Title: *Bridging the Gap of Contention: The Role of Increased Dialogue in ‘Policing’ Orderly Chaos and Disorderly Conduct*

The earthshattering sound systems pulsing Caribbean music through your body; the hearty smells of native cuisine oozing from street stalls; the displays of electric colours as half-naked women dominate space. The burst of topless young black men, surging through crowds looking for targets; the rush of terrified masses as ‘ACID!’ is shouted; the shift in emotions as alcohol takes charge and hostility mounts. The many faces of chaos, under the watchful eye of officers navigating micro-interactions, with just a hint of fear that at any moment control might be lost. There really is nothing quite like London’s *Notting Hill Carnival*, a two-day masquerade of street power.

Using the deployment of the Police Liaison Teams (PLTs) at *Carnival* as a case-study, this paper will consider early analysis of my PhD ethnographic work, exploring the value of dialogue in the police-public interaction process. PLTs are a newer tactical option within public order policing – their role is to establish and maintain dialogue and rapport with different protest groups. *Carnival* is not a protest, but it has continuously been a racially contentious public order event for the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). Thus, to encourage positive engagement between the MPS and ‘carnivalists’ (Cohen 1993), the PLTs were deployed for the first time in 2016, charged with facilitating increased communication between the floats - who perform over the two-day period - and the police.

This paper focuses on the policing perspective, based on: observations of two separate PLT deployments over a two-year period (2016, 2017); one non-PLT deployment (2015); interviews with senior officers; and, an interview with a central figure from the Notting Hill Trust. In their duty of establishing increased dialogue with ‘carnivalists’ the PLTs meet head first the many complex and competing demands of such a politically charged event. As such, the emerging themes to be presented in this paper relate to: the nature of interaction between the police and ‘carnivalists’; the significance of internal (police-police) interaction and how this relates to the ‘type’ of PLT assigned to the floats; and, how policing navigates the problematic concepts of space and movement.