

ONLINE SUPPLEMENTAL CONTENT

This supplementary material has been provided by the author to give readers additional information about the article “Soda Industry Influence on Obesity Science and Policy in China,” published in the *Journal of Public Health Policy*. This is an advance copy that consolidates three documents that will be published on January 9, 2019 as separate supplementary online files. – SG 1/7/119

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APPENDIX 1. METHODOLOGY

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I. METHODS USED

This article is based on 4 years of research on the science and policy addressing China’s obesity epidemic (2013-2016). It draws on 2 main sources of data: (1) interviews in China, and (2) semi-annual newsletters from ILSI Focal Point in China (ILSI-China), as well as websites of key organizations and other information available online. During 2015 and 2016, interviews were also conducted with leading obesity specialists in the United States and Western Europe to gather material on the larger context in which developments in China took place. The focus was on developments in the field of global public health, especially concerning obesity. The methods from that set of interviews are not discussed here, since information gained from them provides only background material for this article.

(1) INTERVIEWS IN CHINA

Affiliation

During the period of fieldwork in China (October to December 2013) I was a visiting scholar at the Research Center for Public Health of Tsinghua University.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

The project received a determination of exemption from human subjects research from the Committee on the Use of Human Subjects at Harvard University. That determination was based on the purpose of the interviews, which was to gain an understanding of how science is made in China, rather than the role of the interviewee in that process. Nonetheless, to cover instances in which informants might talk about their own participation, I followed the Committee’s advice and erred on the side of caution by using an informed-consent script. The consent document, which was based on the Committee’s standard script, explained the purpose of the study, informed the interviewee that s/he could skip questions or stop the interview at any time, that participation was voluntary, and that the data would be kept confidential if the interviewee requested. (The consent document is reproduced below; a Chinese-language version was also prepared.) The project was also reviewed and approved by the IRB of Tsinghua University.

Information Sheet

My name is Susan Greenhalgh. I'm a medical anthropologist from Harvard University, and I am asking if you would be willing to take part in my research study. This is a strictly academic study. It has no policy or practical applications. I am interested only in learning more about health research in China. I expect the research to result in one or more academic papers.

I would like to interview you to learn more about nutrition, physical exercise, and obesity research in China. I'm especially interested in how China's concern about the obesity problem has involved cooperation with organizations outside China, and learning from other countries. My hypothesis is that this area of health research is connecting China to the world in new ways. The interview will last between one and two hours. You can skip questions that you do not want to answer or stop the interview at any time.

You are a well-known figure in the field of obesity research and policy in China. If it is ok with you, I would like to use your name in writing up the results of my research. If you so request, however, I will keep all the data I collect confidential and not attach your name to any of the findings.

Participating in this study is voluntary. Please tell me if you do not want to participate.

Here is my business card if you have any questions. Thank you very much for your time and help!

Selection of Expert-Informants

Before beginning fieldwork, I studied the published research available, in China and internationally, on Chinese obesity, focusing on the applied or public health branch of the field. Based on that research, I identified prominent obesity specialists (those with the most articles published in key journals and widely cited) and created a list of people I hoped to interview. During fieldwork in Beijing, I started with that list and interviewed everyone I could locate either directly or through snowball sampling: leaders of ILSI-China and government- and university-based researchers who had been involved in ILSI research projects and/or conferences on obesity. People invariably referred me to the founding director of (and in 2013 senior advisor to) ILSI-China as the only person who could speak authoritatively on this history. I also had brief but illuminating conversations with 2 American scientists who attended a major ILSI-organized conference and were knowledgeable about ILSI work on obesity. The sample thus included the 2 leaders of ILSI-China, 11 government- and university-based researchers who had been involved in ILSI research projects and/or conferences on obesity, and the 2 US scientists. These 15 individuals involved with ILSI-China activities formed the core group of interviewees. I list them below by affiliation and position at the time of the interview.

To gain a broader perspective, 10 other experts were located through snowball sampling and interviewed (also listed below). Five were specialists in nutrition, obesity, and/or public health; these included 3 hospital-based clinicians. Finally, to gain greater understanding of the making of science and the role of industry in that process, I conducted open-ended discussions of varying lengths with people knowledgeable about public health, science, and/or industry-science relations in China today. Most were scholars at Tsinghua, but one was an employee of a foreign public relations firm with in-depth knowledge of corporate strategies for influencing public opinion.

Conduct of Interviews

Interviews with the core interviewees were conducted in the informant's office, with a Chinese research/translation assistant present. The assistant conducted internet research and, where necessary, helped with translation. The interviews were conducted in Chinese, English, or both. All but 2 of the core

interviews were taped (in 1 case the tape recorder was not working). The full interviews (numbers 1-13 and 16-20) ranged from 1 to 4 hours and averaged 2 hours in length (actual length is in parentheses following identification information, below).

Core Interviewees

- (1) Senior Advisor, ILSI-China (2004 until her death in 2018), Founding Director, ILSI-China (1993-2004); formerly Founding President, Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine (1:35)
- (2) Director, ILSI-China (2004-present), Deputy Director, ILSI-China (1993-2004); Senior Research Professor, China National Center for Food Safety Risk Assessment, and Institute for Nutrition and Food Safety, China CDC (1:50)
- (3) Officer, ThinkTank Center for Health Development (2001-present) (1:45)
- (4) Professor, Department of Health Care Epidemiology, School of Public Health, Peking University (3:30)
- (5) Professor, Department of Nutrition and Food Hygiene, School of Public Health, Peking University (2:00)
- (6) Senior Researcher, Institute for Nutrition and Food Safety, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) (1:45)
- (7) Senior Researcher, China Institute of Sport Science, General Administration of Sport of China (1:55)
- (8) Senior Researcher, National Center for Women's and Children's Health, China CDC (1:25)
- (9) Officer, China Nutrition Society (CNS) (3:00)
- (10) Officer, China Nutrition Society; formerly Senior Researcher, Institute for Nutrition and Food Safety, China CDC (1:50)
- (11) Senior Researcher, Nutrition Policy and Education, China branch of a major Euro-American food corporation (1:05)
- (12) Physician and Clinical Nutritionist, Division of Clinical Nutrition, An Zhen Hospital of Capital Medical University (1:40)
- (13) Officer, Institute for Noncommunicable Disease Control and Prevention, Beijing CDC (1:05)
- (14) Officer, U.S. CDC China Country Office (short conversation)
- (15) Officer and Chief Science and Health Officer, The Coca-Cola Company (short conversation)

Other Specialists on Nutrition, Obesity, and/or Public Health

- (16) Senior Researcher, Educator, and Deputy Director, Department of Nutrition, People's Liberation Army General Hospital (1:40)
- (17) Associate Professor, Institute of Biomedicine, School of Medicine, Tsinghua University (1:35)
- (18) Physician, Peking University People's Hospital (1:00)
- (19) Physician, Peking Union Medical University Hospital (3:00)
- (20) Clinical Nutritionist, Beijing Friendship Hospital (4:00)

Other Informants Knowledgeable about Science and Industry-Science Relations in China

- (21) Director, Research Center for Public Health and Professor of Sociology, Tsinghua University (multiple conversations of varying lengths; same for informants 22 to 25)
- (22) Associate Professor, Institute of Science, Technology, and Society, Tsinghua University
- (23) Assistant Professor, Institute of Science, Technology, and Society, Tsinghua University
- (24) Professor, Department of Philosophy, Tsinghua University
- (25) Employee of Beijing-based American public relations company, serving food and other companies

Interview Questions for Core Interviewees

The interviews were semi-structured affairs in which I asked each informant involved in obesity research (1-13, 16-20) a relatively uniform set of questions, then followed up on interesting responses with a few additional questions. For each interviewee, I included a few specific questions based on his or her prior work, which I learned about through extensive internet research prior to the interview. Each interview included about 20 questions, some with sub-questions, grouped into 5 categories (listed below). For clinicians, I included questions on patient perceptions and care. For informants providing contextual information (14-15, 21-25), questions were created to tap into his or her specific expertise.

