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Bridging the Research-Practice Divide: A Study of Scholar-Practitioners’ Multiple Role Management Strategies and Knowledge Spillovers across Roles

Guillaume Carton, Institut Supérieur de Gestion¹

Paula Ungureanu, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between multiple role management strategies and associated knowledge spillovers across roles. We focus on a particular category of boundary-spanning professionals, the scholar-practitioners – professionals who work across the boundaries of academic and practice worlds – and apply a role theory lens to study a) the sources of inter-role conflict they experience at role boundaries b) the strategies of role management they enact and c) the knowledge spillovers associated to such strategies. We develop a grounded model that describes three role management strategies which occupy different positions on a role separation-integration continuum, and generate different mechanisms of knowledge spillover. Our study sheds light on the understudied relationship between role management strategies and knowledge consequences, and the type of tensions

¹ guillaume.carton@isg.fr

individuals experience in this process. Additionally, we discuss how the strategic management of teaching, research and practical application roles can help bridge academic and practice worlds.

Keywords: Scholar-practitioner; theory-practice debate; role theory; role conflict; multiple role management strategies; knowledge spillover; segmentation; integration; boundary spanning.

INTRODUCTION

This study is concerned with how multiple role management strategies impact on individuals' ability to combine knowledge that derives from different role domains. Taking the general case of boundary spanners—i.e., those professionals who move across multiple work fields to carry out their goals, objectives and tasks (Bartel, 2001; Williams, 2002)—we focus on role management strategies enacted by scholar-practitioners as they move across academic and managerial fields. We focus on scholar-practitioners for several reasons. Drawing on the theory-practice debate that has permeated the field of management in the last decades, we suggest that scholar-practitioners exemplify the challenges of connecting different types of knowledge across role domains (Bartunek & Rynes, 2014; Hughes, Bence, Grisoni, O'Regan, & Wornham, 2011; Kieser, Nicolai, & Seidl, 2015; Markides, 2007, 2011). In turn, studying scholar-practitioners can advance current understandings in role theory about the relationship between how individuals manage multiple roles and how their knowledge moves across role domains.

There is in fact a consensus in the theory-practice debate that management scholars and practitioners organize around distinct systems of expertise that in turn reflect distinct knowledge concerns—i.e., rigorous scientific knowledge and practically relevant knowledge respectively (Bartunek & Rynes, 2014; Kieser & Leiner, 2009; Kieser et al., 2015). While some studies have argued that these differences determine an unbridgeable research-practice divide (Kieser & Leiner, 2009), others have shown that successful knowledge transfers between research and practice occur on a daily basis (Hodgkinson & Rousseau, 2009; Shapiro, Kirkman, & Courtney, 2007). Illustrations have included joint academic-practitioner projects (Amabile et al., 2001; Bansal, Bertels, Ewart, MacConnachie, & O'Brien, 2012; Van de Ven, 2007), executive education programs (Burke & Rau, 2010; Clinebell & Clinebell, 2008; Tushman, O'Reilly, Fenollosa, Kleinbaum, & McGrath, 2007), and, to our interest, the emergence of

theory-practice boundary spanners (Hughes et al., 2011; Kram, Wasserman, & Yip, 2012; Markides, 2007, 2011; Stoppelenburg & Vermaak, 2009; Vermaak & de Caluwé, 2016; Wasserman & Kram, 2009).

Sometimes known also under the names of *idea practitioners* (Davenport, Prusak, & Wilson, 2003) or *knowledge entrepreneurs* (Abrahamson & Fairchild, 1999), scholar-practitioners distinguish as individuals who “have one foot each in the worlds of academia and practice and are pointedly interested in advancing the causes of both theory and practice” (Tenkasi & Hay, 2008, p.50). Due to their highly heterogeneous profiles, their “home base” can be either academic, practice, or hybrid institutional forms (Kram et al., 2012; Lind & Rhenman, 1989; Vermaak & de Caluwé, 2016) while some have even questioned the possibility of identifying a “home base” position at all (Wasserman & Kram, 2009). Practitioners with PhDs that occasionally teach and conduct research in business schools, business consultants who also hold tenure in business schools, academics that consult for companies and are engaged in practice-oriented dissemination, or individuals who move on from working in business schools to create their own companies, are just some category-blurring examples of scholar-practitioners (Knight & Lightowler, 2010).

The main peculiarity of boundary spanners such as scholar-practitioners seems to be their liminality: their being situated “betwixt and between” (Turner, 1969), in an intermediate, ambiguous and temporary position in which they span across multiple cultures in such way that they contribute to all and to none of them at the same time (Beech, 2011). Since liminality entails hybridity and ambiguity, it can constitute both a threat and an opportunity for boundary spanners (Bartel, 2001; Williams, 2002). However, despite the acknowledgement that scholar-practitioners play an important role in bridging separate worlds, little is known about the processes through which they carve out a place for themselves in between well-defined social groups, or about the struggles they undertake to maintain, expand or negotiate their fragile

positions over time. There is also limited understanding of when and how they use knowledge from academic and/or practice domains, and how they transfer knowledge from one role to another. Additionally, more needs to be learnt about how managing knowledge across roles shapes scholar-practitioners' knowledge repertoires (Kram et al., 2012; Lind & Rhenman, 1989; Stoppelenburg & Vermaak, 2009; Tenkasi & Hay, 2008; Vermaak & de Caluwé, 2016; Wasserman & Kram, 2009).

To address these questions, our study adopts a role perspective drawn from role theory, and in particular from studies concerned with multiple role management, such as the micro-role transition literature (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006; Nippert-Eng, 1996) and the literature on work-life role management (Cohen, Duberley, & Musson, 2009; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Rothbard, Phillips, & Dumas, 2005). We use role literature to develop insights about the conflicts related to multiple role enactment, the strategies that individuals adopt to manage conflicts deriving from their multiple memberships, and consequences in terms of knowledge spillover across roles (Smit, Maloney, Maertz, & Montag-Smit, 2016).

To answer these challenges, our study builds on 16 in-depth interviews with experienced scholar-practitioners to understand the strategies they use to manage their professional roles. Our findings present the tensions that scholar-practitioners experience in enacting their professional roles—i.e., teaching, research and practical application—simultaneously or at short intervals of time, and describe three role management strategies through which these conflicts are overcome. Through a grounded theory exercise, we develop a model that connects scholar-practitioners' strategies of multiple role management with consequences in terms of knowledge spillovers. Specifically, we show that how individuals move across a continuum ranging from role separation to integration determines how their knowledge travels across role domains.

We contribute to theory and practice in different ways. First, we contribute to the literature on multiple roles management. Much of the focus in prior research has been on consequences of role integration and segmentation such as stress, job satisfaction, and well-being (e.g., Edwards & Rothbard, 1999; Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006; Kreiner et al., 2006). We complement this research by showing how different role management strategies can lead to different consequences in terms of knowledge spillover across roles, and point out that individuals' preferences for multiple role management, and the types of knowledge they mobilize, depend on a temporal dimension (i.e., their career lifecycle). Second, we contribute to theorizing about what boundary spanning individuals represent for the management discipline and how they challenge the *status quo* of the theory-practice debate. Our study allows a better understanding of those aspects that supposedly render academic-practitioner exchanges problematic and identifies leverages that can narrow the so-called research-practice divide (Bartunek & Rynes, 2014; Kieser et al., 2015).

THE SCHOLAR-PRACTITIONER IN THE THEORY-PRACTICE DEBATE

The liminal space in between management academia and managerial practice is populated by scholar-practitioners. They act as boundary spanners: individuals that are required to draw on and contribute to multiple work fields to carry out their goals, objectives and tasks (Bartel, 2001; Williams, 2002). In "Liminality and Communitas", Turner (1969) defines such individuals as "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony" (p. 95). The scholar-practitioner constitutes the vivid example of a rising liminal category of professionals. Their professional activities cut across managerial and academic fields which are animated by specific logics, practices, interests and expertise (see reviews by Bartunek & Rynes, 2014; Kieser et al., 2015). Examples include managers with PhDs who occasionally teach, research or consult in business

schools, academics with either strong interest in practical dissemination or involvement in the business consulting industry, independent consultants with academic backgrounds, management gurus or proactive entrepreneurs in knowledge-intensive companies (Kram et al., 2012).

