

Nepo Babies Crowd the Runways

The casting craze for celebrity kids hit the big time with the likes of Gigi Hadid and Kendall Jenner. In 2024, the trend is not slowing down.



By **Elizabeth Paton**

Feb. 28, 2024



Family ties: Kendall Jenner on the Victoria Beckham runway in September; Kaia Gerber at Valentino couture in July; and Gigi Hadid at Versace at Milan Fashion Week in February. Peter White/Getty Images, Pascal Le Segretain/Getty Images, Mario Anzuoni/Reuters

At London Fashion Week, the honor of the final look at the Burberry show didn't go to a runway legend like Naomi Campbell, Agyness Deyn or Lily Donaldson, all of whom walked in the show. Instead, Maya Wigram, wearing a belted leather field

jacket and billowing maxi-kilt, took the lap most models would kill for in her modeling debut.

Sorry. Maya who? Maya Wigram, the daughter of the much fetishized fashion designer Phoebe Philo, who recently started her own fashion label.



Maya Wigram, the daughter of Phoebe Philo, closed the Burberry show at London Fashion Week. Filippo Fior/Burberry

Fashion's fixation with celebrity scions is not new. Gigi and Bella Hadid, Kendall Jenner and Kaia Gerber — many of the world's current batch of successful models were born to the rich and famous. (In the case of Ms. Gerber, whose mother is Cindy Crawford, it helps to have a bona fide supermodel to thank for her genes.)

Nepo babies can, in theory, go into any profession. The nepotism doesn't restrict them to the profession of their parents. It just means they had famous, successful family ties (or well-known last names) that helped them get ahead in their chosen field.

New York magazine may have declared 2022 as "the year of the nepo baby," but the trend of luxury brands hiring youngsters who are yet to achieve much professionally, but do happen to be sons and daughters of A-listers, is not abating. If anything, it has been gaining momentum.

Scarlet Stallone, a daughter of Sylvester Stallone, walked her first runway for Tommy Hilfiger during New York Fashion Week. Deva Cassel, a daughter of Monica Bellucci and Vincent Cassel, modeled for Alberta Ferretti in Milan. Iris Law, whose parents are Jude Law and Sadie Frost, is the current face of Burberry. She is also a new Victoria's Secret recruit alongside Lila Moss, daughter of Kate.



From left: Lila Moss, Deva Cassel and Iris Law. Jeff Spicer/Getty Images, Marco Mantovani, Jeff Spicer/Getty Images

Lennon Gallagher, whose dad is the Oasis rocker Liam Gallagher, and Romeo Beckham, a son of David and Victoria Beckham, have recently scored high-profile modeling gigs. Eve Jobs, daughter of Steve, walked for Louis Vuitton last season and Michael Kors this season.

And one of the most booked models of the moment is Amelia Gray Hamlin, a daughter of Lisa Rinna of “The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills.” She has been pounding the runways of Paris after being hired last year by the likes of Miu Miu, Balenciaga and Versace.

The appeal for brands seems clear. “Clicks are the new advertising,” said the former casting director James Scully. “Nepo babies direct huge amounts of online traffic and engagement regardless of how tall they are or how well they can walk.”

He noted that many such models have large social media followings and bring millions of new eyeballs to a brand, thanks to the fan bases established around their family’s footholds in reality television, music or entertainment. Often, conventional industry thresholds are lowered to accommodate them.

“Kaia Gerber and Gigi Hadid would have walked into agencies and been signed, whoever their parents were,” Mr. Scully continued. “That said, the net is cast very wide now, and almost anyone will do. If you’re the average-looking daughter of a celebrity these days, then frankly you are as likely to be cast in a Prada show as if you are an actual model.”

According to Lucie Greene, a trend forecaster for Light Years, much of our gawking is driven by a primal impulse to search nepo baby faces for recognizable genetic similarities and contrasts with their famous parents, and to praise or shame them accordingly. There’s also a sense of being in the know, she said. Perhaps you knew the lineage of Ms. Wigram before anyone else.



Lennon Gallagher, son of the Oasis rocker Liam Gallagher, also walked in the Burberry show last week. Henry Nicholls/Getty Images

Then, too, at a time when beautiful young models are 10 a penny (and often not especially scintillating in interviews), a carefully curated tidbit or beauty tip gleaned from someone raised inside an A-lister household generates far more headlines than those with a conventional background.

