

Article

Religious Diversity and Migration: Exploring Research Trends in an Increasingly Secular Spain

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Abstract: Secularism and the public management of religious diversity have gone hand in hand in public and academic debates in recent decades. Meanwhile, many of the elements related to secularism and the presence of religions in western societies have been conditioned by the migratory phenomenon. At the same time, Spain has been exposed to a relevant qualitative change in its socio-religious composition, evolving from a mainly Catholic society to a less religious and more diverse one, equating to other European societies. Many controversial issues have arisen in recent decades, such as the role of religion in the public life, the relations between religion and the state and the emergence of a more plural society, having a special role the migratory phenomenon. This contribution approaches these issues through analysis of the linkage between migration and religious diversity studies within a secular framework. The paper aims to analyze this reality, focusing on the main research trends in PhD studies in the past 20 years. The article reveals a growing interest in doctoral research from a multidisciplinary perspective in the field of religion and international migration, the contexts in which this research has been carried out, as well as its main themes and methods of approach. The intent is to study the religious phenomenon linked to immigration, because this reflects, at least to a certain extent, the concern for understanding the presence of religion in an increasingly secular society, such as in Spain.

Keywords: religious diversity; immigration; doctoral research; Spain



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1. Introduction

Spain has experienced a qualitative change in its socio-religious composition in recent decades, going from being a mainly Catholic country to a more diverse one, and in this respect it is becoming more like other European societies. Several elements have contributed to this direction, starting with the political change that occurred in the late 1970s with the establishment of democracy and the recognition of human rights such as freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. Since then, initially with the establishment of several religions (other than Catholicism) and later with the increase in the number of these religions and of their members, the socio-religious panorama has been modified. Among the phenomena that have contributed to this are the (international) migratory changes that occurred at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.

This series of circumstances has led to changes in the social perception of the role of religion, both in the private and public spheres. These changes have also been reflected in the relations between state and religion(s). This new reality has directly challenged many aspects of public administration and the normative framework since, among other issues, they have generated difficulties in facing the demands arising from religious minorities.

To answer these and other questions, since the establishment of democracy there have been numerous publications and research studies on religion, religiosity, religious changes, and many other related issues. The approaches and focuses of these research concerns have also changed over the years. Thus, many scholars have directed the focus of their work onto religious transformations in Spanish society. One of the areas of interest has been the impact

of immigration processes, so that many contributions focus on the combination of emerging religious diversity and migration issues. Although the question of religious plurality is an issue of fundamental rights, its intersection with the phenomenon of immigration has had a certain echo in the academic sphere and, perhaps, received greater projection in the consideration of religious diversity in Spain due to its link with the arrival of populations of foreign origin.

The concern from which this study arises is the exploration of research trends on these matters throughout the 21st century, during which the international migratory phenomenon has been very important in this country and has attracted the attention of the Spanish scientific community. This approach addresses the contributions made by doctoral scientific production.

The development of science has been precisely an emblematic framework of secularity, insofar as the scientific method has allowed societies to advance in the understanding of the world and improve the quality of life of people, moving away from religious beliefs. In this context, doctoral theses are an important contribution to scientific knowledge. Building on previously achieved results, they involve rigorous and original research capable of reflecting, at least to some extent, social phenomena identified as important for society. They also contribute by developing new theories, approaches, and methodologies. They are, therefore, valuable contributions to the field of study, and their approaches, results, and conclusions can generate new perspectives, approaches, or solutions to scientific problems. They thus contribute to the formation of a cumulative body of knowledge and, ultimately, to its advancement.

In this context, the study of religion linked to immigration expresses precisely a concern to understand this phenomenon in this framework of secularity. The analysis of the evolution of doctoral work in the field of religion and international migration in the Spanish context will allow us to reflect on its importance as a social phenomenon. Furthermore, we can assess their main contributions (analyzing thematic areas, theoretical and methodological approaches, etc.), identifying strengths, weaknesses, and paths to be explored in the future, by considering the approach and development of such research.

This article is structured in four main sections. In the first section, the changes produced in the country in religious and migratory terms (regulatory framework on religious freedom, social changes, etc.) are contextualized. The second section describes the methodological approach, detailing the criteria used for the selection and analysis of the doctoral research to be considered. In the third section, the main findings are presented and discussed, and finally, the conclusions reached in this work are detailed.

2. Religion, Secularism, and Migration in Spain

The work presented here is based on research carried out in the framework of other previous studies on the projection of a growing religious plurality in Spanish society¹. Since the expansion of democracy and the recognition of fundamental freedoms and rights, there has been a growing implantation of religious confessions other than the Catholic Church. This has been accompanied by the recognition of freedom of religion and worship in the Spanish Constitution of 1978, its development in the Organic Law of Religious Freedom of 1980, and the establishment of Cooperation Agreements between the Spanish state and various confessions (Catholic Church through the Holy See, Protestant churches through the Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities of Spain—FEREDE, Muslim communities through the Islamic Commission of Spain—CIE, and the Jewish community through the Federation of Israelite Communities of Spain—FCIE).