As different as these professionals may be from one another, at least three aspects join them under the same category and distinguish them from traditional scholars and traditional practitioners. First, their professional identities are tied to both academic and managerial roles in such way that both contribute significantly to their professional identity. Living as they do, in between two communities, their personalities and careers are interwoven and mirror aspects of both communities (Simmel, 2011; Stonequist, 1937) and can provide further understanding of the relations between them (Turner, 1969). Second, the frequent need to negotiate divergent requirements coming from different communities brings them to develop a hybrid professional identity based on hybrid practices and hybrid knowledge systems (Lind & Rhenman, 1989; Stoppelenburg & Vermaak, 2009; Tenkasi & Hay, 2008; Vermaak & de Caluwé, 2016; Wasserman & Kram, 2009). Third, they operate in a liminal state which is permanent, rather than temporary. From such standpoint, spanning boundaries across academia and managerial worlds is not one role out of many, but a perpetual work condition (Ybema, Beech, & Ellis, 2011).

Despite the acknowledgement that scholar-practitioners might be key in theory-practice conversations (Hughes et al., 2011; Markides, 2007), little is known about the processes through which such professionals carve out a place for themselves in between the two worlds. There is also little understanding of the types of roles they enact across the two worlds. Reflecting on the variety of roles that scholars are expected to perform in nowadays society, Boyer (1990) distinguishes between discovery roles (i.e., creating new knowledge), integration (i.e., creating connections across multiple disciplines and paradigms), application (i.e., using

knowledge to solve problems) and teaching (i.e., communicating knowledge to students and other interested parties). Additionally, McInnis (1998) has shown an increasing participation of academics in administrative role activities and Jain, George, and Maltarich (2009) have pointed to the more novel institutional entrepreneurship role (i.e., brokering between actors, resources and institutions to take research to the market).

The strategies scholar-practitioners enact to pursue objectives in these roles have received limited attention so far (see Empson, 2012; Kram et al., 2012; Vermaak & de Caluwé, 2016; Wasserman & Kram, 2009). As exceptions, Wasserman and Kram (2009) find that tensions between roles with different requirements, pace and focus lead to dilemmas that scholar-practitioners must answer on a daily basis in order to maintain a coherent sense of the self (see also Markides, 2011). In this sense, Empson (2012) compares bridging research and practice with “having an affair” and Butler, Delaney, and Spoelstra (2015) also mention a series of trade-offs and compromises that such affair might lead to—something Empson refers to as “infidelities”. Even if it has been also argued that individuals can benefit from role spillovers (i.e., Kooor-Misra, 2012), the attempt to create role synergies is mostly documented to generate negative feelings, such as fear of losing one’s professional identity, burn-out, confusion or anxiety (Butler, Delaney, & Spoelstra, 2015; Empson, 2012). Finally, an interesting insight comes from the work of Vermaak and Caluwe (2016) that frames scholar-practitioners’ activities as journeys in search of originality. According to the authors, these journeys are spurred by breakdowns and serendipity, and shaped by incremental elaboration, as they reach maturity.

Even though existing studies describe scholar-practitioners’ role management as challenging and point out a set of consequences as the ones indicated above, there has been little understanding of the strategies themselves—i.e., how scholar-practitioners surf between roles in the worlds of research and practice. Therefore, more needs to be learned about the

extent(s) and way(s) in which multiple roles conflict can be reconciled. Additionally, more attention should be devoted to how scholar-practitioners capture disparate knowledge and social roles coming from practice and academia and use them to avoid threats, build professional opportunities and craft a distinctive professional identity (Kram et al., 2012; Wasserman & Kram, 2009). To address these observations, we adopt a theoretical frame that focuses on multiple roles strategies and role knowledge domains. To this end, we turn to the literature on micro role transitions (Ashforth et al., 2000) and on work-life roles balance (Clark, 2000; Cohen et al., 2009; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Shumate & Fulk, 2004).

A ROLE THEORY APPROACH TO MULTIPLE ROLE TRANSITION AND MULTIPLE ROLE MANAGEMENT

Multiple Role Management Strategies

Role theory defines roles as “the recurring actions of an individual, appropriately interrelated with the repetitive activities of others so as to yield a predictable outcome” (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p.189). They are based on actors’ expectations for their own and others’ behavior (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Individuals can engage in different roles which are characterized by specific attitudes and behavior patterns and are designed to fit each domain’s rules and expectations (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). For this reason, in many cases each role has a specific identity that contrasts with other role identities (Ashforth et al., 2000).

Most attention in the multiple role management literature is focused on describing transition strategies (for recent reviews see Ramarajan, 2014; Reyt & Wiesenfeld, 2015; Smit et al., 2016). The most frequent transition strategies to manage multiple roles are (1) role segmentation which implies keeping role boundaries clear and separate while creating a space to exit one role and enter another and (2) role integration which implies overlapping roles by combining available time, resources and/or cognitive energy (Ashforth, 2000; Ashforth et al.,

2000; Clark, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Nippert-Eng, 1996). Ashforth and colleagues (2000) argue that segmentation is most likely to occur when boundaries between roles are thick and roles highly differentiated, while integration is most likely to occur when the boundary between roles is permeable and flexible—i.e., when roles are embedded in similar contexts or when they overlap in terms of space, time and membership (see also Rau & Hyland, 2002; Rothbard et al., 2005; Smit et al., 2016). It is also noteworthy that segmentation and integration are each associated with certain costs and benefits that affect the ways in which boundaries are created, maintained and eventually crossed (Ashforth, 2000). Accordingly, segmenting roles increases clarity and simplifies the domain of each role, reducing thus role strains such as stress, depression, and mood swings (Ashforth et al., 2000; Meyerson & Scully, 1995). However, it also increases the effort necessary for boundary crossing and might render actors less prone to taking up new roles (Winkel & Clayton, 2010). Oppositely, role integration may promote greater flexibility and higher ability to cope with multiple demands. However, studies show that role integration also increases confusion about roles, and might generate negative cognitions and emotions (Ashforth et al., 2000; Bochantin & Cowan, 2016; Rothbard et al., 2005). For instance, in a seminal work, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) argue that multiple roles that compete for a person's resources (i.e., time, cognitive abilities) will impact that persons' social performances (i.e., ability to meet others' expectations), and cause psycho-social tensions such as social anxiety, fatigue, depression or irritability.

As Ramarajan (2014) and Smit and colleagues (2016) notice in recent reviews of the multiple role literature, most studies describe role segmentation and role integration as opposites (Ashforth, 2000; Ashforth et al., 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Phillips, Rothbard, & Dumas, 2009). However, in developmental approaches, the career of an individual is achieved by ensuring both (Brewer, 1991; Kreiner et al., 2006). It thus becomes important to focus on

strategies in between segmentation and integration. For instance, in the organizational identity literature, Pratt and Foreman (2000) identified, in addition to segmentation and integration, two other strategies: deletion—i.e., ridding oneself of a particular identity—and aggregation—i.e., retaining all distinct identities while creating loose ties among them. On their side, Kreiner and colleagues (2006) identified strategies that they referred to as neutral/dual-function tactics (see also Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). In line with this direction, Ramarajan (2014) suggests that multiple role identities might be connected to each other through both positive and negative ties, such that individuals might employ segmentation and/or integration to reinforce positive ties and prevent negative ties from taking the stage.

All in all, although extant role studies contribute significantly to understanding the identities of boundary spanners, they rarely shed light on the mechanisms and conditions in which role integrations or role separations are performed (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2009; Smit et al., 2016; Van Dyne, Kossek, & Lobel, 2007). In addition, little is known about the knowledge consequences triggered by multiple role management strategies.

Multiple Role Management Strategies and Role Knowledge Spillover

Although multiple role studies assume that role boundaries are important psychologically (Ashforth et al., 2000), and might have multiple consequences in terms of stress, job satisfaction, and well-being (Edwards & Rothbard, 1999; Kossek et al., 2006; Kreiner et al., 2006), we know little about how enacting more integrated or segmented roles shapes how people use knowledge deriving from these roles (Reyt & Wiesenfeld, 2015). For instance, studies by Kanter (1977), Friedman, DeGroot, and Christensen (1998) and Greenhaus and Powell (2006) have speculated that multiple roles provide the opportunity for skills and knowledge learned in one role to be transferred in other roles, either directly or mediated by general knowledge structures (Edwards & Rothbard, 1999). For Ashforth and colleagues (2000), role segmentation and separation might lead to different task management behaviors:

while the first strategy implies terminating tasks and objects associated with one role to prepare for others, the latter strategy might imply more hybridized tasks. A recent study by Reyt and Wiesenfeld (2015) shows that integration strategies lead to more abstract mental presentation and a preference for exploratory knowledge, while segmentation strategies focus individuals' attention on concrete mental representations and operative knowledge exploitation. Although these studies have provided valuable insights on the argument, they have only marginally touched the interplay between role management strategies and knowledge management strategies (Kossek et al., 2006; Smit et al., 2016).