“There’s a race on now to secure the latest progeny to come of age, and a sense of cachet for the brand that gets to book the latest nepo on the block as a model or friend of the house,” Ms. Greene said.

Then there is the allure for the offspring themselves, fetishized and fawned over in a world where being a model — and having the ability and influence to sell a product because of the way you look — appears to be the ultimate form of public validation. Twenty years ago, nepo babies like Stella Tennant who were trying to model would often distance themselves from their family name so they would not be accused of nepotism. In 2024, most actively court that attention, knowing the power it brings.



Amelia Gray Hamlin, a daughter of Lisa Rinna, at the Sportmax show in Milan. Marco Bertorello/Getty Images



Romeo Beckham, a son of David and Victoria Beckham, at the Fashion Awards in London. Dominic Lipinski/Getty Images

“Generation Z kids with inherited fame were brought up in this mess,” Mr. Scully said. “Their standards of beauty and taste and accomplishment are different because they live in the age of influencers, so this is all they know. Digital personas are as important to them as their real ones, whoever your mom or dad is.”

Many children eventually use the profile boost from their modeling as a steppingstone to something else — often acting — as seen in the leaps from the runway to Hollywood by Lily-Rose Depp, Rafferty Law and Dree Hemingway. Many grouch that the outrage and opprobrium they attract is unfair. Almost all of

them say that they may get a foot in the door, only to have to work twice as hard and be twice as good to prove themselves equal to the task, which inevitably prompts backlash from fellow models with less starry origin stories.

After Ms. Depp complained about the resentment during an interview in 2022, the model Vittoria Ceretti wrote on Instagram: “I know it’s not your fault, but please, appreciate and know the place you came from. You can tell me your sad little story about it (even at the end of the day you can still always cry on your dad’s couch in your villa in Malibu), but how about not being able to pay for your flight back home to your family?”

Anok Yai also posted her thoughts about nepo-baby models on the social media platform. “Seeing people benefit from nepotism doesn’t bother me at all — I know my talent and work ethic will get me into any room I want,” she wrote. “But goddamn if only you knew the hell we go through just to be able to stand in the same room you were born in.”

Elizabeth Paton reports on the global fashion industry for The Times, a topic she has covered for more than a decade. She is based in London. More about Elizabeth Paton

Algunos comentarios de los lectores

R**Rick Gage**

Mt. Dora | 2h ago

Nepotism, favoritism and elitism all tied up in a gilded bow. Can you think of anyone less talented or more needy than a model who still needs a parent's help to parade around in front of the other parents and their kids?

[Reply](#) [7 Recommend](#) [Share](#)[Flag](#)D**Don Yuan**

NYC | 1h ago

Yes and no. Of course these people should be aware of their immense privilege, and try not to take things for granted--- but the casual sneering at their endeavors is also absurd. They are human beings. Not all of them are annoying and entitled. Nobody chooses to be born into poverty; nobody chooses to be born rich.

People who smugly dismiss all "nepo babies" as inherently worthless are, I think, jealous. Jealousy with a healthy dose of pseudo-woke ideology. Not a good combination.

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L

Lokrizen

San Diego | 1h ago

They look gorgeous and are probably well introduced to the lifestyle. They have fans. They don't fall for or need lowlife casting shenanigans. Seems a win. So what if their parents are famous. They tick all the boxes. You have to walk n wear clothes while looking great and being super fit n skinny. Where is the problem?

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S

Sheri Spencer

London, Ontario, Canada | 2h ago

This whole nepo-babies thing is so absurd. No one complains about family businesses handed from parent to child, sometimes for generations. No one talks about families that produce teachers or doctors or plumbers generation after generation. Nepotism is not new but media has twisted it into a "dirty" word to denigrate the talents of the offspring of the talented, creative, rich and beautiful and mostly women of the arts and media.

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2 REPLIES

N

NDP

PNW | 2h ago

@Sheri Spencer

You don't need a connection to go into teaching, medicine, or plumbing. You need the right education and credentials. Literally anyone who is capable of successfully completing coursework can enter those industries. Not so with fashion, film, or other fame based industries.

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L

Lawyermom

Washington DC | 23m ago

@NDP Teaching at the college level and entry to premed undergrad and medical school are certainly eased for the children of current professionals in those fields. Especially if the parents can afford large donations.

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