Sex Res Soc Policy (2010) 7:334–347
DOI 10.1007/s13178-010-0026-x

The Melodrama of Virginity and Sex Drive: The Gendered Discourse of "the Sexual Oppression of Disabled People" and Its "Solutions"

Eunjung Kim

Published online: 17 October 2010

Abstract This essay investigates South Korean cultural representations of and public discourses about disabled people's sexuality since the late 1990s. The gendered construction of their sexuality as a "problem" is analyzed to shed light on policy considerations. Close readings of a feature-length documentary film, *Pink Palace* (Seo 2005a); a short film, *Papa* (Lee 2004); and Kawai Kaori's book *Sex Volunteerism* (2005) reveal the complex political and emotional dynamics of "sexual solutions." Representations of the virginity of physically disabled men and the provision of sexual services whether by a legalized commercial sex trade or by volunteers, invoke melodrama. This affective excess also appears in *Papa*'s depiction of incestuous rape of a disabled woman as a way to satisfy her "sex drive." In this restricted framework, "the sexuality of disabled people" is cast within the dichotomy of moral repression and sexual "crusade" supported by a naturalized biological understanding of sexuality. In discussing sexual opportunities for disabled people, careful attention must be paid to cultural, social, economic, and political aspects of diverse disabilities, genders, and the multiplicity of sexualities of disabled people, instead of simply gearing toward institutionalizing sexual "solutions."

Keywords Sex drive · Disability · Sexuality of disabled people · Sexual services · Prostitution · Sex work · Rape of disabled women

E. Kim (✉)
Department of Gender and Women's Studies,
Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education,
University of Wisconsin-Madison,
Madison, WI, USA
e-mail: ekim63@wisc.edu

Introduction

In a short cartoon titled "Kŏsa" ("Big Event"), a man with cerebral palsy asks his nondisabled male friend to take him to a place where he can have sex for the first time (Yi and Yi 1996). The disabled man worries aloud that he may not be allowed in because of his "appearance," but his friend responds confidently: "Korea is a capitalist society. With money, nothing is impossible."[1] When they arrive in what seems to be a hostess club, they are partnered with women who sit next to them and pour their drinks in a private room. Whereas the nondisabled man touches and hugs his partner, displaying his familiarity with the space and the situation, the disabled man drinks alone, sitting far away from the other woman. The disabled man's partner becomes sympathetic toward him, comes near, and infantilizes him by petting him and calling him "my poor baby." She appears to identify with him, as she tells him that they share an unfortunate fate and that God is unfair. But her sense that they are fellow members of outcast groups—namely, disabled persons and sex workers—is short-lived, as he suddenly says that he wants to have sex with her. When the disabled man forces his upper body on hers she screams, "I am not so debased as to sell my body to people like you!" He returns the insult by throwing cash in her face, saying, "I am a man too"—revealing his sense that his manhood, with the accompanying privilege that nondisabled men enjoy in the sexually saturated space, has been unfairly denied.

This mutual exchange of humiliations to claim power does not seem evenly balanced, given that the cartoon was published in a disability rights magazine, *Hamgge Kŏrŭm* (*Walking Together*). It thus reflects the general point of

[1] All translations in this essay are mine.

view of a disabled man, whose sexuality is so thoroughly denied that "even" a sex worker will reject him, leaving him without options to have sex. This rejection invokes a melodramatic reaction to denied masculinity and the failure of capitalist logic and male power when confronted with disability oppression.

This story is merely one example of how the representation of sexuality and disability in South Korean media generates an affective reaction. The melodrama of a disabled man's virginity[2] is a popular motif in the cultural and political production of the sexuality of disabled people in South Korean society. Korean traditional culture considers it tragic and unfortunate for someone to die a virgin, and the melodrama of virginity combines that cultural affect with pity for life with a disability.[3] This essay investigates how disabled people's sexuality is constructed as a "problem" by mainstream media in South Korea, focusing on its foundation in sympathy, transnational justification, and the role of film representations while questioning the homogenous sexual status assigned to the category "disabled people." First, I explore how the emerging public discourse on the sex drive of disabled people in South Korea has focused on male physical disability and been influenced by transnational discourses. Second, I analyze a feature-length documentary film, *Pink Palace* (Seo 2005a), which details the story of a disabled man as he attempts to lose his virginity by entering a brothel in Seoul. Third, I examine the contents and the reaction to the Korean translation of Kawai Kaori's book *Sex Volunteerism* (2005), which introduced the notion of sex volunteers for disabled people, and consider how the conversations about disabled people's sexual drive affect policy suggestions. Last, I describe the efforts to find a "cure" for a behavioral problem supposedly caused by sexual frustration as imagined in the short film *Papa* (Lee 2004), which is unique in presenting a disabled woman's sexuality and in quickly shifting from sex to violence. The materials and discourses analyzed below are not exhaustive but representative of the major debates around disability and sexuality in South Korean politics and culture, as well as in activist communities, on such matters as access to sexual service and public policy for marginalized groups.

[2] "Bachelor" is a more literal translation of the term *ch'onggak,* but the phrase *ch'onggak ttakji* (bachelor label) emphasizes the lack of any sexual experience rather than unmarried status. Thus, despite its gendered connotation and history in English, "virginity" is the more appropriate term here.

[3] Common folktales about maiden and bachelor ghosts (called *ch'ŏnyŏ kwisin* and *mongdal kwisin,* respectively) whose virginity traps them in this world evidence the heightened emotion attached to permanent virginity. These tales often describe rituals in the form of a wedding or symbolic consummation between two virgin ghosts to assist them to let go of their anger and pass to the other world peacefully (Kim 1993).

Throughout these four main sections, by illuminating the hypervisibility of the sex drive of physically disabled men and the proposed solutions such as legalized and subsidized sexual services, whether commercial or provided by volunteers, I argue that the sexuality of disabled people as depicted in these media is constructed in a way that naturalizes nondisabled phallocentric, biologically driven heteronormative sexuality. The mainstream discourses on the sexuality of disabled men and women construct "disabled people's sexuality" (or lack thereof) itself as a problem; consequently, they rely on affective reactions to provide immediate solutions to "suffering" rather than articulating the social and cultural denial of individuals' sexual rights or recognizing the multiplicity and fluidity of sexualities of disabled people. The sex drive and tragic virgin status of disabled men are used rhetorically to argue for their access to sexual services presented as a solution. Such rhetoric problematically uses anecdotal Western and Japanese examples as evidence of cultural and political advancements without considering their contexts. The "melodrama of virginity" does not adequately question the current privileging in South Korean society of certain kinds of sexual experiences and the systematic discrimination disabled people face. Future policies regarding sexual rights of disabled people should first engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including disabled women, sexual minorities, activists with diverse disabilities, and sexual laborers instead of rushing to institutionalize a single "solution" that necessarily delimits diverse sexualities and possibilities.

The "Sexuality Problem" (*Sŏngmunje*), Othering, and "Other Countries"

An online newspaper, *Sports Seoul*, introduced the internationally acclaimed South Korean film *Sex Volunteer: Open Secret, the First Story* (Cho 2009) in an article titled "Disabled People Have a Sex Drive Too" ("Changaein to sŏngyok i itta"; Yi 2009). Various versions of this slogan have been used to encapsulate the topic of the sexuality of disabled people, who are presented as having the same sex drive as nondisabled people but no outlet. Such framing of disabled people's sexuality in the public discourse as biological and homogeneous warrants a more thorough critical analysis. In South Korea, communities of disability activists and scholars began discussing sexuality as a problem in the late 1980s (e.g., Chŏn 1989), and the professional discussions and services available centered on sexual rehabilitation for men with spinal cord injuries. The recent attention of newspapers and other mainstream media has come in waves impelled by developments both within and outside South Korea. They include media coverage of sexual services for disabled people in other countries, such as those provided in the Pink Palace, a

brothel in Australia in 2001; those proposed in Switzerland in 2003; those described in Kawai Kaori's *Sex Volunteerism* in 2005, which focused on Japan and the Netherlands; and those commercially available at Fleks Zorg in the Netherlands, as reported in a sexual rehabilitation seminar after a visit by several Korean disabled people and a physician (Donga.com 2008). The online release of the nude photography of the disabled woman Yi Sŏn-hŭi in 2004, which drew extraordinary attention from Internet users, and the popular films *Oasis* (2002), *Pink Palace* (2005a), and *Sex Volunteer* (2009) were also widely publicized and spurred debates about the sexuality of disabled people. Though it relied on sensational images and rhetoric, this coverage raised the general public's awareness of disabled people as sexual beings with unmet sexual needs.

