

Full Length Research Paper

The meaning of the Chinese cultural keyword *xin*

Jing Li*, Christer Ericsson and Mikael Quennerstedt

School of Health and Medical Sciences, Örebro University, Sweden.

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In China, the word, *xin* 心 (often translated as 'heart') is frequently used and its concept is central to Chinese culture. However, its meaning is not exactly the same as 'heart' in English. Using qigong as the context, this article aims to explore the meaning of *xin* as a cultural keyword in order to gain an in-depth understanding of Chinese culture and knowledge within that cultural system. Qigong is a Chinese health maintenance system and healing tradition which integrates physical activity with training of the mind and self-cultivation. One of qigong's basic components is *xin adjustment*. It is impossible to convey the full meaning of this concept without understanding the meaning of *xin*. In Chinese culture, *xin* is the root of physical and mental life. It is the seat of all emotions, and embodies the inherent goodness of human nature and wisdom. *Xin* helps to guide the individual's way of life and attitude, and can lead one to deep contentment.

Key words: *xin* xin, Chinese heart, cultural keyword, natural semantic metalanguage (NSM), qigong, heart adjustment.

INTRODUCTION

Xin 心 (pronounced hsin) is a word frequently used in Chinese daily life. A modern Chinese-English dictionary (Chen, 2001) translates *xin* as: heart; mind; feeling; intention; centre. In China, *xin* refers mainly to a person's Heart (The capital letter 'H' is used to differentiate the Chinese concept of 'Heart' from the Anglo English 'heart'), and the word *xin* is a morpheme; it serves as the centre of a phraseological cluster. For example:

- a. *xin ling* 心靈 (*xin* spirit) 'soul'
- b. *xin zhi* 心智 (*xin* intelligence) 'wisdom'
- c. zhong *xin* geng geng 忠心耿耿 (devoted *xin* honest) 'loyal and devoted'
- d. xiao *xin* 孝心 (filial *xin*) 'filial piety, love toward parents'
- e. xin *xin* 信心 (trust *xin*) 'confidence; faith'

The common and frequent usage of the word correlates with cultural salience. The meaning and concept of *xin*

are deeply rooted in Chinese culture and reflect important idiosyncratic cultural qualities.

The Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Chinese Language (Lin and Gao, 1985) contains 310 expressions, including idiomatic ones, starting with the word *xin* (as in a. and b.), and more than 250 entries containing *xin* either in the middle or at the end (as in c., d. and e.). Wierzbicka, (1997) defines words that are "frequently used" and "particularly important and revealing in a given culture" as "cultural keywords". These are words that "can be studied as focal points around which whole cultural domains are organized. By exploring these focal points in depth we may be able to show the general organizing principles which lend structure and coherence to a cultural domain as a whole, and which often have an explanatory power extending across a number of domains". In this sense, *xin* is a cultural keyword.

In English, *xin* is often translated as 'heart' or 'mind'. This translation fails to transmit the full meaning of the

word that is deeply rooted in Chinese culture, thereby omitting or obscuring much of *xin*'s significance in cultural knowledge. In academic scholarship, the over-simplified definition of *xin* can create difficulty in transmitting Chinese concepts that span many generations in various fields, such as traditional Chinese arts, sports, philosophy and medicine.

For example, scholars have encountered this issue in defining qigong (pronounced chee-gung). Qigong is an ancient Chinese health maintenance and healing tradition believed to be the basis of traditional Chinese medicine and said to date back to 5,000 - 7,000 years (McCaffrey and Fowler, 2003). The outcome of qigong practice is longevity and harmony in life (Davidson et al., 2003; Jouper et al., 2006; Yang, 1997). The often cited Chinese medicine academic textbook *Zhong Yi Qigong Xue* (Liu, 2005) defines qigong as follows: "Qigong is a body-*xin* practice that integrates body adjustment, breath adjustment and *xin* adjustment into one". *Xin* is mentioned twice in this short definition, which indicates that the cultural keyword *xin* (Heart) is central to traditional Chinese qigong. As already mentioned, its meaning in Chinese culture is not exactly the same as 'heart' or 'mind' in English. How is the meaning of *xin* conveyed for the transmission of the concept, qigong?

Although the physical and mental health effects of qigong have been studied in over 100 research articles in English, the concept of qigong in the West is still vague. An overview of the literature reveals that qigong practice is frequently referred to in relation to three themes. First, qigong is considered to be what the Chinese might call a "gem in the treasure house" of traditional Chinese sports (Bi, 1989). A Westerner might say that qigong is a foundation of Chinese sports. It is a typical Chinese traditional exercise, which is usually slow and gentle in contrast to its Western counterparts (Zhao et al., 2007). Second, qigong is a component of Chinese medicine (Bottomley, 2004; Sancier, 1999; Tan et al., 2007). Medical researchers use it as an intervention in clinical studies and report its positive physical and mental effects on health. Third, qigong is considered to quiet the mind and therefore it is also used as a technique for moral cultivation (Ots, 1994), and consequently regarded as a self-cultivation practice (McDonald, 2004). All these facets and functions make it complicated for people in the West to grasp the many concepts of qigong. The name qigong has a literal translation in English: *qi* means vital energy, and *gong* is the practice (Sancier, 2001). But what is qigong all about? Is qigong an exercise? Is it Chinese medicine? Is it a religion? If the cultural sense of '*xin adjustment/ Heart adjustment*' cannot be accurately conveyed and articulated for a Western audience, some confusion will remain. A study of the meaning of the Chinese cultural keyword *xin* is essential to resolving this issue.

This paper applies the explication of multiple meanings

and roles of the concept of *xin* in Chinese language and culture to convey a deeper understanding of *xin* so as to further clarify a basic but difficult-to-understand component of qigong, *xin adjustment* or *Heart adjustment*. It follows that the practice of qigong not only aims at good health, but also is a central inner component to a harmonious way of living. The conclusion is that *xin* is the root of physical and mental life. It is the seat of all emotions, and embodies the inherent goodness of human nature and wisdom. *Xin* helps to guide the individual's way of life and attitude, and can lead one to deep contentment.

Research questions

This paper aims to clarify the concept of *xin* in Chinese culture, and its meaning in the context of qigong, to build a foundation for scholars investigating other related fields in the Chinese tradition, such as sports and medicine. The research questions are:

1. What is the meaning of the Chinese cultural keyword *xin* (Heart)?
2. What is the meaning of '*Heart adjustment*' as a basic component of qigong?

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Method

In this study, we will explicate the Chinese cultural keyword *xin* through the use of natural semantic metalanguage (NSM), a method developed by Wierzbicka (1972, 1980, 1991, 1992, 1996) and Goddard (2002) that aims to describe complex meanings in simple terms. NSM has been applied to more than 30 languages from many parts of the world, including Chinese linguistic and cultural studies (Tien, 2009; Tong et al., 1997; Ye, 2002, 2004). This approach is known to assist in the translation of cultural keywords into universal language (Pedersen, 2010; Shek, 2010; Shirinbakhsh and Eslamirasekh, 2011; Wierzbicka, 2010a; Wong, 2006).

The NSM approach assumes a small core of basic words, known as semantic primes that carry the same meanings in every language. These primes express the same coherent concept regardless of the language spoken. A set of 64 semantic primes is presented in Table 1.