Categories of Questions for Interviewees Involved in Obesity Research and Policy

- I. Basic Educational and Work History (to confirm information already in hand)
- II. History of Obesity Science in China
- III. Corporate Influence in China's Public Health Field
- IV. Views on the Obesity Epidemic: Measurement and Solutions
- V. State of Development of China's Obesity Science and Policy

Analysis of Interview Data

The interviews were transcribed and translated into English and then analyzed using methods of ethnographic content analysis standard in anthropology. The interview data were coded for key words, main findings, and thematic processes (history and state of obesity science, extent and nature of corporate involvement, obesity policies and policymaking, and so on) and then the data were brought together in a thematic document outlining key quotes, points, themes, and working conclusions that emerged from the interviews.

(2) ILSI FOCAL POINT IN CHINA NEWSLETTERS

To understand trends in obesity-related activities managed by ILSI-China, I performed content analysis of the organization's semiannual newsletters, focusing on the years 1999 (when obesity became an ILSI-China concern) to 2015 (the last year the newsletter was available).

Selection of News Items

I first extracted all the articles on activities concerning obesity or obesity and other chronic diseases in China (conferences, training sessions, media forums, and so forth). In the 34 issues published during 1999-2015, 72 news items (representing 25% of the total of 293) fit that criterion. This process yielded appropriate items for further analysis.

There were 19 more news items that concerned obesity, but that did not describe an additional concrete activity. Instead, those news items provided further information about one of the 72 activities, or they reproduced a scientific article published elsewhere. These news items were not included in the analysis.

Coding of News Items

I first coded the 72 articles on activities for emphasis: physical activity, dietary strategies, neither, or both. The classification of emphasis was based in the first instance on the name of the event, which was usually also the title of the news item. Where the name of the activity included the word "diet" or "nutrition," or the name of a food product or ingredient (e.g., "sweetener"), I categorized it as dietary. Where it included

“physical activity,” “sport,” “Happy 10,” or a similar term, I classified it as emphasizing physical activity. In 92% of the cases, the emphasis was unambiguous.

For the other 8% of activities, whose names or titles did not include any words signaling either of the two strategies, I read the relevant news items closely, paying particular attention to the description of the event’s aim. I categorized them as neither if they focused on measurement issues (rather than intervention strategies) or both if they emphasized exercise and dietary strategies to some extent. All classifications were checked 3 times. Because the categorization was straightforward in the vast majority of cases, it was felt unnecessary to have an independent reviewer redo the classification to check for reproducibility.

Extraction of Other Information

I then created a subset of activities emphasizing physical activity. I mined the relevant news items for information on featured speakers from abroad, corporate speakers, key scientific concepts and conclusions of these speakers and, where available, funding. This information was readily located in the text of the news items.

Connections of International Speakers to ILSI, Coca-Cola, and/or Exercise Is Medicine (EIM)

To determine whether the featured speakers had ties to ILSI-Global, the Coca-Cola Company, and/or the Coca-Cola-funded Exercise Is Medicine program, I conducted Google searches for each speaker. I looked for funding ties or institutional relationships including employment or service as advisor or board member. Such information was easy to locate in professional biographies, curriculum vitae, and similar materials that are available online. To supplement the information on individual professional activities available online, I also consulted ILSI and ILSI-North American annual reports, which contain lists of board members and scientific advisors. Note that this was just a first-order search to determine whether any such connections existed; it was not an exhaustive search aimed at identifying all such connections.

ILSI-China Supporting Companies, 2015: Food Multinationals

The vast majority of ILSI-China’s supporting companies were in the food industry (or had a major division that was). The table below shows the food-industry multinationals (those in the food [and ingredient] production, sales, restaurant, and beverage, but not nutritional supplement business) listed as supporting companies in 2015. The information is drawn from ILSI-Global’s annual report, *ILSI Annual Report: Global Partnerships for a Healthier World, 2015* (Washington, DC: ILSI), p. 14.

Ajinomoto Co., Inc.	Friesland Campina	Mondelez Shanghai Food Corporate Mgt. Co., Ltd. (formerly Kraft)	Rich Products Corp.
Almond Board of CA	Ferrero China	Mars Foods (China) Co., Ltd.	Roquette
Cargill Investments (China) Ltd.	Givaudan Flavours (Shanghai) Ltd.	McDonald's (China) Co., Ltd.	Symrise Shanghai Ltd.

Carrefour (China) Fdn. For Food Safety	Heinz (China) Investment Co., Ltd.	Mead Johnson Pediatric Nutrition Inst. (China)	Tingyi Holding Corp.
Coca-Cola (Shanghai) Beverages Ltd.	Herbalife (China) Health Products Ltd.	Monsanto Biotech Research (Beijing) Co., Ltd.	Unilever China
DuPont Nutrition & Health	Hershey's	Nestle (China) Ltd.	Wrigley Confectionery (China) Ltd.
DANONE China	International Flavors and Fragrances (China) Ltd.	PepsiCo. Asia R&D Center Co., Ltd.	Wyeth Nutritional (China) Ltd.
Fonterra Commercial Trading (Shanghai) Co., Ltd.	Kellogg (Qingdao) Food Co., Ltd.	Red Bull Asian FZE	Yum! Restaurants China

(3) WEB-BASED MATERIALS

Throughout the period of research I monitored a number of websites with relevant information.

At ILSI's headquarters in Washington, DC, there are three organizations relevant to this project, ILSI-Global, the ILSI Research Foundation, and ILSI-North America (one of the 17 branches). The ILSI-Global website has links to the branches and many publications. An ILSI-China webpage, in Chinese, is located on the ILSI-Global site.

<http://ilsi.org/>, <http://ilsichina.org/foreend/index.aspx>

The Coca-Cola Company, especially Coca-Cola Journey, Sustainability page
<http://www.coca-colacompany.com/>

The Coca-Cola Company - Annual corporate responsibility reviews (2005, 2006), sustainability reviews (2007-08 to 2009-10) and reports (2010-11 to 2014-15, 2016).
<http://www.coca-colacompany.com/stories/sustainability-reports>

I monitored the website of China's National Health and Family Planning Commission (before 2013, Ministry of Health) for news items and for developments in policies to address obesity and related chronic diseases. Most important were the pages labeled News Center and Policies.
<http://en.nhfpc.gov.cn/>

I regularly checked the China CDC website for information on the organization and activities of China's CDC, as well as policy developments.
<http://www.chinacdc.cn/en/>

II. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Prepared by Brian D. Segal, PhD.

Table 1 in the text shows an increase in emphasis on physical activity in ILSI-China sponsored obesity activities, from 0% of all activities during 1999-2003 to 60% during 2010-2015. Table A1 below reproduces that table.

Table A1. Counts of ILSI-sponsored obesity activities by emphasis (1999-2015).

