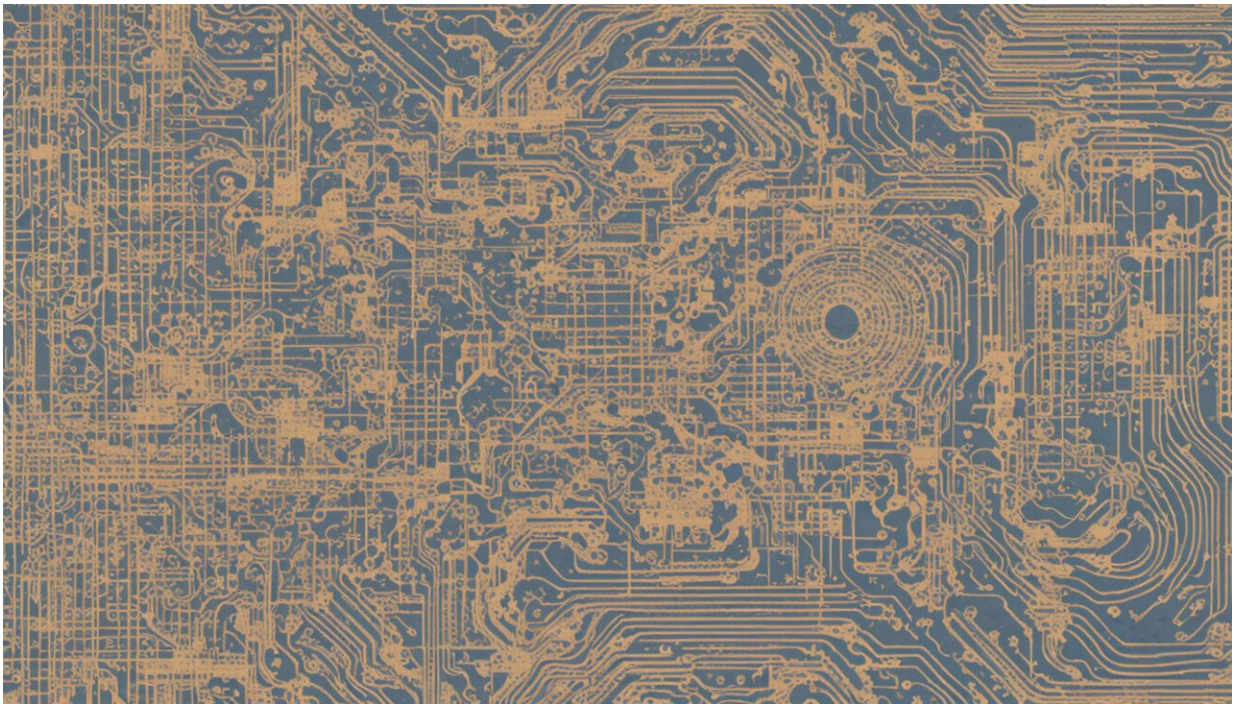


Mobiles and apps key for connecting transnational families

August 1 2016, by Rueben Hale, Sciencenetwork Wa



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Family members on the other side of the world are only as far away as your hip pocket thanks to mobile technology that is bringing loved ones into the daily narrative of each other's lives.

That is the view of UWA anthropologist Professor Loretta Baldassar

who says mobile devices and innovative apps are positively impacting the ability of transnational families to be emotionally 'there' for each other.

In her research paper *de-demonizing distance in mobile family lives: co-presence, care circulation and polymedia as vibrant matter*, Prof Baldassar examines how Australian families are utilising [mobile technology](#) to maintain family relationships separated by significant distance.

Prof Baldassar's research found families of all walks of life are highly motivated to adopt new technologies to further enhance family closeness as it became available.

"The study found that almost every family with access to Skype will use it," Prof Baldassar says.

"And the latest trend is apps like WhatsApp, WeChat and others because of their ability to share information with a group of people simultaneously," she says.

Using these technologies migrant and isolated families have been able to achieve a sense of satisfactory distant occurrence of multifaceted engagement (co-presence), with their transnational or distant [family members](#), Prof Baldassar says.



Chinese national Sha Yi has talks to his brother in China on WeChat several times a week. Credit: Rueben Hale

"And I have also found these devices are facilitating ever-more dynamic and multifaceted relationships across distances," she says.

"If you think about 100 years ago, when people migrated to Australia from another country it was like a kind of social death," Prof Baldassar says.

"You left your home country knowing it was fairly likely that you would be leaving family behind forever and all you were usually left with is a kind of 'broken narrative' about each others lives," she says.

Today's revolution in information and communication technology has meant for the first time we choose when and how we stay in touch across distance, Prof Baldassar says.

Perth businessman Sha Yi says he and his brother Sha Bin, who lives in the Northern Chinese city of Dalian, have been able to develop a closer involvement with each other's families lives using the relatively new WeChat group video calling feature released last December.

Mr Sha, who emigrated from China with his wife and son to start a new life in Australia three years ago, says his family and his brother's family can all be in the same space using separate devices using the feature.

"Since first moving to Australia we can now know what my brother and [family](#) is doing, whenever we want," Mr Sha says.

More information: De-demonizing distance in mobile family lives: Co-presence, care circulation and polymedia as vibrant matter. [research-repository.uwa.edu.au ... a-17069bfc47c7](https://research-repository.uwa.edu.au/.../a-17069bfc47c7)).html

This article first appeared on [ScienceNetwork Western Australia](#) a science news website based at Scitech.

Provided by Science Network WA

Citation: Mobiles and apps key for connecting transnational families (2016, August 1) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-08-mobiles-apps-key-transnational-families.html>

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