

**Council for Australian Catholic Women
Colloquium 2016
Women and Interfaith Dialogue:
Challenges and Opportunities**

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The Catholic Church and Interfaith Dialogue: Church teachings

Nostra Aetate 1965

Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non- Christian Religions

No. 2 Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture.

Church teachings

Evangelii Gaudium 2013

No. 250 Interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for peace in the world, and so **it is a duty for Christians** as well as other religious communities.

No. 252 Our relationship with the followers of Islam has taken on great importance, since they are now significantly present in many traditionally Christian countries, where they can freely worship and become fully a part of society. We must never forget that they “profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, who will judge humanity on the last day.” *(Lumen Gentium 16)*

Church teachings

Evangelii Gaudium cont.

No. 253 In order to sustain dialogue with Islam, **suitable training** is essential for all involved, not only so that they can be solidly and joyfully grounded in their own identity, but so that they can also acknowledge the values of others, appreciate the concerns underlying their demands and shed light on shared beliefs.

We Christians should embrace with affection and respect Muslim immigrants to our countries in the same way that we hope and ask to be received and respected in countries of Islamic tradition.

Church teachings

Misericordiae Vultus (2015) “The Face of Mercy”

No. 23 There is an aspect of mercy that goes beyond the confines of the Church. It relates us to Judaism and Islam, both of which consider mercy to be one of God’s most important attributes...

[OUR CALL]

I trust that this Jubilee year celebrating the mercy of God will foster an encounter with these religions and with other noble religious traditions; **may it open us to even more fervent dialogue** so that we might know and understand one another better; may it eliminate every form of closed-mindedness and disrespect, and drive out every form of violence and discrimination.

330 acts of Islamic terrorism 1980s-2016



USA



London



Bali



Beirut



Baghdad



Yemen



Lahore



Kabul



Nigeria



Paris

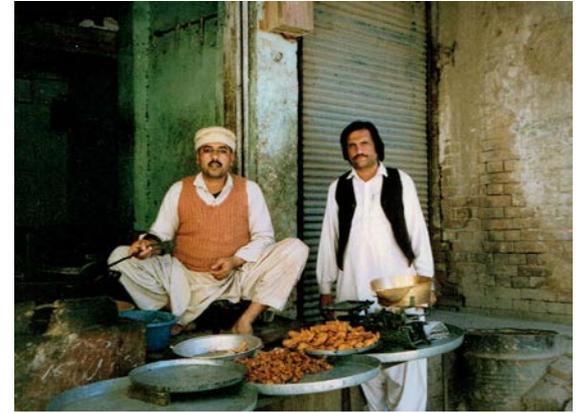


Syria



Brussels

1.8 billion Muslims



Interfaith Dialogue



Women and Interfaith Dialogue



Philosophies and Christian theologies of Women

Aristotle - The female nature is naturally defective

Pythagoras - A good principle created man. A bad principle created woman

Plato - Biological determinism

Confucius - Women, though human beings, are of a lower state than men

Old Testament - Adam and Eve: humanity is male; woman defined as relative

New Testament - Wives, be subject to your husbands

St. Augustine - Men are the true image of God, in body and soul.

St. Thomas Aquinas – Woman is an imperfect man, a defective male

Tertullian - All women are the gateway to the devil

Martin Luther - Confine women to the home: In this way is Eve punished.

Charles Darwin - Females are less evolved than males; intellectually inferior

Pope Leo XIII - The husband represents Christ; wife represents the Church; therefore he commands and she obeys

Pope Paul VI - Excluding women from priesthood is God's plan for the church

Pope John Paul II - Priestly ordination: reserved to men alone

Pope Francis – On women priests, that cannot be done.

Islamic theology and practices regarding women

Pre-Islamic Arabs - female infanticide: economic liabilities and potential hazards to the honor of the men in the tribe.

