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profit-making world, the incentives are reversed," Payne notes. Men who fail to develop good work habits are fired.

Yet at the same time, no one bugs the workers about reforming their lives, he points out. An ILS job is not ordinarily a steppingstone to bigger and better things, but it is a giant step above underclass existence.

Social reformers, who are inclined to think

"that unconditioned giving is the way to help people in need," have something to learn from commercial firms such as ILS, Payne concludes. That is "the idea of *exchange*, the notion that the assisted person should give something in return for what he receives. Helping arrangements based on exchange avoid dependency, enhance self-esteem, foster social learning, and promote tolerance."

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## PRESS & MEDIA

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### *The Forgotten Gray Audience*

"Why Won't Television Grow Up?" by Vicki Thomas and David B. Wolfe, in *American Demographics* (May 1994), 127 State St., Ithaca, N.Y., 14850.

TV advertisers and broadcast network executives are obsessed with the youth audi-

ence. A 30-second spot on NBC's "Sea Quest," which appeals to twenty- and thirty-somethings, costs \$101,000, while a half-minute on CBS's "Murder, She Wrote," which is popular with over-50s and has a much larger audience, goes for \$26,000 less. In their intense competition for harder-to-reach younger viewers, argue Thomas and



Star Trek: The Next Generation was near the height of its popularity last year when it was canceled and replaced by another Star Trek series designed to have more appeal to younger viewers.

Wolfe, who both work in the promotional business, the networks and advertisers are foolishly ignoring a gold mine.

"The most lucrative markets of the 1990s consist of people aged 45 and older," the authors say. Households headed by 45- to 54-year-olds spent an average of \$41,020 in 1993—more than any other households, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. On a per capita basis, those households spent \$14,650, while households headed by 55- to 64-year-olds were next highest, at \$14,336. The next-oldest group spent less (\$12,477) but had a larger share of discretionary income than its juniors. Meanwhile, households headed by people between 25 and 34 years old spent only \$10,212 per person.

Not only do older adults spend more, Thomas and Wolfe note, but their numbers are growing, as the baby boomers age. The median age of adults today is 41.3; in 25 years, it will be 49. By then, the number of people over 50 will have increased by more than 60 percent, while the number of those ages 18-49 will hardly have grown at all.

So why the obsession with youth? One reason, say Thomas and Wolfe, may be that copywriters, agency representatives, and media buyers are young themselves. In an informal survey of top advertisers and ad agencies, the authors found that the average executive was 31 and the average agency representative even younger. They may find it easier to figure out what consumers in their own

generation want (or can be made to want). In addition, the authors say, "few of these young decision-makers are knowledgeable about demographic trends." Most surveyed thought the median age of U.S. adults was lower than it is. These youngsters, however, may have one thing in their favor: it may not be too late for them to learn.

### *The Culture of News*

Writing in *Forbes MediaCritic* (Summer 1995), Michael Schudson, a sociologist at the University of California, San Diego, contends that while many journalists like to depict themselves as high-minded individualists, they are very much creatures of their professional culture.

*Not only do journalists work in particular kinds of organizations, but their work draws on and depends on particular cultural traditions. These traditions concern, among other things, how to know what is interesting or unusual, how to validate a claim, how to demonstrate one's own authorial legitimacy, how to write an arresting lead, how to win a journalistic prize, how to construct a news story as an acceptable moral tale. The cultural traditions, often unspoken, often taken to be instinctual ("a nose for news") or acquired only by long experience in the field ("news judgment"), are the literary, intellectual, and cultural scaffolding on which the news is hung. . . .*

*The news . . . is produced by people who operate, often unwittingly, within a cultural system, a reservoir of stored cultural meanings. It is organized by conventions of sourcing—who is a legitimate conveyer of information to a journalist. It lives by unspoken preconceptions about the audience—less a matter of who the audience actually may be than a projection by journalists of their own social worlds. News as a form of culture incorporates assumptions about what matters, what makes sense, what time and place we live in, what range of considerations we should take seriously. A news story is supposed to answer the questions "who," "what," "when," "where," and "why" about its subject. But to understand news as culture requires asking of news writing what categories of person count as a "who," what kinds of things pass for facts or "what's," what geography and sense of time is inscribed as "where" and "when," and what counts as an explanation of "why."*