

Business founders' work design and new venture development

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Abstract:

This study aims to explain the interplay between business founders' work design and new venture development. Our qualitative research reveals that founders' work design differs in terms of unsettled and settled work. In unsettled work, founders redesign their work to serve the needed changes in their new ventures. In settled work, founders, who develop a commitment to their self-created work, often maintain rather than change their work, regardless of the potentially needed changes in the new ventures. Our findings suggest that founders' work has a subtle structure that results in direct, day-to-day experience that is integral in shaping new ventures.

Keywords: entrepreneurship | job crafting | work design | enactment | qualitative research

Article:

Executive summary

Business founders' work design has received only limited scholarly attention (Baron, 2010). Although there is a rich body of literature on founders' varying business decisions (e.g., opportunity assessment, entrepreneurial entry, exploiting opportunities, entrepreneurial exit decisions; Shepherd et al., 2015), there are only a limited number of studies on founders' work design decisions when developing their business (exceptions include Dahl and Sorenson, 2009; Shabbir and di Gregorio, 1996). This is understandable, as we often assume that business founders' work constantly changes to account for the uncertain and ever-evolving nature of new venture development (Kirkwood and Tootell, 2008). Drawing on enactment perspective (Weick, 1979), we contend, however, that this assumption may oversimplify the interplay between business founders' work design and venturing.

Enactment perspective acknowledges that people are both agentic and constrained. In the realm of work design, business founders could be viewed as agentic, as they have the capacity to design and enact their work as they would like (Kirkwood and Tootell, 2008; Shabbir and di Gregorio, 1996). Enacting itself, however, may make business founders committed to what they have enacted; that is, people may “fall in love” with their own creation when enacting it.

Our findings from a qualitative research suggest that business founders' work can be differentiated as unsettled and settled work, for which business founders enact different principles. In unsettled work, founders redesign their work to serve needed changes in their new ventures; they typically operate a “new venture first, work design second” principle. We identify three overlapping yet distinct needs that business founders seek to achieve in making their new ventures. These needs are then designed into their work arrangement. We label them as business founders' identity, resource, and social meaning work design. In settled work, business founders often develop and express their commitment to their self-created work design. To justify their work design, business founders often hold a “repeating the right work design” principle. Their work design is largely driven by the rewarding experience that they receive from enacting this design. These rewarding experiences can be summarized as the three psychological experiences of work: meaningful, realistic, and socially acceptable.

The interplay between new venture development and work design follows different rationales for unsettled and settled work. In unsettled work, business founders are fundamentally experimenting with ways to make their business survive and thrive. Work design, in this sense, is often invisible or has a subtle, self-created structure and is in the service of new venture development. In the settled work, enacting the self-created work itself provides business founders with a rewarding “small wins,” which are often routinized, as they make business founders believe that they are doing the right thing. Reproducing the rewarding experience by enacting the designed work thus becomes its own end.

In sum, our study reveals a richer understanding of the interplay between business founders' work design and new venture development. Our findings suggest that business founders' work, a previously taken-for-granted self-made structure in the entrepreneurship literature, is often subtle or invisible but may produce real and direct experiences that have the potential to shape the development of new ventures.

1. Introduction

Baron (2010) notes that business founders in the new venture development process often “create their own jobs, tasks, and roles as their new ventures emerge and take shape” (p. 371). Baron's foresight suggests that business founders' new venture development and work design, or the creation or modification of “the content and organization of one's work tasks, activities, relationships, and responsibilities” (Parker, 2014, p. 662), would influence each other. Although it seems that business founders' work design simply co-varies with their ever-evolving new ventures, it also is possible that the enactment of their work influences the way that they make their businesses. For instance, if business founders feel satisfied with their self-created jobs, tasks, and roles, their sense of “settling down” may affect their adaptability to subsequent change. In the present study, we seek to contribute to this line of inquiry by offering a relatively novel and in-depth qualitative investigation on the interplay between business founders' work design and ventures.

In building our understanding, we draw on the enactment perspective (Weick, 1979). This perspective is useful in explaining how powerful actors act upon the environment to shape it (Nicholson, 1995). The environment, in this sense, is at least partially self-created (Marcus and

Anderson, 2013). Specifically, in the present study, we are interested in how business founders, as powerful actors, shape their work design and how the enactment of the designed work shapes their new ventures. The enactment perspective enables us to include both an enactive process (i.e., founders' *making* the self-created jobs) and a self-made enactive environment (i.e., founders' making the *self-created jobs*). The enactive process focuses on the making, while the enactive environment deals with the made.

The distinction between the making and the made reflects a duality in the enactment perspective. On the one hand, the enactment perspective positions actors as agentic, as they have the capacity to change their environment. Business founders, in our study, could be considered people who have the capacity to design the to-be-enacted work as they would like (Kirkwood and Tootell, 2008; Shabbir and di Gregorio, 1996). This enactive process of founders' designing work shares a conceptual affinity with an emerging perspective in organizational work design literature: job crafting (Tims and Bakker, 2010; Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). The job crafting perspective was developed to explain employees' proactivity in shaping their own relatively routine jobs in mature organizations (Berg et al., 2013). Job crafting recognizes that employees are designers of their jobs rather than merely job recipients (Berg et al., 2013).

