

# Cyberbullying on college campuses bringing new ethical issues, researcher says

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Cyberbullying in the college environment can pose serious consequences for students' living and learning environments, including physical endangerment, according to newly published research by a UT Arlington associate education professor.

Jiyoon Yoon, director of the Early Childhood – Grade 6 Program for the UT Arlington College of Education and Health Professions, co-authored the paper "Cyberbullying Presence, Extent, and Forms in a Midwestern Post-secondary Institution," which appears in the June 2013 issue of *Information Systems Education Journal*.

The researchers found that most respondents considered cyberbullying to be more prevalent at the secondary school level. But respondents said harassment via social media, text message or other [electronic communications](#) can be pernicious in the college environment and merited official response from administrators.

"We hope our study will lead universities to ask themselves 'What does the university do to help minimize cyberbullying in academe?'" Yoon said. "Students also need to know about this and how to prepare for something like this if it happens to them."

Jeanne Gerlach, dean of the UT Arlington College of Education and Health Professions, said Yoon's work contributes to the ongoing conversation about the role of [educational institutions](#) in providing safe [learning environments](#).

"There are very few academic studies examining cyberbullying at the college level even though it can seriously impact every aspect of a student's life," Gerlach said. "We eagerly await her findings as she further investigates this issue in education."

Yoon undertook the study with then-graduate student Julie Smith while both were at the University of Minnesota Duluth. Their work was motivated by a 2010 campus incident in which two white [students](#) harassed an African-American student through an [online social networking](#) site.

The issue of cyberbullying garnered national attention the same year after an 18-year-old Rutgers University student jumped off the George Washington Bridge following an incident in which his roommate posted compromising videos of the freshman online.

Yoon said her own interest in the issue began after she observed students harassing peers on Facebook.

"I started thinking about cyberbullying and how people overwhelmingly tend to think that it only happens to teens. But more and more college-age students are dealing with this problem," Yoon said. "Co-eds cyberbully classmates, and I was shocked to discover students trying to cyberbully their instructors, too."

For their study, Smith and Yoon surveyed 276 students from University of Minnesota campuses. They found that college students were not only using Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other [social networking sites](#) to cyberbully others, but they also were harassing peers through university technology infrastructures intended for educational purposes and other platforms for online learning.

Student participants indicated that when a victim's life was imperiled,

the university should play a major role in curbing the cyberbullying. Yoon and Smith wrote that their research led the University of Minnesota Duluth to adopt cyberbullying language in their 2012 student conduct code to try to address the cyberbullying phenomenon.

Yoon said she will focus her next phase of research on the role that a college student's socio-economic background plays in being both a perpetrator and victim of cyberbullying.

**More information:** [isedj.org/2013-11/N3/ISEDJv11n3p52.html](http://isedj.org/2013-11/N3/ISEDJv11n3p52.html)

Provided by University of Texas at Arlington

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