

## Social and Spatial Segregation of The *Moinantes* in Carballo (A Coruña)

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### Abstract

The word *moinante* is a socially loaded term: it is in fact a social representation, taking this to refer to the organising principles of symbolic relationships between individuals and groups (Doise, 2001). In our context, this has been proved to be true, since several members of the non-*moinante* population included in our study shared common points of view regarding the group of *moinantes*.

This research was carried out in the Parish of St. John the Baptist in Carballo, the principal town of the Region of Bergantiños, which is one of the 53 regions into which the Autonomous Community of Galicia is divided. One of the main objectives of the work was to explore the cognitive map for *moinantes* population. We could explore its existence as a group, as well as its physical and social segregation in poor quarters where nobody who doesn't belong to this ethnic group would like to live. *Moinantes* poor quarters are associated to insecurity and *bad life*.

Dimensions derived by Multidimensional Scaling confirm two set of well differentiated neighbourhoods in this area, with different levels of safety, as well with presence or absence of criminal activities. Some aspects related to marginalisation, and other characteristics of this ethnic group are discussed.

Key-words: Social Segregation, Spatial Segregation, Ethnic discrimination

### Introduction

#### The context of the research

The research for this paper was carried out in the Parish of St. John the Baptist in Carballo, the principal town of the Region of Bergantiños, which is one of the 53 regions into which the Autonomous Community of Galicia is divided.

Of all the regions of Galicia, the Region of Bergantiños has one of the highest degrees of internal cohesion and is one of the best consolidated.

According to the Regional Development Plan for Galicia, it consists of 84 parishes divided between the following seven District Councils: A Laracha, Cabana de Bergantiños, Carballo, Coristanco, Laxe, Malpica de Bergantiños and Ponteceso.

Of these seven councils, the coefficients of functional connection reach maximum values in four and come close to unity in two, whilst Laxe has the lowest coefficient. Although it is unrealistic to expect regions that have been determined from a geographical point of view to be perfectly homogeneous, from an ethnographic standpoint the region of Bergantiños shows a high degree of person-territory identification (Nogueira, 1998)

Carballo District Council contains 18 parishes, and our research was limited to one of these, the Parish of St. John the Baptist, with a surface area of 7.5 sq. Km. and a population of 13,616 inhabitants according to the 1996 municipal register. Population density is therefore 1,815 inhabitants per sq. Km, and 50% of the total population of the district council live in this parish.

### **The *Moinantes***

The population of *moinantes* is composed of some 600 persons, belonging to 167 families who mainly live on the periphery of the town. Some of the areas which they inhabit lack the necessary resources to guarantee an acceptable quality of life, and their life expectancy is below average.

The dictionary of the Galician language gives the following definitions for the word *moinante*: 1. A person who travels round markets and towns, selling things and swindling people; a thief. 2. Artful, wily. 3. Used to refer to a person who pretends to be poor in order to obtain money. 4. Used to refer to a person who uses affectionate methods to achieve his or her ends.

In Carballo itself, the word *moinante* is used in its negative meanings, and is seen as an insult: records of staff meetings even document the prohibition of its use in schools, these measures being taken in order to avoid conflicts.

The actions that we perform, our social actions, depend on the social representations we have in common, and which have crystallised through the medium of social interaction into language, forming words, which are

terms used to designate things that we have in common and know. Names have a strategic significance (Philogene, 2001) which has gone mainly unrecognised by Social Psychology until the present. Names given to groups play an important role in a multicultural and multiethnic society (Philogene, 2001), such as that which exists in the town of Carballo.

The word *moinante* is a socially loaded term: it is in fact a social representation, taking this to refer to the organising principles of symbolic relationships between individuals and groups (Doise, 2001). In our context, this has been proved to be true, since several members of the non-*moinante* population included in our study shared common points of view regarding the group of *moinantes*.

The avoidance of the name, according to the context in which this action takes place, has a particular significance: it prevents the generation of conflict. It is as if these people did not exist, because they have not been named. And this is why we have to begin by demonstrating that they do in fact exist.

