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Insistence among family and friends in Quiteño

Spanish: From connectedness to empowerment?

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Abstract

Drawing on sociopragmatics and some ethnographic work in communication studies, in this paper I examine the occurrence of insistence in interactions among family and friends in middle-class Quiteño society (Ecuador) in relation to suggestions, offers and invitations. I interpret insistence in these contexts as a marker of affiliation through which an interpersonal ideology of connectedness (cf. Fitch, 1998) is recreated. However, I find that there is some generational variation in the use of this practice. I suggest that this may be an indication of a possible shift in interpersonal ideology –from connectedness towards empowerment– gradually taking place in middle-class Quiteño society.

Introduction

This study explores the practice of insisting among family and friends in middle-class Quiteño society with respect to suggestions, invitations (including invitations to stay on at leave-taking) and offers. These are convivial actions (Leech, 1983), normally aimed at enhancing interpersonal relations.

Building mainly on studies in sociopragmatics and some ethnographic work in communication, this study examines instances of insistence by means of which caring and hospitality are conveyed as markers of affiliation that recreate an interpersonal ideology of connectedness (Fitch, 1990/1991, 1994, 1998, 2007; Fitch and Sanders, 1994). However, the study identifies some generational variation in the use of this practice. It is suggested that this

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could be interpreted as a possible shift in interpersonal ideology –from connectedness towards empowerment– gradually taking place in middle-class Quiteño society.

The paper, which can be read in conjunction with Placencia (2008a) where responses to (anticipated) insistence and other directives in the same sociocultural context are examined, is organized as follows: in the first section below, I briefly consider how insistence has been dealt with from a number of perspectives; next, I consider the extent to which insisting may be regarded as culturally appropriate behaviour, with reference to studies in the Spanish-speaking world in particular. I then provide a brief description of the data employed followed by an examination of insistence in Quiteño Spanish with respect to suggestions and invitations, offers of food and drink, and (invitations to stay on at) leave-taking from social gatherings.

Background

Insistence as a speech activity

Insisting is a commonplace speech activity that has been examined from various different perspectives. From a speech act theory perspective, the type of insisting considered in the present study would belong to the class of directives in that it involves getting others to do something.²

Within this perspective, Vanderveken (1990) defines insisting as directing in a ‘persistent way’, that is, through a ‘mode of achievement’ that ‘increases the degree of strength’ of the action in question (p. 193).

Insisting has also been aptly described as a *reactive* action by definition (Hundsnurscher, 1981) in that it occurs after the initial action is rejected or not taken up verbally or nonverbally, and it is an indication that the producer of the initiative action ‘is not going to abandon his goal’ (p. 349). The initial action can be a range of activities with a directive component including suggestions, invitations and offers, as in the present study. It can happen not only over a continuous stretch of talk, but also as an action taken up again over the course of a day or longer, as we shall see below.

Within sociopragmatics, insistence appears in empirical works dealing with (responses to) invitations, invitations to stay on at leave-taking, and other convivial directives. With respect to Spanish, insistence in the context of invitations (including invitations to stay on at leave-taking) is described overall as socially appropriate and even expected behaviour in the sociocultural contexts examined (cf. Puga Larraín, 1997); furthermore, it is associated with particular politeness orientations (e.g. a preference for involvement and solidarity) (cf. García, 1992, 1999; Félix-Brasdefer, 2003, 2006).

Insistence phenomena as embedded in a sociocultural context also figure

in ethnographic studies such as García's (1981) and Fitch's (1990/1991) with reference to leave-taking rituals among Mexican Americans and Colombians, respectively, and in Besemeres and Wierzbicka's (in press) ethnopragmatic study on certain cultural terms in Polish. In Fitch's work, insistence phenomena are examined as an enactment of a particular ideology of interpersonal relations.

Finally, insistence phenomena in English also appear in CA studies under the guise of reoffers / reinvitations or subsequent or modified versions of offers / invitations, etc. (Davidson, 1984, 1990). The focus within these studies is, however, on structural aspects in the formulation of reoffers / reinvitations.

The present study, as indicated earlier, draws mainly on sociopragmatic and ethnographic work.

Appropriateness of insisting

Insisting among adults may be regarded as face-threatening in some sociocultural contexts in that it is a strengthened directive and can be taken as an attempt to curtail the freedom of action of one's interlocutor. Mitigating mechanisms such as indirectness may need to be employed to make insistence more acceptable in such contexts.

The association of directives with face-threat derives, as we know, from Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness model; it is also implicit in Searle's (1975) work on indirect speech acts where indirectness in the realization of directives is equated with politeness. However, as we also know, this association has been questioned by numerous scholars working on politeness and the management of interpersonal relations in different languages and cultures (cf. Wierzbicka, 1985; Blum-Kulka, 1987; Sifianou, 1992; Obeng, 1999, among others).

With respect to the Spanish-speaking world, among others, Fitch (1994, 1998) and Fitch and Sanders (1994), for example, show in their ethnographic study of directives in urban Colombia that direct directives are not necessarily face-threatening, as one would predict from Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) model. Likewise, within sociopragmatics, García (1992, 1999) finds that strong insistence in the issuing of invitations in Peru (1992), Venezuela (1999) and Argentina (2007) is expected and necessary rather than face-threatening. Puga Larraín (1997) suggests something similar for Chile with respect to invitations to stay on at leave-taking. On the other hand, Hernández Flores's (1999) finds that advice, another kind of directive, is freely offered among friends in Spain without presenting a threat to face.