Semantic explanations, called "explications", can range in length from two or three words to literally dozens of interrelated clauses. Using NSM, Wierzbicka (1992) explicates the concept of 'heart' (The explications of 'heart' are formulated in an earlier version of NSM, using some elements which have since been superseded, example, 'imagine', 'movement') in Anglo English as follows:

- (1) a part of a person
- (2) one cannot see it
- (3) one can imagine that it is a part of a person's body [in the middle of the upper
- (4) half of the body
- (5) one can hear its movements

Table 1. NSM semantic primes (Wierzbicka, 2007).

Substantive	I, you, someone/person, something/thing, people, body
Relational substantive	Kind, part
Determiners	This, the same, other/else
Quantifiers	One, two, much/many, some, all
Evaluators	Good, bad
Descriptors	Big, small
Mental predicates	Think, know, want, feel, see, hear
Speech	Say, words, true
Actions, events, movement, contact	Do, happen, move, touch
Location, existence, possession, specification	Be (somewhere), there is/exists, have, be
Life and death	Live, die
Time	When/time, now, before, after, a long time, a short time, for some time, moment
Space	Where/place, here, above, below, far, near, side, inside
Logical concepts	Not, maybe, can, because, if
Augmentor, intensifier	Very, more
Similarity	Like

(6) because of this part, a person can feel good things and bad things

(7) because of this part, a person can feel good things towards other people

There may be some validity in the criticism that NSM is circular and simplistic (Murray and Button, 1988), and that it attaches excessive importance to explanatory definition (Riemer, 2006). Nonetheless, it is still a proven semantic method which “can serve as a cultural notation for cross-cultural comparisons and explanations” (Wierzbicka, 2008). It is worth mentioning that elsewhere Wierzbicka (1992) uses NSM again to explicate the Anglo concepts of ‘heart’ and ‘mind’, thereby making it possible to compare meanings cross-linguistically within the same semantic theory and methodology. By understanding the similarities and differences between ‘*xin*’, ‘heart’ and ‘mind’ one can gain a better comprehension of the semantic meaning of the Chinese cultural keyword *xin*. This paper intends to apply a culturally unbiased or non-Anglocentric approach so as to explicate *xin* without distorting or losing its original meanings.

Material

In this paper we bring examples of terms, idioms and sentences to present the semantic meaning of *xin*. The terms and idioms are taken mainly from The Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Chinese Language (Lin and Gao, 1985), a 10-volume dictionary that provides comprehensive coverage of both classical and modern terms in Chinese language. The cited terms and idioms are all in actual usage in contemporary Chinese, in both the written and the spoken language. The quoted sentences from ancient classical texts are used to present the deep roots of the concept of *xin* within the context of traditional culture and philosophy. We have chosen our main references from Chinese classical philosophy and Chinese medicine.

In Chinese classical philosophy, several philosophers contributed fundamental knowledge of the human heart. These include Laozi,

the founder of Daoism, who lived in 600 BC; Zhuangzi who lived in 400 BC, and Mengzi (Mencius) (372 - 289 BC, 2010), who worked in the same philosophical tradition as Kongzi (Confucius).

The earliest ancient Chinese medical text, Huang Di Nei Jing (2004) (known in the West as the Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine) comprises two texts: Simple Questions (2004) and Spiritual Axis. They explore the roles and functions of *xin*. This medical work, first mentioned in the Book of Han in 111 CE, is considered the fundamental doctrinal source for Chinese medicine. To the Chinese, it is considered the equivalent in importance to the Hippocratic Corpus in Greek medicine, or the works of Galen in Islamic and medieval European medicine (Ho and Lisowski, 1993; Kaptchuk, 2000).

The fundamental understandings of *xin* from these ancient sources have penetrated Chinese culture for thousands of years and continue to be revealed today in Chinese daily life (in the way people think, talk, and greet each other, etc.).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE CHINESE CONCEPT OF *XIN*

There are over 500 different Chinese expressions that use the word *xin* as the centre of a phraseological cluster in the Chinese lexicon. Looking at these expressions along with the other data we gathered from literature and references indicates that the concept of *xin* relates to contemporary Chinese life mainly in these eight aspects:

- 1) *xin* and emotions
- 2) *xin* and the physical heart
- 3) *xin* and mind
- 4) *xin*, virtue and vision
- 5) *xin* in terms of its ability to think and know
- 6) *xin* and concentration

- 7) *xin* and desire
 8) *xin*, a way of life and attitude.

In each of these aspects we intend to explore two things: a) the concept of *xin* through the use of NSM; and b) the implications of *Heart adjustment* within qigong practice, using the meaning and roles of *xin*.

Xin and emotions

In Chinese culture, *xin* is more of an invisible concept, a symbol of the higher self, rather than just an internal organ. The Chinese *Heart adjustment* is an odd term to Western ears; perhaps because in English the first definition of heart relates to its function as a physical organ. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, one of the first definitions of 'heart' is "a hollow muscular organ of vertebrate animals that by its rhythmic contraction acts as a force pump maintaining the circulation of the blood." In modern Chinese, the anatomical heart is called: 心臟 (*xin zang*) 'heart organ'. Though the word '*xin*' is often used as an abbreviation of *xin zang*, its meaning is broader than just 'heart organ'. Thus, when Chinese say *Heart adjustment* (*tiao xin*), it does not mean physically adjusting the 'heart organ'. Before we discuss the concept of *xin* and the physical heart, it is necessary to first look at an important, yet, invisible factor that can affect the anatomical heart directly: emotion.

According to Wierzbicka (1992), 'heart' is seen in Anglo English as the organ of emotions, but not necessarily as a seat of all emotions, only of emotions which are seen as either 'good' or 'bad'. Thus one can say 'His heart was full of joy/bitterness/sadness'. But hardly 'His heart was full of surprise/amazement/interest' (1992). However, in Chinese one can say both 'His Heart was full of joy/bitterness/sadness' '他心中充滿了歡樂/苦澀/悲哀', and, 'His Heart was full of surprise/ amazement/interest' '他心中滿懷驚喜/驚嘆/好奇'. Additionally, from Wierzbicka's examples, when something happens Chinese people often express their feelings by saying, 'My Heart feels very happy/unhappy/vexed/excited/depressed/sorrow/free from anxiety/restless/afraid/tender and warm/wronged/sad/bitterness/hurt/perplexed/ashamed and uneasy/strong antipathy/discomfort/lonely/indignant/funny/annoyed and impatient/empty/much fulfilled' '我心裡覺得很快樂/不爽快/煩/興奮/壓/悲哀/踏實/不安/惶恐/溫暖/委屈/難過/苦悶/痛/迷惘/愧疚/反感/別扭/孤單/氣憤/好笑/煩躁/空虛/滿足'. These rich expressions tell us that *xin* feels all the feelings. Though both 'heart' and *xin* are seen as the organ of emotions, *xin* differs from 'heart' as *xin* is a seat of *all* emotions. But in terms of good and bad emotions, both '*xin*' and 'heart' share a common meaning: because of this part, a person can feel good things and bad things.