Qur'an - Adam and Eve both responsible. No sin or stigma attached to Adam's companion (Sura 2: *Al-Bagara* 35-39 Sura 7: *Al-A`rcif*: 19-25 Sura 20: *Ta Ha* 115-123)

Qur'an - Sura *Al Nisa* 4:34: The legal rights of women **BUT** "Men are the maintainers of women ...those on whose part you fear desertion, admonish them...and **beat them**"

Amina Wadud (1999) – Presumption that the male person is the normative human being. Females are restricted and relative beings. Subjects without agency

Riaz Hassan (2008) - "the evidence...indicated deeply entrenched misogynist and patriarchal attitudes in the modern Muslim consciousness."

Riffat Hussein (2013) – Christian, Jewish, Greek-Hellenistic and Bedouin Arab patriarchal traditions influenced Muslim culture, so women can be described as *fitna* ("temptation, trial, punishment")

Sara Mahmood (2016) – Some Muslim women from Western countries are joining ISIS to find empowerment. Making sure they feel at home and not discriminated against, will abate ISIS recruitment rhetoric.

Responses of women of faith

Women's grass roots involvement in their religions

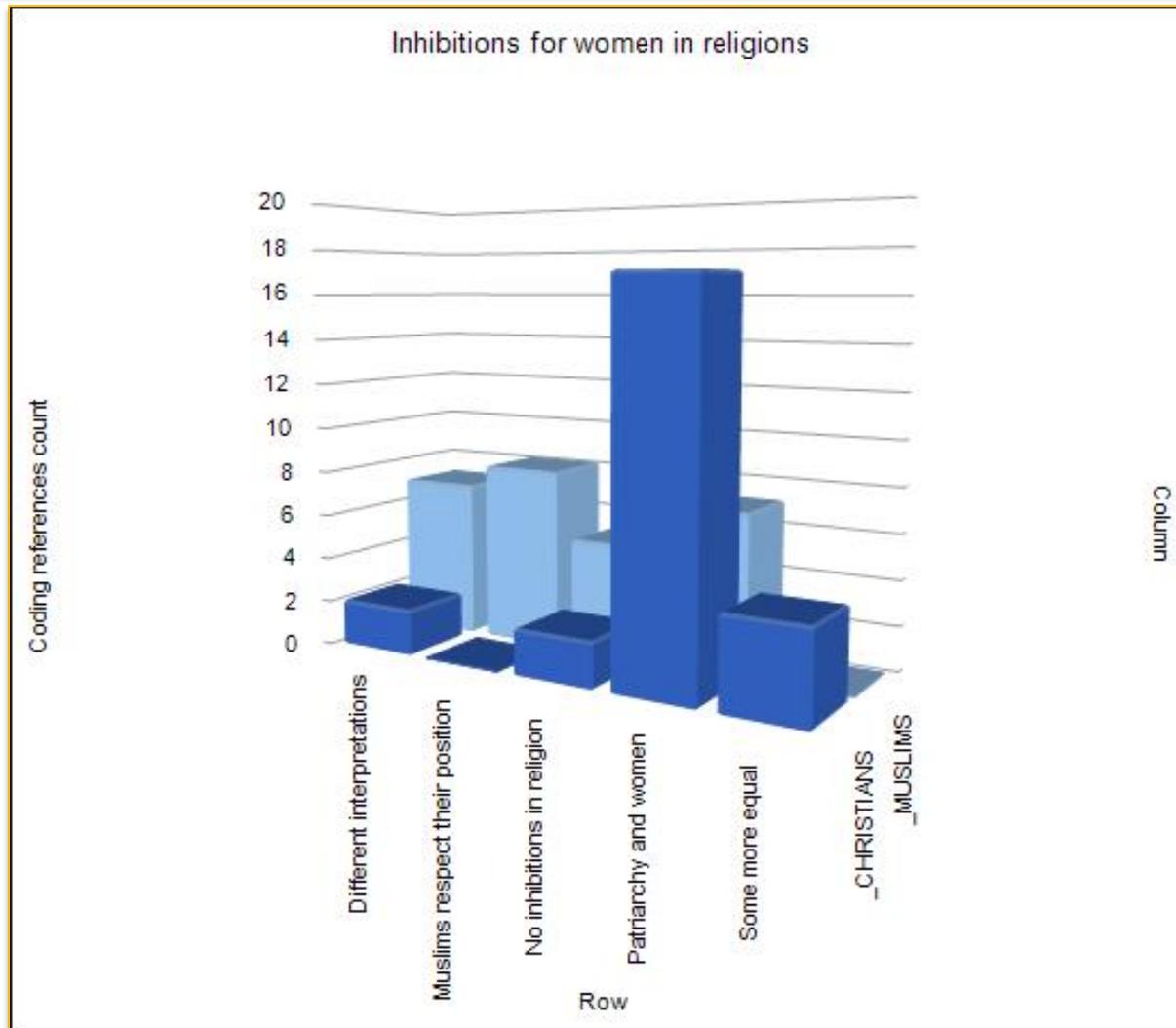
**Muslim and Christian Feminist theologians,
scripture scholars and historians**