	Number of Activities (a)	Nutrition No. (%) (b)	Physical Activity No. (%) (c)	Both No. (%) (d)	Neither No. (%) (e)
1999-2003	12	5 (41.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	7 (58.3)
2004-2009	30	12 (40)	11 (36.7)	5 (16.7)	2 (6.7)
2010-2015	30	7 (23.3)	18 (60)	4 (13.3)	1 (3.3)

To address the question of whether the emphasis on physical activity increased over the years, we combined the number of ILSI-sponsored activities that emphasized “physical activity” only (column c) and “both” physical activity and nutrition (column d) to show all activities with at least some physical activity emphasis. This is shown in Table A2. We then conducted a test of independence on Table A2 as described below.

(1) Physical Activity

Table A2 shows the number of ILSI-China sponsored obesity activities, categorized by whether the activity emphasizes physical activity. The “yes” column is the sum of the “physical activity” and “both” columns of Table A1. The “no” column is the sum of the “nutrition” and “neither” columns of Table A1. Fisher’s exact test of the null of independence of years (rows) and emphasis on physical activity (columns) gives a p -value of 2.8×10^{-5} , indicating that the increase in emphasis on physical activity is highly statistically significant.

Table A2. Counts of ILSI-China sponsored obesity activities that either do or do not emphasize physical activity (1999-2015) (p -value < 0.0001 from Fisher’s exact test)

Years	Emphasizes PA: Yes	Emphasizes PA: No
1999-2003	0	12
2004-2009	16	14
2010-2015	22	8

We then examined trends over sub-periods of time. To determine when the change occurred, we conducted Fisher's exact tests on Tables A3 and A4. The increase in emphasis on physical activity is statistically significant at the 1% level between 1999-2003 and 2004-2009 ($p= 0.0011$), but not between 2004-2009 and 2010-2015 ($p= 0.18$). The increase in obesity activities emphasizing physical activity from 2004-2009 to 2010-2015 (from 53.3% to 73.3%) is, however, noteworthy.

Table A3. Counts of ILSI-China-sponsored obesity activities that either do or do not emphasize physical activity (1999-2009) (p -value= 0.0011 from Fisher's exact test)

Years	Emphasizes PA: Yes	Emphasizes PA: No
1999-2003	0	12
2004-2009	16	14

Table A4. Counts of ILSI-China-sponsored obesity activities that either do or do not emphasize physical activity (2004-2015) (p -value= 0.18 from Fisher's exact test)

Years	Emphasizes PA: Yes	Emphasizes PA: No
2004-2009	16	14
2010-2015	22	8

(2) Nutrition

Table A5 shows the number of ILSI-China sponsored obesity activities, categorized by whether the activity emphasizes nutrition. The “yes” column in Table A5 is the sum of the “nutrition” and “both” columns of Table A1 above, and the “no” column is the sum of the “physical activity” and “neither” columns of Table A1. Fisher's exact test of the null of independence of years (rows) and emphasis on nutrition (columns) gives a p -value of 0.34, indicating that there is not a statistically significant trend in nutrition activities.

Table A5. Counts of ILSI-China sponsored obesity activities that either do or do not emphasize nutrition (1999-2015) (p -value= 0.34 from Fisher's exact test)

Years	Emphasizes Nutrition: Yes	Emphasizes Nutrition: No
1999-2003	5	7
2004-2009	17	13
2010-2015	11	19

Since the overall test was not statistically significant, we did not follow up with sub-table analyses.

Although the decline in obesity activities emphasizing nutrition was not statistically significant overall, the decrease in the proportion of activities emphasizing nutrition between 2004-2009 and 2010-2015 (from 56.7% to 36.7%) is noteworthy.

We conducted all tests with the fisher.test function in R (R Core Team 2017). We note that results with Pearson's Chi-squared tests gave nearly identical results.

Reference

R Core Team. *R: A Language and Environment for Statistical Computing*. R Foundation for Statistical Computing. Vienna, Austria, 2017. [Https://www.R-project.org/](https://www.R-project.org/).

III. STUDY LIMITATIONS

The sensitivity of the issues examined made it difficult to interview some key informants. Officials at the Ministry of Health (in 2013 reorganized and renamed the National Health and Family Planning Commission) did not respond to interview requests. It also proved difficult to talk to scientists associated with the multinational food companies; in the end I managed to interview one person, who requested that the conversation not be audiotaped and his/her name not be used. After August 2015, when the *New York Times* story broke about the Coca-Cola Company paying leading exercise scientists to promote physical activity, it became nearly impossible to interview on this subject. The 3 Americans at the heart of that scandal (Applebaum at Coca-Cola and Blair and Hill in 2 American universities) had all been involved in China's obesity science in 2013. Understandably, they were reluctant to talk to me. One agreed to an interview in late 2015 but kept the conversation vague; the other 2 did not respond to requests for interviews in late 2016. It would have been helpful to learn my Chinese informants' reactions to the findings of this article, but I felt it would be unwise to approach them again.

APPENDIX 2. EXCERPTS FROM INTERVIEWS

This appendix includes key excerpts from the China interviews dealing with topics discussed in the article. To make it easier for readers to locate the relevant quotations, I have organized the material from each interview by topic and included sub-headings to the topic being discussed.

Topic A: ILSI-China Structure, Functioning, and Influence

Topic B: Corporate Involvement: Extent, Benefits, Risks

Topic C: Government Support for Obesity and Chronic Disease Work

The sensitivity of the subject of corporate involvement in Chinese science and policymaking made it important to take every precaution possible to protect informants' identities. This appendix identifies only two individuals, ILSI-China's leaders (founding and current), who alone were able to provide authoritative information on the organization. Excerpts from interviews with these two leaders can be found under (1) and (2). The other informants have been identified only by generic job category (university or government scientist, hospital-based clinical nutritionist, and so forth). They are listed by a number (3 to 14), which links to the citations in the text. Words in brackets are author additions or clarification. Longer explanations are rendered as [au: explanation].

(1) ILSI-CHINA, FOUNDING DIRECTOR (1993-2006) AND SENIOR ADVISOR (2006-2018)

A. ILSI-China Structure, Functioning, and Influence

Q: When and how did ILSI begin?

A: In 1979 [au: 1978] China was contacted by ILSI International's [au: ILSI-Global's] [Dr. Alex] Malaspina, who came to China. During 1979-92, they held 12 training courses, lots of communication with China... I thought it would help to have a branch in China. It was approved by the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine. At that time, international NGOs were not allowed to establish branches in China. So we set up the Focal Point in China. It was not an international NGO; instead, it was affiliated with the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine.

The aim of the larger organization is to bring together or bridge three parties -- industry, government ministries, and the scientific community -- based on science to promote better health. The Chinese branch emphasizes that we do not just hold scientific meetings. Instead, we focus on major public health issues in China, and we put the scientific evidence into policy.

B: Corporate Involvement: Extent, Benefits, Risks

Q: If you look at the ILSI [-Global] website, [you see that] there are lots of member companies that support ILSI.

A: This issue is very important because for ILSI International, there is one major rule, that [corporations] receive no commercial benefit from their association with ILSI. ILSI headquarters has 300 companies that have joined. Companies have conflict of benefits [interests], but if they join ILSI, they cannot do commercial advertising at ILSI meetings. At ILSI events and activities, the companies are not allowed to use their company logo. In 1999, for example, Roche supported the meeting in Beijing, but we were very careful that it should not use its logo. They could have powerpoint [presentations] but they were not allowed to put their logo on them. The experts could only talk about science, never about the [company's] products. This [policy] is very important for the ILSI organization. The whole organization is like that.