The word *xin* is a centre of a phraseological cluster, which is used in modern Chinese to describe different emotions:

- a. 開心 (an open *xin*) 'feel happy'
- b. 灰心 (gray *xin*) 'discouraged'
- c. 擔心 (to shoulder the *xin*) 'worried'
- d. 傷心 (wounded *xin*) 'feel hurt; grieve/broken-hearted'
- e. 痛心 (painful *xin*) 'feel distressed/great sorrow'
- f. 心煩 (*xin* annoyed) 'vexed'
- g. 心酸 (*xin* sour) 'feel sad'
- h. 心驚 (*xin* frightened) 'startled; fearful'

One can say, 'I feel happy/discouraged/worried/hurt/great sorrow/vexed/sad/startled'. The question arises, 'what is the difference between 'I feel' and 'my Heart feels?' It seems, the modern Chinese word 'emotion' gives us a clue:

- i. 心情 (*xin*'s feeling) 'emotion; mood'

Chinese language presents its culture that 'my Heart' can be seen as a 'self', who holds all feelings. Therefore, 'my Heart' in a way is like an 'emotional self', who can detect all feelings more clearly, deeply and sincerely than 'I feel', for example, from the head.

In order to understand the Chinese cultural knowledge regarding *xin*, emotions and health, we need to look into the traditional Chinese medical philosophy that has existed for over 4,000 years, regarding negative and imbalanced emotions as the primary cause of physical disease. There exists seven emotions, each corresponding to a different internal organ (Maciocia, 2005) (Table 2).

Though Heart is related to joy, all emotions affect the Heart. Dr. Yu Chang (1585 - 1664) wrote in the Principles of Medical Practice (1658, chapter 1): "Worry agitates the Heart and has repercussions on the Lungs; pensiveness agitates the Heart and has repercussions on the Spleen; anger agitates the Heart and has repercussions on the Liver; fear agitates the Heart and has repercussions on the Kidneys". This extremely important aspect of the Chinese theory of the internal organs illustrates the unity of body, *xin*, and emotion in Chinese medicine. "Whereas in Western physiology, emotional and mental processes are attributed to the brain; in Chinese medicine they are part of the sphere of action of the internal organs" (Maciocia, 2005). And, Dr. Yu Chang concluded:

- j. 此所以五志惟心所使也 (Therefore, the (five) emotions are enabled by the Heart).

Contemporaries like the physician, Zhang Jie-Bin (1563 - 1640) wrote in his medical work Classic of Categories (1624, chapter 26):

Table 2. The seven emotions and internal organs.

Emotion	Effect
Anger	Anger affects the liver
Joy	Joy affects the heart
Sadness	Sadness affects the lungs and heart
Worry	Worry affects the lungs and spleen
Pensiveness	Pensiveness affects the spleen
Fear	Fear affects the kidneys
Shock	Shock affects the heart

k. 情志之傷，雖五臟各有所屬，然求其所由，則無不從心而發 (Though emotional disorder relates to five-internal-organs, inquiry into the reason reveals all emotions begin from the Heart).

The Chinese medical texts (j. and k.) believe that at least from the sixteenth century *xin* is the seat of *all* emotions; man has emotions because of the Heart. Using NSM to convey this concept: because of this part, a person can feel all feelings (As the substantive ‘person’ is removed in the recent proposed semantic primes (Wierzbicka, 2010b), we prefer to use ‘someone’ or ‘people’ in the newest version. Since Wierzbicka used ‘person’ to explicate the concept of heart in Anglo English, we consider that using ‘person’ as the substantive to explicate *xin* is a clearer way for the readers to see the similarities and differences between the meaning of *xin* and *heart*).

According to Chinese medicine theory, emotional imbalance is a main cause of illness and disease because it disrupts the flow of *qi*. McCaffrey and Fowler (2003) state the Chinese identify *qi* as “the natural energy intrinsic to all things that exist in the universe”, as the fundamental life energy responsible for health and vitality.

In order to understand the Chinese view of *xin*, emotions, *qi* (energy) flow and health, a brief explanation of *qi* is necessary in this section, as Chinese medicine theory is based on the concept of *qi* (Maciocia, 2005). To avoid an overly-detailed discussion of *qi*, we prefer to use a metaphor: *qi*, the vital energy in the human body, is like an electrical current that should flow in certain directions. Imbalanced emotions (imagine a high ohm resistance) can lead to *qi* stagnation and create blockage. Extreme emotions can change the direction of the *qi* flow (electrode change). Each emotion is also said to have a particular effect on the circulation of *qi*: “Anger makes *qi* rise, joy slows *qi* down, sadness dissolves *qi*, fear makes *qi* descend, shock scatters *qi*, pensiveness knots *qi*” (Simple Questions, chapter 39). Chinese medicine is based on the concept of balancing *qi* in the human body, where energy blocks or imbalance may result from disease, injury, strong emotions or stress. The reverse is also true: disease, injury, etc., result from energy blocks

or imbalance. Qigong (*qi* gong) practice accordingly regulates the flow of *qi* and removes the energy blockages (Ng and Tsang, 2009).

Heart adjustment (*tiao xin*): means using qigong practice to balance emotions and stay calm, to avoid unbalanced emotions that disturb the flow of *qi*.

***Xin* and the physical heart**

In terms of the physical heart, *xin* is not only an abbreviation of *xin zang* (example, ‘I hear your *xin* beat’ ‘我聽到你的心跳’ instead *xin zang* beat), but also a centre of a phraseological cluster for medical terminology in describing heart diseases:

- 心慌 (*xin* flusters) ‘irregular heartbeat’
- 心悸 (*xin* palpitates) ‘palpitation’
- 心絞痛 (*xin* wring pain) ‘angina’
- 心率不齊 (*xin*’s rate uneven) ‘arrhythmia’
- 心力衰竭 (*xin*’s power prostration) ‘heart failure’
- 心血管疾病 (*xin* [and] blood vessel disease) ‘cardiovascular disease’
- 心臟病 (*xin* organ disease) ‘heart disease’

Unlike the external parts like arms and legs, the anatomical heart is an internal part of the body; it cannot be seen by human eyes. Compared to the concept of ‘heart’ explicated by Wierzbicka, both *xin* and the ‘heart’ carry the meanings: one can imagine that it is a part of a person’s body [in the middle of the upper half of the body]; and, one can hear its movements.

In old language, *xin* was the only word that referred to the physical heart due to the nonexistence of the modern medical terminology ‘*xin zang*’. According to the earliest surviving work on traditional Chinese medicine, Huan Di Nei Jing (475 BC – 220 CE): “blood pertains to the *xin*” (Simple Questions, chapter 10) and “*xin* governs the blood vessels” (chapter 44). Huan Di Nei Jing further states, “*xin* is the master of all the internal organs” (Simple Questions, chapter 8; Spiritual Axis, chapter 71). Thus, the Heart is considered to be the most important of all the internal organs in traditional Chinese medicine.

Though modern Western medicine regards the physical heart and its functions, similar to 4,000-year-old traditional Chinese medicine, philosophically, they are not. Firstly, traditional Chinese medicine does not separate the physical body from ‘invisible’ factors such as the emotions. Therefore, traditional Chinese medicine doctors do not just treat the physical Heart alone. They integrate the improvement of the balance of *qi* and the emotional state, and adjustment of nutrition and lifestyle into their treatment. Secondly, Western medicine regards

blood, blood pressure and blood circulation as essential to life. Chinese medicine agrees with this, but also believes that *qi* is even more important, because “*qi* generates blood” (Maciocia, 2005). There is *qi* in the food people eat, there is *qi* in the air people breathe, and inside the body there is intrinsic *qi* which transports and transforms the nutrition to blood, and “*qi* is what moves the blood” (Tang, 1884, chapter 1). When *qi* is in flow, blood circulates well. If *qi* is deficient, blood will eventually also be deficient. Thus, the balance and harmony of *qi* (*Yin qi* and *Yang qi*) is essential to life; it symbolizes good health. Because the Heart is the seat of all emotions, it is in charge of both the physical and ‘emotional’ body. Therefore, the following idiom symbolizes a harmonious state of good health; it best demonstrates the relationship between *qi*, Heart and health:

h. 心平氣和 (*xin* calm [and] *qi* harmonious) ‘peaceful heart leads to harmonious *qi*; peaceful heart and balanced *qi* (no excessive *Yin* or *Yang qi*)’

One can say ‘Practicing qigong/brush calligraphy/painting can keep one in a state of peaceful Heart and harmonious *qi*’ 練氣功/書法/繪畫可使人保持心平氣和的狀態’.