**Women's participation in interfaith dialogue
groups**

**Christian and Muslim women's membership of
religious bodies – councils, commissions, boards**

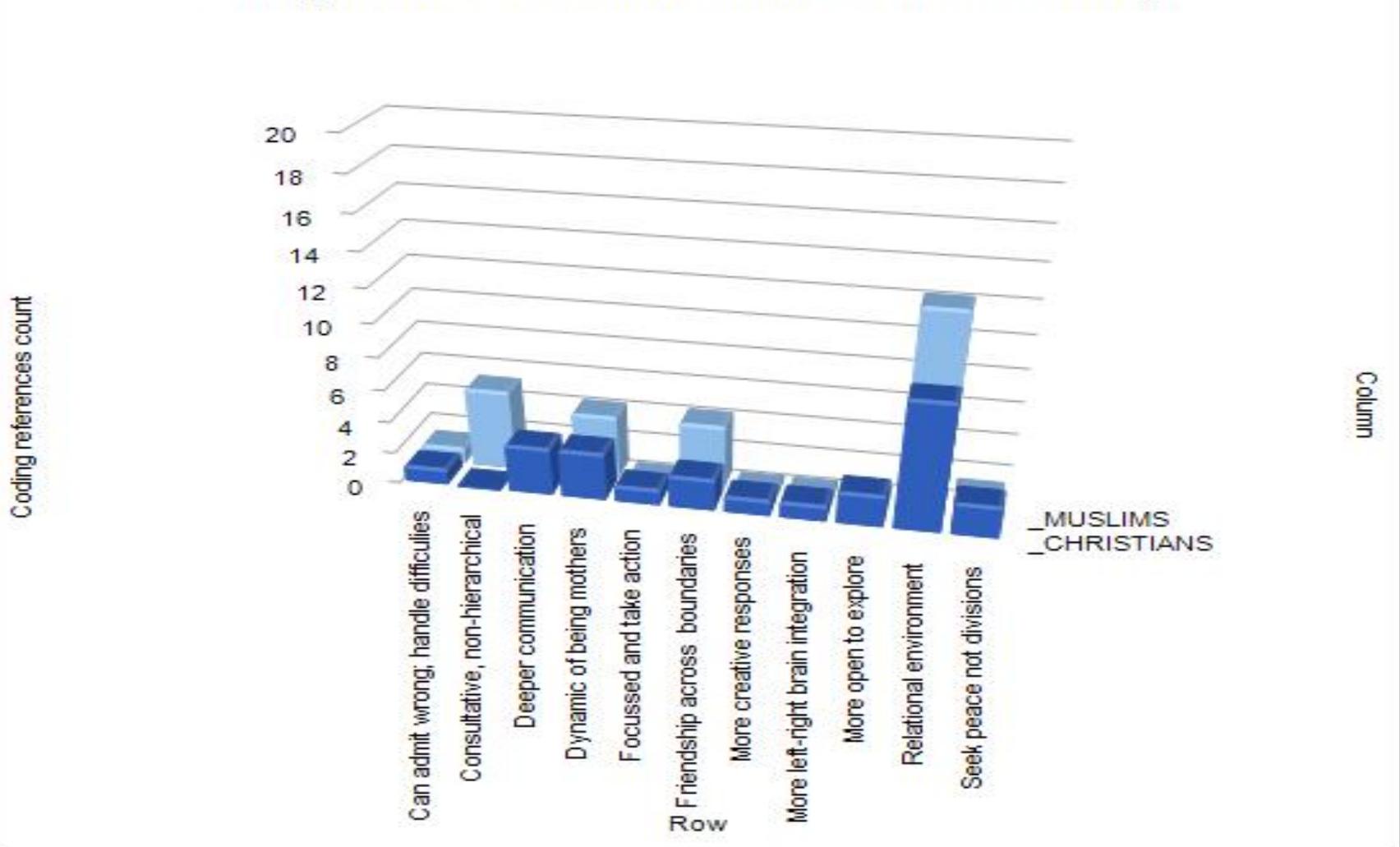
Women's interfaith conferences and colloquia