As follows we will argue that studying scholar-practitioners that span across multiple role boundaries can contribute to understanding the relationship between multiple role management and role knowledge spillover.

METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on the strategies that scholar-practitioners develop to balance their different roles across academia and the practice world. For this purpose, we conducted a qualitative study of experienced scholar-practitioners and developed a grounded model about the strategies that scholar-practitioners use to deal with multiple role conflicts. The next subsections detail the data collection strategy and the methodology for data analysis.

Data Collection

As this study aims at understanding how scholar-practitioners deal with their different role identities, the first step was to identify a relevant pool of scholar-practitioners. First, we used the academic literature to identify senior scholar-practitioners with a consolidated professional image as boundary spanners. We then conducted a research on management conference awards for practical impact and compiled a list of prize recipients. In addition, we used "management thinkers" rankings such as Thinkers50.com and drew on related

conversations that have been held in the management press. Finally, by relying on colleagues, we obtained names of people identified as scholar-practitioners in a more local setting and used local newspapers, online vitae, publications, etc., to check whether the activities they performed defined them as scholar-practitioners. This allowed us to have in our sample both retrospective and synchronous accounts of multiple role management strategies. The final sample consists of 16 scholar-practitioners ranging from 10 to 50 years of practical experience (see Table 1). 13 of them hold a PhD, DBA or equivalent while the other 3 have a MBA or a master degree. At the time of the interview, 4 of them were based in management consulting firms while the other 12 were primarily based in a university or a business school. Finally, the participants either come from Europe (10) or from North America (6) and reflected many of the characteristics identified by the literature (Abrahamson & Fairchild, 1999; Davenport et al., 2003; Kram et al., 2012). For instance, interviewee 11 was based in a top European business school after a PhD earned in the USA. He has been recognized by the academic community both for his research published in top-tier academic journals and by his relevance for practice that was attested by book publications, articles published in bridge journals, newspaper articles and consulting activities. Interviewee 12, on the contrary, is based in a well-known management strategy consulting firm for which he has worked for decades and has moved around its world-wide offices. He has always had research collaborations with the academic world. Not only he has developed high impact ideas published in impactful management books but has also authored more than a dozen practitioner-oriented articles.

We employed semi-structured interviews to have a deep understanding of the practices deployed by scholar-practitioners to cope with their multiple roles. As some of the scholar-practitioners are highly involved in academic discussions related to the relevance of management research, secondary data were used as a preparatory material—i.e., books, articles, biographies and previous interviews. The interviews were organized around 4 themes: (1) a

focus on the life career of the scholar-practitioner with an emphasis on different role identities over time; (2) a focus on the benefits and difficulties of dealing with different role activities and the strategies they develop to face them; (3) a reflection on the personal motives that led to adopt multiple roles in academia and the practice world; (4) an open-ending on future possibilities for scholar-practitioners and their impact in both academia and managerial practice. Interviews were recorded and transcribed when approved by the participant. Their duration was from 36 minutes to almost three hours, with an average time of 72 minutes per interview (see Table 1).

----- Insert Table 1 about here. -----

Data Analysis

We performed data analysis using the consolidated theory of Strauss and Corbin (1990) to develop a grounded model of how scholar-practitioners manage multiple professional roles. We first open coded the transcripts and notes using our interviewees' words and ordered them using their own categories. Then we related the initial open codes to the themes identified in the literature review. We gradually developed a global view of the role structure attached to the scholar-practitioner identity and of how interviewees connected their multiple roles into self-relevant wholes (see also Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Kreiner et al., 2006).

Moving towards more analytic coding, we identified different sources of role conflicts experienced by scholar-practitioners. We noticed, for instance that they indicated states of mind such as "stress", "preoccupation", "pressure to respond to extant challenges" that they associated to norms, rules and behaviors that characterized the evolution of their professional fields. Through additional coding, we realized that these pressures were directed towards role separation. At the same time, we noticed that interviewees opposed what we called "institutional pressures for role integration" to desires to build role synergies, something we labeled as "personal aspiration towards role integration". Additionally, we identified three

different strategies they employed to deal with these pressures. After re-reading our data we also identified a series of role knowledge management strategies, and through a trial and error process, we noticed that each role knowledge strategy corresponded to a different role management strategy. Figure 1 provides a summary of the data structure, showing the first and second level categories that allowed us to identify three different role management strategies, and three types of knowledge consequences. The results of the analysis are presented in the following section.

----- Insert Figure 1 about here. -----

FINDINGS

We found that scholar-practitioners move within a three-party role structure containing teaching roles, research roles, and practical application roles. We first describe the mechanisms underlying the tensions that scholar-practitioners experience as they enact these roles simultaneously or at short intervals of time. We then identify and describe at length the different strategies that they employ to manage such tensions and explore the connection between role management strategies and role knowledge spillovers. Finally, we discuss the enactment of these strategies over time.

Scholar-Practitioners' Multiple Roles

While we asked them about their different activities, our interviewees frequently reported distinctions between three types of roles: the teaching role, the research role, and the practical application role.

The teaching role referred to classroom activities that academics carried out inside and outside the academic institution, from long term undergraduate, graduate and executive programs to occasional seminars and workshops. These included a long list of activities such as preparing curricula, coordinating with colleagues, lecturing, providing explanations,

discussing cases, assessing student preparation, grading, facilitating learning or mediating classroom dialogue.

The research role comprised mainly research-related activities, such as searching for new insights, conducting empirical research, spotting and filling theoretical gaps, developing new arguments, contributing to new literatures, conforming to scientific standards, attending academic conferences, reviewing and revising scientific work, among others.

The practical application role was understood by our interviewees as the sum of activities in which they engaged with stakeholders outside academia. This role included as many as training executives, consulting for companies, participating in joint industry-research projects, participating in policy-making programs, writing practitioner-oriented works, sitting in firm board of directors and advice committees, getting involved with academic spin-offs, working as freelance consultants or starting up one's own firm.

Scholar-Practitioners' Multiple Roles Tensions

Since we asked our interviewees to define themselves professionally, we found that they all had a blurred perception of their professional identity. In fact, by having one foot in practice, and another one in academia, they experienced their professional identity as hybrid and manifested opposite tensions related to multiple role management. Such tensions entailed their aspiration for roles integration, on the one hand, and their perception of institutional pressures for roles separation, on the other hand.

Scholar-Practitioners' Blurred Professional Identities

Our interviewees were unable to tell us what scholar-practitioners did on a daily basis or what kind of knowledge and skills they needed to perform their roles. Rather, they indicated "in-betweenness" as the main characteristic of their profession, theirs being situated in a liminal zone between academia and the practice world (i.e., a "grey area" as Interviewee 15 termed it). For those who practice it, the profession of the scholar-practitioner resembles to a 'hybrid' as

some interviewees explicitly termed it (Interviewees 8 and 11). It has not only “indeterminate boundaries” and “variable contents”, but it is also filled with tensions that must be solved in unconventional ways. Since scholar-practitioners defined themselves as hybrids, they all indicated that their most important challenge was making sense and operating with logics of both academia and managerial practice, as suggested by the following excerpt:

“I think that the role... the kind of hybrid role where we are academic, researcher, and teacher in the one hand, and consultants as well as consultants of consultants on the other, there’s a good chance that such roles will be less widespread and less easy to span. It has never been easy, but for sure it is going to be more and more difficult in the future.” (Interviewee 11)

We found that hybridity was perceived both as an opportunity to assert and legitimate a unique professional identity and as a threat of being de-legitimated and constrained into traditional academic or traditional managerial roles. Consequently, scholar-practitioners oscillated between personal aspirations for role integration and their perception of institutional pressures for roles separation.