On the other hand, the enactment perspective recognizes that powerful actors, such as business founders, are not always as agentic as we would like to believe (Weick, 2003). For instance, powerful actors could be constrained by being “trapped” in the self-created environment as the commitment to their own creation emerges (Marcus and Anderson, 2013). In this regard, business founders may value the feedback received from enacting the designed work and thus develop a commitment to their own design, which limits their capacity for further work redesign. Based on the enactment perspective, we thus ask, “How do business founders design their work?” and “How does their designed work shape and get shaped by the development of the new ventures they are creating?”

We conducted a qualitative study and interviewed a total of 35 business founders in regard to their work design and new venture development. Our findings suggest that business founders' work design is not a one-shot design but a recurring process. A principle of “new venture first, work design second” defines their initially enactive process of work design. We characterize their work as *unsettled*, as it is ever-evolving and constantly designed and redesigned in response to the changes in new ventures. We also provide specific accounts for the business founders' varying ways of enacting designing work (i.e., designing work based on identity, resource, and social meaning) and the corresponding experience of enacting designed work (i.e., meaningful, realistic, and socially acceptable) that shapes their work design and new venture development. Our findings further suggest, however, that business founders' *unsettled* work could become *settled*, as founders' commitment to their own self-created work design emerges. The enactment of designed work produces a rewarding experience that facilitates the emergence of commitment. This commitment changes the above principle, as business founders become less attentive to redesigning work in response to what the new ventures call for. Instead, they follow a principle of “repeating the right work design”, which may limit future possibilities of their new ventures.

Our work provides contributions to the extant entrepreneurship and work design literatures. To the entrepreneurship literature, our research deepens the current understanding of entrepreneurial

work design based on only several emergent studies (e.g., Kirkwood and Tootell, 2008; Shabbir and di Gregorio, 1996), answering Baron's (2010) call to study business founders' work design, and reveals the interplay between business founders' work design and new venture development. To the work design literature, we extend the job crafting perspective to explain the major business venture changes that shape and get shaped by business founders' work design. In sum, although business founders' work design is subtle, the enactment of designed work often produces more direct experiences than do new ventures. Business founders' work design thus involves arranging the subtle structure that may build founders' commitment, which shapes business founders' subsequent decisions regarding new venture development.

2. Literature review

2.1. Entrepreneurial work design: the current status

Although work design has been extensively studied in the micro organizational behavior literature (Parker et al., 2017), relatively less attention has been placed on business founders' work design, and to the best of our knowledge, none of the existing studies focuses on the interplay between business founders' work design and new venture development. These extant studies portray founders as powerful actors who are able to design the work as they would like. For example, Shabbir and di Gregorio (1996) note that women in Pakistan who participated in an entrepreneurship development program stated that one important motivation to start a new business is the freedom to design their work arrangement as they would like. Kirkwood and Tootell (2008) approach 32 women and 26 men entrepreneurs in New Zealand and suggest that entrepreneurs, particularly women, may seek to arrange where, when, and with whom to work as well as manage their roles in work and family. Likewise, Dahl and Sorenson (2009) note that Danish entrepreneurs often choose to start a new venture in a place close to their family and friends rather than a location that could potentially benefit their new venture. Although these studies imply that founders' work design decisions can directly affect a new venture's development, they fail to probe how founders' work design shapes and gets shaped by the development of their new ventures.

2.2. Business founders' work design and new venture development: enactment perspective

Enactment is first and foremost about acting in and on the world (Weick, 1979). From the enactment perspective, acting is about people's acting to change the environment that they face. The enactment perspective suggests that people's acting often creates the structures that both impose constraints and afford opportunities (Weick, 1995). Enactment is particularly relevant to entrepreneurship as, like enactment, entrepreneurship is action oriented, and business founders are often characterized as people whose acting precedes thinking (Gartner et al., 1992). So far, entrepreneurship scholars have paid more attention to business founders' enactment in making their "business" environment (e.g., Gupta et al., 2004; Marcus and Anderson, 2013) than to making their own "work" environment.

Although acting is central to the enactment perspective, thinking is also important. The enactment perspective suggests that acting and thinking are interrelated as a recurring cycle of interaction: acting produces thinking, which then shapes further (re)acting (Weick, 1979). Thus,

people's acting on the environment to shape it would change the way that they think about the environment. Their updated understanding of the environment then shapes their future (re)action. For instance, business founders often take action that precedes understanding and learn how something works (or not) through reflection and the feedback received from acting (Gartner et al., 1992). Hence, the environment is not merely an external or material reality but also people's self-created environment or *enactive environment*, in which “people are very much a part of their own environment” (Weick, 1995, p. 31).

Enactment has two important implications for understanding business founders' work design. First, enactment shapes future action. As noted above, the enactment perspective suggests a recurring cycle between acting and thinking, which then shapes future acting. Applying this idea to the business founders' work design, we expect that business founders' work is often designed and then redesigned to reflect the updated enactive environment. Designing work is thus an enactive process. It is worth noting that, if designing work is understood as a process, the designed work or the enactive environment is not a result of process but only a moment in a process (Weick, 1995).

Second, enactment shapes our way of experiencing the enacted. Enactment suggests that we often enact our taken-for-granted beliefs and that these beliefs can serve as structures, directing our attention to some cues more than to others and to helping to form an interpretation of our initial action (Weick, 1979). Thus, enactment shapes our lived experience (Weber and Glynn, 2006), and lived experience influences our judgment, informing us that some types of enactment are more rewarding than are others. Rewarding enactment is more likely to be repeated and stabilized, thus serving as a source of commitment that shapes the way people come to understand the enactive environment.

