Ly’s “Sexual Harassment in Meatpacking Plants”

Sexual harassment is a serious problem occurring in many workplaces throughout the country. While you may see more sexual harassment in fields that are mostly employed by men, it can happen in any work atmosphere. It is never okay for a woman to feel that she has been treated in a way that makes her feel uncomfortable, no matter what career field she chooses to follow.

In her essay “Sexual Harassment in Meatpacking Plants,” Susan Ly is trying to make a point that in meatpacking plants there is a lot of sexual harassment happening to the women who work in these plants. Ly is also trying to tell us about how the meatpacking plants should be educated in sexual harassment and how they should implement rules for their employees to adhere to.

Ly’s essay tries to make her point by giving information on how to lessen the amount of sexual harassment in the working place. She gives many different scenarios on how companies could start educating their employees. These ideas consist of distributing a copy of definition of sexual harassment as defined by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, having the company have a sexual harassment policy that lets the employees know that there is a zero tolerance for sexual harassment and having a training seminar for employers, their employees and their managers. She actually put the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s definition in her text which reads:
Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment, (2) submissions to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affect such individual, or (3) such conduct has a purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment (128).

By putting the definition in her essay Ly helps to make her point that what is happening in the meatpacking plants is in fact defined as sexual harassment. One good statement that Ly makes is “By communicating what sexual harassment is and by training workers to recognize and report it, employers can prepare employees to recognize and address it” (128). Another idea that Ly puts forth is to install video cameras throughout the work site so that any sexual harassment can be caught on tape. She also points out that while this may seem a good idea because people will normally behave themselves if they know they are being watched, it can also make the workers feel nervous and anxious. The end result being that the overall workflow could slow down and the employers could lose more money by doing this. I guess I don’t know where she really stands on the idea of video cameras in the workplace. She kind of tells both the pros and cons of them, but does not say which one feels outweighs the other.

In Ly’s essay she took a good stand against sexual harassment. I also think that many women have had some experience in their time of employment where they felt they were treated inappropriately. A lot of women could make a connection with the content
of her essay. She makes an important statement when she says “when workers, supervisors, employers and outsiders know about the problem, harassers will think twice before initiating inappropriate behavior” (129). When making this statement I can see where she is going with it. I also think that if the employees realize they have something to lose by behaving this way, they might not do so. Even if what they are losing isn’t just their job, but the respect of those around them as well.

Ly’s essay was only targeting sexual harassment in slaughter houses, yet she gave no real proof to the fact that this is going on. She had nothing to back up her claim in this situation. Therefore I found it not to be credible. If she had said that she had experienced this herself while working in a slaughter house, I might find her more credible, yet still not quite. I don’t think you can generalize all meatpacking plants in the same category without research to back up your claim. I have personally known female friends who work at meatpacking plants, and they have never mentioned that they have been mistreated in anyway. After reading this essay I actually contacted one of my girlfriends to ask their opinion on this, since she works at this sort of establishment. Her reaction was one of shock, she thought that such an essay should not have been written about meatpacking plants as the target. I myself can think of many places of employment where there it has been proven that there is a large problem with women being sexually harassed at work. One good example would be in the mining industry which mostly employs men.

In all I think she should have done some more research to prove the point that she was trying to make in her essay. While she helps make it clear to the reader that sexual harassment is never okay under any circumstances, she does not actually give us the proof that it is taking place in the meatpacking plants. I do not find her credible, and
therefore felt that her essay was not a great piece of work. Yet I did feel very connected to her writing on what sexual harassment is, and thought that she made great points on how employers could help reduce the amount of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Employees should feel safe and comfortable in their work environments. They should feel that they have someone of authority that they can turn to when they think they are being treated in a way that is not okay, or that makes them feel uncomfortable. Employees also need to know they have rights, and that they have the right to stand up for themselves without being ignored, judged or made to feel guilty when they go to a person of authority.