Role integration as individual desideratum

All the scholar-practitioners we interviewed referred to role integration as a sought-for objective to be ideally realized in the future, yet difficult to implement in the institutional context in which they were inserted. As the following excerpt suggests, integration between research, teaching and application is apprehended as an ideal condition which implies that the others would one day acknowledge their hybridity as a source of positive diversity:

“So, when I think about what I do, I can’t think of how traditional academics operate, or how traditional consultants operate, I look up to the future, or to other settings, for instance, to what Anglo-Saxons would call a ‘university hospital’. Imagine a diagram with three concentric centers, the research activity, the pedagogical activities, and the intervention: in an ideal setting, scholar-practitioners would work on all three domains at the same time, and in synergy. You can place each circle on top of the other.” (Interviewee 8)

Ideally, role integration should thus lead to greater professional acknowledgement and facilitate day-to-day activities. However, interviewees also often lamented that the desired

integration is considerably hampered by the actual conditions in which they operate which push them away from role integration *desiderata* and towards role separation.

Perceived institutional pressures for role separation

In contrast with the personal aspiration for role integration, scholar-practitioners perceived an increasing level of institutional pressure for keeping research, teaching and application roles separate. Accordingly, they perceived their hybridity as a potential threat to their own professional survival—i.e., threat that traditional academics, traditional managers and their institutions would have treated their hybridity as a deviation to be corrected. For instance, all the scholar-practitioners that we interviewed lamented that the institutional norms that govern the academic profession require its members to dedicate their time and resources exclusively to academic-specific tasks, such as, for instance, conducting high-quality research, publishing in top-tier academic journals or attending academic-oriented events. In a similar vein, they argued that consultants are increasingly required to engage full time in client-oriented consulting activities and that teaching standards are increasingly set by actors who specialize exclusively in classroom training. For those who work across the two worlds, hyper-specialization pressures constitute obstacles that lead to inevitable trade-offs. Interviewee 3 illustrates that point by expressing how the evolution of both the academic and managerial fields has led to hyper-specialization:

“Universities are becoming more and more specialized, narrow, and academic. This makes going after concrete problems less frequent. It’s something that is disappearing, an endangered ability, if you will. So, universities are becoming more and more abstract, more and more specialized; younger colleagues are working more and more hours, on more and more specific things [...] on the other side [...] it seems to me also that the consulting world has become increasingly specialized. For instance, the guys I work with always complain their work has become longer, harder but also less interesting; they say their clients are more and more specific and demanding. So, the traditional strategic consultant is going extinct, especially in large institutions such as prestigious business schools or big consulting firms [...].”
(Interviewee 3)

By establishing professional agendas on their own terms, traditional academics and traditional managers try to demarcate their own field of competence and push each other out of overlapping zones. We found that the perception of increasing pressure for role separation leads scholar-practitioners to assert that the gap between the academic and the practice worlds is widening. In turn, this activates scholar-practitioners' urgency to respond to institutional threats in unique ways, as to guarantee a space for themselves in times to come. As the following excerpt suggests, scholar-practitioners see themselves as active entrepreneurs who must craft a unique hybrid profession that is still in the making:

"The environment shapes us. There is a high pressure to publish in US/Canada/UK/Australia [...]. Administration counts our publications even if they say they do not. There is also a high pressure in business consulting to become more data oriented, to operate on a fulltime basis, to pay a lot of attention to client relations [...] So, yeah, there is a gap [...] But what matters most is not what things are right now, but what you can make them become." (Interviewee 14).

Scholar-Practitioners' Strategies for Coping with Multiple Roles Tensions

Importantly, we identified a continuum ranging from institutional pressures for role separation to individual aspirations for role integration, and a series of role management strategies that scholar-practitioners enacted to respond to these contrasting tensions. The three strategies are role (re)ordering, role interspacing and temporary role bundling. We found that not all the strategies had the same position inside the continuum: some of them were closer to the separation pole, and others were closer to the integration pole. Each strategy has different consequences on how scholar-practitioners combine knowledge from the three roles, as follows.

Role (re)ordering

On the continuum that unfolds from role separation to role integration, the first strategy mentioned by scholar-practitioners is role (re)ordering. It implies creating a specific role portfolio in which at a given point in time, research, teaching and application have each a well-defined load. Across time, the loads may change according to the priorities that scholar-

practitioners assign to each role. Three activities constitute this strategy: configuring a role portfolio, and establishing and reconsidering role priorities.

Configuring a role portfolio: We found that, when possible, scholar-practitioners who (re)order their roles try to set clear boundaries between their research, teaching and application roles. To define their role portfolio (i.e., what roles they can perform and in which proportions), they ask the organizations they work for to help them clarify role-based activities. In particular, they try to obtain clear dispositions about teaching/research/application loads, such as the time and effort they are supposed to dedicate to each role, outcomes expected for each role, and potential impact on career progression. This strategy allows to reduce perceived conflicts between professional domains and to setup a feasible work agenda that prevents stress accumulation.

“[name of institution] unlike most other business schools is really oriented towards practice, and as I said, this even reflects in promotions criteria. And obviously the [name of practitioner oriented journal] is important, you know, that’s the way you translate your academic ideas into having an impact on... So, that’s the context. The school also allows you to do a day per week outside [...], you just have to account for time, and you need to make sure that there are no conflicting interests, but you are encouraged to do that and that’s important for me to establish what I can do and what is not feasible [...].” (Interviewee 10)

It is however interesting to notice that most interviewees declared that their organizations were rarely able to issue norms and dispositions that actually protected them against day-to-day role conflicts. Therefore, they had to rely on their own abilities to create a feasible role portfolio, first by ordering roles according to personal importance and then by reordering them, as soon as necessities arose. Interviewee 11 expresses the difficulties in predicting certain tasks upfront:

“So you think you allocated your time well and have everything under control, but then things happen and you just start fixing problems: preparing for teaching takes longer than you expected, a colleague comes in and asks for a favor in an executive classroom, and the firm you consult for asks you to do something extra, like, for instance, they always ask me to do surveys or some other quantitative analysis they like [...]. And so, roles get mixed up.” (Interviewee 11)

Establishing and reconsidering role priorities: When actual role portfolios (i.e., as required by daily practices) grew divergent from pre-established role portfolios (i.e., as formalized with their organizations), scholar-practitioners actively ordered roles according to personal priorities. For instance, Interviewee 1 narrated the change in preferences that he had experienced as his career evolved. While in the beginning teaching was perceived as both requirement and priority, with time, new priorities began to arise:

“When I was a PhD, I used to work on my thesis 7 day a week. From morning to late eve. I loved that, but I don’t feel I am able to do that anymore today. Back then, all my energy was absorbed by reading, I read all sorts of books [...]. Then at a certain point I started to teach MBA courses, it was a distraction, a way to break out of the research chains from time to time. When I was a PhD student, I used to teach a lot, I taught everywhere [...], I counted that I had done 800 teaching hours during my PhD. At the time, I used to love that, and besides, I didn’t have a choice, I needed the extra gain. [...] Now I have almost no interest in it. In fact, financially, I have almost no incentive of doing a lot of classes. Right now, publishing is no longer a priority, just a minimum requirement that I try to meet. You need to get something out from time to time, those two top journal papers over 4 years. For now, I still have them. But I do more book writing now, less rigorous academic stuff because right now it is much more fun for me.” (Interviewee 1)

We identified a temporal pattern across our data: most scholar-practitioners who have their home base in academia had begun their careers prioritizing teaching and publishing, and, as their careers progressed, they switched attention towards the practical application role which required more boundary crossing skills. However, some of our interviewees also referred to cyclical processes in which they swiftly changed role priorities in order to deal with emergent projects and unexpected situations:

“At different times in my career, I’ve been more of an academic or more of a consultant. I like both. When challenging situations come up, you have to be ready to switch swiftly.” (Interviewee 10)

Knowledge consequences of role (re)ordering: partitioning knowledge contents

As previously shown, role (re)ordering requires low levels of role integration, and thus also low levels of knowledge integration across roles. Role portfolios imply setting up clear boundaries between knowledge contents that belong to teaching, research and application. Specifically, the interviewed scholar-practitioners specified that through role (re)ordering,

contents only rarely passed from the research role to the teaching or the application role, or the other way around. The main consequence was that contents were categorized as to reduce excessive role conflicts and avoid unmanageable overlaps. Thus, we labeled the main knowledge consequence of role (re)ordering as “content partitioning”.