2.3. From employees' to business founders' work design: lessons from job crafting theory

Work design theories generally include two different but complementary perspectives (Berg et al., 2013; Grant and Parker, 2009; Grant et al., 2009): job design (Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Morgeson and Humphrey, 2006) and job crafting (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). The job design literature often assumes that the role of job designers and that of job enactors are taken by different actors (i.e., managers and employees). In this literature, employees are often portrayed as “passive recipients of job tasks and of social information about job tasks” (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001, p. 193). In contrast, job crafting views employees as “active crafters of their work” (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001, p. 179; see also Grant and Parker, 2009). Wrzesniewski and Dutton take a social constructionist perspective (Gergen, 1994) and contend that employees “have latitude to define and enact the job” (p. 179). In other words, employees are both job designers and job enactors. Such assumption of job crafting theory aligns well with entrepreneurship, as business founders are often considered people who have the freedom to design their work for themselves to enact.

The research on the consequences of employees' job crafting is often at the level of the individual (e.g., Rudolph et al., 2017). With a few exceptions that focus on collective job crafting (e.g., Leana et al., 2009; Mattarelli and Tagliaventi, 2015), the organizational effect of job crafting has received insufficient attention. This is understandable, as employees may have the

capacity to change their jobs but not necessarily their organizations. Business founders, in contrast, have the capacity to change the new ventures' structures that both impose constraints and afford opportunities (Staw and Sutton, 1993). Our study, thus, presents a new possibility in studying work design by gaining an understanding of the interplay between business founders' own work design and new venture development.

Extant job crafting theory specifies three overlapping, yet distinct, perspectives: identity, resource, and meaning. Work identity, or how people define themselves at work (Pratt, 1998), guides employees' job crafting by creating an alignment between what they do (work) and who they are at work (work identity) (Sturges, 2012; Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). In addition, a recent extension of the job crafting theory highlights the significance of employees' managing resources and demands in job crafting (e.g., Bruning and Campion, 2018; Tims and Bakker, 2010). Drawing on the job demands-resources model of burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001), scholars have started to notice that employees can change their jobs in terms of acquiring resources and avoiding demands (e.g., Tims et al., 2012; Tims et al., 2013). Finally, work meaning, or how people understand the purposes of their work (Hsu and Stanworth, 2018), directs job crafting by creating an alignment between what they do (work) and what their work is about (work meaning). This perspective is the least developed although, in the early development of job crafting theory, it was defined as a core ingredient in the creation of a job (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). In sum, building on the understanding that employees design their thinking (identity, resources, and meaning) to develop self-created jobs, our study seeks to examine business founders' work design.

3. Method

To understand business founders' work design and new venture development, we adopted a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Locke, 2001). Such an approach allows us to start with business founders' thinking and acting as a base and then to inductively build upon these views to elaborate on how business founders design their work and the interplay between their designed work and their new venture.

3.1. Our theoretical discovery and turn

The data used in this paper were originally collected for an examination on business founders' career adjustment strategies from employed jobs to their entrepreneurial work. Hence, we approached only business founders who had quit former employed jobs to start their own businesses. During our data collection and analysis, we started to notice that the informants' work design, as one of their major adjustment strategies, not only mattered to their psychological well-being but also to the development of their new ventures. After iterating between our preliminary findings and several relevant literatures, we realized that the interplay between business founders' work design and new venture development was an undertheorized topic. We thus identified new research questions, redirected our energy to them when we further collected and analyzed data. Such theoretical turn is not uncommon when researchers follow the grounded theory approach to conduct qualitative studies (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

3.2. Sample

Our final dataset was drawn from 35 first-time Taiwanese business founders, whose previous employment often served as a point of reference to design the work that they would like to enact. Although our original research focus (i.e., career transitions) obviously influenced our sample, it also enabled us to obtain extreme cases that are particularly useful for building and elaborating on theory; that is, the phenomenon of interest tends to be more salient than it might be in other contexts (Alvarez et al., 2015; Eisenhardt, 1989; Pettigrew, 1990). Because we were interested in business founders' work design and how it interplays with the development of their new ventures, it would be ideal to obtain rich information in terms of subjective experiences and work-related acting and thinking. In contrast to individuals with entrepreneurial expertise (Baron and Ensley, 2006) or habitual entrepreneurs (Wright et al., 1997), our informants were more likely to utilize their entrepreneurial activities as a means to resolve their personal issues, and thereby create their new work from scratch.

We located potential informants through a mix of multiple techniques that is frequently used in the field of entrepreneurship (e.g., Dentoni et al., 2018; Fischer and Reuber, 2011). First, given that career-transition business founders occasionally gain media attention, we searched for and contacted those who had media coverage. Because such business founders might be more likely to have or to share positive experiences, which could limit the capacity of the data to provide a generic account of entrepreneurial work design, we also asked our families, friends, and colleagues whether they personally knew anyone who might have such experience. Such interpersonal connections often increase the trust between interviewers and informants and, thus, the likelihood of authentic sharing (Tsang, 1998). Finally, as business founders often engage with other founders to exchange ideas, we also asked our informants to refer other potential informants who had similar experiences as another means to enlarge the scope of our sample pool.

Our data collection continued for seven months, from mid-2014 to early-2015, during which we typically held research meetings on a biweekly basis. In those meetings, we reviewed our recent interviews, talked about their implications for data collection and theorizing, and discussed candidate informants for the next round of data collection (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). We screened each candidate collectively and decided which candidates might be more willing and able to share their own thinking and acting, rather than confirming our emerging theorizing. We stopped our data collection when we all agreed that we had achieved theoretical saturation (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Although we approached a total of 39 informants, we used data from only 35 because those excluded either were still at the idea stage of their new venture creation or were franchisees who had not created the work and venture from scratch.

