hiring process—enabling improved matching between workers and the firms that hire them. This is important, as quality matches between new hires and hiring firms typically result in better new hire performance and longer employment tenures (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Arthur et al., 2006; Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). From a hiring firm's perspective, under typical hiring conditions, the *ex ante* evaluation of potential match quality is challenging because firms have incomplete information on prospective candidates, who are incentivized to show off their relevant qualifications while hiding negative information about themselves (Bergh et al., 2019). Our review suggests that organizations use prospective hires' professional affiliations to improve matching by providing a means for more efficient selection.

First, hiring organizations often rely on prospective hires' professional affiliations as signals of workers' quality. Indeed, much like educational institutions (Domina et al., 2017), employers often act as “sorting machines” for future career mobility. For example, in some industries, great value is placed on individuals' early-career employment at academy companies (e.g., McKinsey & Company, Goldman Sachs, GE), defined as a select group of prestigious firms in which employees are known to have progressed through rigorous selection processes, deliberate socialization, and significant training and development with high transferability to other firms (Bidwell & Briscoe, 2010; Brymer et al., 2014; Cappelli & Hamori, 2005). These formative experiences position individuals for fast-tracked careers when they move to other firms that target them for their professional pedigree (Bidwell et al., 2015). This pattern is also consistent with findings that a firm's reputation for intensive investments in managerial human capital increases competitors' recruitment of the firm's executives (Lehmerberg et al., 2009).

Second, scholars have demonstrated that hiring firms may gauge the fit of prospective hires based on nonquality-based signals conveyed by individuals' professional affiliations. This research suggests that the self-sorting of individuals into particular employment contexts may signal important cultural attributes to a hiring firm. For instance, prior research has shown that individuals self-select into the military due to their personal characteristics (e.g., attaching importance to discipline, serving others before self, and obedience to rules), and that certain firms intentionally recruit individuals with a military background when these characteristics are a good fit with their cultures (Koch-Bayram & Wernicke, 2018). Studies of hiring in professional service contexts suggest reliance on similar cultural sorting mechanisms (Rivera, 2011), such as law firms' practice of focused hiring to align with client preferences (Oyer & Schaefer, 2016).

Boomerang and formative affiliation hiring are other HBPA practices that may support increased fit, in these cases based on new hires' shared affiliations with incumbents in the hiring firm (Keller et al., 2021; Rider, 2012). Alternatively, research suggests that HBPA may support new hires' fit based on other logics. For instance, in boomerang hiring, firms may be confident that boomerang hires re-enter the organization familiar with the unique features of the organization's social system (Keller et al., 2021), whereas employees hired from suppliers may have deep knowledge of the hiring firm due to their involvement in the supply chain relationship.

Third, research shows that HBPA may facilitate selection processes when prospective hires' professional affiliations provide the hiring firm and/or prospective hires access to information that would be unavailable through open-market hiring. In particular, these professional affiliations may act as conduits that facilitate the proactive flow of richer, more relevant information—reducing information asymmetries for both parties and improving the chance of good matches. Research documents examples such as managers at supply chain partners who broker information between current employees—the prospective hires of client firms—and the hiring client firm in order to gain greater client loyalty (Somaya et al., 2008) and leaders of liftout teams who provide enough information to their teams to convince individual members to move with them to the hiring firm (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2006).

3.2 | Affiliations as prisms: New propositions

Our review above suggests that hiring firms may use HBPA in part to overcome the information asymmetries and related uncertainties that often accompany open-market hiring. Consider internal hiring at one end of the matching spectrum—where match quality is optimized based on internal candidates' having already progressed through a hiring organization's recruitment, selection, and socialization processes. Open-market hiring occupies the other end of the spectrum—where match quality is less certain due to the mutual lack of familiarity and information between the hiring organization and prospective employees. Our review of the extant literature would lead us to expect that hiring firms' use of prospective hires' professional affiliations as prisms will result in hiring matches that fall somewhere between the extremes of internal hiring and open market hiring (see Brymer et al., 2019).

However, this characterization represents an oversimplification of HBPA. There are in fact likely to be variations in the extent to which HBPA improves match quality (i.e., in the traditional sense of maximizing similarity between the attributes of new hires and those of prototypical employees of a hiring firm). Further, we emphasize that HBPA is likely to have implications that extend to outcomes beyond the match of a particular hire. We advance this perspective in a series of propositions suggesting that the relative similarity in matching logics employed by a hiring firm and source firm will have important implications for how a HBPA event—or combination of HBPA events—impacts the hiring firm's workforce composition and organizational capabilities, as well as the relative efficiency and certainty associated with focal new hires' socialization and performance outcomes. Importantly, we suggest that hiring from source firms that employ matching logics that significantly differ from those used by a hiring firm will result in new hires that more markedly differ from the hiring firm's existing workforce, and that these hires may consequently face greater challenges in integrating into their new roles. We then develop arguments that stronger relationships between hiring firms and source firms may help to mitigate the post-hire integration challenges in these cases, enabling hiring firms to leverage HBPA to not only bring in more diverse hires but also to improve such hires' socialization and performance outcomes—offering a more sustainable strategy for improving workforce diversity and providing a basis to expand or transform organizational capabilities.

3.2.1 | Similar Matching Logics in HBPA

An important benefit of internal hiring is the reduction of information asymmetries and the increased likelihood of fit that is achieved by selecting individuals who have already been working in a firm (Bidwell, 2011; Bidwell & Keller, 2014; Greenwald, 1986; Waldman, 1984). Importantly, although matching is often discussed as a phenomenon that occurs at the point of hiring and organizational entry, matching in fact refers to the “process by which individuals are dynamically aligned with roles, jobs, situations, and tasks within organizations” and is achieved through a number of practices (Weller et al., 2019, 188).