“It took me a while to build a body of knowledge for my consulting experiences [...]. The use of the literature I knew and used as researcher was really low. When I started doing my first consulting projects, I got really behind with the publications, without even realizing it. I was too caught up with consulting at the time, too interested in it, but that was dramatic for my academic knowledge. In the end, I managed to put out some research papers, not so bad for those times and that environment [...] but I had to limit my consulting and go back to the academic knowledge [...]. Just using insights from my consulting experience to write papers, that didn't work for me. To publish I had to do new empirical research that had no relation to what I was doing as a consultant.” (Interviewee 2)

Role interspacing

As Interviewee 11 suggested above, there are times when (re)ordering roles is not sufficient because the different roles must be conducted in parallel, or even in combination. In such cases, actors resorted to another strategy that we called role interspacing, which involved a higher level of integration. It represented a strategy through which scholar-practitioners carved out for themselves a middle space in between teaching, research and application roles. The strategy consisted in two interrelated sub-activities: distinguishing by contrast and delineating a perimeter of competitive advantage.

Distinguishing by contrast: One of the most recurrent strategies to assert a professional identity was distinguishing neatly one's roles from those of other related professions. Interestingly, each time our interviewees wanted to explain who they were, they ended up saying who they were not. This implied pointing out the shortcomings of the “typical academic”, “the typical teacher”, “the typical consultant” and “the typical manager” and positioning oneself in antithesis. In addition, they talked about how they remained distant from these ideal types, for instance, refusing to work full-time inside highly structured consulting

firms, avoiding academic institutions that required high-rank publications, or negotiating tenure conditions and teaching loads, as Interviewee 5 explains:

“Our office has a different approach than any other, which is very useful in a world in which companies have become increasingly complex. The consultants solve complex issues by selling “the magic potion”, [...] they lower consulting prices to promote the functional value of their services, completely forgetting about the big picture [...]. Academics on the other hand are way too conservative, (and to think they should be avant-gardists!), they focus on turf mechanisms and defend their own little interests at all costs [...]. Teachers are also, I mean... MBAs are in crisis, most participants already have business backgrounds and expect extra knowledge teachers often fail to deliver. As far as executive education is concerned, there is a void that needs to be filled, and nobody quite knows how to do it.” (Interviewee 5)

Delineating a perimeter of competitive advantage: In contrast with those professions that specialize in one role only, scholar-practitioners point out the need for a professional figure that would “go the extra mile” to cover the gaps in between the two professions—an idea that interviewees frequently expressed, as follows:

“So if your message is, you are kind of stuck in between and your industry is not very attractive because this and this reason, that’s not a consulting product. And so how do you take those ideas and then say, so, ok, if you do the analysis for the industry, what are the levers you could pull that might change your industry? And that’s a consulting project [...]. The academics typically stop too short of that. Most managers, most consultants want to spell into more details than actually possible, and just transfer ideas from previous projects. That’s where the old joke about ‘if you hammer, everything looks like a nail’ comes in. That’s the consulting problem, right? And so, there is a gap. [As a scholar-practitioner], you are kind of stuck in the middle between these, but that [gap] is your strength.” (Interviewee 4)

As expressed by Interviewee 4, scholar-practitioners trace the perimeters of scholarly and managerial roles in such ways as to carve out for themselves a jurisdiction in the middle.

Knowledge consequences of role interspacing: procedural knowledge loops

We found that unlike in role (re)ordering strategies which implied partitioning knowledge contents, scholar-practitioners performing role interspacing were not concerned with knowledge contents because they considered them the business of “traditional” professionals. To give an example, as Interviewee 3 explains, since scholar-practitioners saw academic theories as highly specialized and thus only relevant to academics, and number crunching as an increasing tendency in the consulting profession, they often chose not to

employ either in their own projects. This choice was also motivated by the fact that transferring academic contents directly to teaching or consulting was not appreciated by business students and practitioners with whom they interacted, and thus it was hardly used:

“I don’t go to managers with an academic or a consultant perspective. I don’t want to give them uncontested answers but rather a vision, make them more informed, structure their knowledge about matters they care about. That’s an ability to empower people, I guess [...]. But there is no direct link between research and application. Managers rarely care about research papers at all, they just don’t find them useful [...]. And you can’t go around pretending that a consulting project that you did is actually a research project. I am a bit exaggerating but I want to say that for me the synergies between the two have always been scarce [...] And let’s be honest, writing a case is not doing research anyways. It’s a pedagogical exercise, it’s great for teaching but the scientific component is often lacking.” (Interviewee 3)

As this excerpt shows, rather than implementing knowledge contents, scholar-practitioners connected knowledge from teaching, research and practice roles by drawing upon a series of broadly defined experiences and competences that we labeled as procedural knowledge. We identified two significant loops of procedural knowledge: a competence loop and an experience loop.

The competence loop: As they worked to distinguish from other professionals, we found that scholar-practitioners focused on knowledge deriving from the “here and now” of their projects. For instance, they used their skills and abilities to test connections between role knowledge domains, and encouraged the people they worked with to do the same:

“So I do... it’s basically, I’m hopefully a trusted discussion pal. But I have insights, I have analogies, I have other experiences, I can say, oh yes, this is what happens in the airline business [...]. Most people have only worked in a couple of businesses. They don’t have that breadth of experience. Having seen other industries, you have all the stories, you have analogies, pieces coming from here and there... They like that [...]. But it can’t be rigid content, it’s not a universal truth either, it has to be relevant. And that’s what I can do. And I bring some simple framework to help them think about things in a different way or rearrange mental maps a little.” (Interviewee 10)

The experience loop: All scholar-practitioners reported using experiences coming from consulting or industry to stimulate classroom interaction, which is highly appreciated by students. The following excerpt exemplifies these aspects:

“I have lived in and with organizations, I have a practical sense of the field, so I use my experience to filter the most relevant experiences. Field experience is always helpful. In teaching it helps give some real-life interpretations to abstract literature concepts and to aliment the classroom discussions. [...] Students love it.” (Interviewee 9)

Temporary role bundling

The strategy of temporary role bundling referred to those situations in which scholar-practitioners combined resources from multiple role domains to carry through a project of interest. Some examples of situations in which our interviewees used temporary role bundling are related either to the creation of new projects that usually imply multiple stakeholders (i.e., drafting a new education program, creating a spin-off, building multi-disciplinary project teams, etc.). We found that this strategy relies on the following two tactics: mobilizing resources in hiring organizations, and connecting actors across domains.

Mobilizing organizational resources: By mobilizing organizational resources, scholar-practitioners drew on the resources of the organizations they work for to get close to other fields and to capture resources belonging to those fields. For instance, the interviewees who mobilize this tactic use the business school’s resources to connect with other fields of practice (e.g., consulting firms, practitioners engaged in executive programs, firms collaborating with other faculty members), up to the point of risking to become the schools’ competitors:

“There are lots of small boutique firms and some of them have execs who have good academic ties, there are some that are actually... when I was at (institution name), there was a professor there who had a small firm on the side with a half-dozen employees and he would run projects and draw other faculty members in these projects as needed.” (Interviewee 4)

Connecting actors across role domains: Scholar-practitioners often underline the benefits offered by mobilizing a heterogeneous and widely spread social network of collaborators. As previously mentioned, one of the most frequently cited examples is setting up a new project that requires competences from multiple fields. Interviewee 14 explains, for instance, that over the years he has developed a partnership with an academic colleague who is more academically-grounded than he is. The consequence, our interviewee argues, is a

greater ability to publish in management journals interesting phenomena that he observes in his practical application activities. Similarly, several other scholar-practitioners explain that they tend to partner with consulting firms in order to propose managers more convincing projects, but also to offshore time consuming activities that their academic role does not allow them to take up. The following extract from Interviewee 4 describes how common interests are mobilized across domains:

“This is a separate business in [name of consulting company]. It’s the idea that if you have a very strong network of thought leaders who are not full time employees but that can represent you from case to case, whom you can use in a variety of ways, then it’s mutually beneficial. So talents can use our company almost like an agency that can help them get speaking engagements or other types of engagements and the company can use the talent network as an additional offer to clients with particular needs. In this [name of consulting company], there may be sociologists, economists, climatologists, or entertainers or new media guys or whatever, and you can mobilize them to work for you at the boundary of their expertise.” (Interviewee 4)

Knowledge consequences of temporary role bundling: meta-knowledge loops

We found that temporary role bundling was often connected to meta-knowledge—i.e., scholar-practitioners’ knowledge about knowledge such as, for instance, knowing who knows what, who does what, who needs input from whom, for what purposes, and how reliable knowledge offers/demands are. Interviewees often referred to meta-knowledge as conditional knowledge because it relied on scholar-practitioners’ ability to select available information, deciding when to locate, connect and access resources available in their networks. For instance, Interviewee 4 refers to meta-knowledge as “research within research”:

“We get really all kinds of projects that one could not possibly handle... So thanks to the (name of consulting firm) we keep in touch with a lot of good thinkers that we can talk to and through... So when I do research, a lot of what I do is actually research within research [laughs], as opposed to primary research.” (Interviewee 4)

We identified two types of meta-knowledge loops: a brokering loop and a reliability loop, as follows.

