Understanding And Treating Male Sexual Addiction Through Traditional Chinese Medicine

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Bibliography
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Introduction

Male sexual addiction dates as far back as recorded history but only began to be explored by Western medicine in the late 1970’s. Ancient China placed the utmost importance on moderation for health and longevity. Though sexual temperance was viewed as possibly the most important moderation of all, Classic Chinese medical texts do not mention the concept of sexual addiction, nor the concept of addiction in general, for that matter.

In this thesis, I aim to answer the questions:

How can one use what is known today from Western medicine and from Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) to arrive at a truly TCM understanding of male sexual addiction, its causes and manifestations, which is applicable to the modern-day affliction? How can one then use this understanding to treat those who suffer from this problem?

In Chapter One of this thesis, I have made use of current Western medical theories concerning the biochemistry and psychology of sexual addiction, its definition, definitive characteristics, etiology, diagnosis, and treatment.

In Chapter Two, I have utilized modern interpretations of TCM and of Classic Chinese texts in order to understand the ancient Chinese view of sex and of addiction-related concepts, including desire, obsession, habituation, and possession. The functional mechanisms of the Heart and the Brain, the mental-spiritual entities, and the emotions are also discussed. Furthermore, the relevant TCM concept of San Bao is explored as I search to understand the level (Jing-Qi-Shen) at which sexual addiction originates and manifests and at which level it can be treated.

Finally, in Chapter Three, I utilize the first two chapters to arrive at a TCM interpretation of sexual addiction, its Vital Substance/ ZangFu patterns of disharmony and disturbances of the mental-spiritual entities, and its etiology. I also present a general theoretical model for its treatment on all levels of San Bao.

I have tried to limit repetition of explanations of the relevant concepts to what is necessary for a thorough understanding within their contexts. However, in such a nonlinear, holistic system as TCM, I have found a certain amount of repetition to be unavoidable.
Although my use of quotations in Chapter Two is quite extensive, I have also limited this to what I feel necessary. In certain instances, the vivid and accurate terminology of Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallee, Claude Larre, and Lonny Jarrett are fundamental to an understanding of the relevant concepts.

Furthermore, I have strived for consistency in terminology but have sometimes opted for terms used by the cited authors which deviate from the standard of the thesis, when they emphasize a certain aspect of the concept.

All Chinese concepts are capitalized to set them apart from the Western, English concepts. Likewise, all Pinyin terms are capitalized and appear initially in ( )’s after the English translation. The terms Earth, Human, and Heaven also appear in capital letters in order to emphasize the Chinese concept of this triad.

My reasons for choosing this topic are several: Firstly, in my adult life, I have encountered many males who truly suffer, both physically and emotionally, from sexual addiction. Whether or not future clients come to my practice asking for help with this specific problem, I find it equally important to understand the affliction when it is a backdrop for other illnesses or a partner to other problems.

I have always considered San Bao to be one of the most interesting and important aspects of TCM, and the topic of sexual addiction lends itself well to exploring this uniquely TCM concept. It also lends itself well to exploring various diagnostic and therapeutic visions and approaches, and I feel that viewing a subject from many angles is essential to understanding its essence.

Finally, I find sexual addiction to be a prime example of an affliction which embodies man’s innate habitual condition on his personal path in life. I feel that researching this topic will bring me a deeper understanding of what it means to be a practitioner of TCM.

Chapter 1 Western Concept of Sexual Addiction
1.1 Definition, History, and Data

Since recorded history, man has concerned himself with controlling his desires, and regulating one’s sexual desires lies close to the core of all the world’s philosophies and religions.(1) According to The Meriam-Webster Dictionary, ‘desire’ is defined as “a strong wish, longing, craving.” With the step from ‘desire’ to ‘succumbing to desire’ one comes closer to the concept of ‘addiction,’ defined as “the quality or state of devoting or surrendering [oneself] to something habitually or excessively.”(2) Concise Dictionary of Modern Medicine defines ‘addiction’ as “a preoccupation with the compulsive use of a substance despite recurrent adverse consequences.” This is a quite strict definition, and with the words “use of a substance,” reflects the origins of the concept of addiction in connection with alcohol abuse, and later with drug abuse.(3) Arguably, a distinction may need to be made between addiction to external chemical substances and a more liberal use of the term. This being said, the modern day concept of addiction is not as an exclusive term for inhaling or ingesting chemicals with psychoactive effects. It includes many forms, if not any form, of sensory stimulation and behavior with obsessive tendencies, (4) including work, exercise, eating, and gambling.(5) The possibilities for addiction are, in fact, endless. The concept of sexual addiction, together with the aforementioned addictions, evolved from the earlier concept of alcohol and drug addiction.(6)

Concise Dictionary of Modern Medicine defines ‘sexual addiction’ as equivalent to ‘sex compulsion,’ i.e. “compulsive and ritualized sexuoerotic hyperactivity, generally under specific sexuoerotic conditions and stimuli.” The word ‘stimuli’ here suggests a neurochemical element, but the core of the definition lies in the subject’s actions and not in his biochemistry. ‘Compulsion’ is defined as “a behavior ... which is repetetive ..., which a person feels compelled to perform in response to an obsession ... or behaviors ... aimed at preventing or reducing distress ... or behaviors that are clearly excessive.” ‘Obsession’ is defined as “recurrent and persistent thoughts, impulses, or images that are perceived as intrusive and inappropriate and cause marked anxiety or distress.”

The most accessible discussion I have found regarding the correct terminology for the affliction I have thusfar termed ‘sexual addiction’ comes from sexologist and sex therapist Hannie van Rijsingen:

The World Health Organization defines ‘sexual health’ as “a condition of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being, related to sex; It is not only the absence of sickness, dysfunction, or weakness. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relations. Sexual health requires the ability to engage in pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, without compulsion, discrimination, or aggression. To achieve and sustain sexual health, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected, and realized.”(Schaalma, Kok, 2004)(7)

In the case of sexual addiction, whereby sexual desires and behavior are no longer under control, the “mental well-being, related to sex” is certainly questionable. Since the early 1980’s, every form of sexual behavior no longer under control of the subject falls into the category of pathology known as ‘paraphilia,’ (8) or ‘sexual deviancy,’(9) though a strict definition of this term describes behavior involving either “nonhuman objects, suffering or humiliation of oneself or one’s partner or children, or other nonconsenting persons....” With the possible exception of “suffering or humiliation of oneself or one’s partner,” sexual
addiction does not necessarily involve any of these elements. Theories concerning paraphilias can be divided into pathological theories and normality theories, depending upon their perspective. According to pathological theories, paraphilia is a disturbance, while normality theories consider it to be a normal variety of sexual desire.(10)

Today, in the most common psychiatric vision of paraphilia, the accent no longer lies on the object of sexual desire but on the malfunction of self-regulation of the person. He no longer has control over his sexual desires and actions, the result being hypersexuality. In fact, any sexual behavior may become compulsive.(11)

The list of arguably appropriate terms to name the affliction I here call ‘sexual addiction’ is long. To list a few:

- paraphilia-related disturbance
- sexual (obsessive) compulsive behavior
- sexual stimulus disturbance
- excessive sexual urge
- excessive sexual desire

According to Van Rijsingen, ‘sexual obsessive-compulsive behavior’ does correctly indicate that the behavior stems from emotional problems. However, it does not carry the suggestion of physiological reactions and withdrawal symptoms as does the term ‘sexual addiction,’ these being definitive elements of the behavior. ‘Addiction’ indicates a chemical dependence, which Van Rijsingen does not consider an aspect of sexual addiction, though other specialists contend this point, as will be discussed in this thesis in the section concerning etiology. The decisive factor in her choice of the term ‘sexual addiction’ lies ultimately not in its cause nor in how often the sexual acts occur. She chooses the term because it best describes how the subject and/or his environment experiences the behavior, this being best described by the definitive characteristic of sexual addiction, which is loss of control.(12)

Therefore, one may conclude that the modern-day concept of sexual addiction has its roots in both our spiritual and philosophical early history, in the concept of sexual temperance, and in our more recent history in the concept of psychosomatic dependency on alcohol and drugs. These two sources are not mutually exclusive.

The identification and treatment of sexual addiction as a condition originated in the United States in the late 1970’s through the work of psychologist and researcher Patrick Carnes, Ph.D. His books and T.V. appearances, and more recently his AOL Internet chatroom discussions, have been fundamental in developing a better understanding of sexual addiction, for both professionals and the general public. His ten-year research study of 1500 sexual addicts resulted in his estimation of 15 million sufferers of sexual addiction, more specifically 8% of the adult male population and 3% of the adult female population.(13)

A 1994 sexuological population poll in the United States also reported hypersexual behavior by 3% to 8% of the men polled.(14)

However, controversy surrounds all these findings, largely due to conflicting views surrounding the criteria used to define sexual behavior as sexual addiction. Carnes is criticized by some as being too conservative in his attitude toward sexual norms, thereby tainting his research. They argue that what he considers to be addiction is largely
considered as normal or deviant sexual behavior. They argue that most of his ‘sex addicts’ are by no means addicted and that the term could only be used in an antisesexual, right-wing, puritanical climate.(15)

Indeed, society plays an important role in defining all forms of addiction, as no inherent norm exists by which to define a behavior as excessive, deviant, or addictive. The result is an ever-changing frame of reference for these concepts, depending upon the conservatism or liberalism of the time and place in which they exist.(16) (17) This aspect is reflected in the two-fold societal approach to addiction. On one hand, addiction is moralized and considered as a bad character trait. On the other, addiction is medicalized, whereby the addict is not held responsible for the problem. The addiction is then seen as an illness, with an underlying psychopathology.(18)

1.2 Characteristics

In order to better understand the condition I have chosen to term ‘sexual addiction,’ a closer look at its definitive characteristics is necessary. Because of the aforementioned differences of opinion concerning certain definitive aspects of the condition, I have chosen to base the core of this section on what I consider to be the most clear and pragmatic of sources, Van Rijssingen, with a few carefully chosen supplementary notes from other sources. The definitive characteristics are:

- The addict experiences his desires as uncontrollable, stronger than himself.
- The repercussions for the addict and/or his environment are great.
- His attempts to change the behavior fail.
- There exists a recurrent behavioral pattern.(19)

Other aspects of the behavior often present include:

- The behavior is progressive.
- The behavior often brings high risk (such as sex in dangerous places or in places where he may be caught).(20)
- The sex is often secret.(21)
- The addict often shirks responsibilities because of his addiction.(22)

Most of these characteristics can be elaborated upon by taking a closer look at the definitive recurrent behavioral pattern of the sex addict. The cycle begins with continual and progressive thoughts of sex, at least for several hours of the day, which create sexual arousal and tension. The arousal grows into uncontrollable urges and desire. To end the desire and release the tension created by the thought, the addict acts sexually, through whatever form of sex on which he is fixated. Release of this tension is usually followed by feelings of guilt, shame, and self-hatred, which almost always lead to an attempt to stop the behavior, ushering in a period of abstinence. This period may vary in length from a few hours to several years. However, the sexual thoughts invariably return, leading once again to uncontrollable desire and sexual action. Hence, the cycle continues, the resulting feelings of guilt, shame, and self-hatred increasing with each cycle.(23)
1.3 Different Forms

When examining the different forms of sexual addiction, it is important to keep in mind that no one specific sexual act or preference may be considered as sexual addiction unless it exhibits the previously-discussed definitive characteristics, essentially the loss of control. In fact, the sex addict often uses a variety of behaviors as his condition progresses, in his search for new thrills. (24)

Below is a list of some of the most common forms of sexual behavior in which the addiction may occur or be expressed:

- Exorbitant anonymous sexual contact
- Excessive masturbation
- Viewing of pornography
- Searching for sex advertisements
- Telephone sex (25)

- Trio’s or group sex: In this form, there is usually an element of forceful persuasion (not to be confused with nonconsenting sex) used by the addict on his partner in order to accommodate his insatiable fantasies.

