Camera Project

Over the course of one day I observed thirty-four cameras while carrying out my daily activities. These cameras were located all over in town, such as in my apartment, at school, and the grocery store. For this project, I decided to focus on the camera in the elevator of my apartment complex, Smallwood. Throughout the three weeks I have lived in this apartment complex, I have never really paid attention to this camera even though I ride the elevator multiple times a day. Therefore, I decided to execute an analysis on why this specific camera is watching me and the pros and cons of having this surveillance camera.

The camera in the elevator is either monitored by a Smallwood employee or is only looked at when needed. I do not think that it is safe to assume that there is an employee designated to watching the camera for all hours of the day because this job is not necessary and is too costly for the apartment complex. However, the camera might be displayed on monitors in a room where the employees work so that said employees would be able to recognize if any major malfeasances occur. Because this is an apartment complex in the middle of downtown Bloomington, there is a lot of foot traffic that goes through the building. Considering that residents, friends of residents, and employees all use this elevator, the camera is a good use of video surveillance. From the perspective of the management at Smallwood, there are ample reasons as to why the camera is advantageous. In regard to the employees, the camera improves employee productivity and can monitor maintenance workers and cleaners. If the cameras are recording live footage, then that means that upper level management can easily access the footage and evaluate if the employees are doing their jobs. In turn, the employees are somewhat forced into doing their jobs efficiently and in a timely manner. Besides its use for keeping employees responsible, the camera also acts as helpful evidence in case something were to break or be vandalized in the elevator. If something along those lines were to happen, then the identity of who ever defaced the elevator would be recorded on camera. Likewise, as a result of the camera, safety is improved. To some people, a closed elevator can be scary as the doors are locked when the elevator is moving. So, in a situation where two strangers are using the elevator, one might have comfort knowing that a camera is there to deter one individual from hurting the other. Lastly, on a more sophisticated note, Smallwood could be using the camera to collect data on the different time stamps that people use their elevators. This sort of analysis can supply Smallwood with insight on their residents as to when individuals access their facilities.

The camera provides security to the building as it motivates individuals to behave appropriately. Even if the camera is not recording, its presence manipulates individuals into doing the right thing. Because people know that there is a camera watching, its presence discoursed individuals from committing crimes. However, people still might do things when they think that the camera is not watching. Therefore, it is possible that some people do not even see the camera or forget that it is there. In this circumstance, the camera does not provide any immediate security in the elevator. The privacy of all the people that use the elevator is given up for the benefit of security. Privacy is an issue for both residents and employees. Not to be offensive, but even if someone were to pick their nose in the elevator, it would all be caught on camera. Although quite gross, this example demonstrates that one must act in a socially appropriate manner when using the elevator because there actions are being recorded. In my opinion, the privacy issue is worse for the employees. The camera in the elevator and all the other cameras are consistently watching the employees as they work. It is creepy to think that during an entire shift, there is video footage of everything that an employee does in the building, except in the bathrooms of course.

Although the camera does provide some sort of security, the camera in the elevator can in fact be finessed by a bad guy. If I were a bad guy, I would simply hide my identity from the camera. This could be done by wearing a mask or facing in the opposite direction of the camera because there is only one camera in the elevator. Moreover, if someone wanted to keep their identity safe, one can also vandalize the camera or cover it up. The point is that it is possible to commit a crime even though there is a camera in the elevator. To counteract this, the owners of Smallwood could install more cameras inside the elevator and cameras outside the elevator to make it harder for a
bad guy to defeat the cameras and keep their identity hidden. Smallwood could also put some sort of protection shield over the camera to make it harder for a perpetrator to vandalize the cameras.

Ultimately, people walk past dozens of security cameras everyday, but not many people ever stop to think about why the camera is actually recording you. Our society has become conditioned to not question the amount of cameras we see even though those cameras can easily be collecting data and video footage of us. One can only imagine the immense role that surveillance cameras will play in the future considering they are already so prevalent during modern times.