Traditionally, sexual activity has been morally and legally sanctioned only for heterosexual married couples. Over the past 20 years, the general exclusion of sexual minorities from public conversations about sexuality has gradually weakened in South Korea (Bong 2008). Pre- and extramarital sexual practices are more openly discussed, and diverse sexualities and gender identities, including transgendered and gay and lesbian populations, are more visible. Sex commerce in South Korea historically has a long and complicated relationship with colonial violence and nationalism, evidenced most notably by "comfort women" during the Japanese occupation and by the sex workers who regularly (though illegally) work near US military bases. They have been constructed as "dangerous" and "defiled" women who violate feminine moral norms and national boundaries (Kim 1998). Simultaneously, they have been viewed as victims of violence, patriarchal oppression, trafficking, and exploitative capitalist industry, who acquire disability by their exposure to violence and harsh working conditions (Kim 2003b). A notion of "sex workers" who are entitled to rights and protection has recently emerged to replace that of "victimized prostitutes" who are subjected to rehabilitation and control. Adultery remains a criminal offense; despite many challenges, the Constitutional Court has repeatedly affirmed the constitutionality of this law, most recently in 2008. However, public opinion and women's rights activists increasingly view it not as a measure to protect women in marriage but as an impediment to their sexual self-determination. The discussion of sexuality has become more diverse and nuanced in South Korean contexts, but the melodrama of virginity associated with disempowered men still carries a great deal of cultural significance that gains its force from sympathy rather than the framework of rights.

Most of the Korean news reports and articles begin by stating that disabled men and women are considered sexless or asexual (*musŏngjŏk*) and that their sex drive is not different from that of nondisabled people (Yŏ 2003b; Hŏ 2008). Similar claims are common in Western countries, and the belief that disability and sexuality are incompatible has been well documented (O'Toole and Bregante 1992). Historically, sex, friendship, intimacy, marriage, family, and reproduction have been reserved in the West for heterosexual and nondisabled citizens (Hahn 1981; Cole and Cole 1993; Shakespeare et al 1996; Gill 1996; Garland-Thomson 1997). Margrit Shildrick (2009) has succinctly argued that the denial that disability and sexuality can coexist "plays a part in the maintenance of the normative attitudes that shore up the supposed stability of a social order founded on heterosexuality and nuclear family life" (p. 65).

The sex drive of disabled people came to public attention in South Korea suddenly, as if their sexuality had just been discovered (T'ari 2005; Sinu 2005). Moreover, the discussion has rarely taken into account how disabled people are gendered and sexualized; instead, the default subjects are usually imagined as desexualized male. Thus, they can tap into the same rhetoric of the uncontrollable male sex drive that has long justified the existence of prostitution and rape. For instance, the opponents of the new anti-sex trade legislation (enacted in 2004) invoked the old claim that men's sex drive is uncontainable to argue that the sex trade provides them a necessary outlet (Kim 2004b). However, because the two claims are articulated from two different positions—that of a dominant able-bodied male and that of an oppressed minority—references to disabled men's sex drive appeal to liberal humanist sensibilities about their lack of male privilege and evoke sympathy by assuming (and accepting) that they are denied "sexual outlets" such as marriage. One result is that for disabled people, sexuality outside marriage—still the only sanctioned sexual space—may be beyond moral condemnation, even as their exclusion from that space is naturalized. This dynamic is clearly revealed in the call for sympathy for a "worse off other" voiced in such slogans as "Think about those who have never had sex" or "Think about those who cannot even masturbate owing to their severe physical disability" (Kim 2006a). Discussions of sex drive involve a significant degree of othering by writers both with and without disabilities, who automatically deem men with severe physical disabilities ineligible to marry—as if marriage guaranteed access to sex at all times. Or they imagine their own sexual experiences and opportunities as different from those of individuals with cognitive disabilities. This othering, taken up by advocates for disabled people, is due in part to a potential moral stigma attached to those who openly purchase sex for themselves. When Kim Chu-hyŏn considers whether the sex trade—cast as medically beneficial therapy—might be legalized for disabled people, he claims that he would not think of using the services of sex workers, which he compares to "meaningless masturbation" (2003,

p. 80). The construction of the sexuality of disabled people as a "problem" invokes altruistic intentions toward sexually disabled "others." The distance between the author and those who might actually use these sexual services illustrates the degree to which the discourse of sexual help upholds a dichotomy between the self and "worse off others" in need of intervention.

Sex drive and humanist sentiments also dominate the discussion of the sexuality of other minority populations, including older people and migrant laborers (see Hŏ and Kim 2008; Hŏ, Kim and Kim 2008). The attention paid in the 1980s to older bachelors in rural areas, which resulted in the policy of promoting their marriages to women who were recruited from China and South Asia, has some resonance here. The question left unasked in such expressions of concern about minority populations' sexual alienation is to what extent their right to have sexual lives obligates the state to provide them with avenues for sexual experiences.

As the rhetoric of universal and natural sex drive has focused on men with physical or cognitive disabilities, men with other kinds of disabilities and disabled women have been marginalized if not entirely ignored. For example, at a Pusan symposium on what should be done regarding the sexuality of "severely" disabled people, a speaker named Ch'oe Pu-am set aside women, because for disabled women, sexuality is "a matter that needs to be dealt with caution." He then described a successful collaboration between a brothel owner and the director of an institution for cognitively disabled men to meet the needs of the residents. The sexuality of disabled women is treated at best as an afterthought, and the prevalence of sexual exploitation of and violence against women leads to more caution in proposing solutions. But whereas physically disabled women are viewed as vulnerable, cognitively disabled women are often understood as having uncontrollable urges once their sexuality is "awakened." Because of this perceived hypersexuality, many such women are involuntarily sterilized; others are forcibly given contraceptives, including Depo-Provera, to prevent pregnancy (Chisŏng 2009). Moreover, women and men with sensory or psychiatric disabilities, as well as women who are physically disabled, are often excluded from discussions and policy making about disability and sexuality. The paradigmatic figure in this discussion is a man in his 20s to 50s who is in a wheelchair and has limited use of his upper body (with the emphasized difficulty of masturbation).

Other rhetoric invokes not the intrinsic sex drive of disabled men but the sexual rights of disabled people, including the right to sexual self-determination, the right to enjoy sexuality (*sŏng hyangyugwŏn*), and the right to have their sexual agency and subjectivity respected. However, these claims themselves have been underdeveloped and used interchangeably with arguments about sex drive and the need for sexual outlets (see Kim 2003b). The equation of sexuality with sex drive, combined with the supposed lack of outlets, encourages writers to construct sexuality as a problem that requires an immediate solution and to disregard the historical, cultural, and social contexts of sexuality and disability.

One option often proposed in addressing the disabled men's "sexuality problem" (including their status as virgins) is the sex trade assuming that disabled men have not been involved in the sex trade. Those who argue in favor of legalizing the sex trade for disabled customers view the enterprise as a fact of capitalist society (Kim 2003a). Feminist criticisms of a male-centered understanding of sexual needs and of the exploitation of women in the sex industry are often dismissed by disability rights activists as morally conservative and out of touch with reality (T'ari 2005). Without challenging the illegality of the sex trade generally, some have sought to make the case that an exception should be made for disabled men, who putatively have therapeutic needs; to strengthen this argument, sex workers have been understood as laborers in a capitalist society, entitled to labor rights coinciding with the emergence of the sex workers' movement (Kim 2003a). However, the effort by the mainstream women's movement to eradicate all forms of the sex trade—viewed as intrinsically a type of violence against women—has complicated attempts to make it openly available to disabled men.

Proposals outside South Korea for dealing with the sexuality of disabled people, often involving strategies other than the traditional sex trade, also entered into this discussion. These solutions for providing access to sexual experience are seen as challenging traditional moral attitudes. Among the disability-specific services are assistance for a couple in sexual activities and in accessing sexual venues including motels, assistance in purchasing sexual materials and paraphernalia, assistance in masturbating, direct touching, and intercourse. The global circulation of information about specialized services helped Korean advocates construct disabled men's sex drive as something that, like other aspects of their lives affected by their disability, must be addressed with formal services and policies managed by various institutions. According to media reports, specialized programs were in place for years in Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, but few details were given. A Swiss organization, Pro Infirmis, launched the "touchers project" for disabled people in Zurich in June 2003, attracting the media attention (Swissinfo 2003a; 2003b; 2006). The proposed services, which were later withdrawn due to funding shortages ranged from massage, stroking, holding, and body contact to bringing people to orgasm. Korean media often discusses these programs with little consideration for their cultural specificity or the local opposition they faced.

