Colby Fitness Center

When I think about what a subculture is I see it as any group of people that have something in common. It could be anything from a hobby to an entire lifestyle. I have decided to take a glimpse into the lives of those who work out. The Recreational Sports Center is where a lot of students go to stay in shape and they have formed their own subculture here on campus. I think that they probably live healthy lifestyles and I am interested in seeing how working out helps them. I think that studying them will be beneficial for me to learn more about staying fit, and also how different people utilize the variety of equipment available. I would also like to see how people interact with each other while they are working out.

The specific field site I have decided to study at the Recreational Sports Center is the Colby Fitness Center. The Colby Fitness Center is located on the bottom floor of the RSC. It is a large open room with tons of workout equipment. When you walk through the glass doors you are in a small area surrounded with four foot tall lockers and adjoining benches. To your left is the weightlifting equipment. It has some free weights, and a lot of machines used for various strength building exercises. There are also workout benches that are positioned with varying inclines. Also, there are water fountains and cleaning stations. The cleaning stations have chemical cleaner, clean towels, and a bin for the used towels.

On your right towards the front of the building is most of the cardiovascular equipment. There are elliptical machines, stair climbers, and also treadmills. All the machines are facing televisions at the top of the wall. There is also a second row of televisions for
people on the machines in the back of the section. Throughout the equipment there are more cleaning stations. On the right towards the back of the building there are more cardio machines, mats, and equipment. In the front there are a few exercise bikes, with various weight lifting machines behind them. These machines are bigger than the ones to the left and are more complex. Some are bolted down to the ground, and seem to be more difficult to use. To the left of the machines is a large mat with a few yoga balls on it. On the left of the mat is a large mirror.

On my first visit I decided not to talk to anyone, just to use my senses to observe. My first impression of the Colby Fitness Center was that it smelled like rubber and sweat. The room was noisy, with music playing over the sounds of the cardio machines running. The room seemed very busy with people everywhere. I noticed that about seventy five percent of the people there were male, with the females mostly on the cardio machines. Most of the people were college-aged, but there was a few older men there using the equipment. Almost everyone was wearing shorts and a tee shirt, with only a few exceptions for pants and one sweatshirt. Girls wore their hair pulled back, and the only jewelry I saw were the “livestrong” bracelets. Most people seemed to be working out solitary, but there was an occasional group of guys taking turns together on the lifting machines. A lot of the guys who were in the weightlifting section, but some seemed to be just standing around. Of the people who were on the cardiovascular machines, none were talking and most were staring at the televisions or listening to headphones. On the mats there were mostly girls doing situp/crunch routines, with only one guy doing crunches on a yoga ball.
There aren't very many biases against people who work out that are physically fit. Maybe some people view them as too concerned with their bodies. They could also be seen as vain or shallow. They are known to spend a lot of time working out, and are very dedicated to it. I think that they probably eat healthy as well as exercising daily. Some girls seen at the fitness center, especially those with their makeup and hair done, are probably thought to be there just to check out the guys. Some guys who work out are thought to be very cocky and self-centered.

When researching and observing this topic, I may encounter a few different problems. One of these issues could be that since people have varying schedules and don't always work out at the same times, finding the same people to talk to could be difficult. To avoid this problem I could interview people that I am familiar with, so that I know I can see them again if I need to. Another problem with this subculture could be that it is so large that it will be difficult to come to any conclusions without being too stereotypical.

I think that this will be a good subculture for me to study. It will show how people in the athletic subculture stay athletic and physically fit. It will be interesting to see how these people interact with each other. I want to see how working out affects people's lives, and find out their reasons for working out. I would like to see if this subculture is something that I could take part in, and what benefits come from being a part of this subculture.