Matching begins with recruitment and selection and extends to investments in socialization, training and development, and job design that continue throughout an employment experience. These practices collectively reduce gaps in the attributes and needs of the hiring firm and the workers it employs. Internal hires' experience with these formal matching processes, in addition to their experiences navigating a firm's culture and social system and their track record of job performance developed over the course of their tenure in the hiring firm, make internal hires both higher-quality and easier-to-evaluate matches relative to external hires (Bidwell, 2011; Halaby, 1988; Zajac, 1990). As a result, internal hires are likely to come up to speed in new roles more quickly, exhibit greater predictability in their performance, and more effectively navigate an organization's social system relative to external hires (Benson & Rissing, 2020). At the organization level, internal hiring sustains the composition of a firm's existing workforce, reinforces existing organizational capabilities (and weaknesses) (Datta & Guthrie, 1994; Gupta, 1984), and perpetuates the firm's culture and social system (Bidwell, 2011; Chatman, 1991).

While HBPA is unlikely to offer the same level of matching benefits as internal hiring, using HBPA to target prospective hires from a source firm that employs a similar matching logic to the hiring firm may provide a close substitute. We understand an organization's matching logic to encompass the intent underlying its multidimensional matching investments and practices noted above—reflecting both the “how” of the matching process as well as the intended outcome—or desired attributes of the matches that this process targets and yields. For instance, a firm's matching logic may be reflected in the strategic orientation of its hiring processes (Weller et al., 2019), such as in the nature of messaging in employer branding efforts, in the placement of job advertisements, and in the prioritization of particular candidate attributes in recruitment and screening practices (Collins & Stevens, 2002). An organization's matching logic would be further evident in the post-hire context in the organization's approaches to socializing new employees, in its investment in and provision of training programs and development opportunities, as well as in the design of jobs, routines, and workflows (Weller et al., 2019).

To the extent that a hiring firm targets prospective hires from a source affiliation that employs a similar matching logic, these new hires are more likely to resemble the model (or prototypical) worker of the hiring organization. In other words, such new hires are more likely to possess the required qualities to perform well in their new jobs and are likely to embrace values, prioritize goals, and engage in behaviors that represent a strong fit to the hiring firm's social system and culture—increasing attraction on both sides (Judge & Cable, 1997; Schneider, 1987).

Second, similarities in the values, norms, and routines that are embodied in the source and hiring firms ensure that new hires are equipped to navigate and thrive in the hiring firm's social system, allowing them to effectively integrate into the organization's culture and internalize the informal norms for interacting with other organizational members (Bauer et al., 2007; Miller & Jablin, 1991). Further, such similarity between organizations is likely to result in deep-level similarity between new hires and incumbent workers, begetting positive emergent states, and less conflict over time (Beal et al., 2003; Harrison et al., 1998; Triaña et al., 2021). Integrating these arguments with the logic related to internal hires above, from the individual perspective, we expect that the use of HBPA from a source firm using a similar matching logic will result in new hires that are more precise matches to the hiring firm. This enables these hires to more quickly come up to speed, to more effectively navigate the hiring firm's social system, and to demonstrate more predictable performance upon organizational entry (Bauer et al., 2007).

As a hiring practice, we expect HBPA of this nature to result in similar outcomes characterizing the use of internal hiring, including the replication of the composition of the hiring firm's existing workforce, the reinforcement of existing organizational capabilities and weaknesses within the hiring firm, and the perpetuation of the culture and social system of the hiring firm. Accordingly, such hiring is likely to be associated with increased efficiency and certainty in the contributions of focal hires upon entry to the hiring firm—a pattern reflected in research documenting that similarities in management practices between two firms may facilitate a smooth integration in an acquisition context (Marks & Mirvis, 2011; Mirvis & Marks, 1992).

Proposition 1: Within the context of HBPA, greater similarity between the matching logics employed by the hiring firm and source affiliation will be associated with

- (a) the replication of the existing workforce composition,
- (b) the continued maintenance and exploitation of current organizational capabilities, and
- (c) increased efficiency and certainty in new hires' contributions in the hiring firm.

It follows that a hiring firm's use of HBPA as a means to mimic its own matching logic is not without tradeoffs. Improving match precision facilitates a replication of the hiring firm's current workforce. While fostering smoother new hire integration, higher employee productivity, and reinforcement of the organization's established capabilities, this replication perpetuates the systematic exclusion of prospective hires and talent segments who significantly deviate from incumbent worker profiles, such that HBPA may exacerbate existing limitations in the diversity (e.g., of

experience, thought, demographics) of a firm's workforce. In doing so, it may also limit the firm's capacity for innovation and change (Brymer et al., 2014; Rider, 2012).

3.2.2 | Dissimilar matching logics in HBPA

Hiring firms may also leverage HBPA to hire workers from source firms that employ dissimilar matching logics. For example, we have noted that hiring firms may use *acqui-hiring* and *liftouts* in an effort to access specialized knowledge or capabilities concentrated among employees in a focal source firm (or team). In many cases, such knowledge has been deemed valuable by the hiring firm but is distinct from its existing knowledge base, which is often the rationale for accessing this knowledge through an *acqui-hire* (Chatterji & Patro, 2014) or *liftout* (Groysberg, 2010) rather than developing it internally. In these circumstances, the source firm's focus on distinct—rather than similar—knowledge acts as the relevant prism, with its use of a dissimilar matching logic facilitating a strong match between acquired employees' expertise and the hiring firm's knowledge-based aspirations.

By facilitating the hiring of employees that substantively differ from the hiring firm's existing workforce—both with respect to individual characteristics (e.g., demographic background, professional record) and organizational experiences—recruiting employees from source affiliations with matching logics that differ from that of the hiring firm may contribute to the diversity of the hiring firm's workforce and may introduce novel expertise, perspectives, and/or ways of working. At the organization level, when this occurs in strategically critical positions and/or at sufficient scale, this infusion of novel insights may serve as the basis for innovation and change (Schreyögg, 2005). Indeed, scholars have cited cultural differences between two merging firms as an important source of divergent perspectives that can serve as the basis for new learning (Marks & Mirvis, 2011; Olie & Verwaal, 2004).

