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An Ethnography of Football Fans: The Impact of Technology upon Carnival fan sub-cultures

This paper is based upon a sixteen-year ethnography of English football supporters, to be published in *An Ethnography of English Football Fans: Cans, Cops and Carnival* (Manchester University Press, forthcoming 2012). The research identified a clear sub-culture of football supporters that I have labelled 'carnival fans'. For these fans, creating a version of Bakhtin's carnival – a transgression from the norms of everyday working and family life built upon congregation in large groups, humour, tomfoolery, song, misbehaviour and heavy alcohol consumption – was central to the match-day experience and more important than the result on the pitch.

This paper focuses specifically on the impact of technology upon these subcultures. Since the start of the research two technological developments – the internet and the mobile phone – have had a huge impact upon how these fans behave and express their identity. Mobile phones, camera phones and internet messageboards – and the combination of these - was observed to change the way in which the groups congregated, interacted and related to the world around them. However, amongst the fan groups observed, these developments were primarily used to reinforce an idealised version of *traditional* fandom, and the full impact of this technology upon carnival fan sub-cultures has yet to be seen.