The members of the *moinante* population are unprepared for the modern world of work, and depend mainly on social benefits and begging for their livelihood. Some families still continue to work in their traditional occupations, namely those of hawkers and fairground stallholders (in spring and summer). Others are rag-and-bone men or scrap merchants, and it is the women who are involved in begging, almost invariably accompanied by a small child.

If the *moinantes* have access to other jobs outside those of their own world, then these are unskilled jobs that only require physical strength and are extremely poorly paid. Under these conditions there is an increase in the number of conflicts, whether these be internal or involving people from outside the group.

The *moinantes* survive due to the existence of a mutual support network within the group that enables them to defend themselves against the oppressive, hostile and alienating atmosphere that makes their social identity vulnerable; as can be seen from this study, prejudice and the negative stereotypes with which the group is associated are deeply rooted in the society of Carballo and, indeed, of the whole region.

In short, the word *moinante* in the context of Carballo, and even in the whole of Galicia, can have two readings: a) The name given to a person belonging to this ethnic group. b) An adjective, used as an insult, with

negative connotations. And this, for a person who knows him-or herself to be a *moinante*, is a message with a double connection. The *moinante* knows that he or she belongs to the group, but without the negative connotations that are usually associated with it.

In this context it is difficult for a *moinante* to feel proud of and to defend his or her identity, since this means accepting the negative aspects associated with *moinantes*. For this reason it is often not easy for a *moinante*, in the presence of a stranger or a person that he or she distrusts, to recognise that he or she belongs to the group or to feel safe to affirm his or her identity. And that is why we refer to *blacks wearing white masks*.

## Aims

Our research sets out to show the following:

1. That the *moinantes* form a distinct ethnic grouping in Carballo, even though they refuse to accept that they belong to the group and attempt to pass as non-*moinantes*. They are blacks with white masks.
2. That there exists residential segregation of the *moinantes* by the *rightful* inhabitants of Carballo, the non-*moinantes*.
3. That there exists discrimination against the *moinantes* in their surroundings.
4. That the residents of Carballo who are not *moinantes* associate certain districts of Carballo with the *moinantes* and a higher degree of lack of safety on the streets.

The project is at the same time an explanatory study of the way in which the residents of Carballo construct their cognitive maps, and how, by means of these, we are able to discover the ways in which social and residential segregation are represented for them. For this purpose we employ the concept of cognitive mapping developed by Downs & Stea (1977). According to these authors, a cognitive map is a product, an organised representation of part of one's spatial surroundings. As stated by Stea, Elguea, & Blaut. (1997), human behaviour in the environment in which daily life takes place depends on an essentially spatial behaviour. This is of particular importance in the acquisition of knowledge, as well as for the formation of our social perception and the consequent orientation of our actions.

## Methodology

**Sampling.** The sample population consisted of 153 residents of the Parish of St. John the Baptist in Carballo. The ages of the correspondents range from 17 to 79, with 47.1 being male and 52.9% female.

**Procedure.** In order to obtain the relevant information for the purpose of fulfilling our aims and confirming our hypotheses, a questionnaire was designed, in which the following variables were considered:

1. *The extent to which the moinantes can be considered a separate ethnic group.* In order to obtain evidence to support our hypothesis in this respect, the following items were included:
  - a) Do you think that the *moinantes* comprise an ethnic group?
  - b) Could you write down 3 characteristics which define a *moinante*?
2. *The extent to which residential segregation exists.* The procedure used to confirm the existence of segregation between the *moinantes* and the *rightful* inhabitants of Carballo was as follows: Respondents were asked to rank a list of 17 places in the municipal district of Carballo, according to their preferences for them as a place to live, with 1 being their first choice and 17 their last choice. An open question was also included, in which respondents were asked to name 5 places in Carballo in which they would not like to live, giving their reasons.
3. *Discrimination against the moinante population.* An item was included consisting of the statement "The *moinantes* are discriminated against", to which respondents had to mark the extent to which they agreed or disagreed on a 5-point Likert scale. In order to check the accuracy of the response to this scale, respondents were asked to name three out of a total of five areas (shops, disothèques and recreational centres, access to employment, health centre, and others) in which they considered that discrimination existed against the *moinantes*.
4. *The association of certain areas of the town with the presence of moinantes and the lack of safety on the streets.* The following procedure was used to confirm the lack of safety on the streets as perceived by the non-*moinante* population: Respondents were asked to rank a list of 17 places in the municipal district of Carballo according to the perceived degree of safety, or its lack, with 1

corresponding to the safest and 17 to the least safe place in which to live.