We expect the cost of dissimilar matching logics to be a weaker new hire fit, as the divergence in such new hires' prior experiences and backgrounds may translate to less familiarity—and even compatibility (Bauer & Matzler, 2014; Feldman & Hernandez, 2022)—with the underpinnings of the hiring organization's knowledge base, culture, and/or social system. Using HBPA in such a way is likely to result in the hiring of employees who may have been systematically excluded from consideration based on the typical application of the hiring firm's own matching logic and who have internalized ways of working that are aligned with potentially distant organizational cultures and social systems. From this standpoint, such new hires are likely to experience more significant challenges integrating into the organization and greater difficulty coming up to speed in their new roles. As a result, their socialization is likely to be more arduous and less efficient and their ultimate success less certain—reflecting a risk to both their performance and retention in the hiring organization. Indeed, a robust literature points to cultural incompatibility as one of the most cited reasons for the failure of M&As (Bauer & Matzler, 2014; Datta, 1991). Such hires may also encounter significant barriers in having their unique insights accepted by incumbent employees (Jain, 2016), who may be resistant to ideas that challenge the status quo (Tzabbar et al., 2013)—especially when those ideas are proposed by newcomers who bring a diverse set of personalities, values, and attitudes into the organization (see Harrison et al., 1998 on deep-level diversity). It takes time for such individuals to earn colleagues' trust (Jackson et al., 2003) and to become sufficiently acquainted with the organization's culture and values to position their ideas in the light most favorable to organizational members (Kaiser et al., 2018; Wang & Zatzick, 2019).

In sum, on one hand, the use of HBPA to hire from source organizations that employ matching logics that differ from that employed by a hiring firm is likely to help diversify the workforce and infuse novel ideas and perspectives in a hiring firm, offering a potential basis for innovation and change. On the other hand, such utilization of HBPA may pose challenges for the socialization, integration, and performance of the new hires that it yields, and its ultimate success may be less timely and less certain relative to the use of HBPA to hire employees from source organizations employing matching logics more similar to that of the hiring firm.

Proposition 2: Within the context of HBPA, hiring from source affiliations that employ more dissimilar matching logics relative to those employed by the hiring firm will be associated with

- (a) an increase in workforce diversity,
- (b) improved capacity for innovation and change, and
- (c) reduced efficiency and greater uncertainty in new hires' contributions in the hiring firm.

3.2.3 | Mitigating challenges associated with dissimilar matching logics

While HBPA represents a powerful lever with which firms might increase workforce diversity and supercharge their efforts in innovation and change, firms may avoid using HBPA toward these ends because of the uncertainty induced by the dissimilar matching logic of a source organization. There may, however, be circumstances where this uncertainty is reduced. Specifically, because matching logics are at least partially tacit and are closely intertwined with organizations' idiosyncratic social systems (Kogut & Zander, 1996), understanding a firm's matching logic at a meaningful level of depth is likely to be best supported by trust and ongoing dialogue between two organizations. From this standpoint, having a strong relationship with source affiliations in these HBPA contexts may be valuable in hiring firms' efforts to leverage the differences and mitigate the challenges associated with new hires from sources employing dissimilar matching logics.

To elaborate, strong relationships between hiring and source firms may facilitate the free flow of information, providing visibility into the degree and nature of (dis)similarity in the two firms' matching logics. This is important, as while some manifestations of a source organization's matching logic may be broadly visible (e.g., recruiting), others (e.g., socialization tactics) may otherwise be less visible outside the boundaries of the organization (Colbert, 2004). In the period following hiring, firms are likely to be better equipped to preemptively address the integration challenges faced by such new hires when they have developed a sound a priori understanding of where critical points of divergence in new hires' prior experiences and expectations exist. By developing this understanding, a hiring firm can tailor its pre- and post-hire investments to best suit the needs of new hires from a particular source firm, improving such hires' socialization and integration experiences and helping them to come up to speed more quickly and develop more effective relationships with incumbent employees. Moreover, by offering the hiring firm insights into how to best incorporate new hires' unique knowledge in the organization's operations, this understanding may also improve the likelihood of successful change and innovation efforts associated with hiring from source firms with dissimilar matching logics. These benefits are consistent with the logic underlying GE Capital's practice of conducting behavioral and cultural assessments of prospective acquisition targets, which the organization uses both in evaluating the attractiveness of a target firm based on potential barriers to integration and in developing integration plans for those acquisitions with which it moves forward (Marks & Mirvis, 2011). Finally, we suggest that when HBPA yields new hires that increase the deep-level diversity of a hiring firm's workforce, it is especially critical that the hiring firm has a strong relationship with the affiliated source so as to understand, communicate, and create customized practices to integrate the new hires while avoiding the long-lasting negative effects such diversity can bring (Beal et al., 2003; Harrison et al., 1998).

Across HBPA modes, relationship strength may be fostered in a variety of relational forms, such as through alliances formed prior to an acquisition (e.g., Porrini, 2004), organizational partnerships with suppliers or customers (e.g., Somaya et al., 2008), high-volume hiring pipelines between two organizations (e.g., Brymer et al., 2014), or the sharing of a formative affiliation among a large portion of a firm's workforce (e.g., Barley, 1998). In whatever form they take, we expect these ties to increase a hiring firm's understanding of matching differences and improve its ability to mitigate integration challenges of hires from source firms using dissimilar matching logics.

Proposition 3: Within the context of HBPA, relationship strength between the hiring firm and a source organization employing a dissimilar matching logic will be associated with

- (a) greater knowledge related to the dissimilarities in matching logics and
- (b) increased efficiency and certainty in new hires' contributions in the hiring firm.

3.3 | Affiliations as pipes: An integrative review

Hiring firms may also leverage new hires' ties to their former professional affiliations as conduits that enable privileged access to valuable resources (e.g., intricate knowledge of competitor practices) that would be difficult to acquire through other means. In this sense, new hires' affiliations act as pipes through which resources more easily flow. This functioning of affiliations in HBPA is significant, as these resources may include knowledge, relational capital, or status spillovers associated with new hires' focal affiliations that would typically fall outside the criteria evaluated in traditional selection processes.

