# ADULT: LATER YEARS

**Shaw 9; Pecchioni 5 & 12; Harwood 5-6**

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## THEORIES: LATER LIFE

- Activity theory (Havighurst)
  - Optimal aging supported by activity, involvement, replacement for lost roles
- Disengagement theory (Cumming & Henry)
  - Accept and reduce social involvement (let others take their turn)
  - Disengagement for health reasons
  - Mixed to low support for this theory
- Abandonment theory (Burgess)
  - Aging decreases social engagement and increases isolation and learning to endure these states
  - Aged as a "dis-privileged group"
- Continuity Theory (Erikson)
  - Ego integrity equates to recognized wisdom in application
- Socio-Environmental theory (Gubrium) (Bronfrenbrenner)
  - Interaction between individual and social environment
  - Accept/reject based on personal resources (group resources)
  - Internal and external resources congruent means life satisfaction

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## AGING POPULATION

- Japan has the highest average life expectancy at birth 81 years, followed by Singapore (80) and several other developed countries: Australia, Canada, Italy, Iceland, Sweden and Switzerland (79). Levels for the United States and most other developed countries fall in the 76- to 78-year range.
- Among developing regions, the Caribbean has the highest percentage of older people (7.2 percent).
- There were more older women than older men in the vast majority of the world's countries; notable exceptions were India, Iran and Bangladesh.

In the US:
  - 2011: 40.3 million people over 65
  - 1900: 3.1 million

From "An Aging world: 2001," US Census Bureau and National Institute on Aging

- By 2026 20% of New Zealand over 65

## IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNICATION STUDIES

- Extending working lives raises questions for organizational communication:
  - Intergenerational communication problems linked to generational differences in digital communication skills and values
  - Intergenerational communication problems linked to adapting organizational communication (digital and human) to workers from multiple generational cohorts
- Domains of aging and Communication:
  - Physical domain (Principles of Universal Design)
  As applied to digital communication technologies as well as human communication

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- **PRINCIPLE ONE: Equitable Use**
  The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities
- **PRINCIPLE TWO: Flexibility in Use**
  The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- **PRINCIPLE THREE: Simple and Intuitive Use**
  Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level
- **PRINCIPLE FOUR: Perceptible Information**
  The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
- **PRINCIPLE FIVE: Tolerance for Error**
  The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
- **PRINCIPLE SIX: Low Physical Effort**
  The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.
- **PRINCIPLE SEVEN: Size and Space for Approach and Use**
  Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Source:

NC State University, Center for Universal Design, 1977

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## IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNICATION STUDIES

- **Social domain** (Intergenerational interaction; Social support, Later life & marital communication, Lifespan friendships, Age cohort interaction, Sibling communication in later life; Digital- social communication, etc.)
- **Cognitive domain** (Communicating and memory; emphasis on various kinds of intelligences practical "crystal" intelligence)
- **Emotional domain** (Emotional communication competencies