

Ori Igwe | University of West London, UK

# STUDENT PROFILE



**Ori Igwe**

**Course**

PhD in Law

**Year completed**

2020

**Title of thesis**

*A qualitative enquiry into the threshold of acceptable behaviour on the internet: Perceptions of police officers and prosecutors on the barriers to successful investigation and prosecution of cyberstalkers*

Research has demonstrated that cyberstalking can have a psychological, emotional, and financial impact on victims. However, little is known about how police officers and prosecutors perceive the threshold of acceptable behaviour on the internet. This is despite the fact that there is clear evidence that cyberstalking can, in extreme cases, lead to the murder or suicide of victims. Ori's PhD thesis investigated the difficulties that London police officers and prosecutors perceive hinder them in the investigation and prosecution of cyberstalkers. In doing so, Ori identified their shared perceptions of the thresholds for distinguishing rudeness, abuse, and unpleasant comments on the internet from cyberstalking.

Ori's thesis develops our understanding of the experiences of police officers and prosecutors in London by identifying the factors that police officers and prosecutors feel prevent them from investigating and prosecuting cyberstalkers. Specifically, Ori investigated the extent to which a perceived lack of knowledge impacts on the prosecution of cyberstalkers and the measures that are taken by police officers to acquire the knowledge they lack; how issues of anonymity and lack of resources might affect the effective risk assessment of victims of cyberstalkers, and the impact of the perceived lack of resources on the investigation and prosecution of cyberstalkers.

Ori's research indicates that police officers and prosecutors face six specific law enforcement challenges which impede the investigation and prosecution of cyberstalkers. In particular, cyberstalkers breaching restraining orders, victims not implementing risk assessment safety measures and underreporting by victims were highlighted in Ori's research as major concerns which prevent police officers from protecting victims. Further, the research established that police officers and prosecutors feel that there are several determinants of the threshold of acceptable behaviour on the internet – demonstrating that there is no perceived single accepted threshold of online behaviour.

The unique contribution of Ori's research is to explore the relationship between the investigation and prosecution of cyberstalkers and the risk assessment of victims and offenders. The research makes a number of contributions to the body of knowledge on the investigation and prosecution of cyberstalkers in domestic violence cases especially. From a risk assessment perspective, it provides the experiences of police officers and prosecutors as primary law enforcement officials tasked with bringing cyberstalkers to justice.

Ori's research also has important policy implications as it established that specialist training which focuses on the risk assessment of mentally ill cyberstalkers who require medical assistance is required to enable police officers to promptly identify such offenders on arrest. In particular, Ori's research calls for the introduction of measures which will enable police officers to identify, monitor and manage the risks posed by anonymous cyberstalkers – especially to victims.

*Ori Igwe currently is a civil servant in the Crown Prosecution Service.*



**Supervisors:**

**Professor Maddie Ohl and Dr Philipp Elliot-Wright**

**Professor Maddie Ohl** is Professor of Child Mental Health and Wellbeing, University of West London

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