3.3.1 | Knowledge

Research suggests that the knowledge benefits associated with HBPA lie in a hiring organization's increased access to the knowledge that a focal hire brings to the organization, particularly knowledge acquired through the individual's experiences with their focal affiliations. Knowledge acquired through HBPA has two characteristics distinguishing it from knowledge sourced through other means. First, much HBPA-sourced knowledge is exclusive in that it is not readily available on the open market. Rather, HBPA provides a hiring organization preferential access to knowledge whose accumulation or accessibility is a function of a new hire's focal affiliation. Examples include knowledge of a competitor's capabilities that a new hire developed while employed at the competitor (e.g., Somaya et al., 2008) and, in the case of a liftout, team-specific knowledge (e.g., Groysberg & Abrahms, 2006). Even for knowledge that may be available through alternative means, a hiring firm's access to new hires with first-hand experience with the knowledge (e.g., involvement with patents; Li & Wang, 2021) and/or its source eases the challenges of knowledge integration and use.

Other examples of relevant knowledge sourced through HBPA include boomerang hires' knowledge of the hiring firm's social system (based on their prior employment with the firm) (Keller et al., 2021) and knowledge stocks shared among co-mobile hires who enter the organization together in the context of acqui-hiring and liftouts (Groysberg, 2010; Li & Wang, 2021; Ouimet & Zarutskie, 2020). In each case, through the newly hired employee(s), hiring firms gain preferential access to knowledge that would be less available (e.g., more difficult to identify, locate, or access) through alternative hiring or knowledge-sourcing practices.

3.3.2 | Relational capital

Unlike the knowledge-based benefits of HBPA, the relational capital-based benefits of HBPA depend on the preservation and effective exploitation of one or more critical connections that a new hire brings to a hiring organization. Here again, we emphasize relational capital developed through a new hire's professional experiences within prior affiliations, differentiating this relational capital from that rooted in relationships in more personal settings or pretexts, such as those leveraged in referral hiring (Pieper et al., 2019).

Research demonstrates that in the context of HBPA, new hires' focal affiliations may uniquely create value in hiring organizations as either bridging or bonding relational capital. New hires' affiliations that serve a bridging function help to foster or strengthen the connection between a hiring organization and external stakeholders (e.g., clients, suppliers)

to which the hiring organization may otherwise lack access or hold a weaker tie (e.g., Carnahan & Somaya, 2013). In such cases, focal external stakeholders' familiarity with the new hire can initiate a new or stronger relationship between the stakeholder and the hiring organization. Research emphasizing these bridging functions of new hires' relational capital in HBPA has focused most heavily on how patterns of intra-industry mobility between clients, suppliers, and competitors influence subsequent business relations between these firms. For instance, research in this vein suggests that hiring an employee from the hiring firm's competitor often leads the competitor firm's clients to move to the hiring organization (Broschak, 2004; Broschak et al., 2020; Raffiee, 2017). Likewise, the hiring of an employee from a client firm, or the loss of an employee to a client firm, is associated with increased business from that client and reduced risk of a terminated relationship with that client firm (Somaya et al., 2008). In related terms, hiring from a competitor may increase the likelihood of an alliance relationship forming between the hiring firm and that competitor, particularly when the new hire is able to ease uncertainty by providing unique knowledge about the competitor to the hiring firm (Wagner & Goossen, 2018).

New hires' bonding relational capital comprises their relationships with other members of the hiring organization, who may be incumbents with whom a new hire was previously affiliated (e.g., in the context of boomerang hiring) or other new hires who entered the organization simultaneously (e.g., in the context of liftouts and acqui-hires). This type of capital creates value through the increased availability of social resources to support these hires' socialization and integration in the hiring organization (Munyon et al., 2011)—social resources otherwise unavailable to new hires who lack affiliations in the hiring firm.

The benefits of the support available through new hires' bonding relational capital may materialize in different ways, including increased individual job performance or stronger contributions to key strategic objectives for the hiring organization. For instance, the performance advantage enjoyed by boomerang hires relative to new external hires tends to be stronger when boomerangs return to the same manager, likely because they share an understanding of how to communicate and coordinate with one another that is developed only with time (Keller et al., 2021). We also acknowledge the complementary value of the knowledge resources and relational capital that new hires bring in some HBPA events. For instance, a hiring organization that pursues an acqui-hire of a technology firm may benefit both from the newly hired employees' shared expertise and their shared relational capital enabling them to more effectively leverage that expertise for new collective knowledge creation (Ranft & Lord, 2000).

3.3.3 | Status spillovers

Another vein of research has focused on how HBPA offers signaling benefits rooted in the hiring firms' indirect association with new hires' prior high-status employers. Status spillovers through HBPA are distinct from the aforementioned benefits associated with knowledge transfer and relational capital in that status spillovers materialize through their symbolic rather than their substantive effects on hiring firms (Roberts et al., 2011). That is, apart from substantive benefits (e.g., enhanced product/service quality resulting from access to valuable knowledge) that hiring firms may enjoy through new hires' affiliations, the status of new hires' affiliations has also been shown to "rub off" on hiring firms, conveying benefits of perceived quality or status independent of actual changes in the firms' outputs.

Research has demonstrated status spillovers enjoyed by hiring firms through HBPA in the context of competitor poaching (Ertug & Castellucci, 2013; Hamori, 2010), acqui-hiring (Geis, 2015), and formative affiliation hiring (Bidwell et al., 2015). In these HBPA practices, hiring an employee with a prominent organizational affiliation creates an indirect affiliation between the hiring firm and the high-status source firm, creating the basis for status spillovers via new hires, which may either reinforce the hiring firm's status or improve its reputation (Bidwell et al., 2015; Rivera, 2016). For instance, hiring employees from only a select subset of employers allows the hiring firm to indirectly associate itself with these former employers. This may serve to signal to customers both that the firm only hires skilled individuals and that the firm offers high-quality products or services (Ertug & Castellucci, 2013; Roberts & Khaire, 2009).