- Solicitation of prostitutes: Generally, the patrons are men between the ages of 18 and 40 years who find it difficult to find an outlet for their desires without paying or who are dissatisfied in their steady sexual relationship or who seek an outlet for anger or frustration.

- Deviant sexual preferences: These are usually secret desires which create an intense internal struggle with their own behavioral subcycle of denial, repression, guilt, shame, and acceptance. These behaviors themselves fall under the category of ‘paraphilia.’ Some examples include: sex with a sleeping partner, pedophilia, transvestism, voyeurism, fetishism, exhibitionism, (26) and sadomasochism. (27)

- Computer sex/cyber sex: This form consists of any sexual activity while using the computer, i.e. viewing pornography, engaging in erotic dialogue, visiting chatrooms, virtual cafe’s and bedrooms in search of virtual sex, or exchanging live images via personal webcams, to name a few. All these activities stimulate the fantasies and desires of the user and usually lead to masturbation. (28)

Cyber sex is the newest and fastest growing outlet for sexual addiction, as it provides many of the qualities desired by the addict: isolation, secrecy, a variety of fantasy material, 24-hour availability, and instant accessibility. Because of these qualities, it rapidly accelerates progression of the addict’s behavior, earning it the title “the crack cocaine of sex addiction.” (29)

1.4 Consequences

The consequences of sexual addiction are potentially immense and lie primarily, though not exclusively, in the psychosocial realm. Though the effects on partners and children of the sex addict are often as devastating as to the addict himself, I have chosen to focus only on the consequences for the addict in this thesis. To list a number of these possible consequences:

- Lack of energy for other thoughts and activities (by far, the primary complaint of the sex
addict)(30)
- Leading a secret or double life
- Isolation from the outside world (primarily due to the first two consequences)
- Feeling of distance or estrangement with one’s partner during sex
- Loss of sexual desire for one’s partner (As one gets used to an increasingly higher level of stimulation with a direct release, other kinds of sexual contact become uninteresting.)
- Trying to lead one’s partner into unwilling sexual acts (31)
- Ultimately, a loss of one’s partner, friends, and family (32)
- Problems at work (again, primarily due to the amount of time and energy spent on maintaining the addiction, resulting in lack of availability for work, or due to being so out of touch with the outside world that wrong decisions are made)(33)
- Financial problems (due to the amount of money spent on prostitutes, paid sex websites, etc., and possibly on medications and therapy ) (34) (35)
- A tainted view of relationships, especially if the behavior includes excessive solicitation of prostitutes or solicitation of prostitutes at a very young age (an aspect which may endanger the potential for happiness in future relationships)
- Development of a poor self-image (The sex addict usually begins his behavioral pattern with a poor self-image, which worsens each time he gives in to his addiction.)
- Neglect of self, partners, and children
- Legal problems (even eventual imprisonment for exhibitionism, voyeurism, stalking, rape, etc.)
- Bodily injuries, illnesses (STD’s, HIV)(36), or unwanted pregnancies (37)

1.5 Etiology

The theoretical cause or causes of sexual addiction are as subject to dispute as are the chosen terms for the affliction, which themselves reflect the various etiological theories. There has thusfar been no conclusive research on the subject. Roughly, the primary question is whether there exists a behavioral pattern learned to relieve stress and pain or a malfunction of neurotransmitter regulation in the brain. Some psychologists and sexologists consider it to be an impulse control disturbance, a “failure to resist an impulse, drive, or temptation to perform an act that is harmful to the person or to others.” Sexual addiction is then considered to be a sexual malfunction as a result of a disregulation in the Central Nervous System, whereby the neurotransmission of norepinephrine, dopamine, and serotonin are disturbed, leading to hypersexuality.(38)

When examining this question, I have chosen to explore the etiological aspects of the various normality and pathological theories concerning paraphilia in general. Though they may or may not apply to sexual addiction specifically, I find it important to consider them as frameworks for thought.

Normality Theories:

- Sociopsychological Theory: This theory considers sexual desire not to be a naturally
determined factor, but an empty potential for lust given form by interaction with society. This social environment determines what is and is not acceptable. As a result of the potentially oppressive demands and conditions of society, an individual may become stressed and develop a coping mechanism. This coping mechanism may be a paraphilia.

- Biological Theory: This theory holds the sociopsychological theory to be true but considers the men who have developed this coping mechanism as a paraphilia to be genetically inferior. Evolutionary forces, in combination with early imprinting, have determined the behavior.

Pathological Theories:

- Psychoanalytical Conceptualisations:

1) Psychoanalytical Approach: This theory proposes that the normal object of sexual instinct is a person of the opposite sex. In order to solidify or manifest this instinct, one must work through various conflicts in life, which are representative of specific phases of self-development, gender identity, and object relationships. Development of a paraphilia is indicative of an unresolved conflict in one of these phases.

2) Socio-Cognitive Visions: This theory describes a conditioning process by which frequent (but coincidental) association of an object with sexual stimulation and orgasm leads to sexual desire for that specific object.(39) These are multifactoral theories which also involve biological and developmental psychological frailty.(40)

3) Theory of the Deviant Love Map: This theory considers normal development to result in heterosexual pairing. By playing ‘sexual’ games, children form a love map, a mental representation of an ideal love partner, and a program for erotic activity. This program is formed especially between the ages of 5 and 10 years (and usually between 8 and 10 years), when androgen levels rise due to the adrenarche. During puberty, this program is sexualized, resulting in a love map. Paraphilia is a result of pubescent activity based on a pathological program, in which sexual stimulation and orgasm depend on an unacceptable stimulus. Followers of this theory consider the condition to be incurable.

4) Courtship Disorders: According to this theory, there are four normal steps in courtship: perception of a potential partner, pretactile interaction, tactile interaction, and genital union. The origins of paraphilia lie in a disturbance in this sequence, whereby deviant components are formed and intensified. This situation may occur if the person is unable to wait the normal amount of time between stimulus and orgasm.

- Biopathological Conceptualisations: According to this theory, paraphilia may be the result of a genetic, hormonal, or brain defect, certain individuals being more susceptible than others. It is a symptom of a cerebral disturbance of certain neurotransmitters, such as dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine, which are responsible for the regulation of sexuality. This malfunction may result in an increase in sexual interest or in the intensity of the interest, a high frequency of sexual desire and behavior, and malfunction of the stimulus control. Determining factors include: monoamines, cortisol, the number of older brothers, neurological traumas, and the element of evolutionary defect. This concept has evolved as a result of the similarities between some paraphilias and obsessive-compulsive disorders, which have been treated with SSRI’s (selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors) and similar medications with some success.(41)
There are other medical situations which may result in hypersexuality specifically, including:

- Organic cerebral brain damage, in which part of the structures necessary for the control process fails, and which may occur with CVA (cerebrovascular accident), some forms of temporal epilepsy, frontal brain tumors, and Gilles de la Tourette Syndrome
- Traumatic brain damage, leading to Kluver Bucy Syndrome
- Dementia
- Metabolic disturbance, such as Vitamin B-12 deficiency
- Intoxication by medicine, drugs, or alcohol. As far as medication is concerned, dopamine agonists, which is used to treat Parkinson, is the most common cause of hypersexuality. Risk is greater in patients who tend toward manic behavior.
- Psychosis-related disturbances of sexual impulse control, including the beginning stages of schizophrenia and borderline personality disturbance. Again, the risk is greater during manic stages of the illnesses.(42)

1.6 Diagnosis

An ideal model for diagnosing the paraphilias in general does not exist, though there are some essential core dimensions, including:

1) Phenomenological dimension (aimed at determining the nature and intensity of the sexual desire, how it is experienced, and what the consequences are)
2) Biological dimension (to ascertain any indications of genetic, hormonal, or brain defects or any other comorbidity)
3) Psychopathological dimension (to determine how extreme is the paraphilia and the existence of psychopathological comorbidity)
4) Social dimension (in order to form a picture of the patient’s social network and of his social identity)
5) Criminal justice dimension
6) Danger dimension (in order to determine the patient’s degree of danger to himself and to others)

These dimensions are examined through clinical and sexuological interviews and through psychological tests, which are somewhat open to the interpretation of the therapist. The aim is to formulate a neuropsychiatric diagnosis and to discover which factors inhibit and facilitate the paraphilia. With this information, an appropriate therapy can be applied.(43)
It should be noted that psychotherapists and specialists in the field of hypersexuality and the paraphilias, Kafka and Hennen report that patients coming to them with hypersexual behavior suffer for an average of twelve years before seeking help.(44)

1.7 Treatment

Treatment of the paraphilias:

Treatment of the paraphilias during the 20th century consisted primarily of psychoanalysis,
cognitive behavioral therapy, and biomedical treatment, with cognitive behavioral therapy being the most common over the past 25 years. Since 1990, the use of biomedical intervention has grown, not because research has proven it’s effectiveness. Empirical studies and controlled studies are few, and the field of treatment of paraphilia is as steeped in theoretical speculation as is the issue of its causes. However, there is a general trend in Western society toward medicalization and pharmacologization. Additionally, the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy in the treatment of paraphilias has been less successful than hoped for during it’s peak in the 1970’s. (45)

Here follows a brief explanation of the various types of treatment:

-Socio-Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, aimed at:

1) reducing the unwanted sexual stimulus and teaching an appropriate stimulus
2) learning to optimize social skills
3) processing worths and attitudes which will advance the person’s expression
4) learning intimacy and bonding
5) learning to deal with or solve life problems
6) prevention of relapse with coping strategies

-Psychoanalytical Treatment: This treatment focuses on ‘healing’ the paraphilia by solving the developmental psychological conflict at its root.

-Hormonal and Psychopharmacological Intervention: Historically, there have been three biomedical interventions used to treat paraphilia. Two of these, castration and neurosurgery, are forbidden in most countries for ethical reasons. The third, pharmacological intervention, is generally used as a supplement to psychotherapeutic interventions and is today in full development.

1) Hormonal Intervention: may be chosen for paraphilia of great intensity and behavioral infectiousness. Since the end of the 1960’s, medroxyprogesterone acetate (MPA) and cyproterone acetate (CPA) have been commonly used as hormonal interventions. Since the 1990’s, such alternatives as LH-RH-agonists and antiandrogen flutamide have become popular.

2) Psychopharmaceutical agents: are sometimes used in cases of paraphilia with comorbidity in the form of depression, impulse disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder or in cases of danger, hypersexuality, and lack of controlability. Since the end of the 1980’s, there has been more attention for the use of psychopharmaceutical agents in the form of both modern and classic antidepressants. Unlike the hormonal interventions, these have given some empirical indication of an actual healing effect on the paraphilia, lending support to the theory of paraphilia as an affective and/or impulse disorder.

The general trend is toward allowing the degree of danger in the behavior to determine the type of intervention, with SSRI’s being prescribed for the less dangerous cases. Intramuscular high doses of antiandrogen (or LH-RH-agonists) are prescribed in the most dangerous cases, in order to reduce the frequency and intensity of desire.
Treatment of hypersexuality:

When treating hypersexuality specifically with medication, the choice of medication depends upon what the therapist deems the most appropriate effect should be, based on the findings of the interviews and tests and his/her neuropsychiatric diagnosis. The desired effect may be:

1) to break the specific sexual impulse with antiandrogen medication
2) to use a general impulse breaker
3) to break the anxiety with antipsychotic medication

Many psychotherapists combine psychotherapy and psychopharmaceutical agents (SSRI’s). The goal of the psychotherapy is to learn to cope with emotions such as fear and depression, which lead to the behavior, and to recognize and control the triggers to avoid relapse. Carnes uses a twelve step program based on that of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The treatment applied to paraphilia depends ultimately on the goal of the therapy, which generally falls into one of two categories:

1) to teach the patient to deal with the paraphilia in a better way and to give it a positive place in his personal identity and rational life
2) to get rid of it or make it smaller so that it can be controlled

Which goal is chosen depends upon which paraphilia is present, the wishes of the patient, and if applicable, the demands of the judicial system.