5. In addition, *participatory observation* was carried out of life in the town and the region in which the research was centred. *Naive listening*, taken as the *active listening to the opinions, feelings and expectations, with no judgement being made, of the people in the group under study* (Harari & Beaty, 1990), and of the *rightful* inhabitants of Carballo.

We also interviewed *moinantes* and non-*moinantes*, amongst whom figured some key informers.

The research has also been backed up by the extensive field work undertaken by the first-named author during several years spent living and working in the town of Carballo.

## Data Analysis

The procedures used in obtaining the data for this study implied the use of the following data analysis techniques:

1. *Descriptive analysis*. The responses given by subjects to the items concerning the first aim were analysed, in order to obtain, in percentage terms, the number of respondents who considered that the *moinantes* constitute a separate ethnic group, and the characteristics that these respondents consider best define a *moinante* were also analysed.

The information obtained from the subjects regarding the third of our aims was also subjected to a descriptive analysis: this consisted of the responses of the non-*moinantes* to whether they believed that the *moinantes* were discriminated against, and the places where they suffered discrimination.

2. *Multi-dimensional scaling*. The rankings given by the respondents were used to generate a matrix with 17 columns (places) and 153 rows (sample size), which served as the input for a multi-dimensional scaling analysis, in order to determine the dimensions that contribute to a definition of the criteria of discrimination between places for the residents of Carballo. Our interpretation of these dimensions was reinforced by the grouping of the five places in which the respondents said they would not like to live, and an analysis of the reasons why.

A second multi-dimensional scaling analysis was performed to obtain the dimensions that contribute to an explanation of the perceived lack of safety on the streets as perceived by both the *rightful* or non-*moinante* inhabitants of Carballo.

The theoretical background to multi-dimensional scaling has been widely described in the literature (see Carroll & Chang, 1970; Carroll, 1972; Wish & Carroll, 1974; Carroll, 1980; Carroll & Arabie, 1980; Arabie, Carroll & deSarbo, 1987). The existence of a linear relationship between the Euclidean distances within the stimuli space configured by the set of places shown to the respondents is assumed.

3. The data obtained from the *participatory observation* was used both to produce the questionnaire and to confirm and enrich the interpretations of the results of the field research. The information given by *moinantes* and non-*moinantes* in their interviews, and that provided by the key informers, was systematically structured in order to produce a correct validation of our results.

## Results

### The *moinantes* as an ethnic group

The *moinantes* form a separate ethnic group in Carballo, although they deny belonging to this group and attempt to pass as non-*moinantes*; they can be said to be *Blacks wearing white masks*.

The majority of the inhabitants of Carballo interviewed recognise the *moinantes* as an ethnic group. 110 of the 153 people who completed our questionnaire think that they constitute an ethnic group with clearly differentiated characteristics, and state that they can tell a *moinante* apart.

The majority of respondents define them with negative attributes, used in the masculine, such as *poorly dressed, dirty, use bad language, mouthy, aggressive, trouble-makers, thieves*, etc. Other characteristics associated with the *moinantes* are that they are *very united, get support from the group, defend each other*, etc.

Another significant finding is that according to some of the people who replied to the questionnaire and were interviewed, there would appear to

be a feeling that “the *moinantes* are work-shy” and they prefer to live on the money they get from begging and on social benefit.