In our final samples, all informants were entrepreneurs who started their own businesses in Taiwan. The mean tenure of the informants' previously employed jobs was 11.64 years. Since their career transition, they had been business founders for a mean of 2.96 years in average, with a range of 8 months to 8 years. Their mean age was 38.86 years, ranging from 27 to 55, and 34% were female. Our informants reported that they became business founders for various reasons. For example, whereas 40% of informants engaged in entrepreneurial activities because they wanted to realize expected profits in the foreseeable future, 49% reported a concern with family

commitment and obligation as their primary motivation. In addition, 31% referred to a desire for a healthier lifestyle as their main motivation to become business founders. Moreover, 29% of our informants reported that they became business founders for self-growth purposes, and another 29% referred to prosocial purposes.

Table 1. Informant information.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Entrepreneurial work	Entrepreneurial experience (years)
Tina	F	45	Fine-tea company owner	2.7
Garry	M	41	Tour guide	8.0
Fanny	F	42	Aquaponics farmer	2.5
Gamila	F	31	Board game trainer	4.0
Fairman	M	37	Dairy farmer	3.5
Chloe	F	51	Chocolate-store owner	6.0
Safi	M	46	Café owner	4.5
Blossom	F	30	Writer	2.0
Sam	M	42	Rice farmer	1.5
Morris	M	37	B&B owner	1.3
Greg	M	33	Biotech company owner	4.0
Powell	M	33	B&B owner	7.2
Holly	F	43	Antique store owner	1.8
Joy	F	38	Toy store owner	1.2
Pierce	M	52	Pineapple farmer	6.0
Sol	M	34	Health-beverage company owner	3.0
Grainne	F	31	B&B owner	1.0
Kirk	M	39	Bakery owner	3.0
Lidan	M	30	Café owner	2.0
Sparrow	M	46	Italian food restaurant owner	2.4
Flora	F	55	Information technology company owner	3.0
Bebe	F	27	B&B online reservation company owner	3.0
Ian	M	38	Ice cream shop owner	0.7
Roan	M	39	Japanese-style bar owner	2.3
Apollo	M	33	Blogger	1.5
Rudy	M	35	Bookstore owner	1.1
Sunny	F	32	Independent bookstore owner	1.0
Ray	M	33	Independent bookstore owner	1.0
Hamlet	M	37	Burger shop owner	7.0
Hoyt	M	38	Hot-pot restaurant owner	1.0
Medus	M	37	Social media company owner	5.5
Ben	M	37	Steamed-bun store owner	3.0
Trevor	M	38	B&B owner	1.5
Neena	F	45	Bakery owner	0.5
Harry	M	55	B&B owner	4.0

As shown, our sample represents a group of first-time as well as career-transition business founders who had diverse previous backgrounds and created their new ventures for various reasons. Our sample thus included but was not limited to female, lifestyle, and family entrepreneurs, who may pay more attention to work design because they pursue flexible work arrangements and lifestyle objectives (DeMartino and Barbato, 2003; Kirkwood and Tootell, 2008; Konig and Cesinger, 2015; McGowan et al., 2012; Shabbir and di Gregorio, 1996).

Accordingly, this sample granted better generalizability of our findings to various business founders in general. Table 1 presents detailed information on our informants.

3.3. Data sources

Our primary data source was interviews, which were supplemented with data from media coverage, unobtrusive observation, and social media, sources commonly used in qualitative inquiries (Eisenhardt, 1989). Each interview was semi-structured, lasted approximately 90 min, and typically took place in the entrepreneurs' workplace or a place near their home. We face-to-face interviewed most of the business founders only once. For some informants, we made additional follow-up short telephone interviews when clarifying questions were raised during our data analysis.

Our interview questions were designed to provide an understanding of the informants' work before and after they started their new venture. Asking about their work experiences before their new venture was critical, as it allowed us to make sense of what motivated them to start their new ventures. Questions regarding their work after their new venture then enabled us to look into their current work in terms of its tasks, relationships, responsibilities, purposes, and its relationship with their new venture development. We also asked questions about how their work on a day-to-day basis had changed since they started their new venture and how and why these changes took place. These questions aligned well with Baron's (2010) notion that entrepreneurs create their own jobs, tasks, and roles as their new venture emerges and takes shape. It is worth noting that our primary data were retrospective in nature and focused on past critical events (Flanagan, 1954; Gremler, 2004) that shaped the content and organization of their work.

As with other studies in the field of entrepreneurship (e.g., Conger et al., 2018; Mathias and Williams, 2018), we collected supplementary data from a variety of sources. As noted earlier, we occasionally identified candidate informants from media reports as well as systematically collected information that had been reported in a variety of media, such as newspapers, news websites, business magazines, and autobiographical television programs. We used this part of the data, when available, to understand how external audiences portrayed our informants and their actions. We also conducted unobtrusive observations, when appropriate, by following informants during their workday to obtain general observations about their entrepreneurial work. Unobtrusive observations enabled us to understand the artifacts that our informants used to represent who they were and allowed us to ask supplementary questions. In this way, we had firsthand observations of how these business founders enacted their ideas and interacted with clients or customers. Finally, many informants used social media (e.g., Facebook) as a channel to present their work. They frequently posted texts and photos in regard to the progress of their work, through which they engaged in online interactions with their clients or customers and friends. This source allowed us to obtain additional data, such as how they made their organizational identity claims and how they presented themselves to clients or customers.