Félix-Brasdefer's (2003) study of the refusing of invitations gives some insight into differences between how insistence is perceived by Americans and by Latin Americans. In role-play interactions between Americans

speaking in Spanish as L2 and Latin Americans, where the latter acted as the inviters, Félix-Brasdefer identified a pattern of invitation-refusal followed by strong insistence on the part of the Latin American participants (see also Félix-Brasdefer, 2006 in the Mexican context). Through verbal reports which followed the role plays, Félix-Brasdefer found that Americans felt uncomfortable about the strong insistence. In fact, he reports that ‘80 percent of the participants said that they felt uncomfortable, impatient, bad, forced, and even corralled by the insistence’ (p. 246).

Insisting is certainly a commonplace activity in English, as suggested for example, by Hundsnurscher’s (1981) discourse model for insisting sequences in relation to a range of speech activities. However, what appears to be subject to cross-cultural variation, as is the case with other directives, is the mode in which the producer of the initial directive attempts to obtain compliance – through mild or strong insistence – and also the extent to which insistence is appropriate with respect to particular social activities. When it comes to convivial actions, no insistence or mild insistence only may be appropriate for some cultural groups that place a high value on autonomy or freedom of action, while strong insistence may be appreciated and even expected in other groups where a high value is placed on the strengthening of interpersonal bonds. Zhu Yunxia and Thompson’s (2000) analysis of a communication breakdown in an intercultural invitation given by a Chinese tutor to an Australian student illustrates the cultural embeddedness of insistence: a repeated invitation by the Chinese inviter is intended to indicate sincerity and hospitality, but interpreted by the Australian invitee as harassment. Readers are also referred to Zhu Hua, Li Wei and Qian Yuan’s (1998) work on insistence in connection with gift offers in Chinese, as well as Besemeres and Wierzbicka’s (in press), referred to earlier, on the related notion of ‘exerting pressure’, associated with the term *żal* in Polish, pressure that outsiders may interpret as some kind of manipulation.

The negative reaction of Americans to strong insistence in Félix-Brasdefer’s (2003) study would be a reflection of Americans’ preference for exercising autonomy in their actions. This would be in line with findings from other studies concerning American English such as Fitch (1994) and Fitch and Sanders’s (1994), referred to above, in relation to the use of directives in Boulder, Colorado, in contrast to Bogota, Colombia. These authors found that Colombians, as opposed to Americans, make wide use of direct forms.³ They interpret these differences, in conjunction with a range of other features, as an orientation among Americans to an ideology of *empowerment*, and among Colombians, to one of *connectedness*.⁴

At the core of the ideology of empowerment would be “an individualistic notion of personhood, in which the basic assumption is a preference for autonomy and self-direction and a subsequent distaste for overt exertion of power over the self by others” (Fitch, 1994, p. 200). Within this ideology,

according to Fitch, “people prefer to make their own decisions, rather than be told what to do” (p. 200) so direct directives are dispreferred.⁵

On the other hand, Fitch’s ideology of connectedness, as it surfaces in her studies, is based on the idea that Colombians function not as autonomous individuals but as sets of bonds (*conjunto de vínculos*). Relationship creates obligations which “outweigh the rights and desires of individuals” (Fitch 1994, p. 203).

A key notion within the ideology of connectedness in Colombia, as described by Fitch, is that of *confianza*, related to closeness and trust and characterized by the minimization of power and distance.⁶ *Confianza* comes with a set of rights and obligations, and allows for behaviour such as direct directives, including the insistence phenomena referred to here, that would be face-threatening where there is no *confianza*.⁷ While Americans and possibly other Anglophone groups may interpret strong insistence as face-threatening behaviour in that they may feel ‘corralled’, insistence appears to have a positive value in the context of *confianza* relations in some Spanish-speaking groups, as the studies that we have seen suggest, and as does the present study to a large extent.

Other works by Hispanists that show the occurrence of behaviour with characteristics of insistence are García (1981) and Fitch’s (1990/1991) ethnographic studies on leave-taking from social gatherings by Mexican Americans in the US and Colombians, respectively. Both authors describe a routine pattern where leave takers are challenged by their hosts when they state their desire to leave, as in the following example:

- 1 Guest: Me voy. I’m leaving.
 - 2 Host 1: ¿Se va? ¿Por qué? You’re leaving? Why?
 - 3 Guest: La tarjetica decía muy claramente que de 7 a 10 y ya son las 10:30. The little card (wedding invitation) said very clearly that (the reception would last) from 7 to 10 and now it’s 10:30.
 - 4 Host 2: Pero qué va... But so what...
- (Fitch, 1990/1991: 211)