Finally, even high-status organizations may take advantage of status spillovers in HBPA, for instance, in expanding the scope of their status to new markets. For example, Google acquired YouTube and Nest not only for the knowledge and relational capital embedded in their employees, but also for the status benefits conveyed through the substantial presence of YouTube and Nest employees in their respective markets at the time of both acquisitions (Geis, 2015).

3.4 | Affiliations as pipes: New propositions

Our review establishes HBPA as a means for hiring firms to acquire preferential access to a variety of resources. The realization of value from such resources is likely to depend on the effective integration of these resources into a hiring firm's operations. This requires the identification and leveraging of similarities or compatibilities of newly accessed resources with a firm's existing resource base (Chatterjee et al., 1992; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998; Porrini, 2004) and a determination of how to manage any differences or incompatibilities (Burt, 1992; Gulati, 1999). In order to understand whether and when the integration of newly acquired resources is likely to be successful, we develop propositions highlighting how the nature of the focal resources and the strength of the relationship between the source and hiring firm shape resource integration.

3.4.1 | Realizing value associated with resources accessed through HBPA

Just as new hires entering a firm may be more or less similar to a hiring firm's current workforce, the resources accessed through HBPA may be more or less similar to a hiring firm's existing resource base. An established literature on exploitation and exploration highlights the benefits that hiring firms may anticipate from gaining access to different types of resources (Groysberg & Lee, 2009; March, 1991). Whereas resources that are more similar to a firm's current resource stocks support the reinforcement, scaling, and exploitation of the hiring firm's existing strengths, resources that are less similar to—or less compatible with—a firm's current resources may set the stage for innovation and/or change (Song et al., 2003).

Importantly, we expect that the novelty associated with dissimilar resources accessed through HBPA will come with costs, including inefficiency and uncertainty in integrating these resources into the hiring firm's operations. Whereas resources that are similar to a firm's existing resource stocks can be readily incorporated to benefit ongoing operations, the integration of resources that are less similar to a firm's existing stocks requires greater investment and entails some degree of uncertainty (e.g., Das & Teng, 2000). For instance, leveraging newfound status from hires' affiliations in unfamiliar markets would require that a firm pivot its efforts to meet new customer needs, navigate relationships within different distribution networks, and adjust production and/or marketing. Likewise, the integration of knowledge that resides further outside a hiring firm's current technological expertise entails greater challenges in learning (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990), steeper barriers to achieving buy-in from incumbent employees (Mullen & Copper, 1994; Tzabbar, 2009), and greater investment to leverage the knowledge for commercial gain (Herstad et al., 2015). Furthermore, the ultimate success of these efforts is uncertain, as both innovation and change require venturing into new and unfamiliar territories that may or may not prove viable for a particular firm (Levinthal & March, 1981, 1993). On these bases, we predict:

Proposition 4: Within the context of HBPA, the less similar the newly accessed resources are to a hiring firm's existing resource base, the greater the uncertainty and inefficiencies the firm will experience in integrating those resources into organizational operations.

3.4.2 | Mitigating challenges associated with integrating dissimilar resources

We conclude from the discussion above that establishing how firms can better integrate dissimilar resources is crucial for understanding when HBPA can be leveraged as an effective conduit for accessing resources that offer a foundation for innovation and change. Much as the case with integrating new hires sourced from organizations employing dissimilar matching logics, we expect that the integration of dissimilar resources in the context of HBPA is likely to be facilitated by strong relational ties connecting the hiring and source organizations.

Relational ties connecting hiring firms and source firms may take multiple forms. These ties may exist at the organization level, with two firms engaging in formal alliances (Porrini, 2004) such as contractual supply chain partnerships (Somaya et al., 2008) and/or informal exchanges, for example, repeated relational “handshake” contracting (Ring & Van de Ven, 1992). These exchanges may precede, follow, and/or be strengthened by the focal HBPA event (Somaya et al., 2008) involving the newly hired employee(s). Ties derived from HBPA—when characterized by trust and goodwill—provide a cooperative basis on which a hiring firm may reach out to a source firm to request insight into how best to integrate focal resources. Indeed, Poppo and Zenger (2002) demonstrate that relational governance based on cooperation acts as a complement to the use of customized contracts as supportive ties between organizations facilitate mutual problem-solving, encourage the sharing of private information, and offer incentives for exchange-specific investments that enhance the value of shared resources. From this standpoint, a firm hiring from a supply chain partner may have greater ease in integrating the supplier-specific logistics knowledge brought by a new employee when the two organizations share a strong relational tie.

In other cases, a new hire’s dyadic ties to members of the source organization from which they were hired may be more directly helpful in overcoming challenges in resource integration. For instance, a new hire’s direct ties to source organization members who have familiarity with a focal resource (e.g., those individuals who generated newly accessed knowledge (Tzabbar et al., 2022)) may serve as channels for tapping into information and support related to the utilization and integration of this resource—whether this be knowledge (Corredoira & Rosenkopf, 2010) or a potential client relationship. Indeed, Somaya et al. (2008) discuss how, in the context of supply chain hiring, when a hiring firm recruits from a potential client, the combination of a new hire’s tacit knowledge about the client firm and their ties with former colleagues may be leveraged to strengthen the hiring firm’s understanding of how to best meet the client’s needs.

In still other cases, the number—rather than the strength—of ties to a source organization may support increased knowledge exchange and coordination between the hiring firm and source organization. For instance, Wagner and Goossen (2018) demonstrated in a sample of pharmaceutical firms that in the context of competitor hiring, the number of inventors who moved between two competitors positively influenced the likelihood of alliance formation between the two firms. In particular, the authors theorized that a larger group of newly hired inventors may collectively possess more ties to members of the source organization (with whom they may prefer to maintain collaborative relationships) and, therefore, offer more bridges between the two firms—facilitating the alignment of the two organizations’ decision frames in negotiations. The authors found that this effect was stronger when the hiring firm was less familiar with the competitor’s technology and in the context of alliances geared toward new technology development (i.e., which require more intensive coordination).