3.4. Data analysis

We used traditional coding strategy to develop categories for their entrepreneurial work design. In the first stage of data analysis, we developed descriptive concepts using open coding (Strauss

and Corbin, 1998), which aims to identify informants' acting and thinking regarding entrepreneurial work design. For instance, we created the tentative category of “creating work” to account for our informants' initial arrangement of work. We categorized the changes that they later made to their work as “modifying work.” We then continued to update our descriptive concepts to account for the data collected. For instance, given that our informants reported various triggers for their modification of work, we refined our descriptive concepts to reflect these triggers. In this regard, we refined the category of “modifying work” as “modifying work based on personal values” or “modifying work based on customer demands.”

In the second stage of data analysis, we focused on how categories identified in the first stage were associated with each other at an abstract level. The purpose of this stage was to understand how our descriptive concepts fit together to suggest themes as associated with theory (i.e., axial coding; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). We revisited all of the data and the emerging descriptive concepts in an attempt to identify the core themes that explain how each descriptive concept related to one another. For instance, we created a high-level category, “entrepreneurial work design,” to cover those subcategories related to creating and modifying work. Our coding principle was to maximize the between-category differences while minimizing the within-category differences. Thus, we collapsed subcategories as we engaged in the constant comparative method (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Through this process, we developed a final set of the theoretical categories.

The third and final stage of our data analysis was related to crafting a core storyline for our data and emerging themes, guided by selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In this stage, we constantly revisited our data, rethought how our descriptive concepts and theoretical themes were related to business founders' work design, and discarded codes that were less relevant to the notion of their work design-related acting and thinking (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This stage of data analysis was led by an imaginative conversation that involved proposing research questions and providing answers to these questions as well as proposing alternative storylines, following conventional qualitative inquiries, as a means to make a theoretical contribution (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Pratt, 2008).¹ This stage resulted in the proposal of our research questions and a theoretical reciprocal model of new venture development and work design. Table 2 depicts the theoretical categories and illustrative examples.

Table 2. Theoretical categories and illustrative examples.

Aggregated dimension	Illustrative example
Initial status: unsettled work	
Unsettled work	Safi quit his job as a senior manager of a large-scale semiconductor manufacturer and opened a café that used only healthy, organic ingredients to make coffee and light meals. When the café began to run smoothly and successfully, he decided to open an organic restaurant. Safi quickly realized that running a restaurant was more complicated than running a café. Faced with more diversified ingredients, suppliers, and employees, he could not be as results-oriented as he had been. He began to lessen his original emphasis on standardized

¹ This stage continued as we received feedback during the revision process. Thus, the product of this stage was a collaborative work that involved not only authors but also the editor and reviewers. We thank the editor and reviewers for their constructive comments regarding how to revise our model.

Aggregated dimension	Illustrative example
Entrepreneurial work design	<p>procedures, adjust the way he worked with coworkers, and concentrate more on the service process.</p>
Identity work design	<p>Bebe, a finance journalist, felt that financial reports were generally not appreciated and, thus, did not have a real impact on society. Based on her idealized vision that work should make positive and substantive difference in the world, she decided to set up an integrated online reservation system for B&Bs by which she could internationalize Taiwan's tourism industry. To familiarize herself with the tourism industry, she and her cofounders started to work for B&Bs in exchange for experience with their potential customers.</p>
	<p>Garry, an IT company engineer, felt that there was nothing to learn from the job that he had been in for years. Following his belief that work should allow one to have novel experiences or to learn something new frequently, he opted to become a tour guide and designed the work in such a way that he could learn and have adventures continuously. In doing so, he chose his clients to ensure that they shared his vision. He occasionally gave his clients no travel plan and visited places where he had never been (which was very usual in the tourism business). Consequently, he and his clients co-explored the sites together, without prior experience.</p>
Resource work design	<p>When Lidan set his mind to change the community in which he grew up for the better, he well utilized his public relations (PR) expertise developed from his former job as a cinema PR specialist. He developed a new way of operating a café (a combination of “design” and “food”) in his hometown. He explained, “Here, I barely feel a sense of design. We seldom have art or cultural events, and most people here have no idea about design. With my PR background, I know how to bring it here.”</p>
	<p>When Sam relocated to a rural township for his son's special needs, his hobby of gardening and his former experience of attending an agriculture club caused him to come up with the idea of becoming a rice farmer. He noted, “My former experiences on planting crops and vegetables made my learning regarding rice farming easy and joyful.”</p>
Social meaning work design	<p>Sol started his business of ganoderma tea making due to his pursuit of a healthy life but soon realized that he needed ways to make his product acceptable in the eyes of customers. He explained, “Indeed, people buy my ganoderma tea for health reasons, but no customer would want to buy drinks that are not tasty. I have to tone down its bitter taste if I want to merchandise my tea.”</p>
	<p>Pierce joined an organic planting association and positioned his farming venture as distinct from others in the area. He explained, “Unlike my neighbors, I did not want to rely on pesticides. I grew organic pineapples, which are more difficult to grow than organic vegetables are. My membership in the association suggests that I am happy to challenge myself with organic planting.”</p>
	<p>Roan quit his job at the age of 35, with a child to raise, and was away from home in Japan for one year to study Japanese cuisine, planning to turn it into his new career. He shared how his customers recognized his courageous move: “When I opened this restaurant, I insisted on hiring Japanese chefs and using the finest ingredients. My customers were often amazed; they could not believe that such an ideal restaurant really existed.”</p>
Day-to-day work experiences	
Meaningful work	<p>Sparrow's entrepreneurship created meaningful work, as his work fit well with who he wanted to become (i.e., a participatory family member). He said, “By opening this restaurant, my kids have an opportunity to participate in my work. My kids come here frequently; they know what I am doing when I am at work. They eat pizzas made by their dad. I believe that all these elements—a hardworking dad, yummy pizzas, and a cozy restaurant—make a sweet memory for them.”</p>
Realistic work	<p>Grainne's entrepreneurship created realistic work, as her work fit well with resources that were handy and accessible. She opened a special B&B that often hosts Japanese musicians and band members because she was familiar with many bands when she worked in Japan</p>