Brokering loop: We found that scholar-practitioners produced meta-knowledge by creating an open-ended representation of a problem of interest to which new knowledge could

have been added or subtracted at any time. For instance, scholar-practitioners framed problems in broad, open-ended ways, and encouraged others to fill in the gaps by adding their own knowledge. Just as in the case of role interspacing, temporary role bundling is not concerned with transferring knowledge contents from one role to another. Instead, it implies connecting different interests and expertise around arguments of common interest.

“During classroom, they can put their hands on my knowledge, abilities and on my experience. It’s like a test to see whether what I say has actually any value. But it’s not a systematic process, it’s something that happens, not something I look for at all costs. I’m happy about it, but I don’t want to formalize it, create my own company or things like that. I can collaborate with people; I can do all sorts of things. [...] What I learned so far is the importance of staying flexible.” (Interviewee 11)

Reliability loop: We found that scholar-practitioners also act as warrantors for the way knowledge flows in the networks that they maintain (i.e., knowing how one knows). In particular, they translate domain-specific languages to make sure actors perceive that the network is generating value. In this sense, they described temporary role bundling as a “simultaneous translation exercise”, as Interviewee 9 told us. The prestige of the academic status reassures practitioners of the goodness of these translations and the reverse as well:

“That’s something I have developed in time; the fact I am able to sail my boat in between the two worlds as often as I need. I know what to say to a CEO in order to get his attention, but also how to say it to him, which is the best way to present a convincing argument, and so on. But I also speak the researcher language, the entrepreneur language, the student language. So the fact there are polyglots and chameleons like me is a benefit to the system because they can connect languages of the world, even when they don’t really speak those languages [laughing].” (Interviewee 1)

Temporal and concomitant use of role management strategies and consequences

Although it was common for the majority of our interviewees to use two or more strategies at the same time, they also referred to a temporal order in the enactment of multiple role management strategies. Table 2 shows the distribution of our interviewees across the three strategies, emphasizing both scholar-practitioners’ reliance on different strategies at once and a progression pattern according to career lifecycle.

----- Insert Table 2 about here. -----

The first strategy that scholar-practitioners develop is role (re)ordering. Our least experienced interviewees mentioned this strategy as predominant. For instance, Interviewee 2 reported a predominant use of this strategy (54%). Similarly, interviewees who were in more mature stages of their career mentioned this strategy as the predominant role management strategy they had used in the beginning of their careers or that their younger colleagues should use (see extracts from the “Role (re)ordering” section). As they progress through their careers, scholar-practitioners focus on developing the role interspacing and the temporary role bundling strategies. For instance, Interviewee 10 expressed 3 times the role interspacing strategy and 5 times the role temporary role bundling strategy. In fact, the more experienced scholar-practitioners become, the more they move from strategies closer to the segmentation pole (i.e., role (re)ordering) to strategies which are closer to the integration pole (i.e., temporary role bundling). This finding is summarized by Interviewee 15—who has spent almost all his career as a scholar-practitioner—who discusses in the following excerpt how he has developed the three different strategies over time:

“Actually, I do what most professors do: I do research, I write up research, I try to generate concepts and theories and write them up. I teach classes, I teach MBAs, I teach executive education and I run a research center. And I practice consulting, probably much more than I used to do in the beginning of my career and less than I used to do halfway through my career. And now I probably do more speaking to different people, sort of translating if you will, than when I did more consulting. This happens for a number of reasons that have to do with a functional life cycle thing. And our involvement in the real-world changes over time, from young people who are never involved, from adults that try to get involved as much as possible, to very experienced professionals that try to get other people more involved [...]. Of course, there are exceptions to that, situations in which I become more involved and use my experience to give a contribution, or go back to my desk and start writing an academic piece [...] but it’s important to stay dynamic as opposed to seeing things fixed [...]. There is never a moment that you stop making trade-offs. And you make trade-offs and you incur costs. If you’re going to be tenured and the system says you have to publish journal articles, well, then you have to publish journal articles, and so on [...]. I think there is never a moment academia is not evolving, that the world of business is not evolving. And if you don’t evolve, you crash! And when you crash, you pick up the pieces, get on a better path and start to evolve. Excellence means you flourish and you are really evolving just the way the universe needs you to.” (Interviewee 15)

A Summary of the Grounded Model on Scholar-Practitioners' Strategies for Coping with Multiple Role Tensions

Our grounded model shows that scholar-practitioners move inside a continuum of pressures for role segmentation and pressures for role integration. In our case, the pressures are situated at two different levels. While the pressures for segmentation derive from their perception of an institutional environment that encourages role separation, the pressures for integration derive from their aspiration that one day their multiple roles will be integrated in a more governable and legitimate professional structure.

Within this continuum, scholar-practitioners enact three types of strategies to deal with teaching, research and practical application roles: (1) role (re)ordering, which consists in creating a role portfolio according to the priorities assigned to each role and then reordering role priorities as often as necessary; (2) role interspacing, which consists in creating a jurisdictional perimeter for one's role portfolio by distinguishing by contrast from other professions, and (3) temporary role bundling which implies using organizational resources to create extensive and ephemeral social networks in which actors from different domains are mobilized around common goals. Three knowledge consequences are associated with the three strategies: (a) role re-ordering leads to the partitioning of the knowledge associated to each role ("know what" and "know how" are kept separate); (b) role interspacing triggers procedural knowledge through a competence loop (emphasis on "ask how") and an experience loop (emphasis on "show how"), and (c) temporary role bundling triggers meta-knowledge through a brokering loop ("knowing who knows what" and "who knows who") and a reliability loop ("showing how one knows").

We also found that although two or more strategies (and their knowledge consequences) can be enacted at the same time, there is commonly a temporal pattern: the more experienced scholar-practitioners become, the more they are willing to move from strategies close to the

segmentation pole (i.e., role (re)ordering) to strategies which are closer to the integration pole (i.e., temporary role bundling). Figure 2 summarizes the main findings of our grounded model.

----- Insert Figure 2 about here. -----

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We contribute to the role literature first by giving a more specific understanding of the segmentation-integration continuum, second by linking role management strategies with their knowledge spillover consequences and third by reflecting on the nature of tensions individuals might face while dealing with multiple roles. Then we contribute to a better understanding of how the theory-practice gap can be more effectively bridged.

Contributions to Multiple Role Literature

Segmentation-integration: From individual priorities to professional evolution and changing perceptions about professional hybridity

First, our study advances a more thorough understanding of the segmentation-integration continuum (Ashforth et al., 2000; Rau & Hyland, 2002). Despite attempts to describe how individuals move around the continuum (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Kreiner et al., 2006; Pratt & Foreman, 2000), there is relatively little evidence of the in-between strategies through which individuals compromise multiple role tensions (e.g., Cohen et al., 2009). The three strategies we have identified in this study contribute to this direction. Significantly, it becomes important to explain why individuals move on the continuum the way they do. An existing explanation has to do with individual priorities. Rothbard and colleagues (2005) have suggested that people might have personal preferences for integration and separation, and Ashforth and colleagues (2000) have attributed these preferences to the need to minimize the difficulty of role transitions. We complement these arguments by proposing a temporal pattern in which individuals move from preferences for segmentation in early career phases to

preferences for integration in later career stages. Although further research is necessary, an explanation may be that, as they progress in their careers, individuals acquire the necessary tools (i.e., competences, experiences and meta-knowledge) to deal with new challenges and stimuli. As a consequence, they become abler to enact more sophisticated strategies. A complementary explanation for our findings is that, as professionals evolve through their careers, they change perceptions about whether the hybridity of their profession constitutes a threat or an opportunity for their professional development. From such standpoint, as individuals pass the psychological boundary between threat and opportunity perceptions, they become more confident in their ability to span role boundaries (see also Ashforth et al., 2000). For example, role reordering is a consequence of the fact professional hybridity is perceived as potential threat; role interspacing appears as an intermediate strategy by which scholar-practitioners still see separation pressures as a serious threat and act with prudence in pursuing the integration desideratum. By contrast, as they reach the most mature stages of their career, scholar-practitioners change focus and perceive their professional hybridity as an opportunity for integration, rather than as threat for separation.