ILSI as an organization is very much company-supported. But ILSI Focal Point in China is not a branch, so we cannot have member companies, but we have supporting companies.

Q: What's the difference?

A: Supporting companies are not officially our membership, just supporting. They can join in and go out. At the very beginning, in 1993, ILSI headquarters introduced five companies as supporting companies for ILSI-China. Every year they gave quite a lot of money. Now there are about 38 supporting companies. ILSI-China sets the standards for support; companies can choose to give [one of two amounts]. Companies can choose the level of support they want to provide. Now the money is used for office work. ILSI China is a small organization, with only five full-time staff. The rest are volunteers.

Every year they support [us] with money, and then have the right to come to our meetings and give many recommendations about our future activities. We contact them twice a year, asking them their ideas about

future activities. Then ILSI decides what kind of meeting to hold next.

Because we're an NGO [au: NGO-like organization], we can do everything we like. And the Academy [of Preventive Medicine] has given us so much freedom. We can do whatever we want.

ILSI usually holds five meetings a year on food safety and nutrition. Actually, it's more like eight or nine.

Q: So probably the companies that give more money have more influence [on ILSI's activities]?

A: Yes, yes, yes, the [companies] give regular, routine support money and then if we have [additional] meetings and need further support, we'll contact the companies to ask them if they can support the special meetings. [au: In other words, there are two categories of financial support, routine and special.]

Since 1999, ILSI has held a meeting every other year on obesity. Each has a special theme. December 2013 is the next meeting. ILSI invites international and local experts to participate in presentations and discussions. Our meetings are very special; unlike other societies, we do not just send out a request for abstracts and anyone can come. We have only about 150 participants, with most of them, both presenters and experts, specially invited. [au: In other words, ILSI-China controls who speaks at the meetings.] ILSI normally gets no money from the government.

Q: Which companies are the most important these days, or were at different points in time?

A: Of the 38 supporting companies, most are in the food industry, including some in the flavors industry. There are also some drug companies. The list of members is fairly stable from one year to the next, so you can't say any one corporation is more important than another. They just announce that they will continue their support for ILSI. Some are very small companies; they are still very important.

Q: Are there any that you have worked especially closely with?

A: No, all companies are the same [au: here, espousing the official ILSI view]. Big companies may provide support for some special meetings. [au: In other words, big companies do provide more support.] We will contact them [asking for funding for the extra meetings], but we don't see the 38 companies as having different [degrees of importance].

Q: ILSI has a delicate role to play. You are using money from these [big] companies, but you don't want to be influenced by them. Have there ever been times when the companies have tried to exert influence?

A: No, they don't try to influence us. They are used to it; they know that there won't be any commercial benefit.

Q: Why would a company donate money then?

A: Because they get scientific evidence they can use from ILSI Focal Point [au: for example, to create market plans]. They can report to their boss and say that when we join ILSI-China we can get all these kinds of benefits. But they cannot use the name of ILSI Focal Point [on any of their products or advertising]; that is impossible.

(2) ILSI-CHINA, DEPUTY DIRECTOR (1993-2006) AND DIRECTOR (2006 - PRESENT)

A. *ILSI-China Structure, Functioning, and Influence*

Q: ILSI-China is a really interesting kind of organization. It's a branch of ILSI-Global and is supported by corporations, but it has an office within China CDC. It's a kind of hybrid organization, and this very mixed nature is what seems to give it its power. Are there any other organizations like this in China, or is ILSI-China unique?

A: ILSI-China is unique. It is part of ILSI-Global. Its nature and functions are the same. It is a branch of ILSI-Global, but its features are different. It is an NGO. It is not based in the CDC, but has close relations with CDC. It uses CDC's physical space and human resources. ILSI-China is also unusual because it maintains close relations with the government.

To understand this you need to understand that the CDC is not part of the government; its members are not civil servants. It is a technical unit (*shiyeh danwei*), more like a university or a research institute. But it is under the direct control of the Ministry of Health. This explains how there can be an ILSI-China.

The government has never had any problems with any of ILSI-China's activities. It has had no problem with ILSI's corporate support. It trusts that ILSI leaders will use the support well. You know, there is no criticism of research support by companies in China. The government itself, of course, is not supposed to accept corporate support. But CDC can because it is a professional or technical unit.

Often the government, including the health ministry, encourages industry support for specific projects. To do this, government ministries have set up special international cooperation departments.

B: *Corporate Involvement: Extent, Benefits, Risks*

Q: The field of public health seems to be highly "marketized," with companies supporting conferences, health education activities, and so on. In the early years of obesity research, pharmaceutical companies such as Roche funded some of the research, for example, on BMI cutoff points. Why were they interested in that issue?

A: No, no, we should not use the language of "marketized." It's better to say that we have used resources from all sources, including companies. All ILSI members support all ILSI projects. There is no relation between the support of a particular [ILSI] project and a company's product development or marketing. This is in the ILSI bylaws. [Later he added that] ILSI conferences always use the word "scientific" in the titles to distinguish them from other conferences [au: those run by commercial firms].

The food and drug companies that support ILSI operate in the same way. The Roche case of support for research on BMI cutoffs is an exceptional case [au: a special contribution, not a regular annual fee].

For the last six years the Ministry of Health has had a national campaign on healthy lifestyles. That was the outcome of one of ILSI's obesity conferences. On the last panel, one member, a vice president of China CDC, suggested that there should be a national campaign on healthy lifestyles. Everyone on the panel and in the room agreed. His suggestion was conveyed to the Ministry of Health, which agreed.

That conference was supported by Nestle and Coca-Cola. But no one cared: not the CDC, not the experts, not the university participants, not the government. Scientific conferences such as this have no registration fees – to attract the greatest attendance. (This is unlike most conferences, which charge high fees.) [au: here, pointing out an advantage to corporate funding]

ILSI also coordinates public health projects, for example, those encouraged by UNICEF or WHO. For example, last week WHO asked ILSI to organize a media forum [au: in other words, ILSI doesn't just do company-supported work]. If a company wants [us] to do research [for it], ILSI can coordinate that, too.

C: Government Support for Chronic Disease Work

Q: Has the government paid enough attention to obesity?

A: No, and the Ministry of Health cannot do it alone. It has no support from any of the other ministries, and it is unlikely to get it.

Q: How developed is the field of obesity research in China today?

A: Obesity research is weak. There's virtually nothing going on in the basic science of obesity because there is no funding for it. Where would that come from? There's only the National Natural Science Foundation. China has no National Institutes of Health. Though people are talking about [creating one], it is unlikely to happen for a very long time.

(3) UNIVERSITY OR GOVERNMENT SCIENTIST

A: ILSI Structure, Functioning, and Influence

Q: Can you tell me about the history of obesity science in China?

A: Chen Chunming of ILSI is in charge -- you need to ask her. Before ILSI, Chen was head of the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine. She was very powerful and so able to organize big meetings in this field. ILSI doesn't really fund obesity research. We get support [for it] from corporations. The food companies give support to ILSI. Coca-Cola is maybe doing something on nutrition or obesity with ILSI. They have some work [together].

(4) UNIVERSITY OR GOVERNMENT SCIENTIST

A: ILSI Structure, Functioning, and Influence

Q: How much work was being done on obesity before the late 1990s, when ILSI became involved?