Heart adjustment (*tiao xin*): The Chinese notion of *xin* is both physical and non-physical. According to the Chinese medical dialectical principle, the physical and emotional aspects of the Heart are not separate; they are two-in-one. *Heart adjustment* here points to a dual function of qigong: if the practice benefits the physical health, it is also good for balancing the emotions, and vice versa.

***Xin* and ‘mind’**

In some ways, one aspect of *xin* is very similar to the Anglo concept of ‘mind’ (Wierzbicka, 1992):

- (1) one of two parts of a person
- (2) one cannot see it
- (3) because of this part, a person can think and know

Under the present view point, we will discuss and compare *xin* with the first and second explication of ‘mind’, while the third “because of this part, a person can think and know” will be discussed in more detail later in another section (*xin* in terms of its ability to think and know).

To begin with, the word *xin* is a centre of a phraseological cluster, which is used in modern Chinese to describe psychological aspects, such as:

- a. 耐心 (enduring *xin*) ‘patience; be patient’
- b. 信心 (confident *xin*) ‘confidence; be confident’
- c. 內心 (inner *xin*) ‘innermost being’
- d. 心理學 (*xin* science study/ *xin* logic study) ‘psychology’

It is interesting to note that in Chinese ‘psychology’ is a ‘science study of the *xin*’, while its first definition in Merriam-Webster is ‘the science of mind and behavior’. In this sense, ‘*xin*’ is synonymous with the English word ‘mind’. Thus meaning one cannot see it. Furthermore, the Chinese regard the body (身) as representing the part that can be seen by human eyes; and *xin* the invisible part of a person, which is best presented by the modern Chinese phrase for ‘physical and mental health’:

- e. 身心健康 (body [and] *xin* health) ‘physical and mental health’

This may lead one to relate with the body-mind dichotomy in English. According to Wierzbicka, both ‘mind’ and ‘heart’ carry the meaning “one cannot see it”. However, owing to the Chinese symmetrical use of ‘body’ and ‘*xin*’, one may think that *xin* is more similar to the English concept of ‘mind’ than ‘heart’ because of the predominant Anglo symmetrical use of ‘body’ and ‘mind’ reflecting a dualistic view, rather than multiple parts of a human being. Therefore, *xin* is one of the two parts of a person.

Nevertheless Wierzbicka (1992) points out that ‘mind’ “is a concept specific to Anglo-Saxon culture, which has no exact semantic equivalents in other European languages” such as French and German; neither does the word ‘mind’ have an exact semantic equivalent in Chinese. In modern Chinese language, the words ‘*naozi*’ (brain) and ‘*tounao*’ (head-brain) have the closest meaning to ‘mind’. And, *shen* (mental life) from the traditional Chinese medicine classics is also translated to ‘mind’, such as by Maciocia (2005): “The Heart is the Monarch and it governs the Mind (Simple Questions, chapter 8); The Heart...is the residence of the Mind (Spiritual Axis, chapter 71); The Heart is the root of Life and the origin of mental Life; The Heart... is in control of the Mind” (Simple Questions, chapter 9). He uses ‘Mind’ to differentiate *shen* from the traditional Chinese medicine and the English concept ‘mind’. Meanwhile, the quotes in this paragraph exhibit that the function of the Heart from traditional Chinese medicine point of view which is different from Western medical belief that the brain is at the top of the body-mind pyramid (Maciocia, 2005). As the centre of mental activity, “the Heart houses the mind” (Spiritual Axis, chapter 80; Questions, chapter 23). Thus, Heart in traditional Chinese medicine is also conceptualized as the “master”, or “monarch” of the body. “This cultural conceptualization differs fundamentally from the Western dualism that upholds the reason-emotion

dichotomy, as represented by the binary contrast between mind and heart in particular, and mind and body in general” (Yu, 2007).

The unity of body and *xin* (the two parts of a person) is typically used in ‘holistic thinking’ carried by the traditional Chinese medicine. Longevity is a result of good health. When one part is missing, longevity cannot be achieved. Additional to a ‘healthy body’, ‘*xin*’ is a key to maintain long-life according to traditional Chinese view (Liu, 2006; Zhou, 2008). There is abundant literature on *xin* and longevity from ancient and modern times. For example, Bai Ju-Yi (772 – 846), a well-known Tang dynasty poet wrote in his poetry Bing Zhong Wu Jue Ju “Body as the best doctor and Heart is medicine 身作醫王心是藥”; the poem implies that calming the mind and nourishing the Heart is essential to maintain good health and live a long life (Zhang, 2011). An explication of the relationship between *xin*, health and longevity using NSM would be: if this part of a person is good, it is (also) good for this person’s body, and this person can live a longer time.

Heart adjustment (*tiao xin*): implies using *qi*, which is received and refined by practicing qigong to calm and nourish the mind. *Heart adjustment* can influence mental activities, because “The Heart... is in control of the Mind” (Simple Questions, chapter 9).

***Xin*, virtue and vision**

Though, the dual ‘body and mind’ can always be translated into Chinese as ‘body and *xin*’, whereas the reverse is not true. One of the reasons is that ‘mind’ does not refer to a moral ‘core’ of a person as *xin* does. If omitting the concept of *xin* and its virtuous nature, the following view point (*xin* in terms of its ability to think and know) could not be thoroughly presented.

The word *xin* is used in modern Chinese as a centre of a phraseological cluster to describe ‘good’ or ‘bad’ ethics, such as:

- a. 良心 (with a good *xin*) ‘conscience’
- b. 誠心 (honest *xin*) ‘sincerity’
- c. 愛心 (loving *xin*) ‘loving heart’
- d. 善心 (mercy *xin*) ‘kindness’
- e. 私心 (selfish *xin*) ‘selfish; selfishness’
- f. 邪心 (evil *xin*) ‘wicked; evil heart’
- g. 貪心 (avaricious *xin*) ‘greedy’
- h. 偏心 (slanting *xin*) ‘partial, unfair’

Based on the examples above, it is possible to say in Chinese ‘This person has a good/honest/loving/ mercy Heart’, or ‘This person has a selfish/evil/avaricious/slanting Heart’. Clearly, *xin* can contain ‘good thing’ and ‘bad things’, whereas in English “one can say that

someone ‘has a good/kind/warm/ loving heart’ but not that he or she ‘has a bad/evil/vicious/hating heart’” (Wierzbicka, 1992). In this respect, there is a difference between ‘Heart’ in Chinese and ‘heart’ in English. Wierzbicka pointed out that “in an allocentric perspective a heart in English can only contain ‘good things’ (for example, admiration or gratitude) but not ‘bad things’ (for example, hatred, jealousy, or contempt)” (1992). Wierzbicka describes this concept of heart as because of this part, a person can feel good things towards other people. However, in Chinese one can say ‘She is a good-Hearted person, my Heart cherishes a gratitude toward her’ ‘她是一位好心人, 我對她心懷感激’, and ‘He is a cruel-Hearted person, vicious and merciless, my Heart has fears toward him 他是一個心狠手辣的人, 對他我心有余悸’. The meaning of *xin* can contain both ‘good and bad things’ toward others: because of this part, a person can feel good and bad things towards other people.