The question of religiosity in Spanish society, as well as the role of religion in public life, has received a varied approach in Spanish academia. With the arrival of democracy and public freedoms, a series of debates began on the role of religion in the public sphere and its relationship with the public authorities (Díaz-Salazar 1981; Linz 1993; Pérez Díaz 1987). At the same time, issues such as the role of religion in Spanish society were also incorporated, with a temporal trajectory both in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Díaz-Salazar and

Giner 1993; Díaz-Salazar 2007). Other issues that have captured the attention of scholars of religion and social change in Spain have included the decline of religiosity and the processes of secularization (Esteban 2008; Pérez-Agote 2012; Ruiz 2022). In recent years, studies have more frequently addressed other topics such as immigration and the religious question (Aparicio and Tornos 1999; Moreras 2006; Perea and Sáez de la Fuente 2008), as well as the new social reality in the 21st century (Estruch et al. 2007²; Pérez-Agote and Santiago 2009).

All these publications and studies on the socio-religious reality in Spain are a reflection of the changes taking place in Spanish society, many of them linked to the phenomenon of international immigration. These changes have affected, and continue to affect, the social understanding of the role of religion (and religions) in the country, in the public space, and in society. This situation occurs in a context in which secularity has a more preponderant role than in previous decades. These issues have a direct impact on the native population and also on the population of foreign origin, including those who do not consider themselves believers and those who consider themselves believers (in the Catholic tradition or in other traditions). The changes that have taken place over these decades position the state and Spanish society in a secular context in which the frames of reference have changed substantially from those that existed four decades ago. While the first two decades of democracy represented a panorama in which the new model of the relationship between the state and the confessions, fundamentally the Catholic Church, was being established, the following two decades (those of the 21st century), have reflected a more secular space which includes a greater reflection of the religious plurality rooted in the country. This situation has drawn the attention of the public administrations, as an institution that is directly challenged when it comes to recognizing the religious plurality of Spanish society (Albert-Blanco and Astor 2022). And it has also brought, as we contemplate in this paper, special attention from academia, an emblematic field of secularity that, in this case, attentively observes and studies the existence of religion.

We aim to highlight two phenomena that have had an impact on the socio-religious composition of the Spanish population in this period: on the one hand, the decline in religiosity or religious self-identification of the population (see Table 1), and, on the other hand, the increase in the immigrant population of foreign origin (see Table 2).

As can be seen in Table 1, self-identification as Catholic within the Spanish population has suffered a significant decrease since 1965. At the same time, there has been a considerable increase in the number of people who do not identify with any religious tradition. In relation to the target group in this study, there has been an increase and consolidation of a minimal percentage of those identifying with other religions (non-Catholic).

In parallel, as can be seen in Table 2, there has been a considerable increase in the immigrant population of foreign origin. Many of those have brought with them the faiths and practices of other religions (in addition to Catholicism).

In the context described above, in which these transformations have taken place, many research studies have focused on the field of international migration and aspects derived from the increasing presence of international migrants in Spanish society. The scope of the intersection between immigration and religion has been one of these fields (Moreras 2006, 2015; Martínez 2007), precisely because of the contribution that migration has made to religious diversity.

Table 1. Socio-religious self-identification of the Spanish population (1965–2021). Horizontal percentages³.

Year	Catholics	Other Religions	Non-Believers, Agnostics (and Atheists)	DK/NA
1965	98	0.0	2.0	0.0
1975	88	0.2	2.0	4.0
1982	89	0.5	9.0	1.5
1985	87	1.0	11.0	2.0
1988	81	1.0	13.0	5.0
2000	83	2.5	13.0	1.5
2002	80	1.5	11.5	7.0
2005	79	2.0	17.0	2.0
2007	77	2.0	19.0	2.0
2009	76	2.0	20.0	2.0
2011	73	2.0	23.0	2.0
2013	72	2.0	24.0	2.0
2015	69.6	2.7	25.9	1.8
2017	63.3	2.6	26.0	2.1
2019	68.7	2.4	26.5	2.4
2021	60.1	2.5	36.4	1.1

Source: Díaz-Salazar and Giner (1993, p. 133); Pérez-Agote and Santiago (2008, p. 179), CIS (several years).

Table 2. Evolution of the total population and of the immigrant population of foreign origin in Spain (2000–2020)⁴.