1.8 Notes
1. www.nvsh.nl
3. www.nvsh.nl
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Chapter 2  Relevant TCM Concepts

2.1 Sex, TCM, and Ancient China
In Traditional Chinese Medicine, sexual desire is related to Kidney energy, a healthy sexual desire reflecting a strong Kidney energy. (1)

The concept of desire (Yuwang) (2) as a potential health threat in TCM is discussed at least as early as 221 BCE in chapter one of *The Yellow Emperor’s Classic Of Medicine (Neijing Suwen)*. Here, one is warned of the dangers of excessive desires and fantasies, destructive habits, and overindulgence in food, alcohol, and sex, with some distinction being drawn between the effects of the excessive desire and that of the overindulgent behavior, respectively. (3)

Indeed, since ancient times, the Chinese have considered management of one’s sexual behavior to be a central factor in the stride for health and longevity, reflected in the multitude of literature related to sex, procreation, and intimate relationships, also known as the ‘art of the bedroom’ (Fang Zhong). This integral aspect of TCM, which shares many of the same terms and concepts as acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine, has developed through numerous schools of thought, each with their own theories and practices surrounding the idea of regulation of sex.

Sexual techniques have been developed to treat disease and sexual exercises to strengthen the constitution and cultivate Qi. Although the sexual satisfaction of both men and women is addressed, the emphasis of the techniques usually lies on the health of the male. This aspect does reflect the male dominated society in which the works were created; (4) however, the emphasis also reflects the Chinese belief of the frailty of the male, as compared to the female, during the sexual act. While the sexual Essences (Jing) of both sexes are the outward manifestation of Kidney-Essence, (5) one may also consider Blood (Xue) in women and semen in men to be the physical expressions of Jing. (6) Men’s sexual energy is therefore more directly related to Kidney-Essence, that of women being more directly related to Blood. It would follow that the loss of Essence in women during orgasm is considerably less than that of men during ejaculation. (7) This aspect is reflected in the fact that men are more fatigued after sex than are women and often fall asleep. (8) Hence, in most schools of thought concerning Fang Zhong, the central theme is that of conservation of the male sexual Essence (Jing) through sexual discipline. Here follows a summary of three representatives of these schools of thought:

*Su Nu Jing:*
This ancient manual of human sexuality considers sexual cultivation even more important to health than the use of herbs or acupuncture. Emphasis is placed on arousing the Jing, but not losing it, through regulated, highly self-aware practices with multiple partners. The purpose is to increase the man’s Qi by taking Essence from his sexual partner and to calm the emotions and harmonize the Spirit. Attention is given to the importance of the environmental temperature and to the digestive states of the subjects. (9)

*Sun Si Miao’s Prescriptions Worth a Thousand Pieces of Gold (Qian Jin Fang) (Tang dynasty 600 CE):* (10)
This milestone exploration of the principles of Yin and Yang and how they relate to sexuality and health presents medical guidelines for the appropriate number of ejaculations in a given period and according to age. It is pointed out that not only the age, but also the health of the subject should be taken into account, the stronger the subject the more times he may safely ejaculate. Attention is also given to the physical and mental states of the subjects during the
sexual act itself, and one is cautioned against repression of sexual urges.

The Daoists:
The Daoists were integral in the development of many aspects of Fang Zhong, including the practice of harmonizing sexual activity with the seasons. By controlling one’s breathing and circulation of Qi, the Essence was to be stored and converted into Spirit, the Daoist goal being to extend life indefinitely. Sex was, therefore, a step in an alchemical process aimed not only at procreation and personal health, but also at individual immortality. (11)

When attempting to define the concept of sexual addiction within a TCM framework, one may first look more closely at the distinction between normal and excessive sexual activity. As suggested earlier, the emphasis of the excess in the Classic texts lies on ejaculation for men and orgasm for women, as sexual activity not resulting in orgasm is not believed to deplete the Kidney-Essence. As discussed in the context of Qian Jin Fang, what is considered excessive ejaculation depends upon age, physical condition (constitution and strength of the Essence), and the seasons. (12) The younger and healthier the subject, the more often he may safely ejaculate, as he is able to replace the loss more quickly. (13)

According to the Neijing, it is safe for males to ejaculate at the age of sixteen; however, the cooperation between the Pre- and Postnatal Jing (and therefore the Postnatal Jing itself) is not fully mature until the twenties. A healthy male in his twenties will be able to replace the Jing lost through ejaculation overnight. This regenerative process progressively slows down with age. (14)

When one is fatigued, he has no control over how much he ejaculates. As Jing has already been consumed by the fatigue, ejaculation further worsens the condition and may reduce the Jing to a dangerously low level. (15)

(As a side note: Alcohol and drugs have a similar effect. Psychedelics, cocaine, and amphetamines consume vast quantities of Jing, as they derive the energy for the high from the Jing. “They are merely catalysts for the speedy and exhausting mobilization and combustion of Jing Essence.” Cocaine abusers, therefore, eventually become impotent.) (16)

During Spring and Summer and during a waxing moon, when the Qi and therefore the Jing are growing, there may be a safe increase in the amount of ejaculation. The opposite is true during the Autumn and Winter and during a waning moon, when the Qi and Jing are not being as strongly produced. (17)

For the record, it should also be noted that in the Classic texts, the appropriate amount of sexual activity depended not only on health considerations but also on social class. (18)

Two models showing the appropriate, healthy number of ejaculations in a given period, those from Classic of the Simple Girl (Sui dynasty 581-618) and Qian Jin Fang, respectively, are charted below, their guidelines varying considerably:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classic of the Simple Girl:</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>In good health</th>
<th>Average health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>2x/day</td>
<td>1x/day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>2x/day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Generally</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20's</td>
<td>1x every 4 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>30’s</td>
<td>1x every 8 days</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40’s</td>
<td>1x every 16 days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50’s</td>
<td>1x every 20 days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60’s</td>
<td>max. 1x per month (20)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though these specific criteria for defining excessive sexual activity according to the number of ejaculations are enlightening as to the ancient Chinese view of sex and its relation to health, the modern day affliction known as ‘sexual addiction’ does not necessarily involve excessive ejaculation.

In order to formulate a truly TCM understanding of sexual addiction, one must delve deeper into the respective Daoist, Buddhist, and Confucian concepts of desire and obsession, human nature and destiny, and possession. The doctrine of these three philosophies are essentially the same, and together they define the Chinese understanding of life. (21)

As the binding factors of these concepts are San Bao, the Heart and the Brain, the mental-spiritual entities, and the emotions, a relevant exploration of these TCM concepts is first necessary.

2.2 San Bao

Having its roots in Daoism, (22) the concept of the Three Treasures (San Bao) lies at the very heart of TCM’s holistic nature.

It is an all-encompassing concept of three states of condensation of Qi: the coarse and dense Essence (Jing), the more rarefied Qi (Qi), and the subtle and immaterial Mind (Shen). (23) As a triad, they are not only what makes a person a physically and mentally functional entity. (24) They are also gifts from Early Heaven (also termed Anterior Heaven or Pre-Heaven), which together constitute one’s individual path in life. (25) In TCM, ‘Heaven’ is a “state of subtle and non-material energies and beings” and should not be equated with the Western, Christian concept of ‘heaven.’ (26)

The Daoists view Humans and Heaven as mere reflections of each other and ultimately as one. In each Human there exists a Heavenly Spirit (also termed the Ethereal Soul or Hun) and an Earthly Spirit (also termed the Corporeal Soul or Po). (27) Collectively, the Three Treasures form the Hun, which is connected with Liver, which itself governs Human evolution and one’s “ascent toward Heaven during life.” (28)

The goal of the Daoists is to allow these three energies (Jing, Qi, and Shen) to function at their highest potential, (29) with the ultimate aim of fulfilling their destiny and achieving
immortality.

Although the idea of achieving immortality may be far-removed from the modern-day application of TCM, the idea of preservation and cultivation of the Three Treasures in order to promote health and longevity remains essential. The integration of the three define existence, and their abundance determines the individual’s state of health and length of life. Illness and death are ultimately the result of separation and destruction of the Three Treasures. (30)

The definitions of each of the individual Three Treasures respectively are overlapping and ultimately depend on the context in which they are discussed. Roughly stated, Jing is equivalent to one’s inherited constitution and corresponds to Earth in the triad of Earth-Human-Heaven, and to the Kidneys, where Jing is stored. Qi indicates the state of energy produced from day to day, thereby corresponding to Lung, Stomach, and Spleen and to Human, as the crossroads between Heaven and Earth. Shen expresses the emotional and mental life and corresponds to Heart and to Heaven. (31) However, San Bao is much more complex than these definitions and correspondences convey. The character of each level lies in its relationship with the other two. Furthermore, all levels coexist, making them in a certain sense inseparable. Here follows a deeper exploration of the respective concepts of Jing, Qi, and Shen.

**Jing:**

Jing has many different levels of meaning:
- It is the “living fabric of the universe,” the form which is to be activated in order to create all living beings.
- Everything is Jing or Qi or a combination of the two.
- It is the original gift of Anterior Heaven, the “faithful reproduction of one’s own proper nature.” (32)

The term may be used to describe the energetic Essence of procreation, the substances of sperm and menstrual fluids, or the immortal Spiritual energy achieved by transmutation. (33)

Jing may also be categorized into one of three forms:

1. The Pre-Heaven, or Prenatal, Jing of the Human being is formed by the blending of the sexual Essences of man and woman at conception. (34) These inherited influences represent the “foundation for all growth and possibility in life.” (35)

2. The Post-Heaven, or Postnatal, Jing is the refined elements extracted from food and fluids by the Stomach and Spleen after birth. (36) It may also be considered to include the “positive interpretation of [one’s] life experiences.” (37)

3. Kidney Jing partakes of both of the above Essences to determine growth, reproduction, development, sexual maturation, conception and pregnancy. (38)

What all these various levels, aspects, and forms describe are basically physically or Spiritually generative forces. (39) Essences are, at any level, components of life, their composition being the model for a living being. (40) They are quiet and pure substances, stored to support movement, the “springing up of Yang.” (41)
All physical development is a result of the organization of the Essences, initially the Essences of Anterior Heaven (those of the mother and father) and then the Essences of Posterior Heaven (those from the exterior world). (42)

Separation between these two is not possible, as the Essences of Anterior Heaven are a model for the other and “for the continuation of the life of [one’s] own nature which is a condition what is called [one’s] destiny.” (43)

Here one is able to see the core of TCM’s holism rooted firmly in Daoism, the physical and Spiritual aspects of the Human being inseparably embodied in the concept of Jing. It is said that the Dao exists partly in the Human and partly in Heaven. The Human’s part, his “inherited endowment,” is his Jing. By possessing Jing, he summons its other half, “creating healing and fueling evolution by this union of Heaven and Earth.”

This Jing is Heaven’s mandate in every Human cell, “a very unique quality of being that [one is] destined to bring into the world.” “In order to assure communication with Heaven, [one’s] Jing must be carefully preserved. The potential inherent in Jing may manifest only to the degree that it meets with Shen, the functional expression of complementary quality. Jing holds the potential for the manifestation of Heaven’s will as it exists uniquely within each Human being.” (44)

**Qi:**

The concept of Qi also has many levels of meaning depending upon the context:

In the broadest sense, it is the continuum of matter and energy, from the most immaterial of ‘substances’ such as thoughts, to the most dense such as stone. In this sense, it is the basis of all the other vital substances, including Jing and Shen. (45) In fact, everything in existence may be considered as a form of Qi.