A: There were some people working on obesity, but not too many. Most of the work was done on children, though; there was very little on adults. After ILSI started organizing people to work on it, others continued their work; it was not all done under ILSI sponsorship. Actually, Chen Chunming invited many scientists to join the [obesity research] project because they already had done different surveys on

diabetes, nutrition, and so forth. She pulled together [the surveys they had done] to do some analysis on whether the risk criteria should be changed. She found the problem was serious so then talked to the Ministry of Health, suggesting that ILSI draft guidelines.

Especially the definition of obesity, there was no one doing that. The MOH asked her to prepare the [obesity control and prevention] guidelines; it was very important work.

Q: ILSI-China is a really interesting kind of organization. It belongs to ILSI-Global, so has company support, but it's also located within the China CDC and works closely with the government. This mixed nature is what seems to make it so effective. Are there any other organizations like this in China?

A: ILSI is a very special model. There was a document from the Ministry of Science & Technology [MOST] that said that the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine or a similar institution could have research centers that worked with other countries. ILSI applied to MOST and MOH. That was the early 1990s. There's an important principle when organizing this kind of center: it should not be commercial, it cannot do any advertisement for industry. The companies just donate money, give some financial support, and maybe we can organize symposia on research issues. It is very important to not link the work with any specific products. For example, we can talk about how good it is to drink milk, but not urge people to drink a specific milk product or brand of milk.

ILSI has [close] links to CDC professionals. Because ILSI's leaders were former heads of the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine, they had [good working] relations with people working at the Ministry of Health. So it is unique. Not every institute could work like that. ILSI had natural relations, leadership experience, and also professional links to the scientists.

B: Corporate Involvement: Extent, Benefits, Risks

Q: Given that there's little money available for scientific research on health, corporate support [has advantages]. But are there risks as well? [Showing him a health-promotion flyer with a corporate logo printed at the bottom to make the issue more concrete] What about this company logo on this CDC flyer, for example?

A: This is just what we call educational material. Industry paid to print the material. Because the logo is not related to [does not promote] a specific food, it's ok. For me, I look at this [flyer] and say to myself it's written by the CDC, the company just paid for the printing. Companies always give financial support. But ordinary people, I don't know. Maybe they think, oh, this company is good because its logo is on the [CDC] material.

Q: Are there scholars or researchers who are concerned about the influence of companies on research, the possibility that companies might try to distort or bias the science of public health? [au: I asked this question in several different ways]

A: No, no, there is no criticism of company involvement.

(5) UNIVERSITY OR GOVERNMENT SCIENTIST

A. ILSI-China Structure, Functioning, and Influence

Q: When did the notion of obesity epidemic become widespread in China? Who introduced it?

A: From the late 1990s we started paying attention to the problem of obesity. Although the Ministry of Health is leading this project, the key person actually is Professor Chen Chunming; you should interview her. She used to be a high government official. Since she really cared about this issue, she used [her] academic resources and government connections to draw attention to the issue.

Q: She was a high government official?

A: Her position was comparable to that of a department head (*sizhang, juzhang*). She used to be a *sizhang* in the Ministry of Health and head (*yuanzhang*) of the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine, equivalent to the head of [today's] CDC. So she had a lot of connections and the necessary vision to bring the problem into the spotlight.

Q: We've been studying the Web of Knowledge, the largest academic search engine in China, and discovered a dramatic rise in the number of published papers on obesity in recent years, especially since 2002. How much do you think ILSI contributed to this?

A: At a minimum, on the national level, ILSI was of key importance in policymaking. Of course, there was a lot of research that followed the rise in obesity [in the population], and various kinds of research products. There were also surveys, but ILSI's role there was less substantial. ILSI also directed some [research and intervention] projects.

Q: Did ILSI regularly publish academic papers?

A: They also publish. Because they had Chen Chunming and Chen Junshi, both well-known academics. They also organized projects using ILSI's name, including both international [ones] and [ones from] domestic companies – all sorts.

Q: You said that ILSI's work had to do especially with national policy. Can you say anything more about how ILSI fits into the big picture? Does it do only policy-relevant work?

A: Chen Chunming and Chen Junshi had their own projects, so there were lots of data, including national data. Although they published as scientists, [this work] was supported or organized by ILSI. But you wouldn't find this information on ILSI in their papers, only their names [au: the authors formally belong to another unit]. ILSI-China is special because almost all affiliated people were part-time or [affiliated] in name only. Other papers belonged to other units and were collaborative in nature, such as with the Ministry of Education. ILSI does not support basic research.

Q: Can you estimate what proportion of all published papers [on obesity] have been [written or] supported by ILSI?

A: Not more than 10 percent.

B: Corporate Involvement: Extent, Benefits, Risks

Q: China's public health field also involves lots of cooperation with companies. Could we say that the field is "marketized"?

A: [Interrupting.] This is the first time I heard this term [but it's a fact]. I have participated in meetings for setting national standards, where you can sense that these big companies and multinational companies are here to influence the standards.

Q: Do these companies have any influence on other scholars or CDC officials?

A: Yes, both. Because multinational companies, their work method is to wield influence at every level. It's unavoidable. They won't mention making money, they talk about science and technology. Corporations also invite scholars to investigate (*kaocha*) and to attend academic meetings. This is quite similar to the situation abroad. Their influence is gradual, not direct.

Q: A great deal of research depends on support from companies. Do you think there are risks involved?

A: Definitely. In China, management in this area is not as developed as that abroad. There are no clear demands [i.e., written regulations]. The Chinese way of doing things is rather casual (*suiyi*). I believe that the influence [of the companies] is quite large, affecting one's research results, overall [research] design, data analysis, and so on.

Q: Is there no one concerned about this influence [that is, about the possibility that companies will bias or distort the science]?

A: There are a few, but their voice is very small. It's unlike in the U.S., where there is lots of supervision and it is a very sensitive topic. Very few will complain about company influence on scientific results. People are clearer about [more cognizant of] scholars doing product endorsements; they are not very attentive to possible company influence on researchers.

(6) UNIVERSITY OR GOVERNMENT SCIENTIST

A: ILSI Structure, Organization, and Influence

Q: What kind of organization is ILSI?

A: ILSI is a very loose organization. Usually it doesn't spend much money. The money it has is used to support Chen's meetings of experts. There are a few young people working as assistants, including some from the CDC. ILSI is attached to the CDC, which is an administrative and management organization. It has signed contracts with the CDC for using their offices and people, and it pays CDC for those things.

B: Company Involvement: Extent, Benefits, Risks

Q: Do you know the relationship between food companies and ILSI?

A: I don't know much about this. Coca-Cola is very active [now] in advertising its food as healthy.

(7) UNIVERSITY OR GOVERNMENT SCIENTIST

A. ILSI Structure, Functioning, and Influence

Q: ILSI is an interesting kind of organization. It's supported by various companies but then it's in the CDC. [Can you help me] figure out what kind of organization it is?

A: From my point of view, I feel like I'm not really familiar with how they collaborate with [food] companies. My feeling is that ILSI China has the same system as ILSI [-Global], but in China maybe more experts initially come from the CDC. Experts from outside the system are very few. [That's the reason] ILSI set up its office inside the CDC. As for the specifics, I can't say for sure.

B: Corporate Involvement: Extent, Benefits, Risks

Q: The Coca-Cola Company has [carried out] many projects on health, for example, "balance diet and exercise." [Can you tell us more about them?]