Research conducted through
the Golding Centre for Women's History, Theology and Spirituality at
the Australian Catholic University
Inhibitions for Women in Religions



Defining Element of Christian-Muslim Women's Interfaith Dialogue ("the feminine genius")

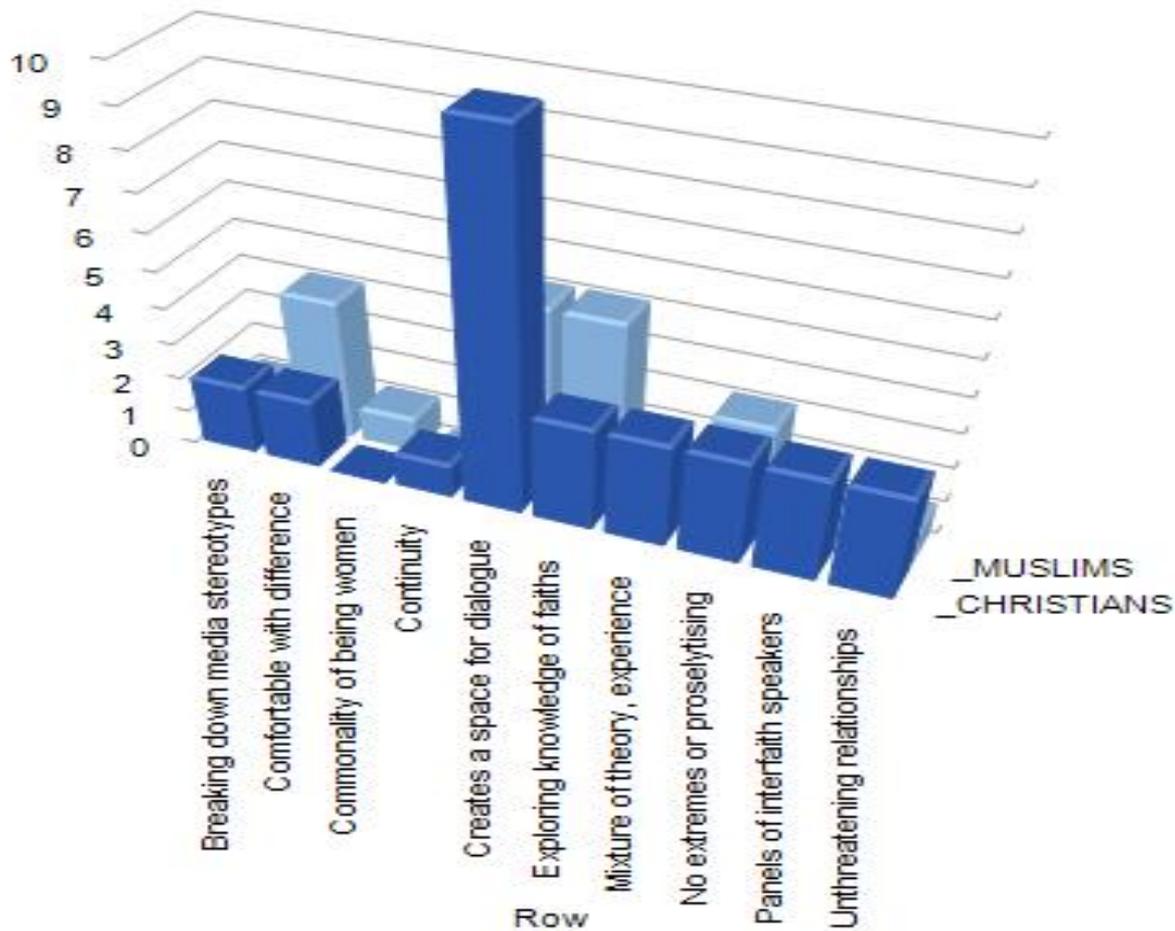
Defining element of Christian-Muslim Women's Interfaith Dialogue



