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### Normative and Deviant Usage of GroupMe in Education

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# **Normative and Deviant Usage of GroupMe in Education**

*TREO Talk Paper*

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## **Abstract**

Over the years, students have partnered up and formed study groups in order to support the learning that occurs in a course. This normative behavior is usually encouraged by instructors. Student-developed social networks allow students to freely express misunderstandings of course content and answer questions that can further develop course knowledge. However, these social networks can also engage in deviant behavior which would be explicitly discouraged by instructors. Students can engage with the course content in unsanctioned ways, sometimes in direct conflict with course policies. With the advent of technology, these student-developed social groups around courses have moved online onto computer-mediated social networks (CMSNs). It is important for educators to examine the impact that these technologies can have on students as studies have shown that participation in social media environments can positively or negatively influence individual behaviors.

In this study, I focus on a particular social media, GroupMe – a mobile group messaging app launched in 2010, currently owned by Microsoft, boasting approximately 11 million mobile app users (Tenbusch, 2020). It also has unique features such as an in-app calendar to coordinate events and reminders, as well as the use of the '@' symbol to get the attention of individual users within a conversation. Recent research on GroupMe has focused on formal usage of it within a higher education environment (Gronseth and Hebert, 2019), where the groups are initiated by course instructors. I aim to examine GroupMe's natural usage by students where instructors are not included, thus providing an examination on why students collaborate and how they learn using GroupMe without authoritative intervention.

More specifically, I integrate and employ social exchange theory, social information-processing theory, and social cognitive theory as a theoretical lens to understand the impact the virtual social environment of GroupMe can have on individual education-related behaviors. Additionally, I examine how labeling theory is manifested in a CMSN environment, where deviant behavior is either explicitly identified or implicitly ignored. I aim to primarily collect data from college students of varying ages and ethnicities at universities in across the United States who attend both online and face-to-face courses. I will also examine how students enrolled in various content area courses across the world can benefit from engaging in the same course social network communication (Taras et al., 2012) and its implications in other productive task environments. The results of this study will highlight the role that student-developed virtual social networks have on individual educational behaviors.

## **References**

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