

Wife, mom, SecState, Methodist

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

June 13, 2013

I'm puzzled by [Sally Quinn's take](#) on Hillary Clinton's [tweeting debut](#) this week:

There were two surprising things about Hillary Clinton's [first tweet](#).

Clinton broke her Twitter silence this week with this bio: "Wife, mom, lawyer, women and kids advocate, FLOAR, FLOTUS, US Senator, SecState, author, dog owner, hair icon, pantsuit aficionado, glass ceiling cracker, TBD . . . ." A photo by Diana Walker showing a serious-looking Clinton in black and looking at her Blackberry through dark glasses is her avatar.

What's surprising is that the photograph belies her tweet. You would think with that choice of photo she would start her bio with anything but "wife, mom." If she's itemizing her accomplishments and interests, to have U.S. Senator and Secretary of State at Nos. 7 and 8 pretty much gives the shaft to the whole notion of "[leaning in](#)."

Leave aside the point of fact that a bio is not a tweet. Is it possible that Quinn somehow missed [Texts From Hillary](#)? "A photo by Diana Walker"? No, it's *the* photo from the Texts From Hillary tumblr that went viral last year, culminating in Clinton herself joining in the fun. That fact, not whatever the photo itself communicates, is obviously why Clinton chose it.

Quinn goes on:

Does "wife, mom" sound like somebody who is running for president?

Would a male opponent start his tweet with "husband, dad?"

No and no, suggests Quinn. Hillary isn't leaning in here, so she must not be running for president (that or she's "throwing people off the scent").

But isn't the answer to the first question actually yes? Speaking of the "is" and not the "should be," leading with family commitments is pretty critical to a female politician's wide appeal in this country. Clinton, of course, knows this better than anyone.

And of course a typical male politician wouldn't start his tweet [sic] with "husband, dad." Though if he did I'd be more likely to vote for him. Family first good! Double standard bad. Male politicians don't have to convince anyone that they can balance the demands of home and work or that they love their families as much as their ambitions. Maybe they should.

Anyway, it probably wouldn't occur to a male politician to single out his role as husband. *Most* people at his level of power are husbands! This is how privilege works: the privileged perceive their identity group as more of a default than one option among several. (Since we're linking to old viral things today, see also [this classic](#).)

Which leads us to Quinn's second point: she wonders why Clinton, an active United Methodist, doesn't include her faith among her list of identity markers and positions held—a faith which, as Quinn details, is clearly very important to Clinton. And it's possible that Clinton would have liked to have said "Christian" or "Methodist" but left it out for political reasons, what with the electorate divided among those who don't care much if a candidate is a Christian, those who would snicker at the suggestion that Clinton's a real one and a few who might even count her faith against her.

But I suspect it's because Clinton's of a generation that has seen Christianity in general and denominational Protestantism in particular as default, not identity. In that context, it might not occur to us white Protestants to single out our faith as a descriptor any more than it would occur to us to single out our race.

Protestant privilege is declining fast in this country, and there's a lot to mourn there. But there are also things to celebrate, not least the fact that it may get more and more intuitive to speak openly of the faith as something that actually defines and shapes us in particular ways—as it has clearly shaped Clinton—and not as a cultural redundancy.