Aggregated dimension	Illustrative example
Socially acceptable work	<p>previously. She noted, "I knew nothing about owning a B&B, but I was certain where to find customers. Many of my friends were invited to play in Taiwan but had a difficulty finding a nice place to stay at. I could offer a very good choice for them."</p> <p>Rudy's entrepreneurship created socially acceptable work, as his work fit well with the interests of his customers. He explained, "I happily find that I have some positive influence. I insist on selling good books rather than many books that my customers may not really need. I also insist on not selling things other than books, such as coffee and food. Many customers return because they agree with my ideal of being just a bookstore with goodwill."</p>
Commitment to work	
Strong commitment	<p>After Grainne opened a B&B primarily to host her foreign friends, she got very positive feedback from her friends, enjoyed her time with them, and found a sense of achievement because she was doing something that not everyone would dare to do. She stated, "My current work makes me feel that everybody likes who I am now. I want to keep doing this despite the unstable income."</p>
Weak commitment	<p>Garry's new career as a tour guide achieved huge success soon after his Greece tour got extremely positive evaluations and went viral on the Internet. He refused, however, to respond to the increasing customer demand. He noted, "I can earn a lot more by repeating the same tour groups five more times a year, but making money has never been the fundamental purpose of this business. I would be emotionally drained if I kept visiting the same destinations and never discovered new places." Having socially acceptable work was not enough to fill his meaningful work gap; thus, Garry still wanted to redesign his work.</p>
Effects of commitment to work on new venture development	
Repeating the right work design	<p>Holly decided that she would make her work fit her lifestyle. She had a casual schedule at her antique store and opened and closed whenever she wanted to (so that she could spend quality time with her underage son). She clearly knew that this would disappoint her customers, but she still insisted on doing so because she felt that her family was her top priority, which they couldn't be if she worked fixed hours. As her family came first and business came second, her attention and time were filtered by her family's needs. Her business was given only the remainder.</p>
New venture first, work design second	<p>Neena, a former financial executive, quit her job and opened a bakery because long working hours as a busy executive began to threaten her health. Realizing that her bakers were deficient in management skills and did not have the ambition to expand their work roles, she began to train and educate her bakers in terms of managerial knowledge. This resulted in a successful leadership development process and, eventually, the opening of several new bakeries led by the well-trained bakers. The self-created new work roles consumed more of Neena's time and energy, added uncertainty to her work arrangement, and were a bit away from her original expectation of having a less-busy job. Such a work redesign, however, transformed her bakery into a bakery restaurant chain.</p>

4. Findings

Our findings suggest that when the studied business founders started their new ventures, their work was unsettled in a sense that their work arrangement was still ever-evolving and constantly designed and redesigned in response to the needed changes in new ventures. Work design, in this sense, was often "secondary" and subtle. Founders engaged in three types of work design, each of which led to a corresponding day-to-day experiences at work that gradually formed a sense of commitment to the enacted work design. Influenced by such a strong commitment, some business founders' work was settled by routinizing what they believed as the "right" work design. Such an emerged commitment to work design then shaped the following new venture development.

4.1. Starting with the unsettled work

As new venture formation is a process of experimentation (Kerr et al., 2014) that involves innovation, proactivity, and risk taking (de Jong et al., 2013), entrepreneurial work design and redesign can be considered highly unstable, reflecting the ever-evolving nature of new ventures. For instance, Ian, an ice cream shop owner, established his shop because this was his father's unrealized dream. In the early stage, he used food additives and coloring to make ice cream because these ingredients were well-justified economically (i.e., lower cost) and psychosocially (i.e., feeling less uncertain). In addition, it enabled his shops to sell a variety of ice cream items. His work arrangement could be predictable, as the artificial ingredients could easily produce reliable products, and his food preparation could be routinized and involve only a few suppliers.

One day, a friend suggested that ice cream made of fresh fruit could serve as a signature item and create a distinction between other ice cream sellers and his shop. He then tried this out. Unlike food additives, fresh fruit was not a reliable ingredient, as the moisture content could significantly influence the final product quality. Using fresh fruit required close monitoring during the production process and incurred a high risk of failure. This business decision changed Ian's work arrangement, as he had to contact more suppliers and to begin work earlier to manage the “unexpected gifts of fresh fruits.” His decision also changed his business model, as his shop was able to produce and sell, at most, only two items a day. Nevertheless, it appeared that he changed his work arrangement without much hesitation; as Ian noted, “You got to do what you got to do” because Ian knew that it made sense to make the change permanent and to distinguish himself from others.