Such programs advocate practices intended to immediately address the sexual needs of disabled people; social changes to ensure their equality are perceived to be harder to achieve. Shildrick cautions against being too quick to see these new practices and policies including facilitated sex implemented by organizations and states as real progress:

> The naming of such changes in public policy as progress—even though they may indeed improve the immediate, material conditions of disability—is to overlook the considerable risks of attaining recognition for sexual interests at the cost of a certain normalisation (2009, p. 74).

She suggests that "even the most seemingly benign developments arising from policies of liberalisation with regard to sexual matters may merely mask a persistent and underlying failure to make space for that which resists the closure of final classification" (p. 74).

In addition to drawing on the rhetoric of sexual liberalism, Korean discursive practices also reflect a legacy of colonialism, as writers tend to view Western and Japanese practices as progressive and to repeatedly use such information from abroad to justify their proposed domestic policy. There are no nuanced narratives about the actual experiences and perspectives of those who in fact use and provide these services; instead, the information used is fragmentary and abstract. These references to other countries also lack any specifics about gender relations and legislative, historical, and cultural contexts. That special services are employed in a progressive atmosphere is almost always mentioned, but the question of how disabled people in those countries remain unequal in status to nondisabled people is not addressed. Furthermore, some local programs, such as the Netherlands's Fleks Zorg (a for-profit business providing heterosexual and homosexual services to disabled men in Amstelveen), are mistakenly presented as national phenomena, as opposition and regional differences are ignored. By referring to these practices as widely available and socially accepted, the discourses on disabled men's sex drive seek to break sexual taboos and remove the moral stigma of paying for sex. Advocates for these practices distinguish them from the sex trade, with its legal restrictions and its foundation in women's commodification, in placing them in the vanguard of ideas for policy intervention.

The construction of the sexuality of physically or cognitively disabled men and women as a problem reflects a complicated mixture of prejudices based on the assumption that normative sexuality is practiced within married, loving, and private relationships. Sympathy for those whose sex drive is thwarted is more easily generated in the case of disabled men than in other populations such as soldiers and prisoners, as well as other sexually marginalized people. Thus the logic of sex drive is applied selectively. Moreover, the othering and distancing that occur when individuals imagine those who have never had sex are grounded on an assumed homogeneity of heteronormative male sexuality and the cultural atmosphere that naturalizes it. This point will be elaborated in the next section, which analyzes a documentary that explores disabled people's sexuality.

Still a Virgin: *Pink Palace* and Red-Light District

The documentary *Pink Palace* presents rich material for investigating how disability, gender, global rhetoric, and the sex trade shape the moral hierarchy of sexual experience in South Korean society. After the "touchers project" first became known, the South Korean magazine *Hamgge Kŏrŭm* featured a series of essays on the sexuality of disabled people that used the term "sexual rights" in discussing European practices, the sex trade, sexual normalization, and the oppression of women within the sex industry. Seo Dong-il, who would direct *Pink Palace*, read an article titled "Disabled Friends, Claim Your Sexual Rights" (Yŏ 2003b), which contains a story similar to that told in the cartoon described in the introduction. The film begins with a prolog outlining the story:

> A man with severe cerebral palsy in his 40s, living in a rural town, went to Ch'ŏngnyangni district with 300,000 won. Leaning his tense body against his scooter, he kept glancing at the women inside the window under the red lights and finally went into one brothel. But he had to turn around in tearful silence when the sex workers ruthlessly rejected him, saying, "We don't like a person like you, even with a lot of money. Go away." Because he cannot even dream of marriage owing to his severe disability, his only wish is to have sex once.

Seo Dong-il ends the prolog by confessing, "When I read this article, I was surprised that disabled people, too, have sexuality"—a fact that he, like most of the public, had totally ignored (Song 2005). Six months later, he quit his job so that he might make a documentary about the sexuality of disabled people and, more specifically, about the man in the article. *Pink Palace* marked his debut as a filmmaker.

What makes the story of a disabled male virgin rejected by a sex worker so compelling that it is repeatedly retold, and why does this story generate strong reactions? The uncanny combination of disability and prostitution marks the intersection of two socially marginalized groups, disabled men and female sex workers. Re-envisioned as the last resort for sexually "undesirable" men in *Pink Palace* and "Big Event" alike, sex workers are portrayed as unsympathetic and prejudiced toward disabled men. The social alienation experienced by a disabled man apparently

heightens when he is rejected and mistreated by a stigmatized and commercially available woman—someone expected to be unselective. Here, the rights of disabled customers to access sexual services and the rights of sexual laborers to choose their own customers come into conflict outside the legal bounds of sexuality. The fact that the male customers' social status determines the hierarchy among sex-selling women within the red-light districts might provide some background why sex workers choose certain kinds of customers. According to Won Mi Hye interviewing Baek Kyoung Ok who worked in a red-light district, sex workers hesitate serving disabled men "not because of their prejudice but because of the limited time per sexual transaction. It takes more time and they are not easy to serve because they are sensitive, thinking that they are looked down upon. Sometimes they show more authoritative attitude than 'regular' men" (Won 2010, p. 147). Won explains the refusal to serve certain customers is a way for sex workers to enforce their own boundary to control their labor condition and avoid practical disadvantage imposed by the owners and pimps (Won 2010, p. 147). However, the testimony of Baek does reflect prejudice against disabled people existing within society in general, while it explains the presence of disabled men as customers in the sex industry adopting gender hierarchy as well as the difficulty sex workers face in accommodating disabled men against the bounds that are enforced by the owners, pimps, and inaccessible environments. Won explains that there are women who specialize in serving disabled men in more flexible circumstances such as in-home service.[4]

The documentary's title *Pink Palace* is another intertextual reference, taken from the name of a brothel in Melbourne, Australia. Located in the state of Victoria, where brothels and escort services are legal, the Pink Palace received widespread media coverage for its progressive efforts to help disabled people seeking sexual partners as it boosted its business by installing doors large enough for wheelchair access and a sit-down shower for disabled male customers (BBC 2001). It created a niche market within the sex industry for disabled tourists and locals alike. By using its name, Seo implicitly contrasts what he sees as the backwardness of South Korea with Australian advances in recognizing the sexuality of disabled people. In so doing, he also provides an example of how oversimplified representations of foreign societies are used to point out the apparent moral repression of sexuality in Korean society.

The film is divided into two unequal parts. In the first, disabled men and women are interviewed about their sexual lives, marriage, dating, unusual erogenous zones, and masturbation. Although it is treated as a prelude to the longer second part, which features Ch'oe Tong-su, whose story was told in *Hamgge Kŏrŭm,* it introduces a wide variety of important (yet fragmented) narratives of men and women with visual, hearing, facial, cognitive, or physical disabilities, providing different perspectives that were previously unknown to the general public. For a man whose face is altered by burns, it is hard to find potential partners or even to make female friends. A deaf couple is concerned about the possibility of engaging in sex and not noticing the presence of other family members in their home. A woman with a physical disability worries that she might involuntarily urinate during intercourse. One woman who uses a wheelchair explains that at her mother's suggestion—and largely for her mother's convenience—she underwent hormonal therapy to stop her menstrual periods. But it caused her to bleed for a month, so she stopped her hormonal therapy. Her mother is now talking about her getting a hysterectomy. Her experience is shared by many other women with cognitive or physical disabilities, who are believed to have no right to reproduce and whose menstruation is viewed as an unnecessary nuisance for their caregivers and a source of indignity for them (Pak 2003; McCarthy 1998).

In these interviews, the sexualities of women and men receive different, unbalanced treatment, drawing the criticism that the film is male-focused, phallocentric, and dominated by penetrative sex as the norm (Pak 2005a). In the film, the sex and sexuality of disabled people are constructed in an essentialist manner and are frequently equated with the desire for food, water, and sleep. One disabled man compares himself to a dog: "If a dog is in heat, people know it should be mating. But God! People don't care about our sexuality at all. I realized at that moment I am treated worse than a dog." The film in fact includes a scene of two dogs mating, captured by chance in the yard of Ch'oe's house. By framing sex as a basic need for men, the main narrative of the film signifies that the gap between disabled men's desire and their limited opportunity to act on that desire is so large that nondisabled people are moved to make sexual experience possible for them.

