

# Physicians' Constitutive Ambivalence in Deciding to Adopt Robotic Technologies

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This paper reconsiders the role of professional boundaries in technology adoption by investigating how, and the extent to which, physicians unexpectedly adopted a computer mouse-driven technology used by doctors for whom manual dexterity – their “good hands” – forms the basis of status judgments. I draw on a content analysis of the corpus of research articles on the technology, as well as interviews with current, former, and candidate users of the technology. In examining adoption decisions, I find little evidence of the common understanding that physicians identified with their professional group in opposition to a competing group. Instead, physicians' decisions are linked more directly to their identification with the venues and peers with whom they trained, as well as those with whom they currently work. This paper argues when technology involving large human and physical capital investments is adopted by physicians, it necessitates memberships in multiple present and past communities and thus reflects a contingent condition that amounts to constitutive ambivalence. The paper finishes by developing this concept in relation both to its original formation in comparative literature, and to its use in Mertonian scholarship on the profession.