The above narrative reveals not only that new venture development and entrepreneurial work design are intertwined but also that new venture development (e.g., survival and thriving) often comes first, and the entrepreneurial work design is secondary. In other words, work is designed and redesigned to reflect the needs of new venture development. As a business has to change, work redesign is inevitable, and any work design could be tentative and ready for change. We refer to this malleable nature of the entrepreneurial work arrangement as “unsettled work design.” The unsettled work design is a default status, allowing the creation and modification of work arrangements without entrepreneurs' being overly concerned about their commitment to a certain work arrangement. Our sample of entrepreneurs often reported that they were “just experimenting” or “trying out new ways.”

4.2. Entrepreneurial work design: Identity, resource, and social meaning work design

The “new venture first, work design second” ethos is reflected in our results related to entrepreneurial work design. Specifically, business founders often ground their justifications for work redesign in terms of three issues when making new ventures: (1) what they (as entrepreneurs) value, (2) what resources are available to ventures, and (3) what the external audience of the marketplace appears to care about. Based on the above justifications, we characterized entrepreneurial work design in terms of identity, resources, and social meaning.

4.2.1. Identity work design

Having the freedom to infuse personal values into a new venture is considered an important driver for becoming an entrepreneur (Rindova et al., 2009). These personal values define their identity and often justify why they become entrepreneurs. We use the term *identity work design* to refer to work design and redesign as justified by personal values. Business founders' personal values are idiosyncratic, as they reflect entrepreneurs' past experiences, current desires, and vision regarding future-oriented ideal life goals. The development of such values can be seen in our informants. One informant, Fanny, was a former investment banker, who was diagnosed with a brain tumor. She felt that her stressful work life as an investment banker was detrimental to her health and noted that her ideal work would allow her to have the essential elements of a healthy life, such as an appropriate amount of physical labor, peace of mind, and work-life balance. Her diagnosis inspired her to envision working as an entrepreneur as a means to have the opportunity to realize her ideal lifestyle and personal values. Thus, she designed her entrepreneurial work with flexible work hours in a suburban area away from the stressful urban style of living.

Another informant, Trevor, was a salesperson of high-tech products who frequently traveled between Taiwan and China but began to place more emphasis on his family role after being married and having a son: "Before getting married, it felt cool [to travel]. However, now I have a wife and a son. Frequent travel, even with business deals being made, has become less desirable." His family-oriented values guided him to start a B&B (Bed-and-Breakfast) in an old house close to where his family stayed and to arrange a work routine that would allow him to fulfill his responsibilities to both his family and work. As shown, enacting a work design (e.g., where and when to work) expresses business founders' identity, and their identity is seen in the new ventures they established.

The journey of discovering one's personal values can start before the decision to become an entrepreneur is made (e.g., Fanny and Trevor). For many entrepreneurs, however, certain entrepreneurial experiences that were novel or thought provoking caused them to reflect on what mattered to them (O'Neil and Ucbasaran, 2016). This is evident in reports of how new experiences had changed entrepreneurs' personal values after they started to work in their new venture. For instance, Powell did not expect that starting a B&B, although it was next to his house, would bring his customers so close to his family and his underage daughter. Upon reflection, he concluded that he could not tolerate how his work relationships (i.e., with potential customers) could potentially compromise the safety of this family. Thus, for his B&B, he began to screen every customer who called to make a reservation and politely rejected those customers whom he thought would be uncomfortable to host by stating that he had no vacancy, although it might not have been the case. His identity work design includes changing his work tasks (i.e., how he handled phone calls), work relationships (i.e., his criteria for rejecting customers and how he did so), and the meanings attached to the tasks and relationships (i.e., screening customers as a way to protect his family) as a response to his valued family role (husband/father).

Pierce went back to his hometown and became an organic pineapple farmer simply because he wanted to spend more time with his mother. When he realized that his new venture brought

many new job opportunities and, thereby, prosperity to his remote rural township, he extended his insight to the whole township, which he incorporated into his personal values. He noted, “Company-wise, we are not profitable, but if you consider all the value we add to this town together, we are on the right track.” After he determined that the purpose of the company was not solely for profit, but rather to help the township, which had become part of his personal value system, he started to spend more time helping people from the local community (e.g., holding an informal book club-like meeting periodically to share new knowledge about organic farming). He designed his way of taking care of the community by a rearrangement of his work relationships.

This identity work design centered on these entrepreneurs' infusing their work (e.g., what they do and with whom they do it) with personal values. Identity work design helps entrepreneurs to align what they do on a day-to-day basis with what they believe to be ideal, important, and valuable in their lives as well as in their new ventures.

4.2.2. Resources work design

Resource acquisition and use matter not only in creating new venture but also in new work. In their acquisition and use of resources, entrepreneurs are often guided by focusing on “affordable loss, rather than expected returns” (Sarasvathy, 2001, p. 259). Entrepreneurs often thus focus on readily available resources, such as their competence (e.g., past training, skills), possessions (e.g., home, property near their home, property with affordable rent), and close social connections (e.g., spouse, in-laws). Using these resources affects when and where they work, with whom they work, and what they do on a day-to-day basis.

For instance, when Fairman decided to move back to his hometown, he leveraged resources from his family connections and became a dairy farmer. Based on his father's good connections with the local farming association, he frequently interacted with members in the association when he worked. In another example, Blossom, a former lawyer, became a professional blogger who wrote about fine cuisine because she had been fascinated by Japanese food since she was a child and was able to draw upon the writing skills that she used as a lawyer. Combining her personal interest with her expertise, she was able to conduct rigorous studies on the history and cultural context of the cuisine and to present the information in a concise and accessible manner, capturing a publisher's attention and leading to the publication of two books. Also, Apollo, who was a fan of Apple, had a very successful blog on the creative use of Apple products, such as iPhones and iPads, when he held a formal job as a law clerk. The idea of becoming a professional Apple blogger emerged immediately when he decided to create his own work through entrepreneurial activities.