Amongst the *moinantes* themselves, there is only a weak sense of identity and feeling of belonging to a group, and in certain cases this even goes to the extreme of rejecting “being a *moinante*” by some members of the group. They do not always admit they are *moinantes*; it depends on who their interlocutor is, where they are, the moment, and the person or persons who they are with. Situations arise in which they openly deny *belonging* when they feel they are being alluded to.

In some interviews the *moinante* would even *speak ill* of the *moinantes*, claiming to be a non-*moinante*, which evidences the use of *masks* in order to pass for a *rightful* inhabitant of Carballo, since messages with a double connection have a negative effect on self-perception.

It is clear that the *moinantes* exist, and even more so given that a study has recently been carried out in order to take a census of their number and analyse the living conditions of those who live in the poor, outlying areas of the town. A total of 600 people were counted, forming 167 families (Obradoiro de Socioloxía, 2002). This research shows that the *moinantes* are not confined to any particular area of Carballo, and some live in the neighbouring town of Coristanco. It would be fair to say that there are many more than these 600, but unwillingness to admit to belonging to the group makes it extremely difficult to reach an accurate figure.

#### Residential segregation

Residential segregation is practised against the *moinantes* by the non-*moinante* *rightful* residents of Carballo.

The multi-dimensional scaling analysis produced a two-dimensional solution that accounts for 98.15% of the variance (RSQ=0.9815), with a Young's S-stress index of 0.033, which can be considered to be a good fit.

In the first of the two dimensions, the respondents clearly differentiate between the places where *moinantes* live, or with which they are associated, and other places. In particular, six places stand out in this analysis because they always occur in a position that is lower than 12th place, and even more significantly, *O Sixto* and *A Colina* are always placed in either final or penultimate position (see Figure 1).



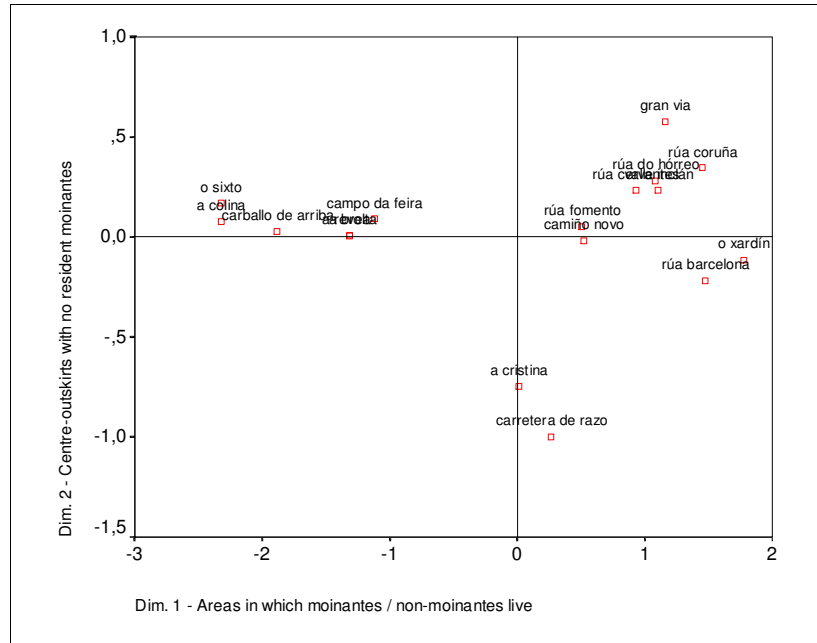


Figure 1. A two-dimensional solution for the ranking of choice of place of residence in Carballo.

Those places in which the majority of the non-*moinante* residents of Carballo would prefer not to live are those in which *moinantes* live, or with which they are associated, these being, in descending order of preference, A Brea, Campo da Feira, A Revolta, Carballo de Arriba, A Colina and O Sixto.

When questioned about the reasons why they would prefer not to live in the above-mentioned areas, most respondents stated that in these areas *there is a bad atmosphere, a lot of moinantes live there, drugs, poorly developed, lack of services, they are very unattractive, they are dangerous, etc.*

With regard to the second dimension, the analysis of the distribution of the different areas within a multidimensional space (see Fig. 1) allows us to differentiate between areas in the centre of the town (Gran Vía, Rúa

Coruña, Rúa do Hórreo, etc) and those on the outskirts, but not occupied by *moinantes* (A Cristina, Carretera de Razo).