Year	Total Population	Immigrant Population	%
2000	40,499,790	1,472,459	3.6
2002	41,035,271	2,334,098	5.7
2004	42,547,454	3,547,669	8.3
2006	44,009,969	4,637,972	10.5
2008	45,668,938	5,878,919	12.9
2010	46,486,621	6,280,066	13.5
2012	46,818,216	6,294,952	13.4
2014	46,512,199	5,958,308	12.8
2016	46,440,099	5,918,341	12.7
2018	46,658,447	6,198,833	13.3
2020	47,332,613	6,996,825	14.8
2022	47,432,892	7,365,310	15.5

Source: INE. Data for 1 January of the indicated year.

It is within this framework that this paper is set, aiming to contribute in this direction by presenting the results of the analysis of doctoral research projects on this topic carried out in Spain during the past two decades. The social and political problems that have arisen in recent decades with regard to the management of religious diversity and the demands of religious minorities, derived from their needs to exercise effectively their right to freedom of worship, have opened avenues of study and have deepened research into how to address them. In the academic field, several research initiatives can be contemplated, such as research projects, academic publications, training courses, congresses, etc. The promotion

of doctoral research is one of the fields in which there has also been an increase in this type of work, as can be seen in the following pages. Undoubtedly, this is a field of study in which the most novel and relevant aspects emerge and which aims to cover existing gaps in the knowledge. For this reason, in this work we have undertaken an in-depth analysis of the doctoral theses defended in Spain over the past two decades with regard to the question of religious plurality. This has been achieved by linking the question of religious plurality to the phenomenon of immigration, which is another reality that has emerged strongly in the past twenty years and which has also had an impact on the socio-religious composition of the country.

3. Methodological Approach

The objective of this paper is to analyze scientific production in the field of doctoral research in order to identify trends or relevant elements in the study of the intersection between immigration and religious issues.

To this end, collection of information was carried out including, where available, a compilation of the texts of doctoral theses that meet the following conditions: (a) focused on the field of religion and international migrations; (b) written in Spanish; (c) defended at a Spanish university; (d) presented during the time period considered (2000–2019); and (e) focused on the study of the Spanish context.

Several databases were consulted for this purpose: Repositorio de tesis doctorales en migraciones⁵, Teseo⁶, Tesis en Red (TDX)⁷, Dialnet⁸, and Portal de tesis doctorales REBIUN⁹.

The terms¹⁰ used as criteria for the search and subsequent incorporation of the theses in the database developed for this purpose were: “religion”, “religiosity”, “religious”, “Islam”, “Islamic”, “Islamophobia”, “Islamist”, “Muslim”, “Christian”, “Christianity”, “Catholicism”, “catholic”, “church”, “evangelical”, “Jewish”, “Buddhist”, “believer”, “secularism”, “secular”, “lay”, “religious pluralism”, “religious minority”, “immigration”, “immigrant”, “migrations”, “emigration”, “emigrant”, “foreigner”, “foreignness”, “multiculturalism”, “interculturality”, “intercultural”, “intercultural”, “cultural diversity”, “racism”, and “xenophobia”.

The total number of doctoral theses found was 60¹¹.

Once the theses had been selected, a database was created using a methodology of both quantitative and, above all, qualitative content analysis techniques, allowing the different doctoral theses to be collected for quick and easy consultation. This database included fields and information such as author, title of the thesis, director, university of defense, department where the thesis was written, year of defense, descriptors, table of contents, summary, and theoretical–methodological approaches. The aim of this work is to contribute to the evaluation of doctoral scientific production in the field of religion and international migration in Spain, highlighting the main contributions, as well as identifying theoretical and methodological gaps, and the main strengths and weaknesses in the development of doctoral research in this field of study.

In the following sections, the obtained information is presented, describing the current state of research in this field and the growth that this area of study has shown in Spain during the first two decades of the 21st century.

4. Doctoral Research and Discussion of Results

4.1. Profile of Researchers and Research Centers

The data obtained show that between 2000 and 2019 there have been 60 doctoral theses that have addressed issues related to religion and immigration. The criterion for the selection of the doctoral theses is that the research in question should address a study on migration and religion, making this issue explicit in one of the following components of the thesis: title, introduction, descriptors, and/or abstract.

As we can see (Table 3), there has been an upward trend in the number of doctoral theses that have incorporated the religion–immigration binomial into the focus of their research. This is a significant increase, since the bulk of the doctoral theses defended in the period between 2000 and 2019 were produced in the most recent decade considered in this

paper (75%), with the most significant concentration of doctoral dissertations in the latest five-year period (42% of the total).

Table 3. Numbers of doctoral theses defended on religion and immigration. (2000–2019).

Period	2000–2004	2005–2009	2010–2014	2015–2019
Number of theses	2	13	20	25

Source: own elaboration.