In sum, although utilizing and integrating newly accessed resources that are dissimilar from a hiring firm’s resource stocks is a taxing and uncertain endeavor, we argue that strong relational ties that secure a hiring organization’s connections to a source organization beyond a particular HBPA event are likely to facilitate the integration process. In particular, these ties can provide access to information, support, and goodwill that set the stage for hiring firms to fully leverage the resources made available through HBPA. For instance, these ties may provide the basis for the integration of distant knowledge, for gaining business from a potential client, or for negotiating an alliance to develop technology with a competitor. Accordingly, we propose:

Proposition 5: Within the context of HBPA, greater relational strength in the ties connecting a hiring organization and source organization will help to overcome the uncertainty and inefficiencies associated with integrating resources that are dissimilar from a hiring firm's existing resource base.

4 | DISCUSSION

In bringing together a fragmented literature on the six distinct hiring practices that fall under the HBPA umbrella, our review underscores the important role that candidates' professional affiliations play in firms' hiring decisions and outcomes. Using the metaphor of affiliations as prisms, we first articulated the ways in which firms leverage professional affiliations to improve candidate evaluations, leading to more efficient matching. Using the metaphor of affiliations as pipes, we then described how firms also leverage these affiliations to gain preferred access to external resources that would otherwise be costly or difficult to attain.

In addition to providing a unified conceptual foundation for understanding HBPA, we drew on insights from research on the knowledge-based and relational views of the firm and on organizational learning to develop a series of propositions intended to offer a more comprehensive examination of HBPA by identifying a series of contingencies shaping its effectiveness as a category of hiring practices. We first developed theory to explain how the relative similarity in matching logics between the hiring firm and source affiliation affects not only the efficiency and certainty associated with the resulting match, but also the hiring firm's workforce composition and organizational capabilities. We proposed that hiring from source firms with similar matching logics enables a hiring firm to bring in workers who get up to speed more quickly and whose success in a hiring firm is more certain. At the same time, these benefits are in part rooted in the fact that these employees are likely to look and think like the hiring firm's current employees, leading to a reproduction of the firm's status quo. In contrast, we suggested that hiring from source firms with dissimilar matching logics offers a means to increase workforce diversity and infuse a hiring firm with new perspectives, but that this novelty comes with the costs of inefficiencies and uncertainty in new hires' integration.

Recognizing these tradeoffs, we then advanced the idea that strong relational ties connecting a hiring firm and source firm may enable easier integration of those HBPA hires who, based on the dissimilar matching logics employed by their source affiliation, are most likely to bring diverse backgrounds and new perspectives to the hiring firm. In doing so, we provide valuable insight as to how firms can utilize HBPA as a path to greater workforce diversity and increased capacity for innovation and change without sacrificing productivity.

Our review of research focusing on HBPA as a means to gain access to resources from new hires' source affiliations revealed that the existing literature has paid more attention to the acquisition than to the integration of these resources. This is noteworthy as we determined that, like new hires who markedly differ from a hiring firm's existing workforce, resources that are dissimilar from a firm's current resource base are likely to both offer important bases for innovation and change and present greater challenges in integration. Accordingly, we extended our consideration of relational ties between hiring and source firms to this context of resource integration. Specifically, we proposed that strong relational ties connecting the hiring firm with a new hire's source affiliation are likely to offer access to unique information, guidance, and support that can mitigate the challenges of resource integration in these circumstances—suggesting the benefits of a more relational (vs. transactional) view of prospective hires' affiliations in such instances of HBPA. Taken together, these theoretical advances point to the need for scholars to devote more attention to understanding how and when HBPA may affect organizations and careers in ways not intended—and in some cases perhaps not yet recognized. In addition, and more generally, these developments point to the need for more explicit and consistent attention to the role of employees' prior affiliations in shaping the resource stocks and organizational capabilities of their employers. We offer directions to this end below.

4.1 | Insights for future research

The centrality of prospective employees' affiliations has implications likely to extend beyond the individual hiring practices that have engaged much of the research in our review and that have been the focus of our theorizing. Below, we explore some of these [additional implications](#).

4.1.1 | Expanding our perspective of labor market matching

Traditionally, scholars have conceptualized labor market matching as the bilateral screening and sorting functions by which hiring organizations and job seekers pursue a favorable fit—with respect to KSAs and values—in the job search and hiring process. We tend to evaluate the success of this matching in terms of newcomers' satisfaction, commitment, early performance, and retention in the organization (Weller et al., 2019).

Expanding the idea of worker–employer match, our theorizing emphasizes the implications of (dis)similarity between hiring firms' and other firms' matching logics in our consideration of HBPA. Measuring matching logic similarity between firms might be accomplished in several ways, and we suggest a few possibilities here. Scholars could leverage large-scale data collection efforts, such as the joint endeavor by MIT and Glassdoor, that analyzes dimensions of organizational culture for hundreds of firms using employee reviews (Sull et al., 2019). Comparative matching logics could be discerned using a subset of the dimensions of this analysis. Another avenue to explore would be partnering with consulting firms who gather data on recruiting, selection, and development practices across multiple firms in creating annual benchmark studies (e.g., Deloitte, Mercer, Willis Towers Watson) to identify a subset of practices/processes within each of these stages that are indicative of matching logic similarity. Scholars could also partner with individual firms who closely track hiring, performance, and turnover using archival data to retroactively assess matching logics using selection and exit interview data. These and related measurement approaches have the potential to foster new future research that benefit from an expanded conceptualization of matching.

Our review and propositions also highlight that matches made through HBPA may create value by granting hiring firms preferred access to resources associated with new hires' affiliations. We have argued that the realization of such value may depend on the presence of relational ties between the hiring firm and source affiliation that support ongoing access and/or ease the integration of these resources. From this standpoint, both the evaluation of match quality and the relational strength between the hiring firm and the firms from which it hires account for the value of the resources made available through new hires' affiliations.

We envision a range of research questions that may follow. For instance, to what extent do the relational benefits associated with hiring from a supplier depend on the quality of a hiring organization's pre-existing relationship (or potential relational compatibility) with that supplier? How does the notion of organizational fit between acquirer and target in the M&A literature apply to the relationship between the newly hired employees and the merged organization?