A: Actually, the Ministry of Health has a Healthy Lifestyles for All Action, which I think began in 2007. When I was an expert [with ILSI] I worked for that project so I know it well. This is mainly [the responsibility of] the ministry, [but] Coca-Cola has promoted some projects [as part of the Action] every year.

Q: What about the "walking day" [program]?

A: [Yes] there is propaganda [au: educational materials] [to that effect]. My feeling is that a lot of [the company's] propaganda [au: health promotion materials] and concepts are not bad. I remember there was this [program that if] you walked 10,000 (or some number of) steps, Coke would donate one dollar. Another example is [a project on] walking to meetings: we walk to the meeting in the morning, and in the afternoon, after everyone walks a certain number of steps, Coke would donate money to people with disability or to welfare projects. So in the last five years every year there has been a different theme. This year it is about planning for healthy living or something like that. In any case, every year [Coke promotes] a different theme and participates in some sponsorship activities.

A: Coca-cola has a [Health] Incentive Plan Activity that is part of the official Healthy Lifestyles for All Action of 2007. Coke's materials are good. The company has good ideas and good mottos, such as "walk ten thousand steps, earn a dollar." Then Coke gives the money to disabled people or to social welfare agencies.

Q: Are there any other companies that have supported physical exercise?

A: From our system, no, not that much.

Q: How does Coke's support benefit the company?

A: I don't know. Maybe from the international system, international food companies [are expected to] do some health promotion. Nowadays these food companies have [corporate social] responsibility; this

seems to be the international trend. As for the specifics, I'm not very clear.

(8) UNIVERSITY OR GOVERNMENT SCIENTIST

B: Corporate Involvement: Extent, Benefits, Risks

Q: In the last five years or so, food corporations have been really active in supporting work on nutrition and obesity in China. How does this work?

A: Yes, there's lots of cooperation between scientific institutes and food companies. As you know, [government funding] for scientific research is still not adequate. Corporate funding has substituted for government research funding. Some companies work with scientific bodies, such as the China Nutrition Society. They usually create foundations [au: that scholars can apply to for research support]. The CDC has a collaboration with Nestle in health education, the Healthy Kids program. It's a kind of global health education program. It's developed health educational materials for students, the target population, and provided funds for running the program. Nestle has also supported basic scientific research -- for example, on iron metabolism, absorption rate -- using advanced technologies. Nestle also has an international foundation that Chinese researchers can apply to for support.

Q: Which companies are the most active in supporting this kind of work?

A: Probably Nestle, then Coca-Cola. For example, Coca-Cola has supported the Health Incentive Plan, working with the Department of Disease Control at the MOH. Each year it works in a different area, such as nutrition, physical activity, stroke, or hypertension.

Q: How do companies profit from this kind of activity?

A: There is no profit, but it is good for their reputation; it shows they are responsible companies. You can find [discussion of] that in WHO documents. Actually, each year, companies give a lot of money for public benefit. For example, they've built schools, including the Hope Schools in the rural areas, and provided equipment for school cafeterias. It's a kind of return to society.

Q: In the U.S., large food and drug companies have been influential in shaping things like nutritional standards and cutoff points. Has there been a problem [of this sort] in China? Have you seen corporations trying to influence any of the scientific findings?

A: From my experience, I'd say no, because the research is independent even when supported by the food companies. Researchers don't have direct contact with the companies; instead they apply for funding through the scientific bodies. Companies' comments and suggestions are welcomed in the development of food and nutritional standards, though. Here they have influence.

(9) UNIVERSITY OR GOVERNMENT SCIENTIST

B: Corporate Involvement: Extent, Benefits, Risks

Q: For many years now, the WHO has encouraged multi-stakeholder partnerships in the field of public health. The Chinese government too has encouraged companies to work on public health.

A: That's right [he then elaborates].

Q: Are there any government regulations on how [organizations] can use company money?

A: No, there are no government regulations on any of this. People do what they feel most comfortable with. But if you do not [do it] right, people will criticize and the committee will criticize, so the person [au: leader] must be careful and consult with the whole committee about the decision. It's not a personal decision.

Q: Others have told us that in China there is little criticism of corporate support for scientific research in public health, that this is not an issue. Do you agree with that?

A: Yes, that's right, it's not an issue. The assumption is that they have the rules [au: on no advertising of company products] and the company will do the right thing. The company will support a meeting and the committee will put the company's name on the [display] board, that's all.

Q: My impression is that company influence in China's public health now is extensive, with companies writing papers and paying academics to publish them under their name.

A: Things are different now from in the past. It's impossible to say no [to corporate support]. I believe that [a leader of a research center] must focus all his energy and activities on the science. When one takes money from companies, it sometimes affects the scientific character of the work.

C: Government Support for Chronic Disease Work

Q: What would you say is the state of development of nutritional science today? What is the biggest problem now?

A: On the public health side, China is ok. There's been lots of research and applied work to solve public health problems. But for the basic research, it is still very weak. The government has funds for basic research [from the Natural Science Foundation] but it's not for our field. No one gets money from China's Natural Science Foundation for public health.

(10) SCIENTIST BASED IN MULTINATIONAL FOOD COMPANY

A: ILSI Structure, Functioning, and Influence

Q: You serve on a committee of ILSI-China. What activities does that engage in?

A: Yes, I am a member. ILSI is very scientific and neutral (*zhongli*). It provides scientific evidence to the government. My company supports the [bi-annual] obesity conferences. It supports education and research. ILSI-China's supporting companies are mostly food companies; every year ILSI gets a fee from

each one.

Q: How does ILSI keep the companies from influencing the science?

A: [Impatiently] I don't know; ask ILSI! ILSI can only use the company name. No company products can be introduced at ILSI activities.

(11) HOSPITAL-BASED CLINICAL NUTRITIONIST

B: Corporate Involvement: Extent, Benefits, Risks

Q: [This follows a longer conversation about the activities of food companies in China's nutrition and public health field.] Some companies approach doctors and ask them to accept their products and recommend them to patients. Have you been bothered by this kind of thing?

A: Like recently, we've been very aware of a lot of nutritional products (*baojian pin*). I like the big companies because there is a guarantee in [product] quality as well as academic quality. They are careful [with the production] of every product. So, when I let my patients take them, I feel secure, I feel comfortable inside. We're different from salespeople. Salespeople are selling to make money [whereas] we are using products to achieve results. But what irritates me? Only talking about the positive features. Small companies when they come to sell things, and can't match [our standards], that's very annoying.

Q: So big companies will come to talk [to you]?

A: When we hold big meetings, big companies will have their own exhibitions and displays. You can go learn about [their products]. We absorb a lot of experience and knowledge from them [those displays].

Q: The China Nutrition Society helps create nutrition standards. Do you have an opinion on [the practice of] companies participating in [setting] scientific standards?

A: I think we must support company participation in standards making. Actually, a lot of companies have contributed a good deal of academic knowledge. They've brought standards from abroad and done a good job of communicating. But they haven't dominated the [process], they've just provided some financial support.

Q: Are you familiar with the specifics of their participation in setting standards?

A: Not really.

(12) HOSPITAL-BASED CLINICAL NUTRITIONIST

B: Corporate Involvement: Extent, Benefits, Risks

Q: [You write a popular blog on nutrition. From where you stand, how big a role do the food companies play in providing nutritional information?]

A: A lot of money for public health education [on nutrition, for example] comes from corporations.

Q: Do you worry about that?

A: It is neither good nor bad.

Q: [What about corporate support for research? Is that regulated?]