Another interesting fact is the distribution of the universities where these doctoral theses have been written and defended. More than half of these doctoral dissertations have been developed in only six Spanish universities¹²: University of Granada (10 theses), Complutense University (5 theses), Autonomous University of Madrid (5 theses), National University of Distance Education (UNED) (4 theses), University of Valencia (4 theses), and the University of Seville (4 theses) (Figure 1).

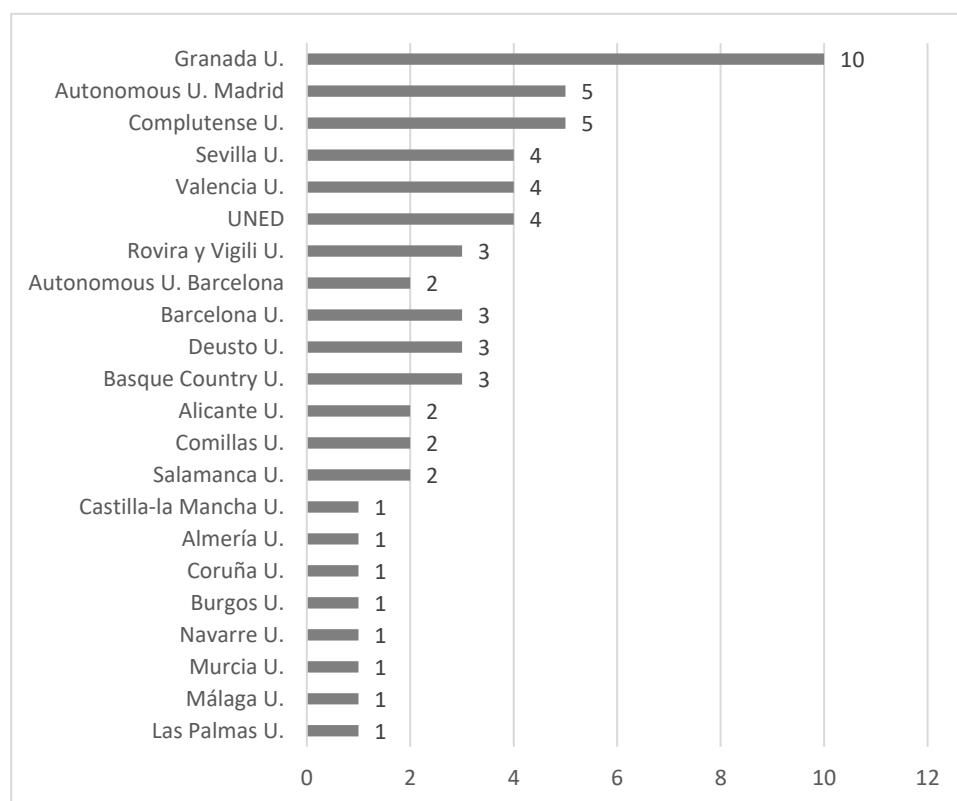


Figure 1. Number of theses per university. Source: own elaboration.

The increase in the number of theses defended in the field of religions and international migration, as well as their differentiated and multidisciplinary treatment, has been reflected in the broadening of the areas on which they focus. Even so, two out of every three of these doctoral theses are in the academic discipline of Law (17 theses), Sociology (14 theses), or Anthropology (8 theses).

As for their geographical distribution, it should be noted that there are only four Autonomous Communities that have not defended any doctoral thesis on this topic in the period from 2000 to 2019: Asturias, La Rioja, Balearic Islands, and Extremadura. However, it is also noteworthy that there is a certain concentration of doctoral dissertations whose thematic axis links religion and immigration, as reflected by the fact that 80% of them were developed in Andalusia, Madrid, Catalonia, the Basque Country, or the Valencian Community (Figure 2).