An expanded conceptualization of matching also has implications for research and practice rooted more squarely in the areas of recruitment and selection. In particular, an expanded view of matching necessitates the consideration of a broader set of criteria for assessing hiring effectiveness, including both new hires' direct contributions based on task performance and less direct contributions that emerge from individuals' professional affiliations.

While newcomers' prior work experience may not demonstrate a consistently strong relationship with individual task performance (Van Iddekinge et al., 2019), if their work experience allowed them to form meaningful professional affiliations, it may be a source of immense value to a hiring firm. Our propositions suggest that instead of defining and assessing the value offered by employees strictly based on task performance, scholars and practitioners alike could take more accurate stock of employee value by also accounting for the resources to which employees provide access through their affiliations. Measuring this expanded match quality would involve, perhaps, partnering with companies

to introduce new measures of contribution. We hesitate to provide specific suggestions here given the wide variety of ways HBPA hires can add value, but a couple of examples might be maintaining strong connections with a client organization or providing intimate knowledge of a competitor's routines.

4.1.2 | Understanding HBPA in the context of firms' hiring and resource acquisition strategies

Having emphasized the ways that HBPA shapes the workforce composition and resource base of a hiring firm, a critical area for future inquiry is the examination of how HBPA fits within firms' broader human capital and resource management strategies (Brymer et al., 2019; Sirmon et al., 2007). For instance, how does acqui-hiring compare to alliance formation in effectiveness, in cost, and in enabling an organization to access and leverage the expertise within a target firm? To what extent are liftouts effective substitutes for internal team development efforts in harnessing the power of well-functioning teams? What role do various HBPA practices play when firms need to scale due to high growth or manage highly fluctuating staffing needs?

Relatedly, it would be worthwhile to examine how organizations' repeated reliance on or combination of HBPA practices influences the outcomes of these practices (e.g., match quality, ease of new hire, and resource integration), as well as interorganizational network dynamics. For instance, repeated hiring from a particular competitor could have implications extending beyond labor market exchanges, such as antagonistic competitive dynamics in product markets (Gardner, 2002). Alternatively, extensive but diversified client, competitor, and/or supplier hiring may help organizations attain favorable central positions in the industry network, which could offer benefits such as sales growth, more favorable supplier contracts, and critical strategic alliances.

At the same time, organizations' immediate strategic objectives do not always determine key decisions, hiring or otherwise. Organizations' resource management activities are path-dependent, such that prior decisions and investments enable and constrain available activities. For instance, large-scale boomerang hiring requires active management of the alumni network; acqui-hires require significant capital outlays unavailable to many organizations; and active hiring pipelines to a particular formative affiliation may preclude the development of other large-scale hiring partnerships. Moreover, hiring managers and other key organizational actors make decisions within the confines of bounded rationality, such that the best-fitting hiring approach in the context of an organization's strategic objectives may not necessarily be the one chosen. Accordingly, in addition to determining the relative effectiveness of different HBPA practices under various circumstances (or when organizations should use particular HBPA practices), scholars may examine antecedents to better understand when organizations do use particular HBPA practices in isolation or combination as this has direct implications for heterogeneity in firms' human capital-based resources. Answers to these questions would provide hiring managers better insights into biases they might have with respect to hiring from particular sources as well as how to better shape and strengthen their portfolio of HBPA practices.

4.1.3 | Extending insights on HBPA to the context of hiring based on educational affiliations

We excluded education affiliations from our conceptualization of HBPA given our focus on employment-related affiliations. However, we suspect that these affiliations share important similarities and foresee fruitful opportunities for cross-fertilization of insights in scholarship. For instance, research in sociology highlights the prevalence of professional status firms' reliance on elite educational affiliations as prisms to facilitate matching early in individuals' careers and sheds light on the implications of this practice for workforce diversity (e.g., Oyer & Schaefer, 2016). In particular, this work emphasizes that because prestigious universities' matching logics (e.g., selection criteria, tuition rates) result in limited representation of marginalized racial and ethnic groups, repeated hiring from such schools reproduces

status-seeking firms' existing (homogenous) workforce compositions. As a result, this practice reinforces the systematic exclusion of marginalized individuals who are scarcely represented in the initial pool of students under a firm's consideration (Rivera, 2011, 2012, 2016, Rivera & Tilcsik, 2016), a pattern that is likely to be further exacerbated by the tendency of firms to develop pipelines for later-career hires from other firms with ties to the same elite schools (Josefy et al., 2022).

We see the applicability of insights on HBPA to recent advances in educational affiliation hiring. For instance, recent media attention has focused on cases where hiring firms that have traditionally targeted entry-level recruitment efforts to Ivy League universities have recognized the potential to hire qualified graduates from select HBCUs (historically black colleges and universities) (Umoh, 2019). While recognizing the benefits for increased workforce diversity, these firms have also recognized the challenges associated with HBCUs' use of dissimilar matching logics relative to those used by elite universities. These differences result in new hires with profiles (e.g., individual differences often including race, socioeconomic background, exposure to professions, work experiences, and extra-curricular activities) that markedly differ from a firm's typical hires and that can pose unique barriers to socialization and integration.

As one approach to bridge the gaps that HBCU hires may face, some of these hiring organizations have formed partnerships with HBCUs to better understand the differences in their students' experiences and in turn have developed mentoring arrangements (Jackley, 2021), brand and business immersion experiences (Lynn, 2016), and targeted internships for the HBCU's students (Umoh, 2019). The hope is that these investments and partnerships, developed in the context of hiring pipeline relationships with these HBCUs (Brymer et al., 2019; 2014), will help to facilitate such students' transition into the hiring firm, while setting the stage for a repeated benefit as more students progress through the pipeline over time. While research and time will be needed to determine the effectiveness of these initiatives (and their potential shortcomings, e.g., Tiku, 2021), these efforts resonate with the insights we advanced in our theorizing, underscoring the potential value of information and guidance made available through strong relational ties connecting a hiring firm with source affiliations that employ dissimilar matching logics.