When considering its place in the triad of San Bao, a more useful definition may be: “vital transformative potential particularly as expressed in the functional forces of the various organs, tissues, and systems of the body.” (46)

Its basic functions, irrespective of its various forms include: transforming, transporting, holding, raising, protecting, and warming. (47)

While all these functions reflect a form of activity or energy, Qi is not “a substance nor a visible sign of activity, but just an exhalation and releasing of something. It is the animation resulting from transformation.” (48)

It should be noted here that Blood (Xue) is itself a very dense and material form of Qi, though a distinction often needs to be made between the two. (49)

Jing and Qi provide nourishment for each other. When comparing the two, I summarize with the words of Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallee:

“Jing is the process of development of life which makes the embryo up to the point of birth. Qi and Xue are that which receives and reflects life from the outside environment and assimilates it into the structure of the already completed body through the process of circulation. This circulation is how [Humans] adapt.” (50)
**Shen:**

Like Jing and Qi, Shen has many different meanings, all related to the “Heavenly aspects of being alive.” (51)

In the context of San Bao, it corresponds with the Western concept of mind: the activities of thinking, consciousness, insight, memory, cognition, sleep, intelligence, wisdom, ideas, and the five senses (hearing, sight, taste, touch, and smell). Most of these mental functions are attributed to the brain in Western medicine, a concept which has also had some support from practitioners of Chinese medicine throughout history. However, in the most pure TCM view, the Mind (Shen) resides in Heart, (52) specifically in Heart-Blood and Heart-Yin. (53)

The Mind (Shen) is the substance which is unique to Human life. It is the vitality behind the Jing and Qi. If Qi may be considered to be movement itself, (54) Mind (Shen) is the force which creates this movement. (55) It is the regulator of all interaction inside the body. (56)

The Chinese character for Shen expresses Heaven’s extension of its will toward Earth and toward Human consciousness. Humans likewise direct their own Shen toward their Jing in their individual acts of ‘self-discovery.’ (57)

Mind (Shen) is ultimately the driving force or “desire of the personality to live life.” (58)

Again, to quote Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallee:

“You do not use your Jing or Qi. You just let the spirits ride life.” (59)

Though Mind (Shen) is the most subtle and immaterial form of Qi, (60) it does have a material aspect and is an integral part of the Human body, not an entity separate from it. (61)

Jing and Qi form the physical basis for Mind (Shen), their abundance and vitality being a precondition for a happy, balanced, and peaceful Mind (Shen). (62)

The Prenatal Jing derived from one’s parents is the foundation of what is called the Prenatal Shen. The Postnatal Shen results from the interaction of Jing and Qi, the Pre- and Postnatal Jing nourishing it throughout one’s life. (63)

It should also be stated that the condition of the Mind (Shen) also affects Jing and Qi. (64)

**Couples within San Bao:**

As the crossing points between Heaven and Earth, Human beings exist through duality, (65) through contradiction and twofold movement. (66)

Just as Yin and Yang define each other and create life through their interaction, (67) so are couples within San Bao necessary to describe the location of the movement, the pathology, and its treatment. (68)

All possible relationships exist between the Three Treasures, (69) and each of the three resulting interchanges (Jingshen, Jingqi, and Shenqi) expresses a particular aspect of life’s maintenance. (70)

Jingshen may be defined as “the Spirits depending on the subtle Essences for their expression”. (71)
When the Essences are strong and abundant, they are able to welcome the Spirits and to “support the enlightenment coming from the Spirits.” (72)
The Jingshen are the highest level of Human life (73) and are responsible for vitalizing the sense organs in the head. (74)

Jingqi function at the level of the Yin Organs (the Zang) in the releasing of Qi from the stored Essences. Qi relies on Essence for its foundation, and Essences rely on Qi for their transformation and assimilation. (75)

Shenqi are also at the highest level of the Human being and may be defined as “the force needed for expression and animation coming from the Spirits.” (76)

Each couple exists as an interdependent relationship. (77)
The transformative activity of Qi is a prerequisite for their maintenance, (78) as living beings must transform everywhere and at every moment. (79)
Furthermore the unity of each couple, which is dependent upon the active presence of the Spirits, is an expression of life itself. (80)
Pathology may be seen as a deterioration of the unity of one or more of the couples. (81)

2.3 The Heart and the Brain

The Heart:

The Heart is one of the six Yin organs (the Zang) and is the emperor of all the organs, as it ultimately is responsible for all mental activities, insight, and cognition. (82)
As this “House of the Spirits,” it may be considered as the origin of life itself, as the building of a living structure requires communication with the outside through respiration, alimentation, and knowledge. (83)
As the “central commanding point of life,”(84) it takes charge of all the psychological and physical aspects of life in order to individualize the Essences and Spirits, thereby constituting an ego, or one’s “relationship to reality.” (85)

Reality itself may be defined as “one’s interpretations of events and responses to these events,” and it is the Heart which allows the individual to know the nature of this reality. This is a “continual process of interpretation and response occurring in each moment, ultimately empowering one’s fulfillment of destiny.” (86)
In order to fulfill this function, the Heart should be clear and reflective. (87)

The Brain:

As one of the six Extraordinary Yang organs (Qiheng Zhi Fu), the Brain, also known as the ‘Sea of Marrow,’ controls memory, concentration, sight, hearing, touch, and smell. Clearly, its functions resemble those of the brain according to Western medicine.
However, in TCM, the Brain’s functions are ultimately dependent upon the Kidney-Essence, which produces Marrow to fill the Brain and spinal cord, and on Heart-Blood, which nourishes the Brain. (88)
2.4 The Mental-Spiritual Entities

As discussed in the section regarding San Bao, the concept of Shen has many different overlapping layers of meaning. The Mind (Shen) is one of the five mental-spiritual entities. Each of these entities resides in a Zang:

- The Mind (Shen) in the Heart
- The Ethereal Soul (Hun) in the Liver
- The Corporeal Soul (Po) in the Lungs
- The Intellect (Yi) in the Spleen
- The Will or Will-Power (Zhi) in the Kidneys

Collectively, these five entities form the Spirit (Shen or Five Shen, as it is termed in some Classics). (89)

Ultimately, their collective function as Spirit (Shen) is “to help empower (the individual) to manifest (his) destiny between Heaven and Earth.” (90)

As the Zang which house these entities are the physiological basis of the Spirit, the state of their Qi and Blood influences both the Mind and the Spirit, and vice versa. (91)

The Mind (Shen) may be summarized as the Human being’s “capacity to interpret data flowing both from the world inward to the Heart and from the Heart outward to the world” (92) and was extensively discussed in the section concerning San Bao.

Here follows an explanation of each of the remaining four mental-spiritual entities, their respective activities and functions commonly overlapping with those of the Mind (Shen). (93)

The Hun:

The Ethereal Soul (Hun) is that part of the soul housed in the Liver which enters the body just after birth. After death it flows back to Heaven (94) through the top of the head at DU-20 (BaiHui) and reports to the Spirits which rule Human destiny as to how the individual has fulfilled his life’s purpose.

It may also be seen as a representative of the virtue the Human has cultivated during his life.

The Three Treasures fuel the evolution of the Human Spirit toward Heaven throughout life and are also responsible for this ‘final’ ascent of the Hun. (95)

The Hun is closely related to the Mind. Both are involved in all mental activities of the Human being. However, the Hun also represents a different level of consciousness. It is described as the “coming and going of the Mind,” allowing the Mind to communicate with both the internal and the external world. Likewise, the Mind is meant to balance and restrain the movement of the Hun with stillness. When comparing the two, the Mind may be considered to be the individual Mind of the Human, his consciousness, which dies with him at the end of his life. The Hun is the link between the individual and the universal Mind, the collective unconscious. The Mind is meant to assimilate and integrate the images and ideas the Human receives through this link. The Hun provides the Mind with intuition and inspiration and with inward movement, in the form of introspection, and with outward movement, in the form of relating with other Humans. This function reflects its unity with Liver-Qi.

Being responsible for the more subconscious aspects of the Mind, the Hun assists the Mind and Heart in balancing the emotional life. More specifically, it prevents the emotions from
becoming excessive and pathological, a reflection of the balance between Liver-Blood and Liver-Qi.
Due to its rooting in Liver-Yin and Liver-Blood, it provides the Human with both physical and mental vision and with courage, creative drive, resoluteness, and a sense of direction in life. (96)

The Po:
Residing in the Lungs, the Corporeal Soul (Po) is the physical complement of the Hun. It is the “somatic expression of the Soul,” and unlike the Hun, it is inseparable from the body, even in death, (97) when it exits through the anus and returns to the earth. In this sense, it may be representative of our unmastered issues in life. (98)

The Po is closely associated with Jing and may even be considered as a manifestation of Jing in the realm of sensations and feelings, being responsible for the Human’s five senses.

It is also the first to be affected when an acupuncture needle is inserted into the body. Subsequently, through the Po, the Mind (Shen), the Hun, the Yi, and the Zhi are then affected.

The existence of the Po is derived from the mother soon after the Prenatal Jing begins to be formed. It is responsible for the movement of Jing in all the body’s physiological processes and is considered to be the intermediary between the Jing and the other vital substances of the body.

Breathing is said to be the pulsating of the Po. Just as the Lung’s Wei Qi protects the body from external pathogenic factors on a physical level, the Po guards the individual against external psychic effects.

Therefore, the Po is associated with the Human’s life as an individual, the Hun being related to the Human’s relationship with others. (99)

The Yi:
Like its storehouse, the Spleen, and its related Element, Earth, the Intellect (Yi) demonstrates the ability to receive and reconstitute. It may be defined as “purpose” or “intention,” the “ability to receive impressions, to have the memory and perception of those impressions and knowledge, and to make something appear as a result.” (100)

The Yi is not in a specific form. Rather, it may be seen as a “raw material which presents itself to the Heart.” The Heart subsequently organizes the vibration and accepts or rejects the proposition, depending on whether or not it conforms to the individual nature of the person. If it is accepted, it takes form and becomes Will-Power.
Will-Power is, in fact, “purpose becoming fixed and holding direction.” (101)
The Yi is “a way of considering all things, a place of passage for all thinking” (102) and has its physiological basis in Postnatal Qi and Blood.

Like the Yi, the Mind (Shen) of the Heart and the Zhi of the Kidneys also include aspects of thinking, remembering, and memorizing. (103)

The Zhi:

While the Yi is responsible for memorizing, the Will, or Will-Power, (Zhi) is responsible for storing the data. Likewise, it provides the Human being with drive, determination, and motivation. (104)

Stored in the Kidneys, the Zhi, in health, is the expression of the Kidneys as the foundation of life, as the “base for the springing up [of life].” (105) The Zhi must be flexible in its orientation but not in its anchoring in order for the changes and transformations of the Human being to occur. These changes and transformations, therefore, express the individual’s true vitality. (106)

Here we see the connection between the Zhi and the Yi, which represent Anterior and Posterior Heaven, respectively. This is anchorage in one’s origin and fidelity to one’s nature in a two-way relationship with the way the individual maintains that nature. When this couple is in harmony, Qi and Blood circulate freely, there is moderation of feeling and emotion, and “the Spirits of the Heart can be present at each level.” It is through the relationship between the Yi and the Zhi that the Human being is able to utilize his Hun and Po. (107)

The mental-spiritual relationship between the Zhi and the Mind (Shen) reflects the physiological relationship between the Kidneys and the Heart. The Kidneys are the basis for the Heart. The Zhi is the basis for the Mind (Shen) and must be directed by it. Both must be strong and the Mind (Shen) must be clear if the Heart is to focus the Mind (Shen) on the Jing “in a way that illuminates destiny as stored in [one’s] depths.”