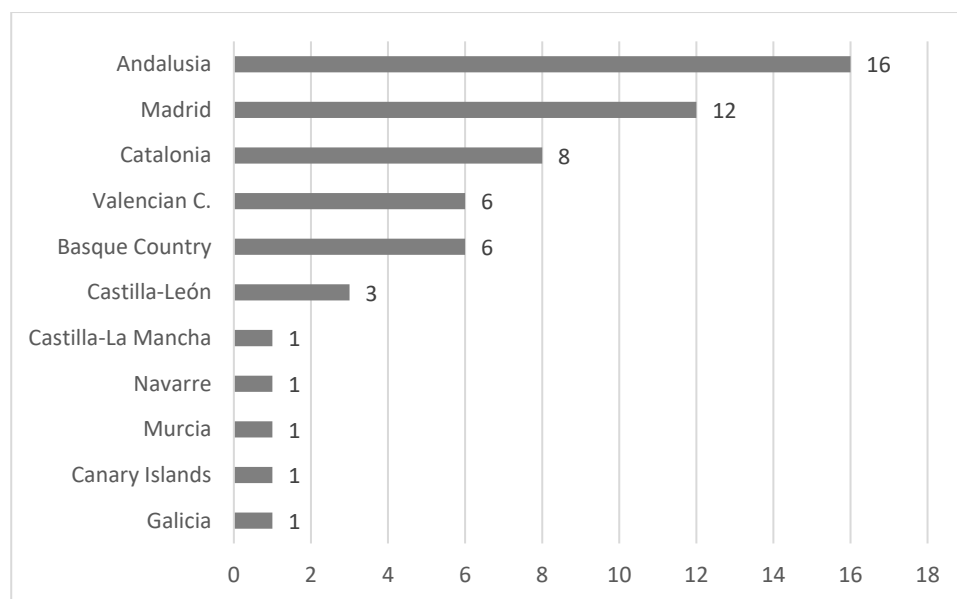


Figure 2. Autonomous Communities where doctoral theses were defended. Source: own elaboration.

Although in most cases the doctoral theses are clearly individual research projects, the geographical distribution by universities and by centers within them reflects the existence of specialized structures for research into migration and religious studies, with a growing institutionalization of research on these topics. Over the past two decades, a growing number of research groups on these topics have been created in Spanish universities, and their multidisciplinary¹³ nature has been intensifying. However, we cannot affirm that all of them are fully consolidated.

The development of clear lines of research, such as that highlighted here (linking religion and migration) has undoubtedly attracted people eager to develop their doctoral research in this thematic area. They have been drawn to certain university academic centers of reference to carry out these studies. At the same time, the development of a growing number of doctoral theses in this discipline has reinforced the composition and strength of these groups (not always sufficiently developed within them). Among these research groups we can highlight the Migration Institute of the University of Granada (Andalusia), the Ortega y Marañón University Institute at the Complutense University, the University Institute of Migration Studies of the Pontifical University of Comillas (Madrid), the Interdisciplinary Research Group on Immigration at Universitat Pompeu Fabra, the Research Team on Sociology of Religion or the Center for Migration Studies and Research at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Catalonia), the Interdisciplinary Group of Studies on Migration, Interculturality and Citizenship (GIEMIC) at the University of Castilla-La Mancha, and the Human Rights Institute at the University of Deusto (Basque Country).

In addition, linked to these groups, throughout the past two decades, postgraduate courses (masters and doctorate) related to the subject of international migration and religion have been developed¹⁴. These postgraduate courses are intended for many researchers the beginning of specialization in their academic training, and provide contact with specialists in the field of reference. Contact with specific researchers, rather than with research groups, focused on this area contributes to their visibility and to the reinforcement of their leadership. As a result of the academic hierarchy, much of the doctoral research on the topic of international migration in general (López Fernández et al. 2015) and in the area of migration and religion in particular, has been conducted with the involvement of a small group of principal investigators (generally directors of these research groups). This situation has specific consequences in terms of scientific production (reducing the possibilities of innovation), and in the competition for resources and projects (which is not between equals, but between a few senior researchers versus a large number of researchers).

Even so, in the past decade the number of doctoral projects linked to publicly funded research projects has been growing, which in any case is an indicator of the recognition and consolidation of the work of these university groups.

On the other hand, given the growing demand for the direction of doctoral theses in the field of religion and migration studies, there is also an increase in the number of persons who have directed at least one thesis, regardless of whether their field of interest is very different and/or their greater or lesser specialization in these subjects.

Finally, and from the point of view of gender, it is noteworthy that, among the persons supervising these doctoral theses, the number of men is clearly higher than that of women (66% and 33%, respectively). This difference is not so remarkable if we take into account the gender of the people who carry out these studies (58% men compared to 42% women). It seems, therefore, that in this as in other fields, women are achieving a greater presence, and their contributions to this field of study are growing.

4.2. Main Topics and Research Approaches

From the point of view of the plurality of religions, Islam is undoubtedly the one that has attracted most interest for the development of doctoral research. Almost half of the dissertations linking religion and international migration focus to some extent on Islam¹⁵ (i.e., [Casti3n 2001](#); [Bravo 2009](#); [Abdulhaleem 2015](#); [V3zquez 2015](#); [Backenk3hler 2018](#)). This interest has grown in line with the evolution of the migratory phenomenon in Spain over recent decades in general, and of the Muslim population in particular¹⁶. This attention also seems to be accompanied by a growing concern among the Spanish population about the presence of this particular type of immigration which, from a socio-religious point of view, is perceived as more difficult to integrate in comparison with other groups of immigrants in Spanish society. We can affirm, therefore, that scientific production in this field is linked to the evolution of the migratory phenomenon itself and to its perceived otherness.