Fitch (1990/1991) regards the challenges in this kind of leave-taking routine that she appropriately calls *sal si puedes* (*leave if you can*) (my translation), as a cultural expectation, a kind of “connection” talk through which the Colombian interpersonal ideology of connectedness is enacted. In fact, she suggests that the absence of the host/hostess’s challenges would be considered as a sign of “boredom” or even “antagonism” on the part of the host (Fitch, 1990/1991: 218). Puga Larraín (1997) refers to similar behaviour among Chileans in contrast with Spaniards. She says that in Chile (Santiago), when a guest announces his/her departure (e.g. *me voy yendo* ‘I’m leaving’),

the expectation is that the host / hostess will attempt to keep him a little longer by saying *¿por qué tan temprano?* ‘why so early?’ or *quédate un poquito más* ‘stay a little longer’ (my translation), opening up a negotiation space for the leave-taker to justify his/her departure (p. 87). In Spain (Valencia), on the other hand, there appears not to be such expectation and a common reply to a guest announcing his / her departure would simply be *porque quieres* ‘because you want to’ (p. 87), which acknowledges the person’s freedom of action.

Challenges at leave-taking constitute a sort of insistence that resembles what García (1992) and Félix-Brasdefer (2003), for example, found in relation to invitations, and what transpires in the present study.

Like the leave-taking sequences in García (1981) and Fitch’s (1990/1991) works, insistence sequences in the present study constitute, on the surface, attempts to exert control over the hearer’s actions; however, they seem to be employed to display interest, sincerity and affection and hence, the assurance that the person really cares (*que se preocupa*), thus recreating an ideology of connectedness. That is, this kind of display would constitute one of the ways through which Quiteños enact connectedness, which would be in line with results from some previous studies that highlight Quiteños’ attention to the strengthening of interpersonal bonds among family and friends through the production and repetition of particular actions. For example, in openings and closings of telephone conversations among family and friends (Placencia, 1996, 1997, 2005), particularly among those in the bulge (Wolfson, 1988), Quiteños have been found to produce repeated inquiries about their interlocutors’ wellbeing as well as repeated warrants for closing and terminal exchanges that seem to serve the purpose of emphasizing the interpersonal bonds between the interlocutors.

In short, it is proposed in the present study that the use of insistence in convivial actions among family and friends is a manifestation of an ideology of connectedness that appears to be in operation among urban professionals in Quito. Nevertheless, participant observation and discussions with a range of Quiteño informants have suggested that there is some generational variation in the use of this practice. I propose that this can be interpreted as an indication of a shift in interpersonal ideology gradually taking place in Quiteño middle-class society: a shift from connectedness to autonomy.

Data employed

The study is based on notes from participant observation (cf. Spradley, 1980) during visits of one to two months to Quito from 2004 to 2006, adding to seven months (see also Placencia, 2008a), recordings of authentic conversations, and in-depth informal interviews (cf. Boxer, 1996) with Quiteño men (12) and women (10), between the ages of 28 and 55. The

focus was on professionals from a middle-class, white-mestizo background, the majority of whom had a university degree; however, as suggested in Placencia (2008a), a future study could profitably examine insistence among groups of a different ethnic / social composition.

Observation took place in a range of settings in interactions with close and distant family members and neighbours and friends as well as neighbours' and friends' own circles of family and friends where access was possible. For a future study, however, it would be of interest to obtain access to a larger number of (unrelated) social networks.

Recordings were also made in different settings including everyday visits received from or made by friends and family members, lunch and other invitations, and parties. Permission to make the recordings was sought in advance some times or, at other times, after the event. The recorded data amount to approximately 15 hours of interactions; insistence sequences surfaced in a number of these interactions.

The interviews focussed on interviewees' perception of insistence with convivial actions among family and friends and yielded useful metalanguage (cf. Watts, 2003) on the appropriateness of this speech activity. Instances of naturally occurring insistence episodes were used as a springboard for discussion.

I approach the present study both as a cultural insider and, to some extent, outsider. I grew up in Quito and I was socialized into the behaviour I describe here; however, the long period of residence – over 15 years – I have spent in a different socio-cultural environment – among Londoners – has given me some distance and facilitated my observation of Quiteños' behaviour.

Insisting among family and friends in Quito

In this section, insisting among family and friends in Quito with respect to suggestions, invitations, offers of food and drink and leave-taking from social gatherings is considered.

Insisting with suggestions and invitations

The following is an example of resuggestions in an interaction between two family members, aunt and niece, over two days. A suggestion is first made in turn 1, 1a (*cómprate el calentador ...* 'buy yourself a jogging suit ...'). This suggestion receives a more or less explicit rejection (*es que no necesito* 'I don't need one') in turn 02, 1a, prompting the first resuggestion (turn 02, 1a) and further rejections and resuggestions in 1b and 1c.

(1)

Situation: Diana (42) who lives in another town is visiting and has

mentioned to her aunt (70) that she would like to borrow a jogging suit from one of her cousins who is away at the moment, as she had forgotten to bring one. There is a factory making jogging suits nearby and Diana's aunt suggests they go and buy one.