In the second part of the film, Seo and his crew visit Ch'oe in a rural town and bring up the narrative featured in the magazine. Ch'oe explains that he felt miserable when the sex workers rejected him. One of the voices off camera responds, "I feel like we need to make your wish come true," signaling that their project will focus on his wish to lose his virginity (literally, "to remove the label of bachelor"—*ch'oggak ttakchi rŭl tteda*). The film is dominated by the story of Ch'oe's rejection and his status as a virgin at age 48, despite the many interviews about disabled individuals' active sex lives that precede it. Thus, the emphasis remains on the "sexlessness" of disabled people, and the melodramatic focus on Ch'oe's virginity gives the film a sense of urgency.

[4] Personal communication with Won (2010).

After the initial interview at Ch'oe's house, *Pink Palace* captures Ch'oe's outing to Seoul to meet one of his friends. At first, to faithfully convey the reality of his journey, the film crew simply follows his trip. It takes him 3 hours to reach the train station by scooter, and the busses and taxis are not accessible. Ch'oe's usual travel routine includes spending a night in the station's public bathroom to recharge the battery of his scooter; but when Seo Dong-il asks why he does not go to a motel to do it, Ch'oe takes the question as a suggestion and responds, "Shall we do that?" The director then intervenes in the journey, thereby interfering with the attempt to record Ch'oe's navigation of economically and physically inaccessible environments and undercutting his own claim of objective representation. Later, as pornography plays on a television in the motel room, they continue to discuss Ch'oe's sexual desire. His embarrassment at the scenes on the television reveals his lack of familiarity with pornographic materials, an ignorance that the film portrays as a sign of tragic naïveté in someone of his age and gender. The hardships that accompany Ch'oe's outing hint that the problem of access to sex is inseparable from the issue of access to social spaces. Perhaps, Ch'oe's experience would have been different if he had owned a scooter in his youth as the filmmaker recalls a young man interviewed earlier who is very active and social because his motorized chair and urban space give him mobility. But because Ch'oe lives in a rural area without accessible infrastructure and transportation, his social experience has remained quite limited even after his acquisition of a scooter.

After his initial edits were finished, the director decided to visit Ch'oe one last time. Text on the screen informs viewers that the 2004 Act on the Prevention of the Sex Trade and Protection of Its Victims was enacted, strengthening the law banning the sex trade and prosecuting those who engage in the sex trade, and the conversation starts with Ch'oe's response to the law, which came into force since their previous meeting: "We, disabled people like us, aren't human then?" Ch'oe thus gives voice to the humanist reaction to the news, and the director continues, "Well, Ajŏssi [a term used in addressing an older man], last time in my house, you mentioned that you would like to lose virginity as your wish but that you had given up." Ch'oe answers, "Yes, I was passionate in the past. But now all the curiosity is gone, 'cause I watch this stuff"—with a glance at his television, implying that he now regularly watches pornography.

> Seo: You are saying, you lost curiosity and you don't want to do it?
> Ch'oe: Yeah.
> Seo: But. . . if there is another opportunity one more time. . .
> Ch'oe: I want to do it if there is another opportunity. It is different from those pictures, isn't it?

Following this suggestive conversation, the director warns him of the possible legal consequences for both of them, and Ch'oe becomes thoughtful.

In the next sequence, Ch'oe is sitting in the back of a car at the entrance of a red-light district, and the two men engage in what seems to be a somewhat staged discussion to confirm his determination. Seo asks Ch'oe if he wants to wait until he finds a woman he loves. Ch'oe adamantly declares, "A woman I love won't appear. It is over for me. It's over, of course. I feel like I'm wasting my virginity on the woman over there, but I can't help it. Once born and dead, one never knows when he will be born again. If I die a virgin, it is so unfair, unfair!" The dialog makes it clear that what Ch'oe is about to undertake is a lesser form of sexual experience, signaling a shift in perspective from focusing on sex drive as basic instinct to framing sexual acts in a normative value-laden hierarchy. The sexual experience available in the red-light district is thus understood as inferior to that with a loved one, which has social and cultural value beyond an instinctual drive. The film figuratively and literally returns to the moment of its conception—the melodrama surrounding Ch'oe's virginity and his rejection by the brothel. The film here provides another melodrama; since to accomplish his mission, Ch'oe must resort to a sex worker rather than a loving partner, who is putatively out of his reach. The presentation of this melodrama fails to incorporate sexual diversities and the systematic discrimination often experienced by disabled people in their exclusion from intimate relationships.

Once Ch'oe is on the street, leaving the filmmaker and the crew behind, the camera makes the viewer into a voyeur watching his brave yet sad adventure as cued by the background music. He sits on a scooter alone in front of a brothel, framed in a long shot. A woman at the doorstep waves him away several times, but after some negotiation facilitated by the note that the film crew wrote for mitigating his speech difference, he wheels through the brothel door, as the camera shows him finally allowed inside. Most problematically, the film ends there. It does not convey how Ch'oe feels about his experience after he emerges. The red-light district remains a taboo space, off-limits for the film crew and the audience alike. Leaving his own interpretation of and perspective on the brothel untold, Ch'oe has not appeared in public or engaged in the debate about his decision to participate in the sex trade. While this visit to the brothel has supposedly solved Ch'oe's "problem" of virginity, the structural inaccessibility of his social environments and his isolation remain.

Pink Palace was generally successful in getting the attention of mainstream media as well as coverage in disability newspapers. It was screened in theaters and other venues, including on the cable television channel RTV.

When RTV announced plans to show the documentary again, several major women's organizations formed an alliance to oppose the rescreening of a film that substantively endorses the sex trade (Kim 2006b). *Pink Palace* was caught in the heated debate between women's rights activists and people who support legalizing the sex industry; among them were sex workers, who began to speak out in the face of more stringent anti-sex trade legislation. The director himself defended his film in a letter to the newspaper *Able News,* denying its endorsement of legalizing the sex trade after a columnist had noted the film's complacency regarding the sex industry and the ethical problems of suggesting that Ch'oe to visit the brothel again (Yi 2005a, b; Seo 2005b).

June 29, 2005 was proclaimed by advocates as the first Sex Workers Day in South Korea, and it was marked by a celebration in Seoul. The organizing committee scheduled a partial screening of *Pink Palace* (only Ch'oe's story), intending both to promote the legalization of the sex trade to meet disabled people's sexual needs and to educate sex workers, who might be less inclined to reject disabled people once they had come to sympathize with Ch'oe (Pak 2005b).[5] This emphasis on the need for the public sex trade echoes rhetoric used by nondisabled activists seeking to garner support for legalization before the enactment of the new law (Kim 2003b). Even though the sex trade is frequently discussed in relation to disabled men's sexuality, there is a gap between exploring it as a matter of equal access (and discrimination against disabled men) only insofar as it is available to nondisabled men and participating in the movement advocating for sex worker's rights and for legalization.[6]

Although there is anxiety and disgust involved in barring disabled men from pornography and prostitution, there is significant market interest and condoned presence of the sex trade—regardless of its illegality—in establishing disabled men as a target group. In the rhetoric that ties disabled men to an industry tailored to masculine desire, there is little room for considering the disabled women who are often laborers in that industry. Because the discourses of sexuality is very often based on stereotyped perceptions of the female body as an object of consumption, women's perspectives are crucial in legal analyses of the individual's sexual rights (Jørgensen 2009). In January 2003, police found two 19-year-old women with cognitive disabilities in a brothel. According to the testimony of a nondisabled coworker who had escaped and reported their presence in the brothel, for several months both had been brutally tortured and denied medical treatment by the brothel owner (Yŏ 2003a). The brothel space to which disabled men wish to gain access becomes a more complicated and ambiguous space given the presence of disabled women as sex workers, in many cases exploited. This is not to say that disabled women in the sex industry are always victimized; some disabled women find their place and the sense of belonging as sex workers (see Ŏm 2003). But ignoring disabled women's position and experience in the sex industry simply adds to the male dominance of this debate.

The gendered landscape of discourse demands a more careful examination of social dynamics and the operations of power across multiple marginalized groups. Furthermore, the dichotomous gendered emphases on male sex drive and female vulnerability do not adequately account for the diverse sexual lives of disabled people. In turn, disabled people's sexuality is closely related to social, cultural, and historical understandings of the sex trade and gender inequality. The next section explores sexual service for disabled men and women offered outside of the sex trade.