Promoters of dialogue

Promoters of dialogue

Coding references count



Column

Women's Conflict Resolution and Peace-building Movements

| COUNTRY | ORGANISATION | YEARS | CONFLICT |
|------------------------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Afghanistan | Flowers for Peace | | |
| Argentina | Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo | 1976-1983 | The "disappeared" citizens |
| Bougainville (Papua New Guinea) | Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom. Women for Bougainville (WFB). | 1988-1998 | |
| Cuba | Ladies in White (Damas de Blanco) | 2003+ | The imprisonment of political dissidents |
| Democratic Republic of Congo | Mothers of the Nation | 2000s? | War |
| Iran | Mothers of Khavaran The Mourning Mothers (also known as the Mothers of Laleh Park) | 1981 to present | Mass execution of political prisoners |
| Kenya | "Wanawake wa Amani" (WAW – Women Peacemakers) | 2008 | Political conflict and ethnic violence |
| Liberia | Liberian Women's Initiative (LWI) | 1989-2003 | Civil war |
| Mali | National Women's Movement for the maintenance of Peace and National Unity (MNFPU) | 1990s | War |
| Nigeria | FMDMs (Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood) involvement in the Damietta Peace Initiative (DPI) | | Muslim-Christian conflict |
| Northern Ireland | Petticoat Peacemakers (Women Together) | | Sectarian violence |
| Pakistan | Women's Peace Movement | | |
| Rwanda | Women played a significant role in restructuring the political structure of Rwanda | 1990s | Genocide |
| Turkey | Saturday Mothers (Cumartesi Anneleri) | 1980s to present | Forced disappearances and political murders |
| | | | |
| Zimbabwe | The Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ). WOZA | | Liberation struggle for independence |

Women's interfaith groups in Australia



JCMA
Jewish Christian Muslim
Association of Australia



Challenges and Opportunities

A Call to Action

Women as witnesses to the joy of the Gospel

How do we make more space for women in decision-making, leadership and lay pastoral ministry in the interfaith dialogue mission of our Church?



Possibilities?



- **Interfaith “literacy” (learning about other religions and about the principles of interfaith dialogue)**
- **Join an interfaith dialogue group**
- **Initiate a parish group meeting to look at possibilities for the parish**
- **Personal contact through the “dialogue of everyday life”**
- **Join a diocesan interfaith committee**
- **???**

Women's Interfaith Dialogue is a Circle Dance