4.2 | Practical implications

Our review and propositions also provide several insights into how firms might improve their efforts to acquire and integrate external hires in a general sense, as well as considerations for the use of HBPA in particular.

We have noted that limited and inconsistent tracking of HBPA makes the prevalence and effectiveness of these practices across organizations difficult to systematically assess. As a path forward, firms should begin by making a concerted effort to catalogue the professional affiliations of the employees they hire, much in the way that firms already record employees' educational affiliations and sourcing through referral programs. Having this information accessible is not only a necessary first step for evaluating the effectiveness of employees with certain professional affiliations, but also critical for informing the firm's talent acquisition and integration efforts over time. Thus, firms should create data fields that clearly indicate when employees enter the organization through any HBPA practices (while also noting from which specific source firms) and should retroactively fill out these fields for current employees.

Our propositions also have implications for how firms can best leverage candidates' professional affiliations to support their efforts to increase diversity and accelerate innovation. Firms interested in accomplishing both goals should focus their talent acquisition efforts on candidates working for organizations whose matching logics are distinct from their own. Employees at such firms are more likely to look, think, and possess knowledge different from the firm's current employees. Firms should also find it relatively easy to approximate the degree of matching logic similarity. Many firms provide detailed information about their recruitment, socialization, and development efforts on their corporate websites and even more information is publicly available via employee testimonials on Glassdoor, Fairygodboss, and other online company review sites (for an excellent example, see Sull et al., 2019).

We have noted that once hired, candidates from organizations with different matching logics are more likely to struggle to find their footing within the organization as they face challenges in making personal connections

and adapting to new ways of working. Thus, efforts to hire such employees should be paired with high-touch onboarding efforts. For example, firms might make it a priority to more regularly engage with these candidates during preboarding—the time between when an offer is accepted and the candidate's start date—a practice supported by recent data showing that such pre-entry engagement deepens new hires' sense of connection to a hiring firm (Talent Board, 2021). Such efforts are likely to be particularly valuable in helping employees entering from very different firms to contribute more quickly.

Our work also highlights the value in recruiting from firms with whom the hiring firm has pre-existing relationships. While many firms leverage the relationships of their employees by incentivizing referrals, few put as much recruiting emphasis on their relationships with other organizations. Many of the presumed benefits of external hiring should be amplified when hiring from an organization with whom a hiring firm has a strong pre-existing relationship. This is particularly true when the goal is to diversify the firm's human capital, knowledge resources, and relational capital. In all of these cases, hiring and post-hire integration carries greater uncertainty. As such, firms should seek to hire diverse candidates possessing distinctive resources from firms with whom they have pre-existing ties, including those from whom they have previously hired or with whom they currently do business. Importantly, extant research suggests that such hiring practices are likely to strengthen existing relationships rather be seen as predatory poaching (e.g., Somaya et al., 2008) and that firms may gain strategic and recruiting advantages from establishing talent pipelines through repeated hiring from a source (Brymer et al., 2019).

We would also encourage managers to consider new hires' professional affiliations when assessing their on-the-job performance, especially early in their tenures. Managers are often encouraged to evaluate all of their subordinates on similar criteria in order to ensure fairness and consistency. Yet, by virtue of their professional affiliations, some employees are more likely to enter the organization ready to contribute immediately and in the same manner as existing employees, while others may take longer to get up-to-speed and may contribute in more novel ways. Accounting for these novel contributions is critical if managers would like to retain employees who bring new ideas and resources into the firm. Penalizing them for not performing in immediate and conventional ways may drive such employees to turnover before the firm realizes value from their hiring. One approach to doing so may be for hiring firms to adopt recent "reinventions" of performance management that have been introduced in firms ranging from Deloitte to GE to The Gap. These reinvented performance review processes approach performance management less from the traditional perspective of a manager's reflective (and standardized) evaluations of an employee's performance and more from the perspective of how the manager believes an employee can be best managed and how the actions of the employee affect a wider range of stakeholders (Buckingham & Goodall, 2015; Christensen, 2015). Such individualized approaches can be tailored to account for the unique circumstances of different employees, and may thus offer a more accurate way to account for the varied scope and timing of new hires' contributions. When paired with frequent feedback and coaching, these approaches may also offer a means for hiring organizations to more systematically nurture and leverage HBPA hires' relevant relational ties to their prior affiliations.

5 | CONCLUSION

Acqui-hiring, boomerang hiring, competitor poaching, formative affiliation hiring, liftouts, and supply chain hiring are six hiring practices with distinct characteristics. Yet they share a powerful commonality—in each case, hiring decisions are strongly influenced by the professional affiliation held by a prospective employee. Our review elaborates the ways that hiring firms leverage these affiliations to improve matching in recruitment and selection and to gain access to valuable resources upon newcomers' organizational entry. Our propositions set the stage for a more nuanced consideration of how and when HBPA may contribute to different goals associated with a hiring firm's workforce composition, resource stocks, and organizational capabilities. In so doing, we underscore that realizing value associated with new hires and newly accessed resources requires that they be effectively integrated into a hiring firm, and that relational ties to their source firms may be instrumental in overcoming challenges in this process.

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NOTES

¹ Additional evidence similarly reflects the prevalence of other HBPA practices, with reports of rampant high-profile competitor and supplier hiring (particularly among tech giants) frequently appearing in the business press (Rowell, 2020), documentation of formative affiliation hiring from targeted “academy companies” dating back to the 1980s (Sonnenfeld & Peiperl, 1988) and law firms establishing new practice areas to help clients execute and defend against liftouts (Davies & Giampina, 2015).

² We do not classify referral hiring as an HBPA practice because most referrals are made by prospective hires’ personal ties (e.g., friends and family members) (Payscale, 2018). Referral hiring has received substantial attention as a distinct hiring practice in its own right, with a review of this research provided by Schlachter and Pieper (2019).

³ We provide a complete list of references included in our review in the online supplement, S1.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable, as the article describes entirely theoretical research. No datasets were generated or analyzed in this study.

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