Sexual Humanitarianism and the Politics of Help

The publication of *Sex Volunteerism* (*Seksŭ chawŏn pongsa*) in 2005 introduced a key new concept into the discussion of sexuality and disability in South Korea. The term "sex volunteers" refers to men or women who offer to provide sexual services to disabled men or women without compensation, and the Sino-Korean word *pongsa* (serving) implies sacrifice and help.[7] Because "volunteering" connotes humanitarianism and charity, even in the sexual realm, the issues of illegality and exploitation connected with the sex trade are potentially avoided. Such rhetoric relies on many sociocultural assumptions that must be examined: How does the fact that one person has a disability change the construction of a consensual sexual exchange into a service voluntarily performed by one for the other, and under what assumptions? What are the power and affective dynamics defined in the rhetoric of help? Given the long-standing expectation that women

[5] Because the members of the film's production group opposed the purpose of the event and objected to this partial screening, the film was not shown.

[6] The sex trade, though illegal, was long condoned in certain areas and even facilitated by local police and the government, whose crackdowns were high-profile but sporadic until international scrutiny about trafficking and the attendant shame, especially about the red-light districts, began to influence the government in the early 2000s.

[7] In Japan, the term "sex volunteers" (*seksŭ chawŏnbongsa*) is also used to refer to men who help women in sexless marriages experience sex (Kawakami 2007). Other related terms have emerged in Korean, such as *seksŭ tolbomi* (sex caretaker; So 2008a, b) and *sŏng toumi* (sex helper), which is ambiguous in its connotation regarding compensation but is distinguished from personal assistants for daily living activities (*hwaldong pojoin*; Pak 2009). The term "pleasure volunteers" (Picariello 2007) has been used to describe the practice of the Netherlands' Stichting Alternatieve Relatiebemiddeling (SAR, or Foundation for Alternative Dating), which has been connecting disabled men and sexual service providers since the early 1980s.

provide care without pay, what are the gendered implications for this type of sexual practice?

Although discussion of the Kawai's work in the domestic media focused on the feasibility of sex volunteering—its pros and cons (see Cho 2005)—the book is far from simply advocating volunteer sexual service. Presenting diverse narratives from the people involved, it covers a wide range of sexual services provided by individuals or through organizations. These services include the typical sex trade, male escort services, the sexual activities of personal assistants, and surrogate therapy in the Netherlands. Kawai delivers the nuanced stories of men and women with disabilities who hire sex workers for a fee or have engaged in sexual activities with volunteers and "semi-volunteers" (who receive expenses or nominal compensation). The book's suggestion that disabled people need to be helped in order to have sexual lives generated controversy. Sex volunteerism includes the altruistic intention to help disabled people who face physical and social barriers to engaging in sex.[8]

For her book, Kawai also interviewed people who provide commercial sexual services to disabled people. In one case, Kawai follows Yurina, a deaf woman, on her first day as an escort for the Enjoy Club, a disabled-customer-only escort service. She used to work as a paid dating partner for older men—a practice called *enjo kosai*—as a way to deal with her loneliness after becoming deaf as a high school student. She also worked in another sex business in which she was paid less than nondisabled colleagues and sometimes had her tips taken away because of her disability. Yurina's story exemplifies how disabled women and girls are drawn to the sex trade because of their lack of resources and social isolation, and how even in that industry they are at a disadvantage in competing with those who are not disabled. Moreover, it shows how disabled women seek out intimacy and income through the sex trade, while challenging the focus on disabled male consumers that has characterized policy debates. Kawai writes that Yurina enjoyed her first day serving a physically disabled man and wants to continue working for the agency so that she can save enough money for her surgery to recover her hearing.

This story of a deaf woman working for a commercial escort service for disabled men draws attention to an important intersection of the sex trade, disability, and gender. The market for disabled men's sexual needs provides her with viable work in which she does not feel stigmatized, although she has to hide her job from her boyfriend. Her story poses a challenge to the simplistic feminist view that the sex trade is by definition a type of violence that victimizes women.

Kawai also introduces Natsuko, a physically disabled woman who hires a male escort at a host club. The host club she uses offers a discount and waives the agency fee for disabled customers. Natsuko calls the man her "prince"; she came to love him but could not tell him so, because he would stop providing his service to her. Natsuko thus experiences on a personal level the blurring between intimate relationships and purchased intimate services. Sato, a male volunteer who has sex with disabled women, thinks that such distinctions are even harder for the male volunteer to draw: "When there is an agency, the distinction between service provider and receiver is clear because there is money involved. But in sex volunteering it becomes ambiguous, especially when I ejaculate. When I helped disabled men to masturbate, my hand felt like a tool, but when I had sex with a disabled woman, it didn't feel like that" (Kawai 2005, p. 101). He continues, "Perhaps I was interested in having sex with a disabled woman. I thought I needed to have a firsthand experience in order to [promote] the practice of sex volunteering, but in fact, the term 'volunteering' was giving me immunity. I think the relationship with money is so much more convenient" (p. 101). His feeling of sexual gratification invokes guilt and confuses the arrangement of volunteering, which implies a sacrifice of time and labor without any compensation or benefit to the volunteer.

Because of the power dynamics of volunteering, the sex services provided by a "sex volunteer," "sex carer," or "sex helper" do not meaningfully further sexual rights and intimate lives, but they may provide sexual experiences that individuals find meaningful and life changing, even if only temporarily. These narratives also suggest that sexual services are not always connected to the objectification of women's bodies; nondisabled women may see themselves as helping and assisting disabled men. However, the logic of volunteering entails a different hierarchy—one based on disability status and on the politics of helping. Volunteering and charity privatize "problems" as difficulties to be solved by individual intervention (Shakespeare 2006, p. 154).

> When a particular group of people is strongly associated with charitable provision, the result is to demean that group. . . . People with power or resources volunteer to help those without power or resources, but the consequence is to make the latter feel dependent and incapable of surviving independently. The charitable relationship is an unequal one (Shakespeare 2006, p. 155).

[8] The practices of sex volunteers in Korea were recently depicted in *Sex Volunteer: Open Secret, the First Story* (2009). Like Seo Dong-il, its director, Cho Kyung-duk, conceived of his film after reading about the sexuality of disabled people—in his case, *Sex Volunteerism.* He was surprised that people born with severe disabilities have a sex drive (Chang 2010). In the film, a Catholic priest advocates for a woman who is arrested on charges of prostitution when in fact she was doing volunteer sex work for a disabled man.

The idea of sex volunteering assumes that a disabled person would wish to have sex with anyone willing to provide sexual services in the absence of gratification, monetary compensation, or any sense of physical attraction. It also assumes that a disabled person cannot find anyone who is mutually desirous of engaging in sex. Sex volunteering is an individual "humanitarian" solution to social and structural problems. The attempt to distinguish sex volunteers from sex workers also seems problematic, because it leaves unquestioned the stigma attached to the latter. Thus the advocacy of "sex volunteering/care/help" for disabled people defines the boundaries of their potential sexual experiences in problematic ways. One woman with a disability who used a man from such a service tells Kawai, "Women feel hurt when they hear 'volunteering'" (2005, p. 111). Disabled people are likely to distrust the charitable intentions of their sexual partner, whether a "volunteer" or not, and disabled women likely receive unwanted sexual advances from men who believe that they need to be sexually "serviced."

Korean websites used by disabled people and others to connect for sexual activities have adopted the term "volunteering." On one of these websites, a posting to recruit sex volunteers specifies that "only women and disabled persons can join," revealing the false assumptions that there is no overlap between the two categories and that the volunteering is always done by nondisabled women for men with disabilities (Kim 2009). In fact, a reporter notes, many nondisabled men are seeking to have sex with disabled women, who thus appear to be at some risk of sexual exploitation (Kim 2009). The rhetoric and practices of sex volunteering require far more attention from both theorists and empirical researchers than they have received to date. Furthermore, it can be connected to "unnamed" private "solutions" in families and social circles of disabled persons for their sexual "problems." In the next section, I explicitly consider disabled women's "sex drive" in familial setting in the cultural representation of their sexuality and its implications.

Representing Women's Sex Drive and Men's Desire to Control

Documentaries on women with disabilities that deal with their sexuality focus primarily on marriage and the desire of intimate relationships (e.g., *The Story of the Marriage of a Disabled Woman,* Kim 1999, and the MBC television documentary *The Sexuality and Love of Disabled Women,* Kim 2007), but one exception is the independent film *Papa* (*Abba*) (Lee 2004), a short drama.