All in all, multidimensional scaling allows us to discover the extent to which the respondents define their preferred choice of residence in relation to the following two criteria: the presence, or lack of it, of *moinantes* in the area, and its location in either the centre of town or on the outskirts when there are no *moinante* residents.

#### Social discrimination against the *moinantes*

*Moinantes* are discriminated against in their environment.

Certain contradictions arise when it comes to proving the validity of this hypothesis, since when residents of Carballo are asked directly whether the *moinantes* are victims of discrimination, 39.9% (61 out of 153 respondents) totally disagree, but when asked in which places they feel that the *moinantes* are discriminated against, only 13 out of 153 give no reply (8.5%), and the others state at least two places in which they feel discrimination exists. There would appear to be some contradiction here: on the one hand they say that discrimination does not exist, but on the other they include places where they feel that discrimination occurs.

Amongst the areas in which the residents of Carballo feel that the *moinantes* are victims of discrimination are: shops, discotheques and leisure areas, access to employment, and others that are not specified.

Lack of personal safety and places associated with *moinantes*

Non-*moinante* residents of Carballo associate certain areas of the town with *moinantes*, poor living conditions and lack of personal safety, and thus reject them as places in which to live.

The multi-dimensional scaling analysis produced a two-dimensional solution that accounts for 98.79% of the variance (RSQ=0.9879), with a Young's S-stress index of 0.0293, which can also be considered to be a good fit.

In the first of the two dimensions, respondents clearly differentiate between safe and unsafe places, and it can be seen that the places considered unsafe coincide with areas inhabited by *moinantes* and associated with higher crime rates, whilst the other areas all appear on the other side of the dimension (see Fig. 2).

In the case of the second dimension, the results seem to be inconclusive, although they appear to be connected with the lack of safety due to other causes, for example road traffic.

In our fieldwork during this research project we have seen that those residents of Carballo that do not belong to the *moinante* collective and/or who pass for non-*moinantes* refer pejoratively to certain areas and more often than not associate them with *moinantes* and *the bad life* (Ortiz, 1986).

Of the 17 residential areas included in the questionnaire about preferred places, those that occupied the last 5 places, ranked in descending order as desirable places in which to live, were: A Brea, Campo da Feira, A Revolta, Carballo de Arriba, A Colina and O Sixto. The last two areas, O Sixto and A Colina, also appeared amongst the places cited when respondents were asked to name five places in Carballo in which they would not like to live. They were also included, amongst others, when they were asked to name 5 places in which *moinantes* live.

When asked to rank the same 17 areas of Carballo in terms of personal safety, the six areas which were considered to be the least safe were O Sixto, A Colina, Carballo de Arriba, A Brea, A Revolta and Campo de Feira (see Figure 2).

The reasons given by respondents for not wanting to live in these areas are many and varied, but those that were repeated most often were: *They've got a bad reputation, delinquency, I don't like the people who live there, lawless places, moinantes live there, run-down, conflictive areas, drug trafficking, I don't know it and it scares me, restricted areas, lack of personal safety, etc.*

Other reasons given for rejecting these areas, but not specifically related to the presence of *moinantes*, are: chaotic town planning, lack of services, *aesthetically displeasing*, distance from the town centre<sup>1</sup>, *I don't know it, etc.*

At least two out of these five places in Carballo are given in all the 153 questionnaires on preferred environment as undesirable places in which to live because of the presence of *moinantes*.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the respondents who gave this response then signal "Carretera de Raxo" or other outlying areas as a choice of residence. This may indicate that they have stated this reason in order to give a "desirable" response that does not create any trouble or hurt any feelings.

