

## Book Review

Zeiger, S. J. (2019). *Alive after academia: Post-career reflections of social work educators*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

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Dr. Spencer James Zeiger served as President of the Association of Baccalaureate Program Directors from 2001 to 2003 and has held social work leadership roles in six states. Dr. Zeiger writes this as a follow up to his previous work *Career Reflections of Social Work Educators*, which was the result of interviewing 66 social work educators in 2010. Having recently departed from 28 years in academia, and subsequent to a qualitative study he completed between 2015 and 2018, he now provides a place for the voices of those social work educators who have resigned or are about to resign. He explores the transition from academia to life after leaving academia and adds his own commentary on what life it is like in “The Next Chapter,” as he refers to retirement.

Questions ranged from asking how a career in social work education prepared them for the next phase of their lives, to what advice they would give to “younger in the job” social work educators. He also asked about life changing events in their career and how does one know when to leave the academy. The responses are thoughtful, open, inspiring and honest. Reading this as a social work educator who is in the “twilight years at the academy” the questions asked prompted some good career reflection and ideas for other things to do before retiring.

Interestingly, during the process, Zeiger was also in the process of retiring and through the encouragement of the interviewees, he decided to be the 39th interview with one of the other interviewees asking the questions. This gives a very intimate feel to the work as he adds his comments at the end of

each chapter, making them feel very personal. This helps to connect the reader to the material and to think about what preparation is needed before it is time to leave the academy.

The intended audience is very specifically social work educators in varying stages of their careers. Zeiger focuses on how when we move to “The Next Chapter” we move from “living life for a purpose” to “living life for meaning.” He sees this as freeing and giving folks the chance to be more fully themselves and to express themselves more readily in new and different ways. “Living life for meaning” seems like the strongest connection to social work values and ethics as it speaks to the ways we put those values and ethics into our lives even after our career in the field.

This is a strong work. There are other questions that could have been asked that might have made the interviews even richer. Seeing if the responses were different based on the type of social work originally practiced would be interesting, or by the type of courses taught, or even by the type of college or university where the interviewees spent most of their career. There is so much left to ask and the work leaves the reader with a sense of wonder about the coming years and a sense of hope for what that time can look like. It might be an interesting book to use on a pedagogy class at the doctoral level as new graduate students contemplate and prepare to enter the academic world. It could give them a sense of what lies ahead and how they need to prepare for their future.