(1a)

- | | | |
|----------|---|-----------------------|
| 01 Aunt | Cómprate el calentador. Nos vamos a la fábrica y te compras. ⁸
Buy yourself the jogging suit [you want].
We'll go to the factory and you can purchase it. | Suggestion |
| 02 Diana | Es que no necesito.
I don't need one. | Rejection 1 |
| 03 Aunt | Pero te compras. Son baratos; si no quieres, te compras, le usas y me dejas.
But you can buy it. They are cheap; if you don't want it, you can buy it, wear it and leave it with me. | Resuggestion 1 |
| 04 Diana | Es que no necesito.
I don't need one. | Rejection 2 |

The following day:

(1b)

- | | | |
|----------|--|-----------------------|
| 01 Aunt | ... y de los calentadores, nos podemos ir a la fábrica para que te compres uno. No son muy caros.
... and about the jogging suits, we can go to the factory so you can get one. They aren't very expensive. | Resuggestion 2 |
| 02 Diana | no no | Rejection 3 |

Ten minutes later:

(1c)

- | | | |
|----------|--|-----------------------|
| 01 Aunt | Si quieres vamos a comprar el calentador.
If you want to we can go get the jogging suit. | Resuggestion 3 |
| 02 Diana | Comprar lo que no es menester ...
If you buy things you don't need ... [you can expect to get poor] | Rejection 4 |

At first glance, the insistence in this example may be considered face-threatening in that the action goes against Diana's expressed wish not to want to buy a jogging suit; nonetheless, in this context where there is a great deal of *confianza* between aunt and niece, it constitutes a way of showing that Diana's aunt cares and that she is trying to be helpful.

As one of the interviewees that took part in the present study observes, it is common in Quito for older relatives, such as parents or aunts and uncles, to

	come on in come on in sit down	
03 Luis	deje deje no más un ratito no más era don't worry we are here only briefly	Rejection 1
04 Uncle	()	
05 Luis	ya se: ya se levantaron have you have you all just got out of bed	
06 Uncle	sí estábamos (.) si no que se recostó siéntense yes (.) but she went to lie down sit down	Reinvitation 1
07 Luis	vea estamos molestando look we are inconveniencing you	Rejection 2
08 Uncle	qué van a estar molestando ya le llamo no no way I'll go and get her [his wife]	Counter-rejection
	[Uncle comes back a few minutes later]	
09 Uncle	siéntense (.) disculparán no más sit down (.) you'll have to excuse us	Reinvitation 2
10 Luisa	no pues ustedes que estuvieron () not at all you were ()	
	[They sit down]	

In this example, the insistence in turns 02, 06 and 09 is clearly a way of showing hospitality. The guests are 'forced' to give in and sit down.

Insisting with offers of food and drink

The first example we consider here to illustrate insisting with offers of food and drink is the continuation of (3a) above.

(3b)

Situation: After 15 minutes or so of their visit, Luis and Luisa stand up to leave.

01 Uncle	estéense no más stay on do stay on	Suggestion to stay on
02 Aunt	pero por qué por qué se van but why why why are you leaving	Challenge
03 Uncle	tómense una colita have a soft drink	Offer
04 Luis	no hay necesidad [para ()] no need [to()]	Rejection 1
05 Aunt	[tómense una colita algo [have a drink something	Reoffer 1
06 Luisa	no [no ustedes están cansados no [no you're tired	Rejection 2
07 Uncle	[no no qué les pasa [no no what are you thinking	Counter-rejection
08 Luis	no no	Rejection 3
09 Luisa	les interrumpimos en su descanso	Rejection 4

	we disturbed you from your rest	
10 Aunt	no	Counter-rejection
11 Luisa	no (.) vaya vaya a descansar sólo queríamos [saludarles no (.) go go and rest we only wanted to[say hello	Rejection 5 + Suggestion
12 Luis	[sí vaya vaya [yes go go	Resuggestion 1
13 Aunt	gracias no no no thank you no no no	Rejection to suggestion
14 Uncle	que se sirvan () para que have () so that	Reoffer 2
15 Luisa	no no que le vamos a dar el trabajo no no we don't want to give you work	Rejection 6
16 Aunt	muchas gracias gracias yo les agradezco pero me aceptan si quiera una colita (qué pasa!) thanks a lot I'm grateful but you have to accept at least a soft drink (what are you thinking!)	Counter-rejection Reoffer 3
17 Luis	no no pero es mucho trabajo deje no más no no it's too much trouble just leave it	Rejection 6
21 Aunt	no no	Counter-rejection
22 Luis	vea ahorita ya no ha de saber ni dónde están las colas (risas) look right now I don't think you even know where the soft drinks are ((laughter))	Rejection 7
23 Aunt	sabes que eso sí () ((laughter)) about this you are right () ((laughter))	
	[Aunt goes into the kitchen to get their visitors a drink]	

The result of this verbal battle is that Luis and his family seem to have no choice but to stay on for a drink, as they have not come up with an explanation that the host and hostess regard as valid enough to justify their leaving.