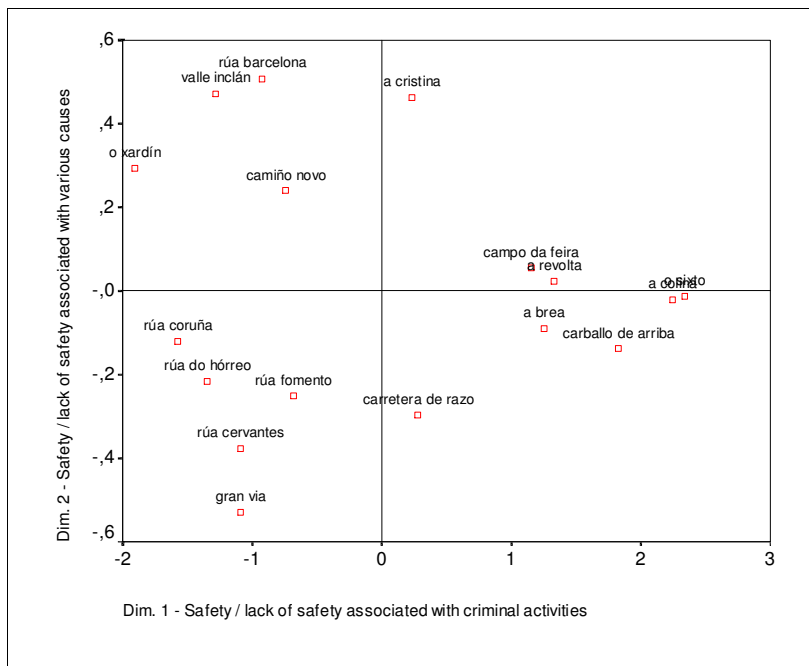


Figure 2.-A two-dimensional solution for the ranking of choice of perceived lack of security in Carballo.

The *rightful* residents of Carballo openly recognise that the *moinantes* are a problem, or perhaps the only problem, in Carballo, and they do not shy from the topic or avoid stating their opinions. This would seem to be a clear case of discrimination against and rejection of this collective. Euphemisms are not used when speaking of the group, except when it comes to using the term *moinante*, when this depends on the context and the interlocutor.

### Discussion

The ethnic group of *moinantes* would appear not to have a real existence, we only imagine that they exist, there is no real knowledge about what a *moinante* is, only a social representation. This study, as is usually the case, is based on information given by the *common sense* of

the respondents who provided the data which we have attempted to translate into scientific language.

Common sense is something that human beings acquire during a process that lasts for the length of our lives, and the belief that everything that an ordinary person thinks, or that is commonly held by the masses to be true, is false, ridiculous, riddled with superstition and trivialities, has nurtured a fallacy that still persists even today, just as it is equally absurd to call some civilisations inferior or savage. These myths reappear when common sense becomes an object of study within the field of Social Psychology, to differentiate between experts and naive laypersons. The naive scientist, who is totally unaware of the serious errors in his or her field of research, commits them in all innocence. We, as human beings as well as scientists, have our beliefs, our mental representations, our attitudes, etc., which undoubtedly have an effect on our research, and when the subject of our research are other human beings, it becomes particularly difficult to remain wholly impartial, which is after all our final goal.

It is impossible for men and women to play a passive role in the perception of their environment (García-Mira, 1997), and the residents of Carballo are proof of this when they openly affirm that the *moinantes* exist and *constitute a problem for the town of Carballo*. It is clear that this open rejection of the group obliges its members to assume a mask.

An ethnic group can be explained by a series of *hows* and *whys*: how it is organised in terms of its internal economy, family relationships, integration with society, etc.; why it functions as it does, the socio-economic interests that are at stake, cultural values that explain this behaviour, with a cultural value being taken as the final explanation that a group gives as to why it usually behaves in a given way (López de Ceballos, 1998). The respondents in our study describe the behaviour of the *moinantes* in terms of value judgements, and interpret these negatively. It is our role, as researchers, to attempt to interpret these data so that they may help us to deconstruct the social representation of the *moinantes*, since if they are represented as existing, then they can in fact exist as such. The individuals and groups that cannot avoid contact with the different ones, the unknown, have to make a representation of them, and the different ones can exist only if they are represented as existing.

