

ABSTRACT

THESIS: “Jesus Made a Feminist Out of Me”: Communication of Dual Evangelical and Feminist Identities

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The number of Christians who identify as evangelical has been on a decline over the past decade. Formal evangelicals may be dropping their religious label in part to fight the nuanced stigma surrounding an evangelical ideology. This phenomenon leaves religious advocates for gender reform caught between two historical and ongoing movements: the feminist movement and the evangelical movement. Often religious advocacy and socio-political advocacy are seen as opposing movements with differing goals that drive a wedge between them. Since social perceptions of faith—specifically Evangelical or Midwest Protestantism—and feminism have a tendency to be viewed as oppositional, I argue that evangelical Christian feminists must communicate their identities in a strategic manner to avoid interpersonal tensions. By doing so, Christian feminists can articulate their advocacy and beliefs in ways that invite both faith-based and liberal-based audiences. With a focus in religious and gender equality identities and using the Communication Theory of Identity as a theoretical lens, I uncover how these spiritual and social identities are communicated in various spaces. Conducted from an interpretivist approach, this study displays how Christian feminists operate on a spectrum of liminality, within aspects of evangelical culture, and the discursive tensions Christian feminists experience as they communicate their identity.