The function of the Zhi is to facilitate this interaction and to determine its quality. (108) The Zhi may be summarized as “the Heart’s capacity to focus the Mind and to initiate action by commanding the Qi to move the body.” (109)

2.5 The Emotions

Emotions are “reactions to the outside world by one’s inner vitality.” (110) Each Zang produces a specific mental energy which “resonates with a particular emotion” when subjected to stimuli. Emotions are triggered by external circumstances, but they are of internal origin. (111) An emotion may be likened to a tree in the wind, the wind representing a stimulus. The emotion should bend with the wind and afterward return to its motionless state.
Likewise, Human beings have emotions which are affected by stimuli. In health, they are able to quickly restore the balance and return to a calm state. (112) This calm is not an absence of emotion but an act of returning to one’s nature and fulfilling his destiny. It is a reflection of being in possession of oneself and of being at one’s center. (113) The most pure expression of this concept is found in the Buddhist’s search for enlightenment, the Mind being completely quietened in order to avoid all influence and agitation from the emotions.

Emotions may become a cause of disease when they are excessive or prolonged. By disturbing the Mind, the Hun, and the Po, they directly disturb the balance of the ZangFu and of the Qi and Blood. (114) Likewise, disharmony of the ZangFu may create a distortion of the movement of Qi coming from the inside and appearing externally as an emotion or a passion. Therefore, emotions are categorized as ‘Internal Causes of Disease.’ (115)

The effect of each emotion depends on whether it is repressed or manifested, as well as on the constitution (and constitutional type) of the individual. The first effect of the excessive emotion is that of disruption of the circulation and the direction of Qi, beginning with that of the Mind. Pathology of any of the emotions will agitate the Heart as well as affecting its related Zang, since the Heart houses the Mind and is ultimately responsible for recognizing a given emotion. Also, each emotion has a specific affect on the circulation of Qi. (116)

Here follows a brief exploration of the emotions most directly related to the behavioral pattern ascribed to sexual addiction, though the remaining emotions of worry, sadness, fear, shock, love, and hatred may all potentially play a role in the origin and manifestation of the cycle:

- Anger includes frustration, irritation, and similar feelings, all of which cause Liver-Blood or Liver-Qi to stagnate, if the feelings are repressed. Generally, it is said that anger makes Qi rise, this usually being the case when the feelings are expressed, resulting in rising Liver-Yang or blazing Liver-Fire. If there is a pre-existing Liver-Yin deficiency, Liver-Yang may rise. If the individual has a tendency to Heat, he may develop blazing Liver-Fire. (117)

- Pensiveness indicates a constant state of brooding or thinking, which may manifest as obsessive thought if carried to extremes. (118) Obsessive thought is thought which always comes back to the same idea without realizing action (119) and will be discussed more extensively in the following section in the context of its relation to desire.

- Guilt primarily affects the Heart and the Kidneys, causing Qi to stagnate. (120) Guilt is actually not exactly the same as emotion, but if feeling guilty leads to damage of the Essences and vitality and to obstruction, it should be treated as obsessive thought. (121)

- Joy, as a pathological emotion, is extensive excitement as a result of constant mental stimulation, which causes the Heart to become larger. There follows an increase in the stimulation, leading to Heart-related complaints.

With sudden joy, a condition similar to shock, the Heart dilates and slows down. (122)
The aspect of joy known as craving indicates “a constant state of craving which is never satisfied.” Craving affects the Heart, scatters Qi, and stirs Minister Fire. In pathology, Minister Fire refers to Empty-Fire which arises in the Kidneys and affects the Pericardium and the Mind. A weakened Mind will propagate the craving, the Pericardium following the insatiable demands. Both Daoism and Buddhism emphasize the importance of reducing craving to prevent the arousal of Minister Fire and the subsequent over-stimulation of the Mind, which may otherwise also lead to Heart-Fire or Heart Empty-Heat. (123)

The emotion of craving is, in a certain sense, equivalent to desire. I began the discussion of TCM concepts relevant to sexual addiction with that of desire, and it is the following section’s deeper exploration of this concept, specifically in its relation to obsession, which will bring the reader closer to a TCM understanding of sexual addiction.

2.6 Desire and Obsession

The Chinese character for ‘desire’ (Yu) contains a valley or a hollow. There is a sense of reception or attraction due to a lack of something.

Desires are a natural part of animal existence, as seen in the instinct to eat the appropriate food or to procreate, for example. (124) In fact, the very building blocks of life, Essences, are filled with desire, specifically the desire for living. This desire gives the Essences their density, their Earthly aspect, as it fuels their movement towards each other, their binding together, and ultimately the production of life. This bonding of the Essences is present on every level and in every moment of the Human life, the ultimate example being the creation of the Human being, a new composition of Essences, at the moment of conception. (125)

However, unlike animals, Human beings have the freedom to follow their own nature or not, allowing for desire for things which are not needed or which are even contrary to what is needed.

In a balanced and healthy state, such as in the life of a sage, desires are movements of the Heart and expressions of one’s own nature and destiny. There is harmony, in fact unity, between the Heart’s movements, the emotions, the desires, and the natural movement of life. Such was the case with Confucious at the end of his life. (126)

Desire in itself has the tendency, or at least the possibility, of being too specific to the individual, therefore separating him from his own nature and from others, who have their own desires. (127) The result is a perversion of the Mind and the Spirit, the Hun and the Po, and of the distribution of all the influences in the body. (128) Furthermore, in Daoist texts, even the theoretically most positive of desires, such as virtue or the void of the Heart, can be overdursed, leading to stagnation of the vital forces and thinking. Therefore, in this sense, “the mechanism of the desire has nothing to do with the object of the desire.” (129)

Giving oneself free license to one’s emotions in order to satisfy one’s desires is what is called “allowing the self to become the slave of things.” (130) This is, in fact, addiction.

Emotions are internal responses by the Zang to external stimuli. Spiritual life is housed in
these Zang and governs all other psychological and physical aspects of the individual’s life. The distribution of Blood and Qi depend not only on good digestion and circulation. At the deepest level, they depend on the Spiritual life. “The Spirits (Shen) are the inner pivot of all kinds of movements of one’s being. Only the Spirits must dwell in the Heart. Being a slave to exterior things, will cause one to lose touch with one’s nature. This leads to a distortion of one’s natural internal movement.”

It is important to not be preoccupied by one emotion, or a desire which is not the realisation of one’s own nature. One must “think about what he knows and percieve with a pure Heart,” so that no emotion will obscure vision. One is then able to understand the knowledge from the perception from the exterior through the orifices. “The Heart is the master of all that, the Mind, the intelligence, and the Spirit in general Classical Chinese literature.”

The concept of ‘obsession’ in relation to sexual addiction has two aspects which must be explored, that of obsessive thought and that of obsessive desire.

With obsessive thought, the Qi is knotted. The correct Qi remains in one spot and does not circulate. The Heart then has one spot in which to dwell, and the Spirits have only one reference point. According to chapter eight of the Ling Shu, the Heart must be able to take charge of all the happenings of life, this being the opposite of obsessive thought, when the Jingshen gather and obstruct themselves with concerns. The Will then becomes paralyzed, and there is no transformation and adaptability. Obsessive thinking injures the Spleen.

The concept of ‘obsessive desire’ is described at least as early as chapter 44 of the Neijing Suwen, which speaks of the pathology of “thought weighed down by preoccupation,” of carrying on indefinitely and being unable to stop. In this situation, the Heart transforms into desire the stimulations coming in from the external world. It wants to possess something it senses and is unable to stop this process. Purpose is then scattered to the exterior. Following the desires worsens the condition, one’s purpose becoming increasingly his own and increasingly in relation to the external stimulation. The purpose is less and less under control of the center, and the circulation of Essences, Qi, and Blood follow the movement to the exterior.

Possibly the most damaging example of obsessive desire is that of obsessive sexual desire, as it potentially exhausts the Essences directly. Here, one senses something he desires, which stops the natural flow of life, resulting in stagnation. The resulting agitation and Heat of the Heart feeds the “excessive power of the Fire Element,” eventually exhausting the Qi and vitality. Transformation of Dampness and containing of liquids become impossible. Spleen Dampness may combine with Heart Heat and push outwards, resulting in spermatorrhea. Therefore, if one’s desires do not correspond with his nature, a space exists which pushes outwards, “in his thinking, in his Heart, in his purpose, and in all his vital movements.”

2.7 Human Nature, Destiny, and Habituation

The infant may be considered as an open channel for the “creative flow of the Dao,” the perfect state of One before the beginning of duality, as it has not yet developed a Mind which
judges, or reacts to its responses of life. (137)
At the moment of conception, Shen imprints on the Jing “the unique Spiritual disposition,”
which we may call one’s constitution or destiny, (138) the “Will of Heaven.” (139)
One’s personal Heart Spirit (Shen) develops from this imprint on the Jing and must illuminate
the Jing throughout the individual’s life, thereby binding his core with that of Heaven.
Shen is the transformative force which determines the individual’s character. It is his relation
to Heaven. (140)
The Human Will (Zhi) is established as a conduit for Shen to interact with Jing. In adult life,
the purest expression of this process may be that of the sage, who focuses Shen on Jing “in the
spontaneous creative act of discovering self anew in each moment.” (141)

So, Heaven provides each individual with original nature. He may or may not preserve this
natural endowment of virtue. (142) Heaven cannot force him to fulfill destiny. (143) It is
based on an “open receptivity” that comes from inaction (Wu Wei), “whereby the individual
cultivates true virtue, aligns his Will with that of Heaven, unites the internal and external
Heavens as one, and fulfills destiny.” (144)

At some moment in his early life, each individual loses original nature and establishes a life
theme dictated by his constitutional type. This life theme is a representation of a distortion by
his Mind of one or more of the inborn virtues, and it determines how he will interpret life and
embody these interpretations as pathology. (145)
In order to avoid the pain of this loss of original nature, he may resort to habitual behavior.
(146) More specifically, he may habitually react to the presence of a certain emotion, which
may obscure his access to the related virtue. (147) Through this habitual behavior, the
primordial powers which influence health and balance are obscured. (148)

“The quality of each individual’s destiny is characterized by the transformation of an
unbalanced emotion back into its corresponding virtue.” (149) The quality of the individual’s
Will (Zhi) is the determining factor for success or failure of this transformation and therefore
the degree of fulfillment of individual destiny. (150)

Below is a list of the Five Elements and their corresponding Zang, mental-spiritual entities,
emotions, and virtues: (151)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Zang</th>
<th>Mental-Spiritual Entity</th>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Virtue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Kidney</td>
<td>Zhi</td>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>Liver</td>
<td>Hun</td>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Benevolence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>Shen</td>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>Propriety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Spleen</td>
<td>Yi</td>
<td>Sympathy</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal</td>
<td>Lung</td>
<td>Po</td>
<td>Grief</td>
<td>Righteousness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Possession is the mechanism through which demonic spirits, incarnated as either Hun or Po,
prey upon a weakened individual. (152)
Although the concept of possession may be considered by some to be archaic and out of place
in the modern practice of TCM, the practice of acupuncture specifically has its origin in
shamanic acts aimed at protecting the sick from evil influences. (153)
Furthermore, Lonny Jarrett argues that clearing possession is “the single most profound
treatment for restoring the memory of original nature to a patient,” and that learning to
diagnose and treat it is essential to the holistically-oriented practitioner. (154)
He also argues that the Human ego may be considered a form of possession, as it is created by the Mind’s individualization of thoughts and feelings and consequently “motivates behavior that obscures original nature.” (155)
Such an interpretation does potentially extend the therapeutic boundaries as well. In any case, possession suggests that the individual is habituated in one form of emotional expression, with no room for other forms of expression. (156)

2.9 Summary of the Functional Mechanism of the Heart and Mind (Shen), the Mental-Spiritual Entities, the Emotions, Human Nature, and Destiny When in a State of Balance

Each Human exists at a specific crossing point between Heaven and Earth.
In a state of health and balance, the individual’s Heart and Mind (Shen) are a calm and reflective central command point.
Each Zang vibrates with its own energy, which becomes a specific emotion in response to external stimuli.
The Heart recognizes the emotions but does not remain focused on them. They come and go easily, as natural responses to the outside world.
The Hun allows the individual to communicate freely with the higher Spirit, with himself, and with other Humans, and it assists in the smooth flow of the emotions as they manifest and ‘disintegrate.’
The Po manifests and circulates the Jing throughout the body, linking the individual with his deepest physical being and regulating intake from the external world through the sense organs, which are open and alert. Through the Po, the individual is well-protected from external psychic influences.
The Yi is a mere possibility, an empty potential for appropriate considerations to be accepted by the Heart and assimilated into the individual and for unnecessary thoughts to be rejected. Those accepted take form and are applied to the Zhi, the pre-existing storehouse of data from past and present which anchors the individual securely.
The ever clear and calm Heart focuses its Mind (Shen) on the Jing, illuminating the individual’s true nature and commanding Qi to move the body in a way which is faithful to that nature.