Other religions linked to the migratory processes experienced in Spain in the past two decades, such as Christianity (Catholicism, Evangelical churches, or the Orthodox Church), Judaism, or Hinduism, have aroused much less interest (i.e., [Cuevas 2010](#); [Mart3nez Ari3o 2012](#); [Romizi 2013](#); [Albright 2013](#); [Diego 2016](#)). Although all of them have been the main subjects of some doctoral theses during this period, their specific treatment has been limited to one or two doctoral theses each, their joint treatment being more common in works focused on religious diversity and international migration.

The arrival of an immigrant population of foreign origin, with cultures and religious traditions different from those shared by the majority of Spanish society, has raised the need to analyze the challenges of social inclusion. This has been an objective in different doctoral theses that frequently link religious belonging with nationality of origin, addressing the importance of religion in the cultural identity of the immigrant population or its contribution to the cultural diversity of Spanish society. Another relevant issue raised in these studies is the role of religious practice—mainly Islam—as a source of cohesion and solidarity among different migrant communities that have to rebuild their identities and relational structures in a socio-cultural and religious environment different from their societies of origin (i.e., [Corpas 2008](#); [Piedrahita 2005](#); [L3pez Bueno 2016](#); [Moreras 2009](#); [Sobczyk 2015](#); [N33ez 2018](#)).

Many of these theses, with a clear cultural focus and a rather descriptive character, have contributed to the development of present Spanish society as increasingly pluralistic from the religious point of view, due to the contribution of immigration. But this does not imply that religious diversity has been accepted as a constitutive feature of our society.

If religious pluralism was initially highlighted as an important factor in the conflicts between groups of immigrants and the Spanish population, little by little these studies are going deeper into the theoretical baggage of religious pluralism, proposing more conceptual and analytical approaches and, at the same time, more political ones. These approaches call for the recognition of plurality in the regulatory framework, in order to guarantee the

coexistence of different socio-cultural and religious groups in our society (i.e., [Urrutia 2013](#); [Salguero 2013](#); [Álvarez 2015](#); [Ferrer 2016](#)).

This doctoral research (sometimes focused on one of the religions, but with increasing frequency covering different minority religions present in Spanish society), focuses on the analysis of models of public management of religious plurality proposed at both state and subnational level in response to the need to achieve its effective integration and to adapt public services, programs, and interventions in the context of this new heterogeneous reality (i.e., [Pizarro 2017](#); [Paza del Pino 2008](#); [Peña-Ramos 2009](#); [Torres 2012](#); [Toledo 2016](#); [Payá 2017](#)). This approach forces us to rethink the basis on which to define how this new plurality fits, beyond the possibilities of non-confessionality and freedom of worship enshrined in the Spanish Constitution itself ([Oliveras 2014](#)). In this context, secularism seems to be the model that has come to define this framework, although it has yet to be conceptualized in order to become the frame of reference (and not a mere rhetorical discursive resource) to reposition religious plurality in a democratic society such as Spain. Spanish society is increasingly secular and diverse, but with little secularist tradition and still with the relevant presence of the Catholic Church (especially in areas such as education or social assistance).

This different approach, less empirical–descriptive and more analytical, has been accompanied by a greater number of these dissertations which, focused on greater conceptual depth and with a predominant focus on the political sphere, are characterized by a greater theoretical–comparative perspective (i.e., [Relaño 2001](#); [Altuna 2012](#); [Intxaurbe 2016](#); [Astigarraga 2017](#)). These projects coincide with the development of more doctoral theses in this field, driven by the strengthening of this line of research in some university centers or by the greater specialization of their supervisors, although they continue to coexist with other projects that have shown little theoretical development.

This progress in comparative doctoral research will be boosted by several factors, such as: (a) The aforementioned greater linkage of some doctoral dissertations with national and international research projects developed by already consolidated university teams, with public funding (either national or European); (b) the growing attractiveness of the Spanish context for comparative European research; (c) the emergence of international networks dedicated to research in these areas; and (d) the growing internationalization of research personnel. Progress is also favored by the development of doctoral research through different channels, such as the positive academic assessment of research stays abroad during the dissertation process¹⁷, their funding in some cases by public administration and/or by the research teams themselves, or through the promotion of direct and personal contact between researchers through participation in conferences and seminars (which is a prerequisite for the defense of the doctoral theses in Spain).

Nevertheless, the scope of these doctoral studies with an international comparative aspect is likely to be extended, since they remain limited in number and in their scope of analysis from both the geographical point of view (centered on the EU and North America) and the disciplinary point of view (most of these contributions approach the issue from the legal field). This broadening will surely lead to new topics of study, new theoretical reflections and research questions, and, it is expected, new methodological approaches. It is precisely to this last aspect that we devote our final reflection.