A: The China Nutrition Society has to rely on corporate support [for research], since government support is lacking. There are few regulations [on the use of corporate money] in the medical field. It's chaotic. There are few regulations about corporate support for [scientific] associations, how they should use the money, where their money should come from, or what they should tell the public. In 2013, the government started to regulate these things [after the GlaxoSmithKline scandal]. There is no regulation on financial support for daily work activities of the association. [Organizations] must decide by themselves.

Q: Some multinational food companies, such as Coke and KFC, participate in the activities of the [government's] Healthy Lifestyles for All Campaign. Why?

A: I've had some encounters with them. I feel that Coca-Cola, say, mainly [talks] about balancing eating with exercise. For example, [it says that although] Coke has a lot of calories, if you exercise, you can burn them off [in other words, eat more and exercise more]. This is just my experience. Also, Coca-Cola has sponsored many surveys on weight among young people. I saw data showing that among college students there is a large thin female population. This is good news for Coca-Cola. [which says that Coke is fine for thin, underweight girls, who not need to worry about weight.]

KFC has more collaborations with the China Nutrition Society, mainly to develop more foods [that fit the national tastebud]. For the KFC items – like its chicken – that satisfy the dietary standards requirements, the company prints the Nutrition Society's table on their food trays [on the placemat under the plate, where customers don't necessarily see it]. I have a lot of posts [on my blog] criticizing KFC and McDonalds. But if they really improve, I am willing to write about that. But the standards cannot be too high; they are fast food companies, after all.

(13) BIOETHICS SCHOLAR

B: Corporate Influence: Extent, Benefits, Risks

Q: What are the ethical implications of corporate involvement in public health work in China? Is that problematic?

A: [Hesitates, then replies] Everyone needs [to make] money from the market.

(14) EMPLOYEE OF FOREIGN PUBLIC RELATIONS COMPANY

B: Corporate Influence: Extent, Benefits, Risks

Q: [You worked in a large American PR firm for five years. What did you learn about company efforts to influence official food and dietary standards?]

A: It is normal for [multinational] companies to try to influence [health, dietary, and other] standards. Big companies hire a Public Relations company... The PR companies have government relations departments responsible for communicating with government regulators. They propose suggestions for regulators. The government does not have much experience with regulating the market, and there are so many products. It needs foreign corporations to teach it about regulations: which ones work, and so on. The government welcomes company advice on standards.

Q: How does the government control the influence of corporate bias?

A: Regulators should judge on their own.

Q: What about bribery?

A: I just don't know of such cases.

TABLE: KEY QUOTATIONS FROM INTERVIEWS

Panel A. Theme 1: ILSI-China: Structure, Functioning, and Influence

Subtheme	Exemplary Quotes, with Interviewee Number
ILSI-China Structure and Functioning	1a. "The aim of the larger [ILSI] organization is to bring together... three parties -- industry, government ministries, and the scientific community -- based on science to promote better health. The Chinese branch emphasizes that we do not just hold scientific meetings. Instead, we focus on major public health issues... and we put the scientific evidence into policy." (1)

	<p>1b. “ILSI as an organization is very much company-supported. But ILSI Focal Point in China is not a branch, so we cannot have member companies, but we have supporting companies. ILSI-China sets the standards for support; [and] companies can choose to give [one of two amounts]... Now the money is used for office work. Every year they support [us] with money, and then have the right to come to our meetings and give many recommendations about our future activities. We contact them twice a year, asking them their ideas about future activities. Then ILSI decides what kind of meeting to hold next.” (1)</p> <p>1c. “Because we’re an NGO [-like organization] we can do everything we like. And the Academy [of Preventive Medicine] has given us so much freedom. We can do whatever we want.” (1)</p> <p>1d. [Asked whether companies that give more money have more influence] “Yes, the [companies] give regular, routine support money and then if we have [additional] meetings and need further support, we’ll contact the companies.” [au: In other words, there are two categories of financial support, routine and special.] (1)</p> <p>1e. “ILSI normally gets no money from the government.” (1)</p>
	<p>1f. “Our meetings are very special; unlike other societies, we do not just send out a request for abstracts and anyone can come. We have only about 150 participants, with most of them, both presenters and experts, specially invited.” [au: In other words, ILSI-China controls who speaks at the meetings.] (1)</p>

	<p>1g. “ILSI-China is unique. It is part of ILSI-Global. Its nature and functions are the same but its features are different... It is not based in the CDC, but has close relations with CDC. It uses CDC’s physical space and human resources. ILSI-China is also unusual because it maintains close relations with the government.” (2)</p> <p>1h. [Beyond organizing company-funded scientific activities] “ILSI also coordinates public health projects, for example, those encouraged by UNICEF or WHO... If a company wants [us] to do research [for it], ILSI can coordinate that, too.” (2)</p>
	<p>1i. “From my point of view, I feel like I’m not really familiar with how [ILSI-China] collaborates with [food] companies. My feeling is that ILSI-China has the same system as ILSI [Global], but in China perhaps more experts initially come from the CDC. [That’s the reason] ILSI set up its office inside the CDC. As for the specifics, I can’t say for sure.” (7)</p>
ILSI-China Influence	<p>2a. “Chen Chunming of ILSI is in charge [of obesity work in China]-- you need to ask her [about that]. Before ILSI, Chen was head of the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine. She was very powerful and so able to organize big meetings in this field.” (3)</p>
	<p>2b. “ILSI is a very special model... Because ILSI’s leaders were former heads of the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine, they had [good working] relations with people working at the Ministry of Health. So it is unique. Not every institute could work like that. ILSI had natural relations, leadership experience, and also professional links to the scientists.” (4)</p>

	<p>2c. “[Before the late 1990s, when ILSI became involved] there were some people working on obesity, but not too many. Most of the work was done on children, though; there was very little on adults... Chen Chunming invited many scientists to join the [obesity research] project.. She pulled together [the surveys they had done] to do some analysis on whether the risk criteria should be changed. She found the problem was serious so then talked to the Ministry of Health, suggesting that ILSI draft guidelines. Especially the definition of obesity, there was no one doing that. The MOH asked her to prepare the [obesity control and prevention] guidelines; it was very important work.” (4)</p>
	<p>2d. “From the late 1990s we started paying attention to the problem of obesity. Although the Ministry of Health is leading this project, the key person actually is Professor Chen Chunming... She used to be a high government official. Since she really cared about this issue, she used [her] academic resources and government connections to draw attention to the issue... She had a lot of connections and the necessary vision to bring the problem into the spotlight.” (5)</p>

2e. “At a minimum, on the national level, ILSI was of key importance in policymaking. Of course, there was a lot of research that followed the rise in obesity [in the population], and various kinds of research products. There were also surveys, but ILSI’s role there was less substantial.” (5)

2f. “They also publish. Because they had Chen Chunming and Chen Junshi, both well-known academics. They also organized projects using ILSI’s name, including both international [ones] and [ones from] domestic companies – all sorts. Although they published as scientists, [this work] was supported or organized by ILSI. But you wouldn’t find this information on ILSI in their papers, only their names. [au: The authors formally belong to another unit.] ILSI-China is special because almost all affiliated people were part-time or [affiliated] in name only... ILSI does not support basic research. Not more than 10 percent [of all published papers on obesity are written or supported by ILSI].” (5)