Papa features a "caring" father living with a nonverbal autistic daughter, Minju. When he notices her bloody fingers, he seems to think that her sex drive is causing her to scratch and to hurt her genitalia; he then consults with a doctor several times about possible solutions. On the street, he searches for a man who will satisfy Minju sexually, even offering money to likely candidates. At the end of the film, with no other way to provide her with sexual satisfaction, he rapes her. Interestingly, the film has been perceived not as representing rape but as breaking the taboos regarding incest and the sexual desires of "severely" disabled women. In a familiar rhetorical turn, the film critic Kim (2004a) holds up Europe as a model:

> In Europe, disabled people's sexual welfare is taken seriously, but in Korea, disabled people's sexuality is not welcomed. The reason might lie in the eugenic [dislike] of disability. The film pushes the daughter and the father to the extreme, as if they were mocking such [dislike]. Most current film's imagination situates the daughter–father relationship in the framework of patriarchal power relations or the dangerous incest taboo. This clichéd imagination invokes a familiar ethical debate that can reinforce the taboo or instead creates a space where we can transcend it.

Through society's fixation with sex drive and the framing of injuries self-inflicted by an isolated and deprived woman as a sexuality problem, the incestuous rape is presented as challenging moral repression and the denial of disabled people's sexuality.

The film takes on an entirely different meaning if it is read as a depiction of the father's desire to control his daughter's behavior. For instance, he is shown trying to organize his environment. When he visits the doctor to talk about Minju's behavior, he lines up the cigarette butts in the ashtray on the doctor's desk. He is portrayed as methodical in his attempts to stop Minju from touching her genital area, first taping gloves onto her wrists and later tying her hands to the furniture with fabric. He carefully shaves Minju's pubic hair from the scratched area and uses a vibrator to treat her "problem." In doing so, he kneels down and turns on Beatles song, as if he were carrying out a ritual. As the sensation from the vibrator gives Minju pleasure, he bursts into tears. That he goes on to rape her later reveals his belief that penetrative sex, not sexual satisfaction, is the only way to eliminate her behavior. In a scene preceding the rape, the father undertakes another ritualistic activity. When he cooks dinner for himself, he cuts the claws off chicken feet, an act that symbolizes his desire to mutilate Minju's fingers because they caused her wound. In the room where he is eating and Minju, sitting on a toy horse, is touching her genitalia, the camera shows a wall tapestry of galloping horses. In order for her sexuality to be as free as the running horses and for her to reach an orgasm, he believes this is only thing to do. As he rapes Minju, weeping, she screams in pain and hits his back repeatedly. His despair indicates that the act for him is not pleasurable

but tragic and that he is forced to it by society's denial of disabled people's sexuality.

The context of the father's misguided commitment to his daughter is the rhetoric of sexual service and volunteerism, as he asks the doctor about it and even asks the doctor to perform it. The doctor explains that such European practices are not appropriate in Korean culture. All approaches to gain Minju's sexual "release" are seemingly blocked by social taboos and "disgust" at disability and sexuality. The father's fixation on finding Minju a sex partner are presented as caring and desperate, not as an effort to control her behavior. In one important scene,[9] he visits an institution in an attempt to find her a partner after an able-bodied student has volunteered but failed to have sex with her. The father looks into a room full of idle young men with various disabilities and sees two men being physically intimate; one is pressing the other man's neck with his fingers in order to stimulate him. To the father, thus framed as a voyeur, apparently none of the men seems suitable. This scene in the institution is set up to rule out the possibility that Minju might have a relationship with a disabled man, leaving the father as the only option. Chŏng Nam-hŭi explains that the film attempts to expand our thinking: "If one gets rid of the stereotype [about the incest], the film opens itself unexpectedly easily. Although the film takes the theme to the extreme, it doesn't erase the father's original intention. The father loved Minju" (2005).

How does Minju's wounding of her genitals make incestuous rape necessary? And what "problem" does the rape solve? Like *Pink Palace*, which ends with Ch'oe entering the brothel, *Papa* ends with the rape scene, leaving unexplored the possibility that such a solution might fail or that new narratives different from the sex drive/release formula might arise. In the closed binary framework of moral repression and sexual crusade against it, the recognition of sexual agency to find pleasure and to problematize violence becomes difficult. In this film, as in *Oasis*, which shows a disabled woman falling in love with a man who had raped her, to free disabled women sexually seems to require the intervention of violence, even against their will. This link for disabled women between sexual desire and violence evidences a gendered representation of how sexual desire is acted on. As subjects, men express their sexual desire and initiate sexual experiences; as objects, women have sexual desire that is recognized by others and its "solution" is enacted upon their bodies. By making viewers feel that the rape scene is inevitable and tragic, *Papa* strips away their ability to recognize the violence and promotes another melodrama of the "forced-to-rape" father.

Conclusion: Intimacy, Safe Space, and Sexual Pleasure

Although the rhetorics of moral repression and sexual crusade broadly characterize the discursive landscape, voices have also emerged to carefully articulate the position that disabled people's sexuality is not a special "problem" and that the sex trade and recruiting volunteers are not desirable solutions. Activists in disabled women's rights organizations lament their difficulty in being heard, as the debate has centered on disabled men. The sexuality of disabled women is discussed mainly in the contexts of sexual violence and reproductive control, including sterilization abuse. It is also framed in relation to interpersonal intimacy and relationships rather than to sexual pleasure. Activists in disabled women's organizations experience these frameworks as limiting their ability to express their perspectives on sexual pleasure and reproductive rights.

Pak Yŏng-hee argues against using the reductive framework of sex drive to construct disabled people as recipients of another kind of service from the state or institutions (Cho 2005). She is wary of this process of institutionalizing (*chedowha*) their sexuality. Corrective policies intended to encourage sexual experiences can turn into pressure to manage sexuality when diversity and different desires, including the desire not to engage in sexual activities, are not accorded equal respect. T'ari (2005) argues that a safe space, the exploration of sexual pleasure, and the power to produce narratives will lead to alternative discourses about the sexuality of disabled people. For example, Cho Mi-kyŏng describes her experience in the alternative space of a 2-day workshop hosted by a disabled women's organization (Yongrong 2008). In the workshop, women shared their pleasurable imaginings about being liberated from norms and morality and considered how they could critically rethink social norms associated with sexuality, which often ignore certain groups.[10] The disabled feminist activists observed that societal barriers and inaccessible social and physical environments suppress the sexual, intimate lives, and friendship of disabled people. Shakespeare also asserts that while sexuality is an important form of intimacy, friendship and acceptance are more fundamental than sex and sex maybe unimportant to a wide section of the population in Western societies (Shakespeare 2006, pp. 168–169).

A sexual culture based on pleasure (rather than on "biological release" and "therapy") and the reconfiguration of "conventional" sexuality to include more than the heteronormative may be the best way to broaden the limited discursive landscape of disabled people's sexuality and to discern violence (Gill 2009). The gendered discourses

[9] According to Ryu (2005), the sequence was filmed at a real institution and the disabled men were not actors.

[10] Sinu (2005) also points out that the construction of "disabled people" as a group lacking sexual opportunity is false.

of sexual oppression—casting disabled women as victims of sexual exploitation or as needing violent intervention to be satisfied and disabled men as denied essential access to sexual services—significantly limit a full understanding of disabled people's experiences of desexualization and denial of their sexual agency.

The suggested ways of dealing with the sex drive of disabled people paradoxically discipline disabled people and their sexual and asexual practices, in that the immediate remedies are often controlled by gendered and institutionalized settings. Simple solutions remove any possibility that disabled people may be recognized as sexual/asexual agents. Further, reducing their sexuality merely to sex drive separates it from broader issues of political and civil rights and the continuing history of their segregation and desexualization. More importantly, the gendered nature of the discourses necessarily leads to unequal treatment. At the same time, the predominance of the sex drive discourse masks how the rights of disabled people to live in a community, to have private space, and to have adequate assistance are interconnected with the rights of other marginalized groups who experience sexual stigma. It also obscures the differences between violence and sexual pleasure. The shift has to be made from viewing the sex drive as a biological necessity and sexual charity as an immediate solution to recognizing sexual agency and sexual subcultures (with diverse ways of achieving pleasure and intimacy) in disabled people's lives; at the same time, they must be given access to all aspects of social spaces and to political, economic, and cultural rights.