In addition, Chinese can say ‘This young man, good Heart! Good person! 這個年輕人, 心好! 人好!’ or ‘That is an evil-Hearted person, who has no good moral standing. He is not a good person 那人可心術不正, 人品不好, 不是個好人’. Thus, in Chinese society, a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ person depends on individual’s moral quality and Heart. *Xin* is seen as a symbol of a person, who is ‘good’ or ‘bad’: if this part of a person is good, people say: “This is a good person”, if this part of a person is bad, people say: “This is a bad person”.

It is interesting to see from Chinese expressions that more than a centre of a phraseological cluster to describe moral value, *xin* is also a root word for concepts of dynamic inner world:

- i. 心性 (*xin*’s nature) ‘one’s nature’
- j. 心靈 (*xin* spirit) ‘soul’

The spirit in the Heart is the ‘soul’; this word delegates a common Chinese belief that ‘soul’ resides in the Heart. Being aware of that the ‘transcendental’ nature of *xin* cannot be measured; however this connotation should not be ignored. To inquire why *xin* is able to ‘feel’ and to discern ‘good things’ and ‘bad things’ in Chinese culture, some important theories come to explain its philosophical foundations. Mengzi (Mencius) is considered one of the most influential traditional Chinese philosophers after Confucius. He creates the fundamental idea of “probing the goodness of nature through the goodness of heart” (Yang, 2002). In a popular children’s traditional classic philosophy text book influenced by his thinking named San Zi Jing (13th century), the first four verses illustrate the core credo of Confucianism as developed by Mencius: “People at birth, their natures are naturally good (kind hearted). Their natures are similar, but their habits make them different from each other”. A scholar of Daoism, Li Dao-Chun pointed out: “nature and mind are

both fastened to *xin*" (1290). In other words, traditional Chinese philosophy has a view that every infant has a pure *xin*. *Xin* is the carrier of human nature and the soul. Mengzi's core theory defines human nature as an innate attribute, "which is characteristic of human beings and which distinguishes humans from other animals" (Mengzi, chapter 8; Xu, 2006). Because the inherent goodness of human nature and human ethics pertain to *xin*, the word 'Heart' in Chinese has this meaning: because of this part, a person is not the same as other living things (beings).

A commonly used modern literal expression 'love in my Heart-field' '愛在心田' implies that in Chinese culture *xin* is like a field where virtue grows. People regard *xin* as the source of value in a human being: if this part of a person is good this person wants to do good things; if this part of a person is bad this person wants to do bad things. This concept is related to behaviour that is dominated by moral education (Li, 2008; Lu, 2002; Wu, 2003), which is the heart of Buddhist teachings termed 'virtue cultivation'. The classical Buddhist scripture Da Zhi Du Lun (Nagarjuna, 150 – 250) emphasizes:

- i. 善心 (mercy *xin*) 'compassion'
- j. 心淨 (*xin* clean) 'heart purification'

Together with another Buddhist phrase, a commonly used modern literal expression 'love exists in Heart-room' '愛在心間' they illustrate a philosophical metaphor: the Heart is a 'room', which is clean at one's birth. Buddhist teachings suggest one to clean the 'room' regularly in order to keep it clear of 'dust' (Zocchi, 2011). This is similar to Mengzi's view that "the intrinsic Heart" carries the inherent goodness of human nature (Mengzi, Chapter 11). This function of *xin* is further illustrated in a Buddhist proverb, which is often used by modern Chinese:

- k. 明心見性 (polish the *xin* [to allow] one's nature to appear) 'purify the heart to see one's nature'

The temptations and confusions of the material world can easily contaminate one's thoughts and actions. In order to keep a clear vision and conduct one's life virtuously, one has to 'purify the Heart' regularly. 'Virtue cultivation' or 'purifying the Heart' may sound religious in Western countries, but the Chinese traditional culture regards *xin* cultivation as a helpful instrument for gaining clarity in daily life and minimizing mistakes. Based on Confucians, Daoist and Buddhist philosophy in China, it seems like that Heart is regarded as an innate 'virtuous self' in that cultural system.

The idea that cultivation of virtue has a positive effect on health is a core belief in Chinese culture. In chapter two of the contemporary Chinese text book, Health Education (Ma, 2004), there is a discussion of the way the ethics of society influences behaviour and affects

mental and physical health. In this respect, there is an instrument that 'cleans' or 'purifies' the Heart in order to prevent or remove blockages in the pathways in the body, promoting a perfect unity between body and *xin* by minimizing the disturbance from 'dust'. An equation may be used to exhibit a relationship between *xin*, virtue and health:

Heart is pure = good virtue = no blockage between body, mind and Heart = beneficial for physical and mental health.

Heart adjustment (*tiao xin*): means to cultivate virtue and purify the Heart. In terms of decision-making and behaviour, virtue cultivation can help one to find and maintain the clarity in the Heart that guides the person to do things correctly. In terms of physical and mental health, the body and mind are in harmony when the Heart is pure and clear without disturbance from obstructions.

***Xin* in terms of its ability to think and know**

The Chinese hold that while the body belongs to the physical, material world, *xin* is invisible and intangible, existing as a cognitive entity (Yu, 2009). The following words illustrate that *xin* in modern Chinese language is a centre of a phraseological cluster for thinking and knowing:

- a. 心想 (*xin* thinks) 'think; think with the heart'
- b. 心思 (*xin*'s thought) 'thoughts; thinking'
- c. 心願 (*xin* wishes) 'wish; wish from the heart'
- d. 心解 (*xin* understands) 'comprehend in the heart; heart solution'
- e. 心知 (*xin* knows) 'knowing by heart'
- f. 心領神會 (*xin* comprehends [and] mind associates) 'to understand thoroughly'

Using these words above, Chinese can say 'my Heart thinks/wishes/understands/knows'. The meaning of *xin* comprises: a person can think and know with this part.

Ancient Chinese philosophy regards "the heart as human being's thinking and knowing organ" (Yu, 2009). Traditional Chinese medicine believes "The Heart is the root of life and the origin of mental life" (Simple Questions, Chapter 9), and Chinese philosopher Mengzi (Mengzi, Chapter 11) stated:

- g. "心之官則思..."

Xin this organ is (for) thinking...
'The Heart is an organ for thinking...'

The two quotations above reflect a view from traditional

Chinese medicine and philosophy that Heart is in charge of the mind, and Heart is also an organ responsible for thinking, memory, perceptions, etc. Interestingly, there is a distinct characteristic of *xin* as compared to the Anglo English concept of the 'heart'; *xin* in this respect is identical to the Anglo concept of 'mind' that Wierzbica (1992) claimed: because of this part, a person can think and know.