2.10 Notes
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
30. Ibid., p. 117.
32. Larre, 1999, p. 31.
34. Maciocia, 1989, pp. 138-139.
41. Ibid., p.9.
42. Ibid., pp. 24-25.
43. Ibid. pp. 28-29.
52. Maciocia, 1994, pp. 198-201.
56. Ibid., pp. 4-5.
59. Larre, 1999, p. 43.
60. Maciocia, 1994, pp. 198-201.
64. Maciocia, 1994, pp. 198-201.
65. Larre, 1999, pp. 4-5.
66. Ibid., p. 39.
67. Ibid., p. 38.
68. Ibid., p. 1.
69. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
70. Ibid., pp. 15-17.
71. Ibid., pp. 4-5.
72. Ibid., p. 35.
73. Ibid., pp. 15-17.
74. Ibid., p. 35.
75. Ibid., pp. 15-17.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
78. Ibid., p. 28.
79. Ibid., pp. 15-17.
80. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
81. Ibid., p. 10.
82. Maciocia, 1994, pp. 198-201.
84. Larre, 1996, p. 41.
85. Ibid., p. 43.
87. Larre, 1996, p. 29.
89. Maciocia, 1994, pp. 198-201.
94. Ibid., pp. 200-208.
97. Ibid.
100. Larre, 1996, pp. 45-46.
101. Ibid., pp. 41-43.
102. Ibid., p. 79.
104. Ibid.
106. Ibid., p. 51.
107. Ibid., pp. 55-58.
111. Maciocia, 1994, pp. 208-211.
112. Larre, 1996, p.5.
114. Maciocia, 1994, pp. 208-211.
117. Ibid., pp. 211-212.
118. Ibid., p. 214.
123. Ibid., p. 216.
127. Ibid.
128. Ibid., p.8.
129. Ibid., p.10.
130. Ibid., p. 20.
131. Ibid., p. 28.
132. Ibid., p. 6.
133. Ibid., pp. 159-160.
134. Ibid., pp. 162-164.
135. Ibid., p. 10.
136. Ibid., pp. 162-164.
138. Ibid., pp. 50-51.
139. Ibid., p. 55.
140. Ibid., pp. 50-51.
141. Ibid., p. 59.
142. Ibid., pp. 45-46.
143. Ibid., p. 55.
144. Ibid., pp. 45-46, 55, 59.
146. Ibid., p. 157.
147. Ibid., p. 154.
148. Ibid., p. 158.
149. Ibid., pp. 45-46.
150. Ibid., p. 180.
151. Ibid., p. 126.
153. Ibid., p. 39.
154. Ibid., pp. 37, 40-41.
155. Ibid., p. 42.
Chapter 3    A TCM Interpretation of Sexual Addiction

3.1 Introduction
As Western practitioners of TCM attempt to understand, in TCM terminology, Western psychiatric illnesses, they frequently encounter the difficulty of ‘translating’ the illness. Many Western psychiatric illnesses have been ‘mapped out’ in direct correlations explaining the pathomechanisms in terms of TCM pattern identification. There exists varying systems of categorizing the psychiatric illnesses, or Essence Spirit
Disorders (Jing Shen Bing). (1) One such classification system determines the effects on Qi, Blood, and Yin and subsequently categorizes the patterns into either Mind Obstructed, Mind Unsettled, or Mind Weakened. (2)

Mind Obstructed involves patterns of stagnation which mist the Mind and obstruct its functions, resulting in mental confusion and emotional numbness. (3)

Mind Unsettled results from patterns of Yin deficiency or Blood deficiency, often combined with patterns of stagnation. An unsettled Mind results in anxiety and restlessness. If the Hun is affected, there may be nightmares, irritability, depression, or inability to plan one’s life. An unsettled Po may result in breathlessness, tightness of the chest, extensive worrying, and emotional somatization in the form of skin rashes. (4)

Mind Weakened, more so than the previous two categories, is more often a result than a cause of Vital Substance/ZangFu disharmonies. The patterns are exclusively deficient, resulting in physical and mental exhaustion, depression, lack of drive, insomnia, poor memory, and mild anxiety. (5)

To my knowledge, the concept of ‘sexual addiction’ has yet to be categorized under any of these headings.

In TCM, the diagnosis and treatment are ultimately uniquely personal and based on the patient’s individual combination of patterns. (6) Each Human is, in fact, at a specific crossing point between Heaven and Earth, and each ‘sex addict’ will therefore have his own personally-tailored expression of the condition in the form of patterns of disharmony. Of course, certain patterns will be present in most, if not all, cases of sexual addiction, and it is primarily these patterns which I attempt to bring to light in the following sections. Theoretically, one may use a process of “triangulation and hypothesis-formation” according to age, sex, and body type in combination with the relevant published Essence Spirit Disease diagnoses to formulate a pattern diagnosis for ‘sexual addiction.’ (7) However, in the absence of live subjects, I am unable to base a hypothesis on individual symptoms, ages, sex, and body types.

Instead, through my understanding of the TCM concepts explored in Chapter Two, I have interpreted the primary definitive characteristics, specifically the ‘loss of control’ and the five stages of the behavioral pattern, all of which I explore individually. When necessary, additional information is presented to support my interpretations. As the aim in TCM is always to see a broader picture, I also attempt to find a more all-encompassing definition, diagnosis, and treatment of sexual addiction, ultimately one related to cultivation of virtue and fulfillment of destiny.

I would like to emphasize that my interpretations are not exclusive, as there may be other explanations for the same phenomena.

Furthermore, they remain theoretical, and their worth will ultimately be borne out in future practice.

3.2 Definitive Characteristics
Uncontrollable Desire:

The primary definitive characteristic of sexual addiction is ‘uncontrollable desire.’

Although ‘inability to control oneself’ may be a symptom related to other TCM patterns of disharmony, in the context of sexual addiction, it can most likely be categorized as a symptom of Mind Weakened due to Qi and Blood deficiency, specifically due to injury to Heart-Qi from excessive joy and craving. (8)

The picture presented is one of Spleen-Qi deficiency and overthinking, possibly obsessively, leading to Qi and Blood deficiency and Heart-Qi deficiency. Heart-Qi deficiency, Heart-Qi stagnation and Heart Empty-Heat or Heart-Fire due to craving worsen the Heart-Qi deficiency. A vicious circle of ‘uncontrollable desire’ exists in the Heart, the central command point. (9)

Behavioral Pattern:

The behavioral pattern of the sex addict may be categorized into five stages.

Stage 1: continual and progressive thoughts of sex

This stage may be interpreted as ‘the perversion of thought as a way of considering all things, developing into pensiveness and obsession.’

Traditionally, the symptoms associated with obsessive-compulsive disorder are categorized under the diseases: vexation and agitation (Fan Zao), depressed condition (Yu Zheng), impaired memory (Jian Wang), and abject demeanor (Bie Die). The focus here lies on the Heart and Gall Bladder’s relationship with courage, timidity, and decision-making. (10)

Obsession may also potentially be categorized as ‘Mind Weakened by Qi and Blood vacuity.’ (11)

The patterns involved in obsession vary, the severity of the condition depending upon the presence or absence of a pathological factor and the predominance of a deficiency or an excess. Generally, the presence of Phlegm or Blood stasis will manifest more severe mental and physical symptoms than will Qi or Blood vacuity, for example. Here follows a brief explanation of the possible development of patterns of disharmony involved in this stage of the sex addict’s behavioral pattern:

Because of focus on one thought, the Spleen may become over-taxed and vacuous, resulting in a lack of transformation and transportation of Essences and a failure to engender Qi and Blood. (12)

There follows a kind of “powerless agitation instead of circulation.” The Qi is unable to know the correct way and stagnates, specifically affecting Liver-Qi. (13) The vacuity of Qi and Blood may lead to Heart vacuity, Dampness, and/or Phlegm. Phlegm may assail the Gall Bladder, worsening the Heart vacuity on a mental level, and the
individual may become unable to control himself. (14)

As the Heart is preoccupied with the thought and not free, the Spirits are injured. Fire of the Heart is unable to generate Earth of the Spleen, and circulation, which is needed for mental clarity, is progressively obstructed in a kind of vicious circle. (15)

Repression of the emotions may likewise result in Qi and/or Blood stagnation, especially Liver-Qi stagnation with Blood stasis involving the Gall Bladder. (16)

In summary, the most likely Vital Substance/ ZangFu patterns of disharmony to consider in this stage are:

- Qi vacuity, especially of the Spleen, Heart, and Gall Bladder;
- Qi stagnation, especially of the Liver and the Heart;
- Blood vacuity, especially of the Heart;
- Dampness and/or Phlegm, especially Phlegm assailing the Gall Bladder and clouding the Mind;
- Blood stagnation, especially of the Liver and affecting the Gall Bladder.

**Stage 2: uncontrollable desire**

“Uncontrollable desire” may be translated as “craving.”

This stage, of course, is not separate from the previous one, as it includes many of the same symptoms, such as ‘obsessive thought’ and ‘lack of control.’ Nor is it separate from sexual addiction’s definitive characteristic of ‘uncontrollable desire.’

In order to emphasize its place within the behavioral pattern, I will summarize with the following:

The Heart transforms into desire stimuli from the outside world. As with obsession, there exists stagnation of Liver-Qi and of Heart-Qi. However, craving also scatters energy, one’s Qi and Vital Substances, to the exterior, whereby the center is no longer in control.

The central, Heart-Qi stagnation creates Heat in the form of Heart Empty-Heat, if the individual has a tendency toward Yin deficiency. Otherwise, it results in Heart-Fire. (17) The Heat exhausts the Qi, especially that of the Heart, and the qualities of transformation and transporntation fail, possibly resulting in Dampness, Qi and Blood deficiency or Heart-Blood stasis. (18)

The Mind may become weakened by the Qi and Blood deficiency, resulting in the individual’s inability to control himself, or the Mind may become unsettled by the Heart-Fire (19) or obstructed by the Heart-Blood stasis. (20)

An important consideration here is that the Heat generated during the act of craving is not only the Heat of stagnation. Craving also causes the Ministerial Fire to stir upward.