Discussions of sexuality that focus on problems and solutions allow no room for disabled individuals to explore the complicated meanings and uncertain interpretations of a particular sexual encounter. *Pink Palace* does not tell what Ch'oe experienced inside the brothel and how he interprets that experience. *Papa* clearly fails to imagine the disabled woman as obtaining sexual pleasure in a way that does not involve pain and injury. Although sexual experience and exercising the right to pleasure may transform an individual's perspective on life, the experience may be subject to different interpretations and to political dynamics. However, when emphasizing social change, we must also keep in mind that individual experiences and aspirations to have sexual touch and pleasure is highly meaningful in itself.

The efforts to help disabled people enter the sexual realm have focused on immediate solutions; on limited information about other countries' practices, held up as the ideal; and on the politics surrounding the sex trade and charity. These approaches discipline the sexuality of disabled people in much the same way as the processes that relegate them to outside the sexual realm. The notions of a necessary "release" (*haeso*) and of "charity volunteering," which emerged as a way to solve the "sexuality problem" of disabled people, ignore sexual agency and the subcultures of disabled individuals and simplistically equate sexual oppression with lack of a sexual outlet. The sexual oppression of disabled people cannot be separated from the politics of sexual shame and stigma in Korean culture, and the search for institutional and policy solutions to deal with the sex drive of disabled people constructs their sexuality as a special entity to be managed without bringing meaningful changes to the general practices that desexualize and devalue them.

Multiple counter-representations have yet to emerge from diverse spaces for disabled women living in institutions, disabled feminists, lesbians, sex workers, and asexuals challenging erotophobia combined with ableism and desexualization (Wilkerson 2002) as well as hypersexualizing representations of disabled people that control their expressions of sexuality. In addition to creating ways to produce sexual pleasure and to promote sustained social networks and friendship, it is also important to affirm the sexual agency of disabled women without ignoring sexual victimization.

Acknowledgment I thank Sealing Cheng, participants in Envisioning Global Korea from the Margins at Wellesley College, the activists at the organization, Women with Disabilities Empathy, Martha Fineman and Feminism and Legal Theory workshop at Emory University for their support and opportunity to share the earlier version of this work. I also thank anonymous reviewers and Michael Gill who provided helpful suggestions for revision.

References

BBC News (2001). Brothel offers easy access for disabled. Accessed from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1219879.stm. Accessed on March 14.

Bong, Youngshik D. (2008). The gay rights movement in democratizing Korea. *Korean Studies, 32*, 86–103.

Chang, K-M. (2010). 섹스와 자원봉사, 그리고 중증장애인 [Sex and volunteering and severely disabled people]. 에이블뉴스 [*Able News*]. Acessed from http://www.ablenews.co.kr/News/NewsContent.aspx?CategoryCode=0014&NewsCode=001420100125182127186375. Accessed on January 26.

Chisŏng. (2009). 발달장애여성의 삶과 섹슈얼리티: 지배적인 성규범 안에 갇힌 장애여성의 성적 권리 찾기 [Lives and sexuality of developmentally disabled women: Searching for the sexual rights of disabled women who are bound by dominant sexual norms]. *Alza.net.* Accessed from http://alja.net/web/board.php?board=kkkcolumn&command=body&no=106. Accessed on December 9.

Cho, Ŭ-Y. (2005).장애우 섹스서비스에 대한 찬반 [Pros and cons of sex services for disabled people]. 함께걸음 [Walking together]. Accessed from http://www.cowalknews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=3030. Accessed on April 1.

Cho, K-D (Director). (2009). 섹스 볼란티어: 공공연한 비밀 첫번째 이야기 [*Sex Volunteer: Open Secret, the First Story*]. Korea.

Chŏn, H-Y. (1989).장애인의 결혼 왜 어려운가 [Why is marriage difficult for disabled people?].함께걸음 [Walking together], September 1.

Chŏng, N-H. (2005). 아빠: 인식의 확장을 요구하는 영화 [Papa: a film expands our consciousness].독립영화 [Independent film], *24*. Accessed from http://cafe.naver.com/ArticleRead.nhn?clubid=12114477&articleid=79&menuid=34&boardtype=L&page=1.

Cole, S. S., & Cole, T. M. (1993). Sexuality, disability, and reproductive issues through the lifespan. *Sexuality and Disability, 11*(3), 189–205.

Donga.com. (2008). 유럽 장애인 성 서비스 현황 공개… 한국 도입은 글쎄 [Introducing sexual services for disabled people in Europe. Unsure about its adoption in Korea].동아일보 [East Asia daily]. Accessed from http://www.donga.com/news/print_web.php?n=200805300273. Accessed on May 30.

Garland-Thomson, R. (1997). *Extraordinary bodies: figuring physical disability in American culture and literature*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Gill, C. J. (1996). Dating and relationship issues. *Sexuality and Disability, 14*(3), 183–190.

Gill, M. (2009) Intellectual disability and sexuality: Challenging paternalism, harm reduction, and incompetence (Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2009).

Hahn, H. (1981). The social components of sexuality and disability: some problems and proposals. *Sexuality and Disability, 4*(4), 220–233.

Hŏ, C-H. (2008). 마이너리티의 성: 장애인 [The sexuality of minority: Disabled people].한국일보 [Korea daily]. Accessed from http://news.hankooki.com/lpage/society/200804/h2008041504260084100.htm. Accessed on April 15.

Hŏ, C-H., & Kim, S-H. (2008). 마이너리티의 성: 외국인 노동자 [The sexuality of minority: Migrant laborers]. 한국일보 [Korea daily]. Accessed from http://news.hankooki.com/lpage/society/200804/h2008041603100284100.htm. Accessed on April 16.

Hŏ, C-H., Kim, C-H., & Kim, S-H. (2008). 마이너리티의 성: 노인 [The sexuality of a minority: Elderly people]. 한국일보 [Korea daily]. Accessed from http://news.hankooki.com/lpage/society/200804/h2008041402402484100.htm. Accessed on April 14.

Jørgensen, S. (2009). Handicap, seksualitet og ligestilling mellem kvinder og mænd. Nordisk tidsskrift for menneskerettigheter. *Nordic Journal of Human Rights, 3*, 345–356.

Kawai, K. (2005). 섹스 자원봉사: 억눌린 장애인의 성 [Sex volunteerism: repressed sexuality of disabled people]. (Yuk Min-hye, Trans.). Seoul: Arom Media.

Kawakami, S. (2007). *Goodbye Mme. B: Sex, marriage and the modern Japanese woman*. Seattle: Chin Music Press.

Kim, C-H. (2003a). 중증장애인의 성? 시혜와 동정, 당신을 가두고 있는 윤리부터 벗어던져라 [Severely disabled people's sexuality: Throw out charity and pity, or your old morals first.]. 현장 특수교육 [*Special education field*], 78–83, September–October.

Kim, C-O (Director). (1999). 여성장애인 김진옥씨의 결혼 이야기 [The story of the marriage of a disabled woman, Kim Chin-Ok].

Kim, C-S. (2006a). 섹스 못해본 그들을 생각해보라 [Think about those people who never had sex]. *21* [Han'gyŏre21]. Accessed from http://h21.hani.co.kr/section-021005000/2006/08/02100500020060818062306O.html. Accessed on August 18.

Kim, H. B. (2004a). Program Note. 아빠 [Papa] 서울독립영화제 2004 수상작 소책자 [Booklet for Seoul Independent Film Festival award winning film collection], 15.

Kim, H. S. (1998). Yanggongju as an allegory of the nation: images of working-class women in popular and radical texts. In E. H. Kim & C. Choi (Eds.), *Dangerous women: gender and Korean nationalism* (pp. 175–201). New York: Routledge.

Kim, H-S. (2003b). 장애인의 성욕과 성매매 [Disabled people's sex drive and the sex trade]. 함께걸음 [Walking together]. Accessed from http://www.cowalknews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=85. Accessed on June 1.

Kim, M-K. (2006b). 장애인의 성욕은 유죄인가? [Is disabled people's sexual desire at fault?] 한겨레21 [Han'gyŏre21]. Accessed from http://h21.hani.co.kr/section-021005000/2006/08/02100500020060818062304 7.html. Accessed on April 18.

Kim, M-S. (1993). 한국민속제의와 음양오행 [Korean traditional rituals and yin, yang and five elements]. 집문당 [Chipmundang].

