

Digital Repertoire Expansion and Immigrant Incorporation: Evidence from Canada

Migration can expand the set of digital communication tools (DCTs) through which immigrants maintain relationships and participate in a destination society. This expansion is especially pronounced when origin and destination countries have asymmetric DCT ecologies. Tools central to communication in one country may be restricted, marginal, or weakly connected to institutions in the other. This develops the concept of post-migration digital repertoire expansion to describe the addition of newly accessible destination DCTs alongside tools carried across the border. Immigrants from Mainland China provide a clear case. WeChat is the dominant superapp that combines messaging and social networking with payments, media, business, and public services and is deeply embedded in everyday life in China. After migration, it continues to support established relationships, while previously unavailable global DCTs provide additional routes to people and institutions in the host countries. Using an online survey of 522 Mainland-origin immigrants in Canada, we compare WeChat use with average use of six global DCTs across seven social, civic, and bicultural outcomes. Global DCT use is associated with more cross-group interaction and civic participation, stronger acceptance and belonging, and greater bicultural compatibility. The baseline associations between WeChat use, lower cross-group interaction, and greater cultural conflict weaken after accounting for respondents' language practices. Respondents who frequently use both sets of DCTs report stronger acceptance and belonging than those who use both less frequently, although the positive association with global DCT use is weaker among frequent WeChat users. The findings connect immigrant incorporation to the composition of the digital repertoire that migrants develop after arrival.