With reference to the methodology used, it should be noted that, throughout the period considered for this study, most of the doctoral theses in the field of religion and international migration have employed a qualitative methodology (i.e., [López Lindström 2006](#); [Nasri 2014](#); [Bilbao 2015](#); [Jiménez-Yáñez 2017](#); [Mendoza 2017](#)). This choice seems to have been largely influenced by funding conditions, and not only because of the research objectives. It appears that it is difficult to undertake doctoral research based on the application of a quantitative methodology when there is a scarce budget for its development, or with the growing limitations imposed by funding entities, especially in times of economic crisis. The decrease in the budget allocated to national Research and Development projects (to which some of these doctoral theses are linked) surely explains, at least in some cases,

the qualitative methodological option. This tendency will not be significantly modified by the development of some of these investigations within the framework of European projects, because, although these are accompanied by more important economic contributions for their development, they are still limited in quantity. In any case, the analysis shows that the qualitative methodology used has also changed over the period considered, achieving significantly more systematic and rigorous development in the different steps of its application in order to guarantee the validity and reliability of its results.

5. Conclusions

Over the past few decades, the religious panorama present in Spanish society has been modified by a twofold trend. On the one hand, there is a trend towards secularization, i.e., a decrease in the influence of religion in society and in religious practice in general. On the other hand, there is a trend towards the growth of religious pluralism, driven to a large extent—although not exclusively—by the significant increase in international immigration to Spain during this period, bringing different beliefs and religious traditions.

The link between the increase in the immigrant population and the growth of religious diversity has been reflected in an increasing number of doctoral research projects developed over the past two decades. This relevance, however, has been linked above all in its initial contributions to a problematic perception of religious diversity as a barrier to the social inclusion of the immigrant population, both in its individual dimension and in its collective component (opening of places of worship, etc.). This approach, little by little, has been problematized by the establishment of the research questions in other doctoral theses developed subsequently, causing clear changes in study approaches, levels of analysis, research topics and, to a certain extent, research methods.

Throughout this period of time, we have moved away from approaching what we could call a religious study of immigration and towards a study of religious pluralism. From the initial consideration of the relationship between religion and immigration (analyzing how religion affects the migratory experience and how migration influences the beliefs and religious practices of the immigrant population), we have moved on to the increasingly present study of religious diversity in general, considering the role of religion in society, as well as the dialogue between different religious traditions, secularization, and religious pluralism. All this has occurred in a context and in a period of time in which the country has undergone major transformations both in terms of the recognition of religious plurality and the emergence of the phenomenon of international immigration. Both phenomena, for different reasons, strain the secular framework that characterizes the country. The data provided by doctoral research trends in Spain foretell an increase in the study of this reality, opening up new areas and themes for research based on the contributions already highlighted. Religious pluralism does not mean indifference towards different religious beliefs, but rather their recognition and appreciation. For this reason, knowledge and understanding of the different religions and beliefs present in society should be promoted in order to avoid stereotypes and prejudices that could lead to discrimination and rejection of those who think differently. Religious pluralism becomes, in an increasingly secularised society, a vital element for the development of peaceful and inclusive coexistence, fostering tolerance and respect for the rights and freedoms of each person, regardless of their religion or belief, and this should also be present in academia.

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Appendix A

This appendix contains information on all the PhD Dissertations considered in the study presented in this article.

Abdulhaleem, Hithem. 2015. Evaluación psicosocial del fundamentalismo y el neofundamentalismo religioso. Estudio empírico sobre el neofundamentalismo islámico. Ph.D. dissertation, Universidad de Deusto, Bilbao, Spain.

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Notes

- ¹ In this regard, and by way of example, works such as the following can be consulted: Fuentes and Vicente (2007); Estruch et al. (2007); Etxeberria et al. (2007); Buades and Vidal (2007); López García et al. (2007); Díez de Velasco (2008); Gómez Bahillo (2009); Hernando de Larramendi and García (2009); Ruiz and Urrutia (2010); Briones et al. (2010); Ruiz (2010); Montes del Castillo and Martínez (2011); Lasheras (2012); Briones et al. (2013); Izquierdo (2014); Morondo and Ruiz (2014); Buades (2016); or Urrutia (2017), among others.