The Ministerial Fire is the fire in the body which is inseparable from Kidney-Yang and which inhabits the life gate (Ming Men), the Liver, the Gall Bladder, and the Triple Burner. Together with the Sovereign Fire of the Heart, it powers the body’s activity. (21) Sexual
desire itself is a function of the Ministerial Fire. The Heart does not reign personally. Rather, it is assisted by the Ministerial Fire via the Pericardium. (22)

When this fire rises due to Liver- and/or Kidney-Yin deficiency (23) or is stirred due to craving, it leaves its root in the Lower Warmer, resulting in:

1. Injury to Spleen Qi
2. Transformation of any tendency to evil Heat in the body
3. Damage and consumption of Yin
4. Lower Burner vacuity and Coldness
(24)

Therefore, in addition to the patterns it shares with obsession, the trademark patterns of craving are:

- Heart-Fire or Heart Empty-Heat

**Stage 3: sexual act**

If one were to assume that the sexual addict’s behavioral pattern does result in excessive ejaculation, it would certainly fit in with the image of an agitating Heat culminating in a dispersal of the stagnation and release of the Heat through ejaculation. Also, one may consider all the physical repercussions of excessive ejaculation: a possible Kidney-, Heart-, and/or Liver-Yin deficiency, with or without Empty-Heat, a Kidney-Yang deficiency, or the more direct Kidney-Essence deficiency, all of which may result in a Mind Unsettled. (25)

The most common complaint of the sex addict, that of lack of energy, may certainly be explained through any of these patterns of disharmony.

However, it should be stated that with or without ejaculation, the sexual act, like craving, does stir the Ministerial Fire, (26) with the same potential repercussions as those of craving, unless the individual is skilled in the Daoist sexual techniques of circulating the Jing. Furthermore, frequent stimulation without release would otherwise increase the stagnation and Heat. This consideration is, in fact, in contradiction with the idea that sexual acts not resulting in ejaculation are not dangerous to men’s health, which was extensively discussed in Chapter Two.

**Stage 4: guilt**

The primary effect of guilt is that of Qi stagnation, specifically that of the Heart and the Kidneys. It therefore creates somewhat of a paralysis of the directional forces of the body. Guilt may result in a Mind Obstructed by Heart-Blood stasis or by Blood stasis in the Lower Burner. (27)

It may also contribute to the development of Heart- and/or Kidney-Yin deficiency, with or without Empty-Heat, all of which may lead to a Mind Unsettled. (28)

Kidney-Yin, -Yang, or -Essence deficiency may also result from prolonged feelings of guilt, leading to a Mind Weakened. However, Kidney-Yang deficiency is more often a cause than a result of feelings of guilt. (29)
Plainly stated, feelings of guilt have a quality of stagnation similar to that of obsessive thought. However, obsessive thought primarily involves the Heart in its function of relating to the external world and assimilating elements of the external world into the individual, through the functions and dysfunctions of the Liver, the Gall Bladder, and the Spleen. Feelings of guilt damage the individual at his very base, the Kidneys and their relationship to the Heart, the Water-Fire axis.

**Stage 5: abstinence**

If one considers the stage of abstinence from sex to continue through the first and second stages of obsessive thought and craving, respectively, it may be considered to involve repression, or stagnation.

As the Liver is responsible for the free circulation of Qi and Blood, especially in the Lower Burner, (30) it is immediately affected by repression, certainly by repression of sexual desires. Unfulfilled desires of any kind are the primary initial cause of Liver-Qi stagnation, which may also result from Liver-Blood or -Yin deficiency. Liver-Qi stagnation is also the central mechanism in the development of mental-emotional disorders. Any of the other ZangFu which are co-responsible for the development of these disorders will be negatively influenced by the Liver-Qi stagnation. Usually, the Spleen is the first to be affected, potentially leading to Spleen-Qi deficiency, Dampness, Phlegm, food stagnation, and/or Blood stasis. Spleen-Qi deficiency may subsequently lead to Lung-Qi deficiency, Heart-Blood and/or -Qi deficiency, and/or Kidney-Yang deficiency. Blood deficiency may further develop into a Yin deficiency. Liver-Qi stagnation may transform to Heat and ascend to harass the Heart Spirit. Transformative Heat may also develop and rise from Dampness, Phlegm, or Stomach food stagnation. Empty-Heat may develop from Kidney-Yin deficiency. (31)

Furthermore, the Mind (Shen) may be obstructed due to stagnation of Liver-, Lung-, or Heart-Qi or due to Blood stasis in the Lower Burner. (32) The Mind may be Unsettled by Qi stagnation or Blood stasis or by Liver-Yin deficiency. (33)

Any of these patterns of disharmony may be present in the cycle of sexual addiction, and most have been discussed in the categories of the first four stages of the behavioral pattern.

What is important to consider is that abstinence, in so far as it may be equated with Liver-Qi stagnation, propagates the cycle of sexual addiction. It strengthens any of the possible pre-existing excesses of Dampness, Phlegm, Qi stagnation, Blood stasis, or Heat, and damages the ZangFu, leading to further deficiencies of Qi, Blood, or Yin.

Classic texts warn that repression of sexual urges may cause accumulation of too much pressure and subsequent abscesses. (34) Prostate problems, termed ‘Buddhist Monk’s Disease’ in old China, were attributed to Jing becoming stagnant after not being circulated to its fullest potential. (35)
One was also warned that such repression will make the urges even harder to control and may result in leaking semen, a condition called ‘Having Sex With A Ghost.’ (36)

Furthermore, the warning that repression of sexual urges leads to arousal and exhaustion of the Spirit, and therefore to a shorter life, (37) highlights the behavioral pattern stages of stagnation and craving.

3.3 Core Pathology of Sexual Addiction
Considering the definitive characteristics of ‘uncontrollable desire’ and the behavioral pattern as a whole, the condition termed ‘sexual addiction’ in Western psychiatry may be summarized in the following cycle of TCM ZangFu patterns of disharmony and disturbances of the mental-spiritual entities:

Stimuli from the external world are converted into emotions by the ZangFu. The Heart converts external stimuli into the emotion of craving, or desire. The Mind recognizes the emotions, as well as the thoughts presented by the Yi. There exists a deficiency of Heart-Qi and of the Mind (Shen), and possibly a deficiency of Gall Bladder-Qi. The Heart is unable to distinguish or reject inappropriate thoughts and emotions, resulting in Heart-Qi stagnation. Subsequently, Heart-Fire or Heart Empty-Heat is generated due to the Mind dwelling on one idea or emotion. The pivotal function of the center is disrupted and Qi is pushed to the exterior. There exists a Spleen-Qi deficiency, including deficient functioning of the Yi, as it fails in the free presentation of considerations to be assimilated into the individual. There exists Liver-Qi stagnation and a failure in the functions of the Hun. The free flow of emotions is disrupted, and the individual loses clear communication with the Higher Spirit, with himself, and with other individuals. Resoluteness and direction in life are lost. There exists a Kidney deficiency. Whether it is a Kidney-Yin, Kidney-Yang, or Kidney-Essence deficiency depends on the tendency of the individual. However, considering the involvement of Heat, primarily that of the stirring of Ministerial Fire, the extent of the sexual desire, and the likelihood of excessive ejaculation, Kidney-Yin and/or -Essence deficiency is probable. A deficient Yi fails to nourish the deficient Zhi, which becomes paralyzed and inflexible in its movement. There is no transformation, and the Zhi is unable to support the focusing of Shen on Jing by the Heart, the Heart itself being unclear for the action, its vision obscured by emotion. The Fire-Water axis stagnates and all interpretations and responses become perverted, in a vicious circle of stagnation, Heat, and deficiency, depleting the individual’s reserves of Jing, Qi, and Shen.

At the moment the individual loses original nature, he creates an ego, a false self, which focuses outward instead of inward, (38) just as craving causes an outward movement of Qi toward the exterior. If this ego comes into action each time the individual encounters the emotion associated with his constitutional type, resulting in habitual behavior, one may consider the possibility of
addiction itself being a response to a specific emotion.

Although any of the three categories of Mind Obstructed, Mind Unsettled, or Mind Weakened may appropriately describe the result of certain patterns of disharmony developed by the sex addict, the category of Mind Unsettled generally seems the most accurate, considering the trademark symptoms of anxiety and restlessness and its mix of deficiency patterns and patterns of stagnation.

When categorizing sexual addiction into TCM patterns of disharmony, one must also consider Yin Fire Theory. According to this theory, a pathological Fire may rise from the Middle and Lower Burners to harass the Heart and create a malnourishment of the Spirit. This Yin Fire is a result of five disease mechanisms, each of which may cause any of the others.

These mechanisms are:

1. Spleen vacuity
2. Liver depression
3. Damp Heat
4. Yin/ Blood vacuity
5. Stirring of Ministerial Fire

According to the cycle just mapped out, sexual addiction would include at least three (Spleen vacuity, Liver depression and Stirring of Ministerial Fire), if not all of these mechanisms.

3.4 Consequences

Unlike Western medicine, which primarily considers the psychosocial consequences of sexual addiction, TCM considers the consequences to be more far-reaching, damaging the physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects of the individual. Therefore, sexual addiction’s definitive characteristic of “having great repercussions,” is even more present in a TCM interpretation than in that of Western medicine. This aspect of TCM’s holism in relation to sexual addiction has been discussed extensively in previous sections as well as in the following section concerning etiology. The consequences are, in fact, somewhat inseparable from the causes and manifestations. This is certainly true in the case of sexual addiction, which is a self-propagating condition.

3.5 Etiology

The complex pathology involved in the behavioral pattern discussed in the previous sections would theoretically allow the origins of sexual addiction to be found in any of the etiological categories of TCM, namely:

- Internal causes (the emotions, most likely joy in the form of craving, or frustration, or pensiveness, as they distort the movement of Qi of the Heart and Kidneys, the Liver, or the Spleen, respectively)
- External causes (the climatic factors, any of which may result in Heat, which harasses the
Heart, and in Liver-Qi stagnation)
- Other causes (most likely those of:

- Constitution, specifically the inherited state of the nervous system, and therefore the Heart, or the Kidneys.
- Diet, which directly affects the Spleen as well as the Heart
- Drugs, which themselves create a cycle of disharmony similar to that of sexual addiction
- Overwork, which depletes the Kidneys
- Excessive sexual activity itself, which creates a self-propagating cycle of Kidney deficiency and stirring of the Ministerial Fire) (40)

The binding element of all these factors is that of Qi, the movement of which determines the physiology, psychology, and pathology of the individual. A distortion in the free circulation of Qi due to a physical cause, such as an external pathogen invading the body and injuring the ZangFu, causing a disturbance in the Jingqi, will result in a specific emotion. Likewise, feeling a certain emotion, an act of Shenqi, will result in a distortion in the movement of Qi, directly affecting the ZangFu and possibly leading to physical complaints. Free circulation of Qi and Blood is a prerequisite for a healthy mental state. Likewise, the ability of the Zhi and the Mind (Shen) to choose and act appropriately is necessary for a balanced function on a physical level. (41)

The boundaries between physiology and psychology in Western medicine become somewhat blurred in the search for the origins of sexual addiction in biogenetics, neurochemical disturbances, and learned sociological behavioral patterns. This area of psychology is possibly the area of Western medicine which comes closest to the holistic nature of TCM. A number of the Western medical etiological theories of sexual addiction bear some resemblance to TCM. The sociopsychological theory’s description of an ‘empty potential for lust’ as well as the biological theories’ consideration of genetics and evolutionary forces reminds one of the place of Jing in sexual addiction. The sociopsychological theory’s development of a coping mechanism in response to stress resembles the individual’s loss of original nature. Furthermore, discussion of Western medical treatment of hypersexuality involves language similar to that of TCM, namely, emotions and triggers, or external stimuli.

However, while Western medicine uses a linear framework of cause and effect, the relationship between sex and psychology, and sex and physiology in TCM is bi-directional. (42)

So, a distortion on any level of San Bao may contribute to the development of an addiction to sex.

According to Lonny Jarrett, “Any condition we are capable of manifesting must find its basis within us as karmic or genetic potential.” (43) On the deepest level, one may say that Humans have an innate predisposition to addiction, especially to sexual addiction, in the nature of Essences, which are filled with desire to bond and create life. This potential to develop sexual addiction, therefore, lies in the Jing. Furthermore, it is the interaction of the Jing and the Shen which specifies the individual, and a malfunction of which leads to habituation and “an inability to keep in touch with [one’s] Spirits,” (44) a separation from original nature.