This example shows incidentally how insistence can be produced collaboratively, by the two hosts in this case, and how it can be tackled also collaboratively, by the visitors in this example; that is, both hosts and visitors join efforts to achieve their goals. The hosts insist that their visitors stay on (turn 02) and that they be given the opportunity to show some of their hospitality by accepting the drink they are offering (turn 03); they restate their offer in turns 05, 14 and 16 and challenge all the objections presented by their visitors (turns 07, 10, 13, 21). The visitors on the other hand, jointly resist the invitation to stay on and the offer they are made (turns 04, 06, 08, 09, 11, 15, 17, 22). Rejections are carried out forcefully through direct forms (e.g. *no, no*), but accompanied by reasons/suggestions that display

consideration for their hosts (*you are tired, go and get some rest*); nonetheless, as can also be seen, the reasons given are challenged forcefully by their hosts (e.g. to the objection ‘you are tired’, the reply is ‘no, no, what are you thinking!’). A last resort by one of the visitors is a joke (turn 22) about how tired their hosts must be (i.e., they are probably so tired that they cannot even remember where things are!); they all laugh, but the host and hostess win in the end.

After this episode, the visitors are hoping to have their drink and leave; however, their hostess comes back with other plans so a similar, but perhaps slightly fiercer, battle ensues. This episode illustrates once more the occurrence of strong insistence.

- (3c)
- | | | |
|----------|---|-----------------------------|
| 01 Aunt | verán vengo a proponerles una una cosa (.)
look I've come to make a proposal (.)
mejor que cola (.) almorcemos juntos pues
better than a soft drink (.) how about
having lunch together | Invitation |
| 02 Luisa | no | Rejection 1 |
| 03 Aunt | claro pues!
of course of course! | Counter-rejection |
| 04 Luisa | no () | Rejection 2 |
| 05 Aunt | no importa eso
that doesn't matter | Counter-rejection |
| 06 Luisa | no no no | Rejection 3 |
| 07 Aunt | para nosotros es un gusto enorme pues
[tenerles aquí]
for us it's a great pleasure you know
[to have you here] | Counter-rejection |
| 08 Luisa | [nosotros les invitamos allá a ()
vamos!
we invite you to the () let's go! | Counter-invitation 1 |
| 09 Luis | vamos!
let's go! | Counter-invitation 2 |
| 10 Aunt | no yo les invito aquí a que se hagan
aquí la pegadura
no I'm inviting you for you to put up
with our meal | Reinvitation 1 |
| 11 Luisa | no no | Rejection 4 |
| 12 Luis | vea vea Teresita ha de estar cansada
look look Teresita you must be tired | Rejection 5 |
| 13 Uncle | no no se preocupen es cuestión de acomodar un
poquito no más los muebles y todo
don't worry it's a matter of just sorting out
the furniture a little bit and that kind of thing | Counter-rejection |
| 14 Luisa | no vamos a aceptar | Rejection 6 |

- 106 Son no no quiero helado gracias
no thanks I don't want any ice cream
- .
- .
- .
- 118 Mother algo toma algo **Offer 2**
something have something
- 119 Son sí sí ya voy a tomar no se preocupe
yes yes I'll get something in a minute don't trouble
yourself
- 120 Mother unnn he un helado **Offer 3**
an ice ice cream
- 121 Son no gracias no
no thanks I don't want one
- (0.6)
- 122 Mother un trocito de torta toma (.) come [()] **Offer 4**
have a piece^D of cake (.) eat something [()]
- 123 Son [sí ya voy a comer
gracias
[yes I'll have
some in a minute thanks
- 124 Mother aquí tienes el cuchillo
here's a knife
- 125 Son no aquí hay uno
I don't need a knife there's one here
- 126 Mother pero calentarasle mijo (.) muy poquito está ps **Offer 5**
saca otrito
but heat it up my son (.) that's too little get
another piece^D
- 127 Son ((laugther))
- 128 Mother muy poco mijito **(indirect) Offer 6**
too little my son
- 129 Son ya después me p(x) pongo un poco más
I'll g(x) get some more later
- 130 Mother por qué no le calientas?
why don't you heat it up?
- 131 Son no: no me gusta caliente quiere tomar alguna
agua de algo?
no: I don't like it hot would you like something
to drink?
- .
- .
- .

165 Mother saca un trocito grande de torta siquiera (.) **Offer 7**
 esa miga que has sacado
 at least get a large piece of cake (.) what you've
 taken is like a breadcrumb

(5)

Situation: A grandson (28) is visiting his grandmother (70) in the middle of the afternoon and they are sitting at the dining table. He is having a cup of coffee.

.
 .
 .

04 Grandma toma con esas galletas (.) vas a quedar en nada **Offer 1**
 have it with some biscuits you're going to
 'disappear' (out of not eating enough).

(0.5)

05 Grandma come **Offer 2**
 have something

The middle-aged informants in the present study all recognize insistence with food offers as a common practice in family invitations when they were younger and they had to eat what they were offered, out of courtesy, even if they were not hungry or did not like what they were eating. At present, however, they associate this kind of behaviour mostly with elderly relatives (70+). My observations confirm that strong insistence around food offers appears indeed to be restricted to that age group. Some middle-aged men do the insisting, possibly because they often also do the cooking at barbecues, for example. Nonetheless, the insisting observed seems to be milder than what can be seen in (4) or (5) above. The following are some of the forms used, as noted down through participant observation:

(6)

Situation: Barbecue among a group of middle-aged friends. The host addresses his guests:

Cómete un poquito más. / Pero cómete otro poquito.
 Have a little bit more. / But have a little bit more.