- ² This publication is the first in a series of studies on religious minorities in the Autonomous Communities in Spain. Most of these studies have been sponsored by the *Fundación Pluralismo y Convivencia* and are openly accessible on its own website (<https://www.pluralismoyconvivencia.es/> (accessed on 24 March 2023)).
- ³ This table shows the evolution of religious self-identification over the past decades. Some more recent studies show higher figures (4 or 5%) for the case of “other religions”. For example, see the Observatorio del Pluralismo Religioso (Observatory for Religious Pluralism) database: https://www.observatorioreligion.es/banco-de-datos/1_1__creencias_religiosas_de_la_poblacion_residente_en_espana.html (accessed on 23 March 2023).
- ⁴ The selection of this time period is due to the fact that it is precisely the beginning of the 21st century, which is taken as a reference for the moment at which Spain is positioned as a country of reception for an immigrant population of foreign origin.
- ⁵ Repository hosted by the Intercultural Documentation Center of the Migration Institute of the University of Granada. The database contains the following fields: author, title, abstract, director, university, reading center, academic year, and descriptors. It also offers the full texts of the collected theses. To date, this repository has recorded more than 1300 theses defended since 1985.
- ⁶ Teseo is the main database of doctoral theses, developed by the Ministry of Universities of the Spanish Government, on theses approved in Spanish universities since 1976. The database contains the following fields: author, title, abstract, director, university, reading center, academic year, and descriptors. It also allows access to the full text of the thesis when the author accepts this option. Website: <http://www.educacion.es/teseo> (accessed on 14 December 2022).
- ⁷ TDX (Tesis Doctorales en Xarxa) is a repository that offers, in digital format, doctoral theses read in the universities of Catalonia and other autonomous communities. The consultation of the theses is free access and allows searches in the full text of the theses, by author, director, title, subject of the thesis, university and department where the thesis was presented, year of defense, etc. Website: <http://www.tesisenred.net/> (accessed on 13 December 2022).
- ⁸ Dialnet is one of the largest bibliographic portals in the world, whose main objective is to give greater visibility to Hispanic scientific production. It contains all types of publications (books, book chapters, journal articles, and collective monographs), as well as information on doctoral theses (title, authorship, academic direction, members of the examining board, university and date of defense, subjects, and abstract). It also indicates whether the full text of the thesis can be consulted, allowing direct access to the repository that hosts it. Website: <http://dialnet.unirioja.es/> (accessed on 12 December 2022).
- ⁹ REBIUN is the catalog of the Spanish University Libraries Network. Since its creation in 1988, REBIUN has been a stable organization in which all Spanish university and scientific libraries are represented. Website: <http://www.rebiun.org> (accessed on 12 December 2022).
- ¹⁰ The original terms were searched in Spanish.
- ¹¹ We are aware of the possibility that there may be other doctoral theses to which we have not had access, but given the sources consulted and their characteristics, the selected ones are able to present a fairly accurate view of the current state of the field.
- ¹² A small number, especially if we consider that in Spain there are a total of 93 universities. For a more detailed analysis, see Uniscopio: <https://uniscopio.com/universidad/> (accessed on 22 March 2023).
- ¹³ That the study of international migration should be multidisciplinary, if not interdisciplinary, both in its theoretical and methodological approach, had already been emphasized before the beginning of the period considered in this article by such renowned authors as Castles (1993, p. 30) or Hollifield (2000).
- ¹⁴ Several postgraduate courses in this field have been offered by Spanish universities over the past two decades. By way of example we can highlight the following: the University Master in International Migrations (U. de Comillas, Madrid), the Inter-University Master in Contemporary Migrations (U. Autónoma de Barcelona and U. de Barcelona, Catalonia), the Master in Migration Studies (U. Pompeu Fabra, Catalonia), the University Master in Migratory Movements in the 21st Century (U. de Gerona, Catalonia), Master Erasmus Mundus in Transnational Migrations (U. Granada, Andalusia), Master in Migrations, Mediation and Vulnerable Groups (U. de Almería, Andalusia), Official Master in Social Sciences and Social Intervention. Multiculturalism, Interculturality and Diversity (U. of Seville, Andalusia), University Master in International Migrations: Research, Migration Policies and Intercultural Mediation (U. A Coruña), or the European Master in Migrations, Conflict and Social Cohesion in the Global Society (U. Deusto, Basque Country), among others.
- ¹⁵ Without aiming to be exhaustive, this section indicates some doctoral works that serve as an example of what is being said. The references to these PhD dissertations, along with the other ones on which this article is based, can be found in Appendix A.
- ¹⁶ The identification of an immigrant group within a faith community is especially intense in the case of the population coming from countries where the majority religion is Islam. This is reflected at the socio-political level, and even in the title of some of the doctoral theses considered here, with the denomination “Muslim” assigned to those people coming from these countries. This is the result of a figurative social construction, and not of the contrast with their religious affiliation or their status as practitioner, an assignment that has also led to their overrepresentation in doctoral dissertations, compared with other religious minorities.
- ¹⁷ Recognized, for example, through the international mention that can be awarded to them, or via accreditation systems.

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