

**Note to NUFs students-** Your readings are slightly different than the other articles. They deal with “labor psychology” – psychology in the workplace. Specifically, they deal with change an “occupation” from a “job” or a “career” into a “calling.” Positive psychology in ELT is not a “mainstream” topic like things such as grammar or reading are. I think a lot of us are interested because it is a way to make our classes – our own jobs – more satisfying for ourselves as well as the students.

As you read, please think about how these ideas (might/ could) apply to your own teaching situation). Could they apply to tasks we set for learners?

I suggest you read this *Psychology Today* article before the one from the University of Michigan.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/career-transitions/201206/job-career-calling-key-happiness-and-meaning-work>



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Career Transitions

## Job, Career, Calling: Key to Happiness and Meaning at Work?

What's your work orientation? And why does it matter?

Like 221

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How you approach your work might directly affect your level of job satisfaction and determine the meaning you find in employment. Some interesting research in work orientation comes from Dr. Amy Wrzesniewski, an Associate Professor of Organizational Behavior at Yale University's School of Management. Dr. Wrzesniewski and other researchers have been studying a classification system which can help you recognize your orientation toward your work and find ways to attain greater job satisfaction.

Consider these three orientations toward work-- see which one applies to your current employment:

**Job Orientation:** Individuals who fall into this category tend to view their work as a means to an end. They work to receive the pay and/or benefits to support their hobbies, family, or life outside work. They prefer jobs which do not interfere with their personal lives. They are not as likely to have a strong connection to the workplace or their job duties. The job serves as a basic necessity in life.

**Career Orientation:** An individual with a “career” orientation is more likely to focus on elements related to success or prestige. This individual will be interested in the ability to move upward in his or her career, to receive raises and new titles, and to achieve the social standing which comes from the career. Careers which have a clear upward “ladder” are appealing to those with a career orientation.

**Calling Orientation:** Individuals with a calling orientation often describe their work as integral to their lives and their identity. They view their career as a form of self-expression and personal fulfillment. Research conducted by Wrzesniewski and colleagues find that individuals with a calling orientation are more likely to find their work meaningful and will modify their duties and develop relationships to make it more so. They are found to be more satisfied in general with their work and their lives.

These aren’t necessarily exclusive categories: someone with a calling orientation may also desire a good salary and benefits—but individuals with a calling orientation are more likely to say that they would do their job even if they weren’t paid.

Interestingly enough, you cannot necessarily predict someone’s orientation based on their job title or income. In fact, Wrzesniewski’s research has found that most professions are fairly evenly divided—with about a third of workers falling into each category. Let’s take the example of an administrative assistant:

- The administrative assistant might approach his/her work with a job attitude: “I’m working here because it was the only job available in this market. It’s OK but it’s not my life. I’m more interested in my family right now.”
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- Or s/he might have a career approach: “I really want to move up. I’m working toward becoming the CEO’s assistant. I want that office on the top floor. I want to be seen as a person with power and access to the people in this organization.”
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- Or an administrative assistant with a calling orientation might be more likely to say: “I take a lot of pride in solving our customers’ problems before they ever reach my supervisor’s desk. I consider myself an integral element in the success of our company and I enjoy the challenges I face each day.”

I have observed the presence of different work orientations when advising students who are considering medical school. Many aspiring doctors are thwarted in their career paths by the rigors of the premed curriculum or the highly selective admissions process. When they need to seek other careers, advisors often assume they will want to select another helping or health-related profession. And those with a calling orientation might. But many premed students actually have a career orientation and are more likely to seek another prestigious, powerful, or high-paying field such as the law or investment banking.

Wrzesniewski's research has also shown that most workplaces are evenly divided—with about one-third of workers falling into each of the categories. And as described above, within some professions it's not uncommon to see the same three-way split among orientation.

While there is no right or wrong orientation toward work, Wrzesniewski's research shows that individuals who have a calling orientation report higher satisfaction with their lives and work, and are more likely to "craft" their jobs to fit their strengths and interests. Wrzesniewski describes the calling orientation as a "portable benefit" for those who are generally positive about a variety of work experiences. On the other hand, those who have a job orientation may simply find more meaning in activities outside of the work setting. So where do you think you fall in this classification system? Take a moment to think about how your orientation affects your motivation, your desire to continue with your career or find a new one, and your overall job/career satisfaction.

Not sure? You can take a questionnaire to determine your preference. Click on this link to the [AuthenticHappiness website](#) at The University of Pennsylvania. Scroll down through the list of tests, and click on the "Work-Life Questionnaire" (currently the 14th questionnaire on the list). You will be asked to register (it's free; just create a username and password) and take the quiz. It will only take a few minutes.

Knowing your work orientation can help you find ways to motivate yourself and craft a better work situation without having to change jobs. It can also help you know what other careers might be more or equally satisfying to you. This can be particularly helpful knowledge for transitioning into a new career field. It can also help you better understand why your colleagues approach their jobs differently from you. And if you're a manager, the supervisory style needed to manage individuals with job orientations differs from those with calling orientations. My next blog post will focus on suggestions developed by Dr. Wrzesniewski and other researchers for crafting your job to enhance your happiness and satisfaction regardless of your orientation.

Want to read more? Check out: Wrzesniewski, A., McCauley, C. R., Rozin, P., & Schwartz, B. (1997). [Jobs, careers, and callings: People's relations to their work](#). *Journal of Research in Personality*, 31, 21-33.

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