Maciocia (2005) wrote: "This is in a similar way as in Western medicine: the brain controls intelligence and mental clarity. Many of the functions that Western medicine attributes to the brain are attributed to the Heart in Chinese medicine". Nevertheless, there remains a fine line between intelligence and wisdom. Traditional Chinese medicine regards wisdom as originating from the Heart (Spiritual Axis, chapter 8; Zhang, 1624). Guanzi (c. 720 - 645 BC), a famous economic and political thinker during the Spring and Autumn Period said: "The Heart is the house of wisdom 心也者, 智之舍也" (Guanzi, Chapter 36). In Chinese culture, *xin* is considered as a "source of wisdom" within a person (Zhang, 2006) and "Heart... governs the Mind" (Simple Questions, chapter 8). Therefore, *xin* has a higher 'status' than *naozi* (brain or mind). In Chinese society, thinking only in *naozi* is not as highly valued as thinking in collaboration with the *xin*, where the soul and wisdom reside. *Naozi* calculates according to self-interest, whereas *xin* 'can think and know' without being contaminated by ego. Therefore, a person thinks of someone or something sincerely and selflessly in the Heart:

h. 我心裡 想: 這個 問題 怎麼 解決?
My *xin* inside thinks: this problem how-to solve?
'I think in my Heart: how do I solve this problem?'

'I think in my Heart' involves a greater depth of feeling and is highly valued in Chinese culture. In Chinese language, 'I think in my Heart' is more precise than 'I think', in which the decision may be made by the brain or by the Heart. A subtle but important hidden meaning of thinking in the *xin* vs. from the *naozi* can be described as follows: when a person thinks about something, it is good if this person thinks with this part.

Because *xin* can become overloaded from excessive thinking and consequently will feel tired, in relation to one's health, it needs relaxation. Chinese say:

i. 心累 (*xin* tired) 'heart tired'
j. 鬆心 (loosen the *xin*) 'relax the heart'

'I feel my Heart is tired from the many things that happened recently, and consequently I would like to relax the Heart and take a beach vacation! 最近發生地很多事讓我真覺得心累, 多想到海邊去度個假鬆鬆心啊!' Relaxing the Heart is essential to physical and mental health, especially in today's fully scheduled modern life.

However, it is necessary to clarify the definition of relaxation is not synonymous with laziness, though some may think that is the case. 'Lazy' refers to 'not doing something', but 'relaxation' is an intent to 'prepare oneself to do something better'. If people know how to relax the Heart, they may gain efficiency and a bigger Heart capacity to perceive more knowledge.

Heart adjustment (*tiao xin*): means to relax the Heart in qigong practice in order to receive and accumulate more energy (*qi*) for needed work. Heart is "an organ for thinking" and "source of wisdom"; the purpose of relaxing the Heart also aims to strengthening Heart's capacity to perceive knowledge and gain wisdom.

***Xin* and concentration**

The word *xin* is a centre of a phraseological cluster for concentration and attention:

- a. 專心 (to concentrate on *xin*) 'concentrate; concentrated'
- b. 一心一意 (one *xin* one mind) 'focused on the intent'
- c. 三心二意 (three *xin* two minds) 'half-hearted; double-minded'
- d. 心不在焉 (*xin* not at here) 'inattentive'
- e. 分心 (scatter the *xin*) 'distracted'
- f. 小心 (small/focus on *xin*) 'to be careful; to watch out; caution'
- g. 留心 (keep the *xin*) 'to pay attention; to take heed; to be careful; to exercise caution'

Giving an example of how the words are used in a. and e., very often Chinese parents and teachers say these two words in one imperative sentence 'Do your homework by concentrating on the Heart, do not scatter the Heart! 專心做你的作業別分心!' A practice to concentrate on the Heart is emphasized in Buddhist teaching. Zen scripture Xizhi Guanchan Fayao Liumiao Famen (Zhiyi, 538 – 597 /1999) states:

h. "制 心 一處 無事 不 辦."

Regulate *xin* (to) one-place nothing not achieved.
'When the Heart is very concentrated toward one goal, nothing is impossible.'

Because *xin* can think and concentrate, it can direct attention and effort, and influence one's achievements. A beautiful Buddhist term quoted from Da Zhi Du Lun (chapter 17):

i. "定心" (to anchor the *xin*) 'centre the Heart' is treasured and used by modern Chinese. One can say 'My Heart is not steadfastly and *qi* is parched while doing homework. Is there a way to centre the Heart?'

我做功課的時候總覺得心浮氣燥，有什麼可以定心的辦法嗎？’ Chinese attribute the concentration ability to *xin*. “Centre the Heart” means that thoughts should not be somewhere in the past nor future, but ‘now’ (the present moment); the mind should not be distracted by other things, but focused on ‘this’ (what one is doing right now). In the Buddhist tradition, concentration is an ability of the Heart to focus on ‘now’ and ‘this’. Using NSM to explicate the concentration aspect within the concept of *xin* would be: When a person does one thing, it is good if this part of the person is at the same time on the same thing.

According to traditional Chinese medicine, Heart “governs the Mind” and is seen as a “master organ” (Simple Questions, chapter 8). Only when *xin* is at ease and tranquil does it have the capacity to govern the mind into doing what it is supposed to do; and *qi* will be able to receive a clear order from the “master” and provide energy effectively to one task in order to yield positive results. Conversely, if the *xin* is uneasy, not directing its full attention to ‘now’ and ‘here’, it fails governing the mind, and the mind will be scattered. *Qi* in this case will be portioned out to multiple tasks; energy is not used effectively, and the intended work is not the best it could be.

Heart adjustment (*tiao xin*): in Chinese culture, the ability to concentrate is attributed to *xin*. *Heart adjustment* in qigong denotes calming the Heart to centre oneself and learn to focus on the very moment to promote concentration.

***Xin*, desire and vision**

It seems like that *xin* is a busy ‘self’, who creates emotions, generates blood, houses and governs the mind, preserves virtue, originates thinking, provides concentration, and Chinese say

a. 心裡產生的慾望 (*xin* inside produced desire) ‘desire which is produced by the heart’,

but cannot say ‘desire is produced by the head/brain/mind’. Therefore, *xin* is the origin of desire. It is interesting to see that Chinese characters are often composed by pictures and meanings. The concept of *xin* also can be illustrated from Chinese character: *xin* 心 is a radical in the lower part of the word ‘desire 慾’, which has ‘want 欲’ on top of the ‘*xin* 心’ implies that desires arise from the Heart. *Xin* can think and therefore *xin* wants to achieve many things, this concept can be captured: inside this part, a person wants many things. And, because of this part, a person can want to do many things.

When Chinese people express total bodily exhaustion,

they use an expression:

b. 身心兼憊 (body and *xin* both exhausted) ‘body and heart are concurrently exhausted’. (*Xin* 心 is a radical in the lower part of the word ‘exhaustion 憊’. When one looks carefully, one will find more characters from the previous and later examples use 心 as a radical at their lower part).

Too much desire can overload the body and *xin*, which is unfavourable to longevity. According to traditional Chinese medicine theory, desire wastes energy and harms the balance of *qi* (Simple Questions, chapter 1; Spiritual Axis, chapter 8). In respect to longevity and inner happiness, philosopher Mengzi emphasized on ‘nourishing *xin*’ by reducing desires:

c. “養心莫善於寡慾。” (Mengzi, chapter 7)

Nourish *xin* no-more-than be-good-at few desires.
‘The best way to nourish Heart is to reduce desires.’