Pero repítete un poquito más.
 But help yourself a little bit more.

While imperatives are still used, their force is counteracted by minimization strategies such as the use of *un poco*+ *dim* (*a little* +*dim*) as can be seen in the above examples.

Our interviewees – both young and middle-aged – in fact confirm that at the present time there are fewer restrictions on personal freedom of action than some years ago. This is what two of them say:

Ahora no comes por compromiso sino por libertad. Antes, una comida que no te gustaba tenías que comer pues cómo vas a quedar con las personas. Ahora dices ‘esto no me gusta’.⁹

These days you eat not out of social obligation but free choice. Before, if you didn’t like a meal, you had to eat it any way since the question was ‘what are you going to look like in other people’s eyes’. Nowadays you say ‘I don’t like this’.

(male businessman, 54)

Ahora como que te sientes un poco más libre en tus decisiones.

Nowadays it’s like you feel a little freer in your decisions.

(female bank clerk, 51 years old)

Nonetheless, their freedom of action still appears to be restricted in other contexts for both young and middle-aged people. One of these is when drinking, particularly in the case of men, and another one is when taking leave from social gatherings.

With respect to drinking, all of the male interviewees who participated in the present study talk about the occurrence of insisting that the person drinks in social gatherings such as weddings and christenings. This is what one of them says:

Aquí se da mucho la insistencia a tomar. Socialmente te obligan a tomar. En matrimonios, bautizos, eventos más formales te obligan a tomar: “Toma, tómate”, y te ponen el vaso en la boca.

Here there is a great deal of insistence when drinking (alcohol). Socially, you are forced to drink. At weddings, christenings, and other formal events, you are forced to drink: “Drink, drink this, and they put the glass in your mouth.

They point out that if someone does not want to drink, they have to provide a very convincing explanation, such as that they are undergoing a particular medical treatment. One of professionals interviewed (male engineer, 54) indicated that he once had to show a prescription in order to be ‘exonerated’ from drinking.

This kind of insisting appears to be *una forma de relacionarse* ‘a way of relating to others’, as the same interviewee (male engineer, 54) and another one (male computer analyst, 33) explain, and because of friendship men in particular feel obliged to drink. This is a practice that seems to be associated

with an image of masculinity that some men want to perpetuate and that other men appear to resent:

Yo no tomo y no me siento a gusto quedándome cuando están dedicados a tomar. Si uno no toma, se aburre. Toca escaparse.

I don't drink [alcohol] and I don't enjoy staying on when [people] are dedicated to drinking. If you don't drink, you get bored. You have no choice but to escape.

(male computer analyst, 33)

The association between alcohol consumption and masculinity is no doubt present in many cultures, but it may be enacted differently in different places. This, however, is a consideration beyond the scope of this paper.

Insistence at leave-taking from social gatherings

In (3b) above we saw how people can be challenged when they express their desire to leave a social event. Among friends, insistence to stay on may also be realized by means of a range of utterances through which pressure is exerted upon the leave-taker, as in the following example:

(7)

¡Qué al huevo que eres! ¡No seas mala nota ¡No te vayas!

You're a bore! Don't be a party pooper! Don't go!

As one informant (male computer analyst, 33) put it, the meaning conveyed when insisting at leave-taking is *no te vayas, yo estoy a gusto contigo* 'don't go, I feel good with you / I enjoy your company'.

Other utterances employed normally with men only are the following:

(8)

Quédate un chance más, no seas mandarina.

Stay a little longer, don't let her rule you.

Ya libérate.

It's time you freed yourself.

These examples represent a way of exerting pressure by jokingly accusing the leave-taker of being dominated by his girlfriend / wife. *Mandarina*, literally a mandarin, is an instance of wordplay that comes from *mandar* 'to rule' as in *quién manda en tu casa* 'who wears the trousers in your house'. It is part of teasing behaviour that is common among young and middle-aged Ecuadorian men where women are presented as dominant and referred to as *la ley* (literally, 'the law') and men as weak, letting their wives or girlfriends

rule their lives. Implied in this kind of insistence is the idea that staying on in social gatherings is a way for men to show that they are in charge.

One interviewee observes, however, that the nature of social gatherings among young people at present is changing and therefore the sense of social obligation about staying on may not be as strong. While in the past, parties were with relatives and friends, at present, he claims, they include a mixture of relatives, friends and strangers. Since insisting is a way of showing affection to people one is close to, then it is unlikely to occur in the presence of strangers or mere acquaintances.

Another interviewee (male engineer, 52) alludes to norms of particular communities of practice. He explains, for example, that in social gatherings among the military, no one is expected to leave until their commanding officer leaves; in other words, insistence may not even arise in some contexts.

On the other hand, new practices seem to have emerged in recent years in response to current socioeconomic conditions in Quito/Ecuador. For safety reasons, for example, some people (women in particular) plan to leave a social gathering in groups at a certain time, and therefore there is less insistence.

The instances of insistence we have considered so far are verbal forms; however, we have also identified nonverbal means of getting people to stay on, which, interestingly, represent *literal* restrictions of freedom of action. These include hiding guests' coats and locking front doors. This kind of nonverbal insistence, is a literal *sal-si-puedes* (see Fitch, 1990/1991, above) game through which connection appears to be enacted. Hosts wish for the party or gathering to continue and not to flag, and since enjoyment comes from the company of others, guests are urged or may be 'forced' to stay on.