It is also interesting to notice that as individuals grow closer to the integration pole, role management strategies become more fluid and open-ended. We suggest that when role structures become highly complex and account for manifold interdependencies, actors must engage in more complex and personalized efforts of role management. Some existing evidence supports our suggestion. In an interview on the different roles that academics embody, Kooor-Misra (2012) notices a strategy through which a successful business professor “switches” in and out of roles, as through a sort of ritual that allows him to juggle with multiple roles and mindsets. In role studies, Kreiner and colleagues (2006) have pointed to a strategy through which individuals buffer tensions by directing them towards parallel streams, rather than reducing or compressing them. Our study carries these findings forward to identify different

strategies, with a different degree of complexity, and leading to different types of knowledge spillover.

We do however acknowledge that the extent to which an individual is able to sustain increasingly sophisticated role strategies might depend on multiple factors, such as individual abilities, role portfolio, and frequency with which transitions are enacted. In a related way, there might be cases in which an individual skips the first strategy and begins with more complex strategies. Although our sample did include both young boundary-spanners who directly gained control over their multiple professional roles or established individuals who decided to become scholar-practitioners at a later stage of their career, we did not find differences as far as role management strategies are concerned. However, since ours is a limited sample, future studies might further investigate this distinction.

Role management strategies and knowledge spillover consequences

Importantly, we also contribute to understanding how different role management strategies lead to different types of knowledge spillovers between roles. In particular, our findings show that the more scholar-practitioners integrate roles, the more they become knowledge brokers and “meta-knowers”. What is interesting to notice is that we did not find any patterns of direct knowledge transfer across the teaching, research and application roles within the three strategies that individuals undertook. Instead, we found that role (re)ordering led to the partitioning of knowledge domains such as to control for potential overlaps; role interspacing relied on experiences and competences that were broad and flexible enough to overcome the boundaries of knowledge contents, and temporary role bundling implied performances which were not based on the depth of one’s knowledge but on the extensiveness of one’s meta-knowledge.

Based on the findings in this study, we suggest that the more individuals progress towards role integration, the less concerned they are with knowledge contents, and the more they work

at the periphery of knowledge domains, either through procedural knowledge loops (i.e., asking how and showing how) or through meta-knowledge loops (i.e., knowing who knows what, who knows whom and how one knows). Our findings resonate with Alvesson's (1995, 2001) indications according to which in knowledge-intensive professions the relational properties of knowledge—i.e., being linked to actors and institutions that confirm one's expertise, orchestrating knowledge exchanges from a political rather than technical point of view—play a more important role than the content itself (see also Starbuck, 1992; Svensson, 1990). Similarly, a recent study by Reyt and Wiesenfeld (2015) supports the idea that role segmentation leads individuals to focus on constructs with a low level of abstractness which are useful for solving operative tasks (i.e., learning through exploitation), while role integration draws attention to more abstract constructs and encourages individuals to engage in exploratory learning tasks. We complement these studies by indicating that on the left side of the segmentation-integration continuum, individuals enacting multiple roles might use knowledge contents which are low on abstractness or any other contents which they can order sequentially as to avoid overlaps; at intermediate points individuals might be inclined to get their tasks done by using procedural knowledge; and on the right side of the continuum, as the volume of social and knowledge ties in use increases, individuals will be more prone to using meta-knowledge. Future studies might also further investigate what happens to knowledge domains when individuals implement integration and separation strategies simultaneously. Furthermore, as we do not intend to provide a full taxonomy of role management strategies, future research can draw on studies about knowledge management processes (see also Bhatt, 2002; Earl, 2001; Kang, Morris, & Snell, 2007) to identify other combinations of role management and knowledge management strategies.

Implications for the Theory-Practice Debate

As our case was particularly focused on scholar-practitioners, we also offer implications for the theory-practice debate. First, while several authors suggest that a way to bridge the so-called research-practice divide is to benefit from spillovers between role domains (Burke & Rau, 2010; Kooor-Misra, 2012; Markides, 2007), we did not find any patterns of direct knowledge transfer across the teaching, research and application roles. Significantly, our findings suggest that research knowledge often remains isolated from both teaching and application knowledge because contents are not directly relevant or readily applicable (Nicolai & Seidl, 2010). Our findings thus echo studies claiming the need to go beyond a knowledge transfer paradigm (Beyer & Trice, 1982; Mesny & Mailhot, 2012; Nicolai & Seidl, 2010; Shrivastava & Mitroff, 1984), to consider less linear types of knowledge contamination, such as procedural knowledge and meta-knowledge.

Second, an interesting question arises: to which extent are interspacing and bundling strategies typical of scholar-practitioners or can they be enacted also by traditional scholars and practitioners who deal with multiple professional requirements in multitask environments? While we acknowledge that research, teaching, and application roles are connected in a dense web of management knowledge, skills and social contacts of which also traditional academics and traditional practitioners could take advantage, one significant difference must be taken into consideration. It is in fact the interplay between pressures for role separation and the desire for role integration that pushes scholar-practitioners to manage their multiple roles the way they do. On the other hand, traditional scholars and traditional practitioners differ in the fact they are less subject to environmental ambiguity. For instance, their hiring organizations might play an important role in reducing environmental ambiguity by encouraging them either to specialize on a single role or to partition roles, thus reducing role strain and facilitating role transition (see Boyer, 1990; Simon, 1967). Therefore, the difference between traditional

scholars or traditional practitioners and scholar-practitioners lies in the extent to which they perceive themselves and act as boundary spanners. Thus, adequate policy in academia to support traditional scholars taking up application roles might encourage them to act like boundary spanners. Additionally, attracting traditional practitioners towards academic research and teaching activities would also facilitate the process by which the latter perceive themselves as boundary spanners.

Third, while different authors have decried the lack of empirical research aimed at bridging the research-practice divide (Jarzabkowski, Mohrman, & Scherer, 2010; Kieser et al., 2015; Rynes, Bartunek, & Daft, 2001), we build on previous studies that have documented how scholar-practitioners who occupy that liminal space can bridge the gap (Empson, 2012; Kram et al., 2012; Lind & Rhenman, 1989; Stoppelenburg & Vermaak, 2009; Vermaak & de Caluwé, 2016; Wasserman & Kram, 2009). Further research could also investigate how scholar-practitioners deal with knowledge belonging to their multiple roles by focusing on identity and identification processes in intricate networks of practice (Bertolotti & Tagliaventi, 2007). It is thus important to look more carefully at how scholar-practitioners interact with members of the teaching, research and managerial application communities, to understand which communities occupy a preferential role, for instance, and how this is manifested in day-to-day interactions.

In sum, future studies of scholar-practitioners are paramount for achieving a better understanding of those aspects that supposedly render academic-practitioner exchanges problematic and for identifying leverages that can narrow the so-called research-practice divide. Additionally, as we hope this study has proven, a close look to the case of scholar-practitioners can stem new insights in the literature on multiple role management.