‘*Xin*’ in some Chinese classical philosophical literature also meant ‘desire’, and pointing at one’s vision:

d. “虛其心，實其腹...” (Laozi, chapter 3)

Emptying their *xin*, fill their bellies...
‘Emptying people’s destructive desire fills their bellies ...’

e. “心齋”(*xin* fasting) ‘self-cultivation through fasting the Heart’ (Zhuangzi, chapter 4)

Zhuangzi compared reducing desires to “fasting the Heart”, which assisted him in maintaining health, having a tranquil mind and a clear vision. Laozi, the author of *Dao De Jing* ([600–300 BC]/2007) and is regarded as the founder of Daoism said that a sage should care for and govern people by making sure people have enough food. A person comes into this world facing many temptations; “emptying their *xin*” means encouraging them to reduce desires and open themselves to a broader vision in order to reach a peaceful state (*Dao De Jing*, chapter 3; Zhang, 2007). Nourishing the Heart by reducing desires is not just good for health, but it also aimed for broadening one’s vision. Mengzi suggests his students be free of the small selves and “nourishing vast” (Mengzi, chapter 3), which is expressed in a modern term:

f. 心胸豁達 (*xin* and chest magnanimous) ‘be open-minded; a wise and generous heart; to gain a broad vision’

According to Mengzi, when desires occupy the *xin*, one spends too much time concentrating on the small self, so that the *xin* is not able to see a ‘larger picture’, such as

long-term developments of a country or of the world. Too much desire is often detrimental to human life. The constant desire for a bigger house can have a negative effect on an individual. A country's desire for more territory or a military's need for more power affects populations of entire nations. A war destroys many lives. Mengzi believes the human Heart should be nourished by reducing these destructive desires and not wasting energy on them, but using energy for more meaningful things. 'Reducing desires' implies "knowing when one has enough" (Dao De Jing, chapter 46). If one focuses one's energy on love and on gaining a fruitful long-term vision, a lasting happiness can result – for individuals and for nations (Dao De Jing, chapter 10 and 13). Desire and vision are related to *xin*; use NSM to convey the cultural meaning of *xin*, which implies 'vision': if this part of a person is small, this person thinks small; if this part of a person is big, this person thinks big.

Heart adjustment (*tiao xin*): means letting go of destructive desires and developing tranquillity in the Heart. *Heart adjustment* encourages a person to gain clear vision and find ways to grow beyond the illusion that fiercely focused competitiveness can bring genuine happiness.

***Xin*, a way of life and attitude**

Maintaining peace in the Heart by reducing destructive desires also points to an ideal way of life. Chinese know this idiom as,

a. 修心養性 (cultivate *xin* and to nurture one's nature) 'through cultivation it allows the Heart and the body to reach a perfect state'

This idiom comes from a poem written by poet Wu (1993) in the Yuan dynasty. Chinese scholars believe this idiom well demonstrates an ideal way of life: harmony. Harmony is one of the highest principles in ancient Chinese philosophy. Laozi believes cultivating *xin* is a way to understand Dao (Dao De Jing, chapter 16; Zhang, 2012). He described a 'perfect state' as having no worries and living in harmony with nature and all beings (Dao De Jing, chapter 25); the goal of cultivating *xin* is not trying to be an exalted saint in heaven, but a wise person, down-to-earth and living in harmony with oneself and others (chapter 2 and 26). *Xin* can maintain peace and lead one to lasting happiness. NSM captures the relationship between *xin* and harmony in the following way: Many people think like this: "I want to live well." If this part of a person is good, this happens: this person can live well with other people and many others living things (beings).

Closely related to a way of life, *xin* also directs one's attitude. It is a common sense that a good attitude and a clear mind lead to a life of harmony. For instance, in order to achieve a positive outcome, especially when one is in a challenging situation (example, before, during or after competition, conflicts), one needs to change or adjust attitude to maintain peace in the heart. This 'attitude' in Chinese is called:

b. 心態 (*xin*'s attitude) 'attitude; mentality'

Chinese believe that *xin* is responsible for quality of work, because it can influence one's work attitude (工作態度). They often use these words to describe the attitude in their work:

c. 細心 (fine *xin*) 'careful; circumspect; attentive'

d. 精心 (most-refined *xin*) 'meticulously; painstakingly; with utmost care; attentive and circumspect'

e. 盡心 (to the utmost *xin*) 'to devote all one's energies'

The Chinese often think that a good result comes not just from experience or skill, but also from one's *xin*, as well as from one's attitude which is closely related to *xin*. People evaluate work positively when someone does things with *xin* or puts their *xin* into their deeds. They should act with *xin* when they intend to carry out something with the utmost care and attention, including work duties, crafts and even daily activities. 'Act with *xin*' in the Chinese language is 'use *xin* 用心'.

f. 用心做事: use the Heart to do things (including crafts)

g. 用心看: use the Heart to see

h. 用心聽: use the Heart to listen

i. 用心學: use the Heart to learn

j. 用心記: use the Heart to memorize

k. 用心思考: use the Heart to think through

l. 用心用腦: use the Heart and use the brain

m. 用心體會: use the Heart to experience

n. 用心對待: use the Heart to treat (someone or something)

o. 用心處理: use the Heart to handle (relationship or things)

p. 用心服務: use the Heart to serve

q. 用心去愛: use the Heart to love

r. 用心好好珍惜: use the Heart to treasure

All of these refer to a good attitude: using the Heart to do one's best. To explicate by NSM that *xin* can direct one's attitude: when a person does one thing, it is good if this person thinks at the same time in this part like this: "I want to do this thing well." This is highly respected in Chinese society. To give an example, when the Chinese refer to 'using Heart' to do a task, it refers to efficiency

and quality of the work, and to have a positive attitude. Therefore, having *xin* throughout the entire process of completing a task is highly valued and regarded as genuine and noble. Conversely, one cannot say in Chinese 'use Heart to cheat' or 'use Heart to steal'. Just as *xin* relates to moral values, it is also related to doing something good. Using NSM to describe this concept, we would say: when a person does something good, it is the best if this person can do it with all of this part; people see this is very good.

Heart adjustment (*tiao xin*): means cultivating the Heart in order to live in harmony with oneself and others. *Heart adjustment* also means checking and adjusting one's attitude. This signifies being aware of an ideal way of life and adjusting one's attitude with that goal in mind. A good attitude also garners respect by yielding positive outcomes that cause no harm to others. It is an aspect of self-cultivation in traditional qigong practice.

Conclusion

This paper first uses the NSM approach to explicate the meanings of a Chinese cultural keyword *xin*, the Heart. Then, it used the meanings of *xin* to clarify the implications of *Heart adjustment*, which is a basic component of qigong and a key for comprehending the idea of qigong.