The following is an account by a 54 year-old professional who in 2005 attended a pre-Christmas *Novena* social gathering with his family, where he and his family found it very difficult to leave:

(9)

En Navidad aquí se reza la Novena ... y se acostumbra invitar. Normalmente es entre familia pero a veces van amigos también. Para esto, una prima nos invitó para un día, creo que para el 18. Y pero coincidentalmente unos amigos, los Xs también hacen la novena en diferente casa. Y justo para ese mismo 18, la hermana y la mamá de nuestro amigo hicieron en su casa y nos invitaron, que no faltemos. Y pues, les dijimos que claro, con todo gusto pero que sólo hemos de ir un rato porque tenemos la otra invitación. Y pues, muy bien, fuimos y estábamos con unas buenas chompas todos los cinco, con T [su mujer] y nuestros tres hijos. Dejamos las chompas en la percha a la entrada, atrás de la puerta y participamos de la novena cantando, rezando y después sirvieron la comida, unos platos ricos, pero enseguida de eso ya nos dispusimos a ir a salir, para alcanzar a ir donde nuestra prima. Entonces nos despedimos de la hija y madre que nos invitaron y pues nos dijeron que no, que imposible, que cómo nos vamos a ir, que recién se acaba la novena, que cómo vamos a hacer la del

indio, indio comido indio ido.¹⁰ Total, bueno les explicamos que ya les habíamos anticipado que íbamos a salir pronto pero dijeron ‘no, no’, que nos quedemos un rato más, que vamos a cantar otras canciones, que nos tomemos un trago. Entonces dijimos que no, que era imposible, que ya estamos atrasados de la otra invitación y no entendieron: que no, que nos quedemos. Así es que sin recibir la aprobación de las despedidas, nos dijimos entre nosotros, ‘bueno, ya vamos no más’, y con señas nos despedimos del resto, y total al salir no estaban nuestras chompas. Preguntamos que dónde están las chompas. Nos dijeron que no saben, que nadie ha cogido. Así que nos pusimos a buscar. Sabíamos que nos habían escondido para que no nos fuéramos. Y total que cada cual fue a un dormitorio, a buscar en los closets y tras de una buena búsqueda, finalmente aparecieron las chompas. Y ya, muy sonrientes, nos pusimos las chompas y entramos nuevamente a la sala para decir que ya encontramos las chompas y que nos íbamos. Entonces nuevamente nos despedimos y el rato de querer salir nos encontramos con que estaba la puerta con llave. Así que comenzamos a preguntar, a pedir que nos abran y nadie sabía donde estaba esa llave, ni la empleada ni la mamá ni la hija; nadie sabía nada de la llave. Y nosotros ya desesperados –ya estábamos media hora tratando de salir– hasta que por ahí alguien se compadeció y nos dijo que por ahí estaba la llave y pudimos salir e irnos al otro compromiso. Dijimos ni más pero igual la siguiente vez, el año pasado, nos pasó algo parecido con ellos mismos.

Summary: X and his family had agreed to accept M and Y’s invitation for a Novena prayer and social gathering, but had informed the people who invited them that they would come and stay for a short while only owing to another commitment. They came and when they wanted to leave the gathering, they were met with a great deal of verbal insistence and were not able to leave. They then planned to ‘escape’ but the first obstacle was to find the jackets they had left in the hallway, at the entrance of the house. The jackets had been hidden away. After a prolonged search of the house, they found them; however, when they tried to leave, they found the door locked. They asked for someone to open it but the key ‘could not’ be found. In the end, someone felt sorry for them, ‘found’ the key and opened the door. X and his family swore never to attend another invitation at this house, but a year later they did, and the same situation arose. They continue to be good friends with their *Novena* hosts.

This kind of non-verbal insistence, which appears in other accounts provided by the interviewees in the present study, goes beyond the leave-taking ritual that Fitch (1990/1991) or García (1981) describe for Colombians and Mexican-Americans in the US, respectively. It is a literal *sal-si-puedes* (*leave if you can*), as we have said, through which connection seems to be enacted. As with other forms of insistence considered here, it is possible by virtue of the type of long-standing *confianza* relation obtaining between the hostesses in this case, and their guests. As a male computer analyst (33) says,

si es dónde no te conocen mucho, no tienen la confianza para pedirte que te quedes, pero si es amigos o familiares, cogen, le cierran la puerta con llave, esconden las carteras de las mujeres...
 if it's somewhere they don't know you very well, they don't have the *confianza* to ask you to stay, but if it's among friends or family, they lock the door, hide away women's bags ...

This sort of insistence is a way of both displaying and recreating relations of *confianza*, and showing how much the company of a particular friend/relative is appreciated.