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Figure 1: Data Structure

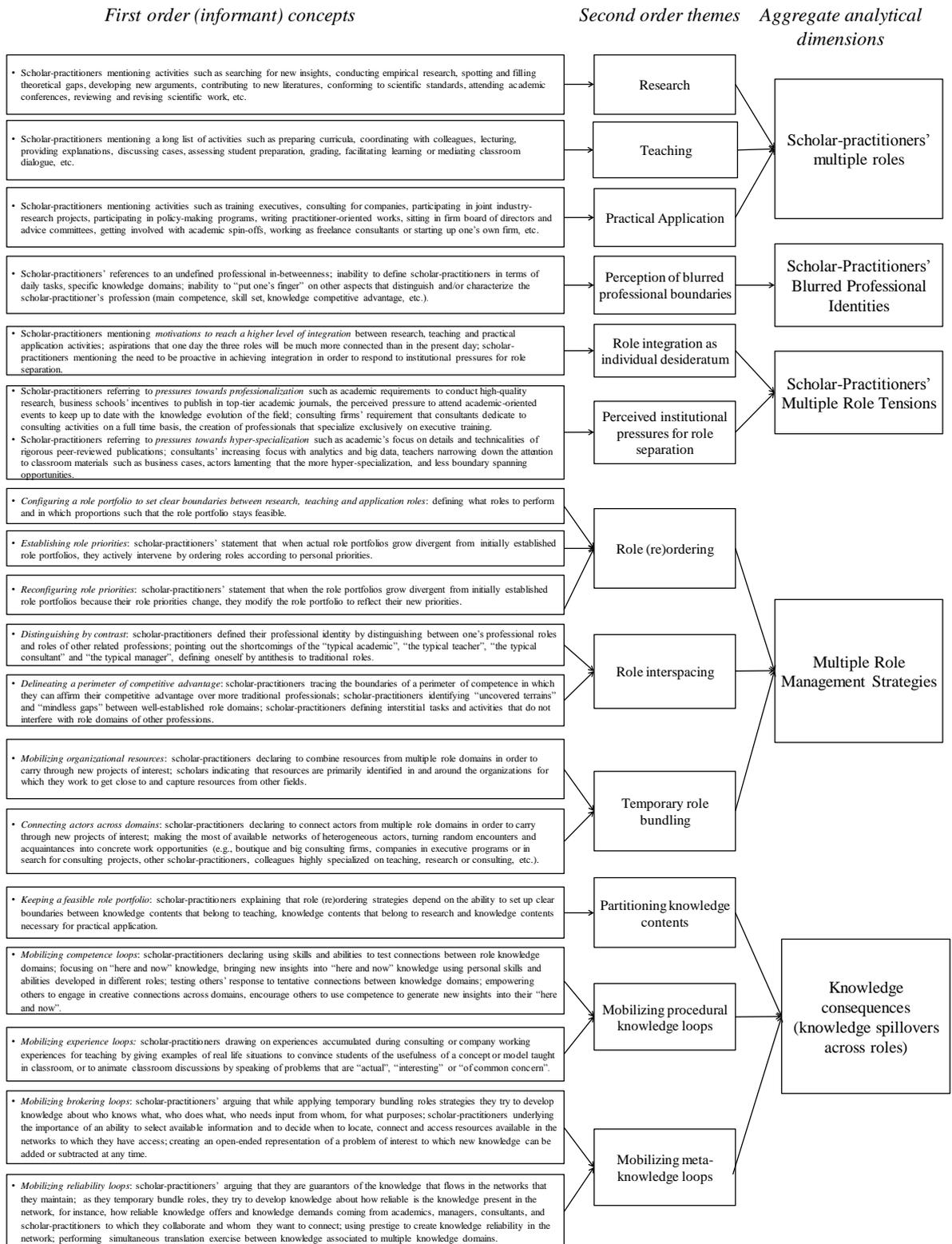


Figure 2: Scholar-Practitioners' Strategies for Coping with Multiple Role Tensions

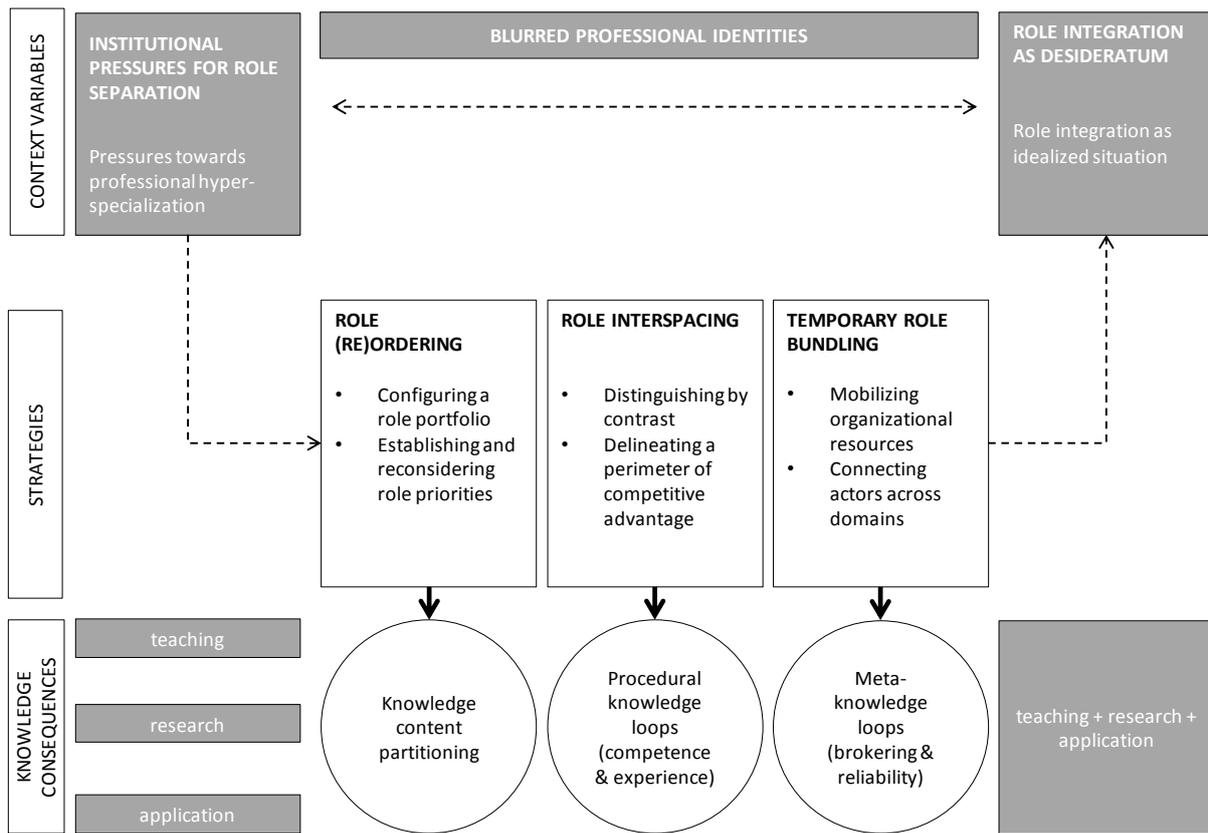


Table 1: Profiles of the Scholar-Practitioners

Interviewee	Practice (years)*	PhD/DBA (years)*	Main institution*	Country*	Data	Length
<i>Least experienced scholar-practitioners</i>						
1	10+	10+	Univ. Paris	France	Transcript	01:03
2	15+	15+	HEC Genève	Switzerland	Transcript	00:55
<i>Experienced scholar-practitioners</i>						
3	20+	20+	HEC Paris	France	Transcript	00:39
4	20+	25+	Monitor	USA	Transcript	01:32
5	20+	30+	ESCP Europe	France	Notes	02:45
6	30+	N/A	<i>Independent</i>	France	Transcript	01:31
7	30+	N/A	ESCP Europe	France	Transcript	01:39
8	30+	30+	Univ. of Oxford	UK	Notes	00:36
9	30+	30+	CNAM	France	Notes	00:45
<i>Most experienced scholar-practitioners</i>						
10	35+	25+	Harvard Uni.	USA	Transcript	00:40
11	35+	35+	INSEAD	France	Transcript	01:02
12	35+	N/A	BCG	Canada	Transcript	02:02
13	40+	25+	<i>Independent</i>	Switzerland	Transcript	00:46
14	40+	40+	Uni. of Toronto	Canada	Notes	02:00
15	40+	40+	Uni. of Michigan	USA	Transcript	00:37
16	50+	50+	Harvard Uni.	USA	Transcript	00:42

* At the time of the interview.

Table 2: Distribution of the Interviewees Across Multiple Role Management Strategies

Strategies / Interviewee	Role (Re)ordering	Role Interspacing	Temporary Role Bundling
<i>Least experienced scholar-practitioners</i>			
1	32% (6)	53% (10)	16% (3)
2	54% (7)	38% (5)	8% (1)
<i>Experienced scholar-practitioners</i>			
3	10% (1)	50% (5)	40% (4)
4	0% (0)	58% (7)	42% (5)
5	15% (2)	77% (10)	8% (1)
6	0% (0)	86% (6)	14% (1)
7	30% (3)	60% (6)	10% (1)
8	20% (2)	60% (6)	20% (2)
<i>Most experienced scholar-practitioners</i>			
9	14% (1)	71% (5)	14% (1)
10	11% (1)	33% (3)	56% (5)
11	0% (0)	86% (6)	14% (1)
12	20% (3)	60% (9)	20% (3)
13	13% (1)	0% (0)	88% (7)
14	25% (2)	63% (5)	13% (1)
15	33% (2)	67% (4)	0% (0)
16	20% (1)	40% (2)	40% (2)

Note: The percentages indicate the numbers of extracts of notes and transcripts (among the ones related to role strategies) that deal with each of the three strategies. The numbers in brackets refer to number of extracts for each strategy for each interviewee.