The cultural meaning of *xin*

Xin, the Chinese concept of 'Heart' is cultural-specific and central to Chinese life. This concept is strongly influenced by Daoist, Confucian and Buddhist philosophies, as well as the principles of traditional Chinese medicine. We discussed the concept of *xin* from eight aspects based on the Chinese modern lexicon and classic literature. The meaning of *xin* contains both the physical heart and the 'Heart' that we cannot see, in terms of emotions, virtue, wisdom, concentration, desire and vision, attitude and Heart is the source of physical and mental life. By the use of NSM approach, we conclude that the Chinese cultural meaning of Heart includes the entire concept of the Anglo English 'heart' explicated by Wierzbicka (1992):

- (1) a part of a person
- (2) one cannot see it
- (3) one can imagine that it is a part of a person's body [in the middle of the upper half of the body]
- (4) one can hear its movements
- (5) because of this part, a person can feel good things and bad things
- (6) because of this part, a person can feel good things

towards other people

In addition, the Chinese concept of the Heart also carries the following meanings (summarized in accordance to the sequence of the discussion):

- (7) a person can feel all feelings in this part
- (8) because of this part, a person can feel good things and bad things
- (9) because of this part, a person can feel all feelings.
- (10) one of the two parts of a person (one part is person's body, this is the other part)
- (11) if this part of a person is good, it is (also) good for this person's body, and this person can live a longer time
- (12) because of this part, a person can feel good and bad things towards other people.
- (13) if this part of a person is good, people say: "This is a good person", if this part of a person is bad, people say: "This is a bad person"
- (14) because of this part, a person is not the same as other living things (beings)
- (15) if this part of a person is good this person wants to do good things; if this part of a person is bad this person wants to do bad things
- (16) a person can think and know with this part
- (17) because of this part, a person can think and know
- (18) when a person thinks about something, it is good if this person thinks with this part
- (19) when a person does one thing, it is good if this part of the person is at the same time on the same thing
- (20) inside this part, a person wants many things.
- (21) because of this part, a person can want to do many things
- (22) if this part of a person is small this person thinks small; if this part of a person is big this person thinks big
- (23) many people think like this: "I want to live well". If this part of a person is good, this happens: this person can live well with other people and many others living things (beings)
- (24) when a person does one thing, it is good if this person thinks at the same time in this part like this: "I want to do this thing well"
- (25) when a person does something good, it is the best if this person can do it with all of this part; people see this is very good

Understanding the meaning of the Chinese cultural keyword *xin* also benefits other domains of studies which involve this concept (Chinese arts, Chinese philosophy and traditional Chinese medicine). Given the richness and the scope of this word it is not surprising that as opposed to 'body', it is the *xin* which is commonly seen as the more important one and which tends to be identified with the person as a whole: "The Heart is the monarch and it governs the mind" (Simple Questions, chapter 8), while in English "...when the human person

was seen as composed, essentially, of a body and a mind, that mind is seen as purely psychological (with the emphasis on the intellect, not on the emotions)” (Wierzbicka, 1992). Therefore, the concept of *xin* in Chinese medicine represents the fundamental Chinese understanding of health: body and *xin* are two parts of a person; they cannot be treated separately, and human health is also influenced by one’s way of life (Maciocia, 2005).

Meaning of *Heart adjustment (tiao xin)* within the definition of qigong

This article explores the cultural meaning of *xin* and preserves the cultural knowledge carried by it. Regarding the fundamentals of qigong, Liu’s (2005) definition refers to three adjustments (of body, breath and Heart) as the basic components of qigong. The first two adjustments (of body and breath) can be explained in English in a straightforward manner. Body adjustment can be understood as the correct and appropriate practice of qigong bodily movements and/or postures. Breath adjustment refers to regulation of the breath while practicing. It is fairly easy to relate these two adjustments to common health promotion physical activities that are practiced in the West, including swimming, running, weight lifting and the like. However, the third adjustment: *Heart adjustment* is an ‘invisible’ component, which sets qigong distinctly apart from Western exercise methods and health care traditions. It is a fundamental knowledge and a key to understanding the idea of qigong. According to the sequence of the discussion (the eight aspects of the Chinese cultural meaning of Heart), *Heart adjustment* in the context of qigong includes:

- (1) balancing emotions
- (2) harmonizing *qi* (vital energy) and promoting *qi* to generate blood
- (3) quieting and nourishing the mind
- (4) cultivating virtue and purifying the Heart
- (5) relaxing the Heart for accumulating more energy (*qi*)
- (6) calming the Heart to centre oneself
- (7) releasing destructive desires and developing tranquillity in the Heart
- (8) adjusting attitude; cultivating the Heart and living in harmony

In the English version of Liu’s academic medical text book titled Chinese Medical Qigong (2010), ‘*tiao xin*’ is translated as ‘mind adjustment’, although the editors (Personal interview with the chief editor, Professor Liu Tian-Jun (Jan. 27, 2013) was aware that *xin* has broader meanings and functions that go far beyond the ‘mind’. In their view, the phrase ‘heart adjustment’ according to Chinese culture could have been a more accurate

translation; however, it might sound peculiar to English speakers and be misunderstood as something like ‘heart operation’, whereas ‘mind adjustment’ would be more easily understood. In the West, qigong is now often referred to simply as a “physical and mental exercise” (Thompson, 2003; Shinnick, 2006). However, the English word ‘mind’ cannot be stylized substitute for *xin*. ‘Mind’ is a cognitive entity, anything further such as feelings, life, virtue, wisdom and attitude are not part of ‘mind’, and it can miss out the following cultural knowledge:

1. “All emotions are from the Heart” (Zhang, 1624)
2. “Heart is the master of all the internal organs” (Simple Questions, chapter 8; Spiritual Axis, chapter 71).
3. “Heart governs the blood vessels” (Simple Questions, chapter 44)
4. “The Heart is the Monarch and it governs the Mind” (Simple Questions, chapter 8)
5. “The Heart is the root of life and the origin of mental life” (Simple Questions, chapter 9)
6. “The Heart houses the Mind” (Simple Questions, chapter 23; Spiritual Axis, chapter 80)
7. “Body as the best doctor and Heart is medicine” (Bai, 772 – 846)
8. Heart is the carrier of human nature and the soul (see *xin*, virtue and vision i. and j.), it “distinguishes humans from other animals” (Xu, 2006)
9. “Nature and mind are both fastened to *xin*” (Li, 1290), and “the intrinsic Heart” carries goodness (Mengzi, chapter 11)
10. “The Heart is the house of wisdom” (Guanzi, chapter 36)
11. “The Heart is an organ for thinking” (Mengzi, chapter 11)
12. “When the Heart is very concentrated toward a goal, nothing is impossible” (Zhiyi, 538 – 597)
13. “The best way to nourish Heart is to reduce desires” (Mengzi, chapter 7)
14. Reducing desires from the Heart allows one to open a broader vision and reach a peaceful state (Laozi, chapter 3; Zhang, 2007)
15. “Cultivating the Heart and nurturing one’s nature” (Wu, Yuan dynasty) allows one to live in harmony with nature and all beings (Laozi, chapter 25)
16. The Heart can direct attitude

Based on the definition of qigong (Liu, 2005) and the Chinese concept of human *xin*, we understand that qigong is a blending of traditional Chinese exercise, classical philosophy and traditional Chinese medicine. Qigong can be seen either as a physical activity, a healing and health maintenance practice, a way of self-cultivation to maintain peace, or as a combination of *all* of these things.

One can thank somebody “from the bottom of one’s heart”, but one cannot say “at the bottom of one’s mind”

(Wierzbicka, 1992). We would like to say from the depth of our *xin*, that in order to gain profound knowledge in Chinese studies, the cultural aspect cannot be overlooked; otherwise, some precious knowledge of that cultural system will get lost. This article shows the definition of qigong can be accurately translated and transmitted, yet, the idea of qigong can be clearly and completely presented if the cultural meaning of 'Heart' in Chinese has been explicated and understood.

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