Panel B. Theme 2: Corporate Involvement: Extent, Benefits, Risks

Subtheme	Exemplary Quotes
Extent of Corporate Involvement	<p>3a. “This is the first time I heard this term [public health field as “marketized”] [but it’s a fact]. I have participated in meetings for setting national standards, where you can sense that these big companies and multinational companies are here to influence the standards.” (5)</p> <p>3b. “Yes, [companies have influence on] both [scholars and CDC officials]. Because multinational companies, their work method is to wield influence at every level. It’s unavoidable. They won’t mention making money, they talk about science and technology. Corporations also invite scholars to inspect (<i>kaocha</i>) and to attend academic meetings. This is quite similar to the situation abroad. Their influence is gradual, not direct.” (5)</p>
	<p>3c. “The Ministry of Health has a Healthy Lifestyles for All Action, which I think began in 2007. I worked for that project so I know it well. This is mainly [the responsibility of] the [health] ministry, [but] Coca-Cola has promoted some projects [as part of the Action] every year. I remember there was this [program that if] you walked 10,000 (or some number of) steps, Coke would donate one dollar... to people with disability or to welfare projects. So in the last five years every year there has been a different theme... [To my knowledge, besides Coke] there are no other companies that have supported physical exercise.” (7)</p>

	<p>3d. “There’s lots of cooperation between scientific institutes and food companies. As you know, [government funding] for scientific research is still not adequate. Corporate funding has substituted for government research funding. Some companies work with scientific bodies, such as the China Nutrition Society. [Asked whether companies are trying to influence the scientific findings] No, because the research is independent even when supported by the food companies... Companies’ comments and suggestions are welcomed in the development of food and nutritional standards, though. Here they have influence.” (8)</p>
	<p>3e. “Things are different now from in the past. It’s impossible to say no [to corporate support]. I believe that [a leader of a research center] must focus all his energy and activities on the science. When one takes money from companies, it sometimes it affects the scientific character of the work.” (9).</p>
	<p>3f. “It is normal for [multinational] companies to try to influence [health, dietary, and other] standards. Big companies hire a Public Relations company... The PR companies have government relations departments... [which] propose suggestions for regulators. The government does not have much experience with regulating the market, and there are so many products. It needs foreign corporations to teach it about regulations: which ones work, and so on. The government welcomes company advice on standards.” (14)</p>

Benefits of Corporate Involvement	<p>4a. “My feeling is that a lot of [the company’s] propaganda [au: health promotion materials] and concepts are not bad. Coca-Cola has a [Health] Incentive Plan Activity that is part of the official Healthy Lifestyles for All Action of 2007. Coke’s materials are good. The company has good ideas and good mottos, such as “walk ten thousand steps, earn a dollar.” Then Coke gives the money to disabled people or to social welfare agencies.” (7)</p>
	<p>4b. “The CDC has a collaboration with Nestle in health education, the Healthy Kids program... Nestle has also supported basic scientific research... using advanced technologies. Nestle also has an international foundation that Chinese researchers can apply to for support. Probably Nestle, then Coca-Cola [are the most active]. For example, Coca-Cola has supported the Health Incentive Plan, working with the... Ministry of Health. Each year it works in a different area, such as nutrition, physical activity, stroke, or hypertension. There is no profit, but it is good for their reputation; it shows they are responsible companies... Actually, each year, companies give a lot of money for public benefit... It’s a kind of return to society.” (8)</p>

	<p>4c. “I like the big companies because there is a guarantee in [product] quality as well as academic quality. They are careful [with the production] of every product. So, when I let my patients take them, I feel secure, I feel comfortable inside... But what irritates me?... Small companies when they come to sell things, and can’t match [our standards], that’s very annoying.” (11)</p> <p>4d. “When we hold big meetings, big companies will have their own exhibitions and displays. You can go learn about [their products]. We absorb a lot of experience and knowledge from them [those displays].” (11)</p> <p>4e. “I think we must support company participation in standards making. Actually, a lot of companies have contributed a good deal of academic knowledge. They’ve brought standards from abroad and done a good job of communicating. But they haven’t dominated the [process], they’ve just provided some financial support.” (11)</p>
(Perceived) Risks of Corporate Involvement; Risk Management Practices	<p>5a. “This issue [of corporate support] is very important because for ILSI international, there is one major rule, that [corporations] receive no commercial benefit from their association with ILSI... Companies have conflict of benefits, but if they join ILSI, they cannot do commercial advertising at ILSI meetings... The companies are not allowed to use their company logo... The experts could only talk about science, never about the [company’s] products... [The supporting companies] don’t try to influence us. They are used to it; they know that there won’t be any commercial benefit. [They give money because] they get scientific evidence they can use.” (1)</p>

	<p>5b. “We have used resources from all sources, including companies. All ILSI members support all ILSI projects. There is no relation between the support of a particular [ILSI] project and a company’s product development or marketing. This is in the ILSI bylaws... ILSI conferences always use the word “scientific” in the titles to distinguish them from other conferences [au: those run by commercial firms].” (2)</p> <p>5c. “The Ministry of Health has had a national campaign on healthy lifestyles. That was the outcome of one of ILSI’s obesity conferences... That conference was supported by Nestle and Coca-Cola. But no one cared: not the CDC, not the experts, not the university participants, not the government.” (2)</p>
	<p>5d. “There’s an important principle when organizing this kind of center: it should not be commercial, it cannot do any advertisement for industry... It is very important to not link the work with any specific products.” (4)</p>
	<p>5e. “No, there is no criticism of company [influence on research].”(4)</p>

	<p>5f. “Definitely [there are risks entailed by corporate support of research]. In China, management in this area is not as developed as that abroad. There are no clear demands [i.e., written regulations]. The Chinese way of doing things is rather casual. I believe that the influence [of the companies] is quite large, affecting one’s research results, overall [research] design, data analysis, and so on.” (5)</p> <p>5g. “There are a few [people who are concerned about the possibility that the science will be distorted], but their voice is very small. It’s unlike in the U.S., where there is lots of supervision and it is a very sensitive topic. Very few will complain about company influence on scientific results. People are clearer about [i.e., more cognizant of] scholars doing product endorsements; they are not very attentive to possible company influence on researchers.” (5)</p>
	<p>5h. “That’s right, [the government has encouraged companies to work on public health]... There are no government regulations on any of this. People do what they feel most comfortable with. But if you do not [do it] right, people will criticize.” (9)</p>
	<p>5i. [Asked whether corporate support for scientific research is not an issue] “Yes, that’s right, it is not an issue. The assumption is that they have the rules [au: on no advertising of company products] and the company will do the right thing. The company will support a meeting and the committee will put the company’s name on the [display] board, that’s all.” (9)</p>
	<p>5j. [Asked how ILSI keeps the companies from influencing the science] “I don’t know, ask ILSI! ILSI can only use the company name. No company products can be introduced at ILSI activities.” (10)</p>

	5k. “A lot of money for public health education [on nutrition, for example] comes from corporations. It is neither good nor bad.” (12)
	5l. “The China Nutrition Society has to rely on corporate support [for research], since government support is lacking. There are few regulations [on the use of corporate money] in the medical field. It’s chaotic. There are few regulations about corporate support for associations, how they should use the money, where their money should come from, or what they should tell the public... [Organizations] must decide by themselves.” (12)
	5m. [Asked about the ethical implications of corporate involvement in public health work] “Everyone needs [to make] money from the market.” (13)
<p>Notes:</p> <p>This table contains key quotes from the interviews with Chinese public health specialists that support points presented in the article. For longer quotations, see online Supplemental Content, Appendix 2, Excerpts from Interviews. Words in [brackets] are author additions for clarification.</p>	