People recognize the good intentions behind insistence at leave-taking and some even feel flattered when it happens:

si a uno le insisten uno dice que chévere que a uno le quieren ...
 if people insist that you stay one thinks it's great that they like you so much...
 (female accountant, 29)

However, in general people claim to feel uncomfortable when they are at the receiving end of insistence:

Le ponen a uno en una situación incómoda [con la insistencia] cuando uno tiene que irse.
 They put you in an uncomfortable situation [through insistence] when you have to leave.
 (male engineer, 29)

Certainly, no one expressed a liking for being locked in at a party, but frustration, as in the Novena anecdote. Some of the informants (the young ones in particular) indicated that nowadays they avoid organizing parties in friends' houses precisely for fear of not being able to leave when they choose to do so; for this reason social gatherings in bars or nightclubs instead appear to be preferred by some (see also Placencia, 2008a).

A number of the people interviewed in fact seem to complain about their space and their wishes not being respected when insistence occurs:

No se respeta el espacio del otro, cuando uno dice no, es no pero están insiste que insiste.
 People don't respect the space of other people; when one says no, it's no, but they carry on insisting.
 (female accountant, 28)

No respetan la decisión que uno ha tomado: 'Me tengo que ir'. 'No, no quédate'. No respeta a la otra persona, sus decisiones. No hay respeto.

They don't respect the decision you've taken: 'I have to go'. 'No, no stay'.
There is no respect for the other person, his/her decisions. There's no respect.
(male businessman, 28 years old)

Some even question the logic of insistence:

El rato que ya te quieres ir ya te quieres ir por mucho amor que le tengas a la persona. Cuando una persona se quiere ir es porque ya no quiere estar ...
The moment you want to leave you want to leave. This is no matter how much you like the person. When someone wants to leave it's because he/she doesn't want to stay any longer ...
(female bank clerk, 50)

Estás porque quieres estar no porque te obligan.
You are [at a party] because you want to not because anyone is forcing you to stay.
(male businessman, 54)

Comments of this type suggest that the values associated with autonomy may have started replacing those of interdependence, at least in some contexts.

Summary and concluding remarks

In this paper I have illustrated the occurrence of insistence with some convivial directives in interactions among family and friends in Quiteño society, where there is *confianza* among the interactants. In such contexts, the function of insistence was described as a way of showing affection and that the person cares. As such, insistence was interpreted here as a kind of connection talk through which an ideology of connectedness (Fitch, 1990/1991, 1994, 1998) seems to be recreated.

Nonetheless, I suggest that there seems to be some age variation with respect to strong insistence with food offerings, which at present appear to be restricted to the group of the elderly. On the other hand, I highlight the fact that insistence still appears to be a commonplace phenomenon with offers of drink among male friends or relatives, which would suggest some gender variation (a topic in need of further exploration).

I also reported on insistence at leave-taking from social gatherings as a widespread practice, but indicated that it may be changing in some contexts as a result of changes in the nature of certain social gatherings, among other factors.

Finally, I proposed that some of the apparent changes in the practice of insistence that have been identified, together with the negative evaluations of this practice that a number of interviewees in the present study provide, suggest there may be a change in ideology taking place from connectedness

to empowerment, with a preference for autonomy and self-direction developing among middle-class Quiteños.

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Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 10th International Pragmatics Association Conference, Gothenburg, 8-13 July 2007.
2. Insisting in other contexts may also be classified under the category of assertives (cf. Vanderveken, 1990).
3. See Márquez Reiter and Placencia (2005) for a review of a number of other studies on requests based on elicited data where both anglophones and hispanophones have been found to display an overall preference for indirectness, but where higher levels of directness have been found among the latter group.
4. This contrast is related to Markus and Kitayama's (1991) within their self-construal theory between independent (the self seen as differentiated from others) and interdependent (the self seen as connected with others) self-construal, as well as the individualism vs. collectivism value orientation distinction (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1988) that has been employed in characterizations of Western and non-Western societies.
5. An orientation to connectedness rather than autonomy has also been identified for other cultural groups such as the Japanese (see Kondo, 1990).
6. The notion of *confianza* also appears in the contexts of relations in Spain in the work of Fant (1989) and Bravo (cf. Bravo, 1999) and her colleagues (cf. Hernández Flores, 1999), who build on Thurén (1988).
7. Fitch (2007: 250), nonetheless, makes clear that not all blunt imperatives are necessarily a show of *confianza*, but the opposite: "Clearly, many of the blunt imperatives I heard around me (and directed at me) were not a show of *confianza*. Quite the opposite, they were the means of maintaining interpersonal power within an intensely hierarchical system."
8. Examples from notes from observation, such as this one, are reproduced here using standard orthographic conventions. For examples transcribed from recordings, see Appendix for transcription conventions employed.

9. See Placencia (2008a) for the notions of *compromiso social* (social obligation) and *quedar bien/mal* (looking good/bad in other people's eyes).
10. This is an expression, deeply rooted in Ecuadorian and other varieties of Latin American Spanish, with the meaning 'bad-mannered' (see Placencia, 2008b).

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Appendix: Transcription conventions employed

- (.) pause of under 5 seconds
- (0.5) pause of 5 or more seconds
- () inaudible speech
- (()) non-linguistic activity
- : vowel prolongation
- (x) stutter on the part of the speaker
- [beginning of overlapping speech
- ? rising intonation
- ! exclamation
- . intervening turns have been taken out of the fragment
- .
- .
- ... additional speech comes before the reported fragment

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