Kim, P-J. (2009). 음지에서 피어나는 장애인 성도우미 [Sex helpers for disabled people emerging from underground]. *Chuson.com*. Accessed from http://blog.chosun.com/blog.log.view.screen?userId=ha4141n&logId=4093903. Accessed on July 22.

Kim, S-B. (2004b). 남성의 성욕은 참을수 없는 '본능'? [Men's sexual urge is the uncontrollable nature?] 한겨레 [Han'gyŏre]. Accessed from http://www.hani.co.kr/section-005000000/2004/10/005000000200410151458001.html. Accessed on October 15.

Kim, Y-H (Director). (2007). 몸에 대한 몇가지 시선, 장애여성의 성과 사랑. [Several views on the body: The sexuality and love of disabled women]. *MBC Special*. Seoul: Munhwa Broadcasting Company, April 15.

Lee, S-J (Director). (2004). 아빠 [Papa]. Korea.

McCarthy, M. (1998). Whose body is it anyway? Pressure and control for women with learning disabilities. *Disability and Society, 13* (4), 557–574.

Ŏm, S-M. (2003). 한낱 떨이가 되는 참 착한 여자들 [Very good women, who are sold at clearance]. 공감 [Empathy], *6*, 44–50.

O'Toole, C. J., & Bregante, J. K. (1992). Disabled women: the myth of the asexual female. In S. K. Susan (Ed.), *Sex equity and sexuality in education* (pp. 271–279). Albany: SUNY Albany Press.

Pak, C-J. (2005a). 영화 핑크팰리스의 한계와 가치 [Limits and values of the film, *Pink Palace*]. 에이블 뉴스 [Able news]. Accessed from http://www.ablenews.co.kr/News/NewsContent.aspx?CategoryCode=0006&NewsCode=7627. Accessed on June 30.

Pak, C-J. (2005b). 성노동자의 날 행사에 장애인의 성이 이용당할 뻔 [Disabled people's sexuality could have been taken advantage of at the event for sex workers' day]. 에이블 뉴스 [Able news]. Accessed from http://www.ablenews.co.kr/News/NewsContent.aspx?CategoryCode=0006&NewsCode=7663. Accessed on July 5.

Pak, I-A. (2009). 장애인 성도우미 논란, 댓글 살펴봤더니. [Reviewing the controversy over sex helpers for disabled people]. 에이블 뉴스 [Able news]. Accessed from http://www.ablenews.co.kr/News/NewsContent.aspx?CategoryCode=0013&NewsCode=001320090514180941258821. Accessed on May 14.

Pak, S-C. (2003). 축복도 저주도 아닌 나의 월경: 장애여성의 월경 [My menstruation: Neither blessing nor a curse].공감 [Empathy], *6*, 26–31.

Picariello, G. (2007). Holland's "pleasure volunteers." *Associated Content. 4*(12). Accessed from http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/200313/hollands_pleasure_volunteers.html?cat=5.

Ryu, M-R. (2005). 장애인의 성을 소재로 한 독립영화: 아빠 [Independent film on the topic of disabled people's sexuality: *Papa*]. 위드뉴스 [With news]. Accessed from http://www.withnews.com/read.php3?no=2770&read_temp=20050708&section=14&search=%BE%C6%BA%FC%20%B7%F9%B9%CC%B7%CA. Accessed on July 8.

Seo, D-I (Director). (2005a). 핑크팰리스 [Pink Palace]. Korea.

Seo, D-I. (2005b). 핑크팰리스의 안타까움을 전합니다 [Sending Pink Palace's regret]. 위드뉴스 [With news]. Accessed from http://www.withnews.com/read.php3?no=2726&read_temp=20050704&section=14&search=%C7%CE%C5%A9%C6%D3%B8%AE%BD%BA. Accessed on July 4.

Shakespeare, T. (2006). *Disability rights and wrongs*. London: Routledge.

Shakespeare, T., Gillespie-Sells, K., & Davies, D. (1996). *The sexual politics of disability: untold desires*. London: Cassell.

Shildrick, M. (2009). *Dangerous discourses of disability, subjectivity and sexuality*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sinu. (2005). 다들하고 있냐구요? 핑크팰리스를 통해 본 성담론. [Are we doing it? Sexuality discourse through *Pink Palace*]. [Empathy], *8*, 63–72.

So, C-S. (2008a). 장애인 섹스돌봄이를 아시나요? [Do you know about sex helpers for disabled people?]. 에이블뉴스 [Able news].

Accessed from http://www.ablenews.co.kr/News/NewsPrint/Print.aspx?News Code=17117. Accessed on June 12.

So, C-S. (2008b, June 19). 섹스돌봄이 2명과 이용자 2명 인터뷰 [Interviews with two sex helpers and two users]. 에이블뉴스 [Able news]. Accessed from http://www.ablenews.co.kr/News/NewsPrint/Print.aspx?NewsCode=17196.

Song, C-Y. (2005). 핑크 팰리스 서동일 감독의 인생이야기 [Pink Palace, the director Seo's life story]. *Film 2*, November 7.

Swissinfo (2003a). Zurich disabled get sexual relief. Accessed from http://www.swissinfo.org/sen/swissinfo.html?siteSect=105&sid=1715377. Accessed on April 8.

Swissinfo (2003b). Disabled organization withdraws sex project. Accessed from http://www.swissinfo.org/sen/swissinfo.html?siteSect=105&sid=4222207. Accessed on September 11.

Swissinfo (2006). Disabled sex 'assistants' tackle taboo. Accessed from http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/search/detail/Disabled_sex_assistants_tackle_taboo.html?siteSect=881&sid=6954192.cv. Accessed on April 8.

T'ari. (2005). 장애인의 섹슈얼리티: 치료, 봉사, 매매에서 이탈하기 [Disabled people's sexuality: Escaping from therapy, service, transaction]. 공감 [Empathy], *8*, 89–98.

Wilkerson, A. (2002). Disability, sex radicalism, and political agency. *NWSA Journal, 14*(3), 33–57.

Won, M. H. (2010). "'성 판매 여성'의 생애체험 연구: 교차적 성 위계의 시공간적 작용을 중심으로" [A Life History Research of Women Who Sell Sex: The Temporal and Spatial Operationalization of Intersectional Sex Hierarchy] Ewha Womans University Ph.D dissertation.

Yi, H-H. (2005a). 장애인의 성문제 다룬 '핑크 팰리스' 유감: 누가 이 영화를 장애인 영화라고 말하는가? [Regrets about *Pink Palace* dealing with disabled people's sexuality problem: Who says this is a disability movie?]. 위드뉴스 [With news]. Accessed from http://www.withnews.com/read.php3?no=2690&read_temp=20050629&section=7. Accessed on June 29.

Yi, H-H. (2005b). 재반론, 핑크팰리스 반론에 대한 더 큰 안타까움. [Rebuttal: More regrets about the response from *Pink Palace*]. 위드뉴스 [With news]. Accessed from http://www.withnews.com/read.php3?no=2742&read_temp=20050705&section=1. Accessed on July 5.

Yi, M-G. (2009). 장애인도 성욕있다! 성자원봉사 다룬 섹스볼란티어. [Disabled people have sex drive too: *Sex volunteer* deals with sex volunteers]. 스포츠 선데이 [Sports Sunday]. Accessed from http://www.sportsseoul.com/news2/sunday/hotissue/2009/0501/20090501101110400000000_6925585733.html. Accessed on May 1.

Yi, T-G (text)., & Yi, S-Y (illustration). (1996). 거사 [Big event]. 함께걸음 [Walking together], 58–65, November.

Yŏ, C-M. (2003a). 윤락가의 두 장애여성, 이들에게 무슨 일이 일어났나? [Two disabled women in the red light district, what happened to them?] 함께걸음 [Walking together]. Accessed from http://www.cowalknews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=159. Accessed on March 1.

Yŏ, C-M. (2003b). 장애우들이여, 이제 성적 권리를 주장하라 [Disabled friends, claim your sexual rights]. 함께걸음 [Walking together]. Accessed from http://www.cowalknews.co.kr/news/quickViewArticleView.html?idxno=82. Accessed on June 1.

Yongrong. (2008). 장애인들의 섹슈얼리티는 '발견'되는 것이 아니다: 조미경씨를 만나 장애인의 성을 말하다 [Disabled people's sexuality is not something that can be discovered: An interview with Cho Mi-kyŏng on sexuality]. 함께걸음 [Walking together]. Accessed from http://www.cowalknews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=6669. Accessed on September 11.