

# Will This Mrs American Beauty Queen With Eight Kids Make Big Families Normal Again?

In case you haven't heard, Hannah and Daniel Neeleman are the genesis of the Instagram sensation "Ballerina Farm." What makes [Ballerina Farm](#) so appealing that it has amassed nearly 9 million followers?

Well, there's lots to like: A Julliard ballerina marries a businessman, and they buy a gorgeous plot of land in a little mountain valley to raise pigs on. They bake sourdough bread in an antique stove named Agnes and share videos of milking cows, making lasagna noodles from scratch, riding horses, dancing, going to church, sorting fresh eggs, making more food, and giving birth at home—to eight children.

Oh, and one more thing. Hannah is a prize-winning beauty queen who just competed in the Mrs World pageant with her two-week old baby in tow.

The Instagram world fell all over itself either cheering or condemning the ballerina beauty queen not just for competing in the pageant, but for the gall of looking so dang good doing it. Not many women could pull off an evening gown competition and a swimsuit exhibition just days after birthing a child—much less their eighth child. But Hannah did.

A [picture](#) of Hannah nursing her baby backstage while wearing an evening gown and looking gorgeous as all heck took the internet by storm. As well it should. A woman with a winning combination of grittiness and glamour who takes motherhood gracefully by the horns like a boss while still pursuing her personal ambitions is worthy of note. Maybe even admiration.

# One in a million?

But here's the thing. Not that long ago, having eight children was normal. Lots of women—perhaps even most women—in ages past had eight children. Or more. And milking cows has been standard practice for thousands of years, as has making cheese, collecting eggs, and baking bread. Competing in beauty pageants may be a less common use of one's time, but beauty itself has arguably always been the realm of women.

And giving birth has been happening since the dawn of time and until recently it almost always happened at home. So what I'm saying is that not very many years ago, everyone was Ballerina Farm—minus the toe shoes. Almost everyone cooked their own food, worked with livestock, and had lots of kids.

For instance, two of my own great grandparents came from families with 13 children. The mother of one of those families was known as a woman who “loved to ride horses and broke many wild horses into tame ones.” She also led the local choir and was a good cook who “welcomed anyone into her home at any time and gave them dinner.”

And my third great grandma crossed the ocean with her husband and four children, pulled a handcart 300 miles on their journey west, and birthed a baby boy along the way. She became known as “a dressy woman who ran a good home,” “a fine seamstress,” and a “kind and loving mother who worked hard for her children and husband.” A neighbor once wrote of her, “I never knew a prettier or more refined woman.”

And there are millions more women with [stories](#) just like this. These women don't sound like oppressed, angry females who resented their lives, their children, their husbands, or the hard work and adventure that was part of their daily living. In fact, they sound a lot like Hannah Neeleman: tough, beautiful, joyful, and focused on family.

# Has having fewer children made us better?

Most people don't have eight kids anymore. I have five children and was once told by an angry online troll to "shut my legs and stop overpopulating the earth." This way of thinking has overtaken much of the world, and the average [global fertility rate](#) is now 2.3 children per woman.

But is the world any better for it?

Are the kids doing better? Are children less depressed, more physically fit, and more joyful? Are women happier? Are men more noble? Are families generally more content and more cohesive? Are children getting more attention from their parents? Is society at large becoming more united, safer, and more peaceful?

Social scientists (and even mildly observant people) have been noting consistent decline in many of these areas for at least the past 50 years. So, it may not be the cow-milking ballerina who has lost her mind. Maybe it's the rest of us.

## **Ballerina Farm makes motherhood look good, but it's just a political ruse!!!!**

While women the world over are watching Ballerina Farm with a sort of enamored longing, the chafing feminists among us can't stand it. And at least some of them think there can be only one reason for Ballerina Farm's popularity. In the wake of Roe v. Wade being overturned, there is a right wing political cabal pushing motherhood and traditional gender roles on women. And Ballerina Farm must be a pernicious part of it.

[TikToker](#) Caroline Burke explains, "You cannot tell me that it

is accidental that in the two years since we lost more reproductive rights than in previous decades, all of these ‘tradwives’ have been gaining insane traction online.” She says that while Hannah Neeleman is disingenuously making motherhood “look enjoyable,” real women today are “terrified of having children” and are subconsciously searching for some sort of misguided hope that they can thrive in a future where motherhood is thrust upon them.

Ballerina Farm does indeed give women hope, real hope, the hope that a plucky woman can thrive as a mother, an entrepreneur, and a beauty queen, which protesting feminists apparently can’t stand.

## Raising hope

Then keep it up, Hannah. Keep raising kids, raising bread, and raising people’s hopes. Keep showing people that the clatter of big families not only fills our lives with noise and work, but with purpose and love. Keep showing the terrified women of the world that a future with family in it can be beautiful—and that *they* can be beautiful and happy as wives, as mothers, and as whatever else they choose to be.

My refined, hearty ancestors who crossed oceans and tamed horses also helped settle a little mountain town known as Kamas, Utah. And as fate would have it, Ballerina Farm is nestled right in the heart of Kamas valley. I think my grandmothers would smile to know that Hannah Neeleman is there wrangling livestock, making dinner, raising a brood of children, and inviting people back to a life filled with family—and looking pretty while she does it.

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