There is a deep-seated idea in the Carballo area that to talk about the *moinantes* is to talk about poverty, both financial and cultural, and the

*bad life*. In our research, however, some of the respondents, when asked to write down the places in Carballo where the *moinantes* live, replied that they lived all over the region. This explains the reason why although residential segregation exists, and there are, as the results show, 6 particular places in Carballo that are associated with the *moinantes*, they do in fact live in many different parts of the region.

Why, then, do some *moinantes* live together in certain districts, or ghettos, and are segregated?

Fried and Gleicher (1970), in their analysis of the influence of social relationships on residential satisfaction, observe that the greater the extent to which the links in the neighbourhood are external, the higher the proportion of people who show positive feelings towards the neighbourhood (relatives, friends, etc.). The conclusion is that *The relationship with one's neighbours, whether or not it be based on the existence of a prior family relationship, constitutes one of the critical links between the individual and his or her area of residence* (Fried & Gleicher, 1970, quoted in García-Mira, 1997, p. 86).

This, together with the type of housing and its cost, may be one of the causes, although we should bear in mind that according the *rightful* residents of Carballo, the *moinantes* are closely united: this means that a non-*moinante* perceives these districts as being undesirable places in which to live. The *moinante*, however, adapts to these districts: *By compensating the low level of resources with an informal network that is extremely rich in social relationships* (García-Mira, 1997, p.67).

Many of the people interviewed for this study had no first-hand personal knowledge of the districts that are associated with the *moinantes*, but reject them because *they have a bad reputation*; these respondents elaborate their cognitive representations on the basis of rumours and prejudice. Residential segregation does exist in Carballo and, as elsewhere, with a background of social inequality.

What was previously described by the word *classism* (the desire of one social class to maintain its privileges over the rest) has now separated itself into different concepts, according to the source of oppression (ethnic grouping, language, sexual orientation, etc.), and in the case of the *moinantes*, there is only a small degree of social mobility. If their financial circumstances improve, they can pass for non-*moinantes*, and in

some cases they change their place of residence, which confirms that residential segregation exists and that it is perceived by them.

Marginalisation implies a loss of cultural identity as well as the absence of positive relationships with the dominant group (Berry, 1984). In the case of the *moinantes*, both these dicta hold true. On the question of discrimination, members of the dominant group affirm *that the moinantes are the ones who do not want to integrate*. In reality, however, they are living under conditions of an authentic *apartheid*. The areas of A Colina and O Sixto are stigmatised and rejected, and the other residents of Carballo are scared to venture into these neighbourhoods. The town is being de-ruralised, and the transition from tradition to modernity has meant that sons and daughters appear to belong to a totally different culture to that of their parents. There is a lack of direction and leadership.

If society as a whole has changed in Carballo, then so has the traditional culture and way of life of the *moinantes*. The consumer needs that are created in them by the influence of the mass media are the shop-window to which they cannot legitimately obtain access, but at which they nevertheless continue to stare. Their traditional trades and crafts have disappeared, as have their values, and each member of the group has a certain degree of initiative whilst at the same time starting from behind, when it comes to reaching a higher social position. Social mobility is extremely slow and costly, with school and other institutions being mechanisms that generate inequality, filters to which they are unable to arrive with the same level of opportunity.

The *moinante* uses conspicuous consumption (cars, television sets, clothes, music, etc.), as well as language, as a means of socio-cultural integration. Their children speak Castilian Spanish in order to pass for non-*moinantes*; they hide behind language, using it as a mask.

A *moinante* is assessed according to a common moral and normative standard, imposed by the current values in the society of reference. How does a *moinante* reach a particular social position within his or her group? Or outside the group? What is the price he or she has to pay? Who is interested whether the *moinantes* exist or not? Are they themselves interested in being the subject of research? What can we bring to them?

How does the *moinante* experience discrimination? What solutions can the political authorities provide? What role do social scientists have to play? These are all questions that require a much deeper analysis.

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