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in earlier generations. In the age "cohort" now in its college years, nearly half of all second children were born within two years of the first. Among those born in 1970–74, only a third were. That means fewer younger siblings will be denied college educations because their parents cannot afford to pay for more than a year or so of two costly university tuitions at once.

Although a few economists and other critics have argued that a college education no longer "yields" enough future increased earning power to justify the investment (typically, about \$40,000), Smith doubts that such claims will depress enrollment in the future. Salaries for freshly minted college graduates should rise as their numbers fall. And the existing glut of sheepskin-bearing Baby-Boomers will give future students every incentive to seek *graduate* degrees to get ahead of the pack.

"Only an economist," Smith adds, "could envision an American society in which college-graduate parents tell their children that a college education is 'not worth it.'"

*Parent Problem*

"Raising Kids" by James Q. Wilson, in *The Atlantic* (Oct. 1983), Box 2547, Boulder, Colo. 80322.

Psychologists perplexed by violent or overly aggressive children have come up with a host of theories to explain their behavior—faulty genes, broken homes, and the Oedipal complex. But more and more evidence points to a simpler view, writes Wilson, a Harvard political scientist: "Incompetent" parents raise bad kids.

The notion that families might be responsible for growing delinquency was unpopular among social scientists during the 1960s, when socioeconomic theories were in vogue. But in 1969, University of Arizona criminologist Travis Hirschi broke ranks when he asked in his *Causes of Delinquency* not why people break the law, but why they obey it. He found that children of all social classes were more law-abiding if they had close family ties.

Therapists working in the field have gone further, Wilson notes. "Behavior modification"—setting up an explicit system of rewards and punishments for problem children in institutions—seems to work well for a time, but once children return home, they tend to revert to their old ways. Gerald R. Patterson of the Oregon Social Learning Center has achieved far more lasting results by teaching parents how to use a mild form of behavior modification at home.

Patterson believes poor child-rearing *skills*, not personality or income, account for most parents' failures to rear children well. Failure occurs when parents' rules are unclear to their children and are enforced erratically. Patterson advocates paying careful attention to the routine but vital interactions in which parents display approval or disapproval by word, tone, gesture, or expression.

Can parents have forgotten such basic tricks of the trade? There is no reason to think so, says Wilson. He speculates that "traditional social

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and moral supports for family life" have weakened and that "opportunities for distraction and entertainment outside the family have become greater." Hence, parents are simply paying less attention to their offspring. Good parents are needed to raise good kids.

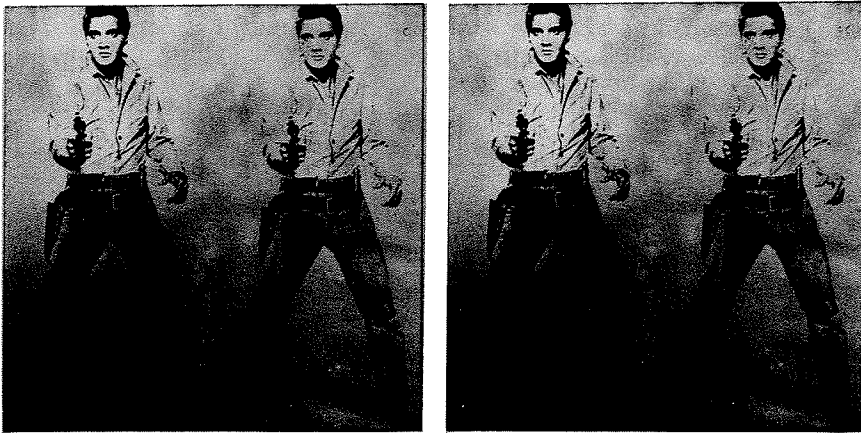
### *Superstars' Fat Salaries*

"The Economics of Superstars" by Sherwin Rosen, in *The American Scholar* (Autumn 1983), 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Are top baseball players, television news anchors, or rock singers worth the millions of dollars they can earn each year? Yes, argues Rosen, a University of Chicago economist.

Just a few decades ago, such figures were simply "stars." Today, they are called "superstars," an apt inflation in nomenclature, says Rosen, given the vastly expanded audiences they can reach thanks to the growth of television, movies, and records.

Not all vocations produce superstars. In those that can, minute increases in talent produce immense leaps in productivity. A football running back who is half a step faster than the rest will gain more yards and score more touchdowns, and his shoes couldn't be filled by any of a dozen slightly slower peers. The tiny increase in speed is worth an enormous increase in pay. By contrast, a salesman who is twice as success-



*Elvis Presley, one of the first modern superstars, as immortalized in 1964 by Andy Warhol, an early superstar of the art world.*