However, with Essences, at the highest level of their character’s meaning, there is no possible
pathology. There is only a kind of potential, the “element of life waiting to be seized by life itself.” (45)

One may also consider the origins of sexual addiction to be found in the Heart and Mind’s individualization of everything, or the “distortions of the Mind (Shen) as it is conditioned by ego.” (46)

Furthermore, it is the Zhi’s function as a catalyst between the Jing and the Shen which determines the quality of the interaction and the fulfillment of one’s true nature.

Certainly, when considering any pathology at the level of Shen, one must be speaking of the Mind (Shen), as the Spirit (Shen) is the aspect of the individual which is never touched by life. “It is fully formed within at conception, and throughout life, is always ready to be expressed as absolute virtue at the moment [the individual chooses] to identify with it.” The Spirit (Shen) therefore, is never sick. Rather, it may be clouded, by ego or by other influences. (As a side note: With reference to Western theories of the etiology of sexual addiction, neural and chemical pathology may be viewed in this way, as a clouding of the Spirit.) (47)

This type of malfunction is also found specifically in the case of possession, when individuals are made more vulnerable to these internal or external dysfunctional influences by shock, severe emotional trauma, poor living conditions, exposure to extreme environmental conditions, psychedelic drug use, prolonged meditation, or lack of integrity of their therapists.

The common factor in these cases is the dissolution of defensive mechanisms of the individual, and it is here where the most concrete etiology may be found. In order for pathology to exist, a shape must be delineated or a form taken, and it is in a malfunction of Qi, specifically in the couple of Defensive Qi (Wei Qi) and Nutritive Qi (Ying Qi), where this delineation exists. (48) Furthermore, the Wei Qi is a result of “the quietness and purity of the Essences offering support for the Spirits.”(49)

Therefore, one may generally say that the potential for sexual addiction lies in the Jing, or more specifically in Jingshen, and that its initial manifestation as pathology is to be found in the Qi.

3.6 Diagnosis and Treatment

As no direct translation of its concept exists in TCM, an individual would not be diagnosed with ‘sexual addiction’ as such by a practitioner of TCM. The Four Diagnostic Methods of Looking, Hearing and Smelling, Asking, and Feeling would be utilized in order to formulate a TCM diagnosis. (50)

As in diagnosis of all mental-emotional problems, specific attention would be paid to the individual’s complexion, which may reflect long-standing emotional problems, his eyes, which reflect the condition of the Mind (Shen) and the Spirit (Shen), his pulse, which reflects the state of Qi, and his tongue, which reflects the most basic and underlying pattern of
disharmony. All the aspects would be carefully integrated in order to correctly diagnose the mental-emotional problem. (51)

When organizing the information acquired by the Four Diagnostic Methods, there are several organizational/interpretive systems which may be used to arrive at a diagnosis. Here, I will focus on two, namely: the Eight Principle (Ba Gang) diagnosis, and the Five-Element Constitutional diagnosis.

Generally speaking, a Ba Gang diagnosis would concern itself with determining the acquired patterns of dysfunction, i.e. the Vital Substance/ZangFu patterns of disharmony. Its focus would be primarily the physiological manifestations of pathology, with no implication of its correspondence with the individual’s purpose or distortion of true nature. (52)

The presenting patterns of disharmony may vary extensively, depending on the individual and on the behavioral pattern stage in which he finds himself at that moment. Therefore, the diagnosis would be one or more of the Vital Substance/ZangFu patterns of disharmony discussed in the previous sections, the most likely examples being: Heart-Qi or -Blood deficiency, Heart-Qi stagnation, Heart-Fire or Heart Empty-Heat, Liver-Qi stagnation, Spleen-Qi vacuity, and/or Kidney-Yin or –Essence vacuity. A more encompassing diagnosis of Mind Unsettled or of Yin Fire may be determined.

Certainly in the case of Yin Fire, which is always an aspect of sexual addiction, all the disease mechanisms must be treated simultaneously. Otherwise, those patterns not treated will soon re-establish those which are treated. (53)

Also, the presence of such stagnant patterns as Phlegm or Blood stasis should be addressed immediately.

The Five-Element Constitutional diagnosis would focus on uncovering the meaning behind the patterns of disharmony, by first determining the psychological constitutional type of the individual and subsequently exploring his current mental-emotional state and history. (54)

(As a side note, it is the Fire Yang type which is most likely to be sexually overactive.) (55)

While the same Four Diagnostic Methods are used in this system as in that of the Ba Gang diagnosis, the Five-Element Constitutional diagnosis places less emphasis on the informational aspect of the individual’s answers to the 10+2 Questions, and more on its congruency with the individual’s tongue, pulse, color, sound, odor, and emotion. In this way, the therapist measures the degree to which the answer conforms to clinical reality. The aim is to discover the constitutional pattern of disharmony.

By utilizing the Five-Element Generating (Sheng) and Controlling (Ke) cycles, treatment focuses on establishing the Three Treasures as the “guiding influences in life” and eliminating the dysfunctional Qi which “supports the life of the created self.” The goal is cultivation of the relevant virtue. (56)

When using this diagnostic system, an important consideration is the potential presence of possession. The primary indication of possession of an individual would be the therapist’s inability to make contact with any “sane or clear influences at [the individual’s] core.” He may be unable to make eye contact with the individual or have the sense that “no one is at home.” The individual may express his feeling that he is not himself or that something has taken him over. The pulse may be any type of Qi-wild (San Mai) pulse, with all positions constantly changing quality, reflecting internal chaos.

It should be stated that not everyone who has been separated from his original nature is possessed. (57)

If the presence of possession is suspected, its treatment should take precedence over that of any other dysfunction. Unless the individual is in possession of himself, any other treatment
would be no more than symptom management. (58)
Treatment of possession involves dispelling the evil influence, including dissolution of the
ego, if applicable, as well as re-establishing the True Qi (Zhen Qi) and repairing the Heart-
Kidney axis. (59)

As TCM is truly holistic, the two diagnostic systems of Ba Gang and Five-Element
Constitution are not mutually exclusive, and an integration in the treatment of sexual
addiction may prove effective.

For example, initial treatment may address the potential presence of possession, as observed
in the Five-Element Constitutional diagnosis, as well as any patterns of Phlegm or Blood
stasis uncovered in a Ba Gang diagnostic framework. Theoretically, after the possession is
dispelled, the therapist may address the constitutional dynamics in order to break the pattern
of addiction at its deep origins, while simultaneously balancing any Vital Substance/ ZangFu
patterns of disharmony, such as any remaining Phlegm or Blood stasis or Yin Fire.
Pathology, in fact, is always found at different levels, and rebalancing at each level is
important. (60)

One may consider that a priority in the treatment of any mental-emotional disorder is to
disinhibit the free flow of Qi, as all pathological emotions create a stagnation of Qi.
Rectifying the free flow of Qi is also the primary effect of acupuncture. (61) Tonification of
any Vital Substance/ ZangFu deficiency or sedation of any excess is achieved through the
manipulation of Qi.

Through this rectification of the free flow of Qi, acupuncture may also clear the way for the
 Spirits, in order to make communication possible and allow its signal to the Spirits to be
 received. In Classical texts it is said that if a therapist does not go to the Spirits, he is not
 really able to cure. (62) It is the Spirits, in fact, which determine the movement of Qi. (63)
 In this sense, acupuncture may be understood as a request of movement issued by the
 therapist and the patient to the Spirits.

The aspect of calming the emotions, which is actually a calming of the Spirit (Shen) in its
disturbance by the emotion, is also important in the treatment of sexual addiction. This aspect
is intended to help the individual “come back to a state where the emotion is felt inside [his]
quietness.” (64)

As addiction may be interpreted as the most extreme example of a habitual mind, (65) helping
the individual re-establish contact with the higher self, an act of Jingshen, is considered by
some to be the only way to “satisfy” the addiction. (66)
When discussing acupuncture treatment of addiction, a mention of auricular acupuncture is
unavoidable. In fact, it has been one of the most popular TCM treatments of addiction over
the past thirty years. (67) There exists an ear point protocol, and even a specific ear point, for
sexual compulsion. Points are selected according to the individual’s symptoms and underlying
condition, and ultimately according to how reactive the points are to pressure or to electric
current. (68)
While I do not intend to suggest that auricular acupuncture works directly at the level of Jing,
it is interesting to consider the parallel between its effectiveness in treating addiction, which
has its roots in Jingshen, and TCM symbolism of the ear, which is of a foetus, the Kidneys,
the Original Qi (Yuan Qi), Jing, and serenity, harmony, and spirituality. (69)
What I would like to suggest is the possibility of a pragmatic combination of auricular
acupuncture and the aforementioned systems of body acupuncture.

3.7 Notes

3. Ibid., p. 232.
4. Ibid., p. 244.
5. Ibid., p. 263.
7. Ibid., pp. 92-93.
9. Ibid., pp. 266-268, 216.
18. Ibid., p. 266.
19. Ibid., p. 257.
20. Ibid., p. 237.
28. Ibid., pp. 246-247, 251-252.
29. Ibid., pp. 268-271.
33. Ibid., pp. 248-250, 257.
37. Ibid., p. 184.
42. Flaws, 2001, p. 22.
44. Larre, 1996, pp. 34-35.
Chapter 4 Conclusion

I began my research of the Western medical concept of ‘sexual addiction’ and of related TCM concepts, dissatisfied with the direct translation of ‘sexual addiction’ in ‘excessive desire,’ this being the most similar concept as it exists in Classic texts such as the Neijing Suwen. Specifically, I found that the term ‘excessive desire’ did not sufficiently allow for the intensity and physically and mentally self-propagating quality of addiction.

By interpreting into TCM concepts the definitive characteristics of sexual addiction according to Western medicine, specifically an uncontrollable desire and a complex behavioral pattern, I
have not been able to formulate a more accurate term for the condition. Certainly, there exists a Mind Unsettled, Yin Fire, an entire array of Vital Substance/ ZangFu patterns of disharmony, excessive emotions, and ultimately a separation from original nature and manifestation of ego through habitual behavior. I am now able to conclude that the TCM concepts explored do allow for a sound explanation for the intensity and the physically and mentally self-propagating quality of sexual addiction. Through this research, I am also now able to begin formulating multi-layered treatment plans for those suffering from the condition.

With regard to my exploration of San Bao, in an attempt to understand at what level sexual addiction originates, at what level it manifests, and at what level it may be treated, I conclude:

- The potential for sexual addiction lies in the Jing, more specifically in Jingshen.
- Sexual addiction manifests on all levels of San Bao. Its initial manifestation is in the Qi.
- Sexual addiction may be treated on all levels (Jing, Qi, and Shen) through initial intervention at the level of Qi.

More important than this rigid categorization is my better understanding of the holism of TCM, through San Bao. San Bao is not a framework for linear thought of cause and effect. Jing, Qi, and Shen are aspects of every element of life, and San Bao is a pattern for considering all things and for understanding the movement of life and pathology.

I am left with the task of developing a more complete diagnosis and treatment plan for sexual addiction in future practice, as well as with the following questions:

- Is sexual addiction a response to a specific emotion? (This aspect is one which I also hope to investigate in future practice.)
- How can sexual addiction be explored in a context of meridian development?
- What is the connection between certain illnesses defined in Western medicine (CVA, temporal epilepsy, frontal brain tumors, Gilles de la Tourette Syndrome, dementia, manic psychosis-related disturbances, and certain metabolic disturbances), Western medications (dopamine agonists), alcohol, recreational drugs and sexual addiction, as interpreted through TCM?

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