The journey itself is constantly changing, as ventures need a variety of resources in different stages. For instance, Sunny and her husband, Ray, decided to follow their passion for reading to start a bookstore in their suburban hometown. Sunny was a marketing manager who frequently worked with the government; thus, she was able to write a proposal to apply for government funding. In addition, because Ray had self-taught carpentry skills, he built bookshelves at low cost. After their bookstore opened, Sunny soon switched to the marketing aspect of the operation (e.g., evening reading clubs, new book release events), while Ray created new work by holding a

“young carpenter classroom” during weekends for children and their parents. Similarly, Apollo began his new business by operating a blog about Apple products. As he gradually gained a large blog audience, he utilized his connection with these blog followers by hosting off-line gatherings to promote newly developed products provided by his sponsors. As shown, these informants' work was constantly being redesigned around their available resources.

This resource work design focused on shaping work around the available resources. Resource work design helps entrepreneurs to create a day-to-day routine around resources that are approachable, useful, and available to them.

4.2.3. Social meaning work design

After a startup begins, external audiences' (e.g., customers') feedback and acceptance become increasingly critical to a business's survival and thriving (O'Neil and Ucbasaran, 2016; Rindova et al., 2009). To attract or, at least, to be accepted as appropriate by external audiences, entrepreneurs need to infuse the presentation of their work with social meaning that is relevant to external audiences. Business founders' social meaning work design includes actively using certain social meaning (e.g., environmental concerns, food safety) to make the existence of their venture relevant to external audiences. Social meaning is a publicly available symbolic vehicle (e.g., stories, rituals) that shapes people's expression and experience (Swidler, 1986). Incorporating social meaning has important work design implications in terms of tasks, activities, responsibilities, and relationships.

We found that business founders built relevance to three types of external audience: target customers, the community, and the general public. To make themselves relevant to their external audience, our informants often sought to explain the benefits that their venture could bring to target customers. This presentation was not a one-time task but, rather, involved trial and error in terms of arranging and rearranging their tasks, activities, roles, and relationships as a means to provide such benefits. For instance, Greg and his cofounders started a new venture in which they grew organic vegetables in a scientific-like laboratory. In the early stages of their developing venture, they tried hard to explain why “green” was important to the environment and why this should be important to everyone. Their communication strategies involved telling stories whose message was “why you should also care about what I care about.” Their claim of valuing environmental concerns and food safety was incorporated into their day-to-day operation (e.g., checking whether their daily operation was up to code) as part of the promise that they made to their target customers. However, miscommunication occurred, Greg stated:

Originally, we thought that our target customers were people who appreciated our green philosophy. However, after we launched our products in an organic supermarket, customers called to complain that they had no idea how to cook our vegetables. We then realized that our marketing communication failed, as we had not thought about their needs.

Customer complaints led Greg to better understand customers' needs and to add new roles (e.g., marketing researcher) to his and the cofounders' work to be able to revise how they presented themselves to their target audience. A fundamental shift of their meaning of work from

“customers should care about what I care about” to “I care about what customers care about” occurred.

Our informants also sought to engage with the community where new ventures belong or operate. Here community refers to the external audience who often had direct interactions with the business founders. In terms of belongingness, one major tactic was to make identity claims about their membership. For instance, three informants (i.e., Rudy, Sunny, and Ray) opened bookstores as their entrepreneurial work and often identified their ventures as “independent bookstores,” which differentiated their stores from chain bookstores and explained their pro-social impacts. For instance, Sunny and Ray engaged with the independent bookstore community, and Ray, a former programmer, started to help this community to build its technological infrastructure (e.g., consortium purchasing). Claiming their association also meant redesigning their work (e.g., relationships) to validate that association. In terms of operations, Sunny and Ray's bookstore was located in the country. In a media interview, they talked about their roles in regard to changing the community not only in terms of the landscape (the former tenant had a karaoke bar) but also in terms of connections (a place where mothers could gather during the early afternoon before they left to pick up their children from daycare or school). In that, they considered themselves not just bookstore owners, but also gardeners (to safeguard the landscape) and cookie bakers (to provide cookies in the afternoon for mothers).

The final and perhaps most intriguing aspect was to bond with the public by presenting themselves in terms of courage. General public here refers to the external audience who knew the new ventures and/or the founders mainly via mass media reports or social media. By defining courage as “acting intentionally in the face of risks, threats, or obstacles in the pursuit of moral worth goals” (Koerner, 2014, p. 64), many of our informants could be considered as engaging in courageous moral acts: They were directed by their personal values, had limited resources, and struggled to bring benefits to potential customers and society. Such courageous acts often won the sincere appreciation of others. For instance, four informants (i.e., Harry, Sunny, Morris, and Powell) shared similar experiences of their customers' considering them brave because they dared to do things that their customers also had been longing to do but were too afraid to try (e.g., creating a form of work that reserves quality time for family members).

This social meaning work design focuses on the aspects of work that are understood by the external audience and concern cognitive, relational, or role changes in their work. For business founders to create a bond and sense of relevance in the eyes of their external customers, the incorporation of social meaning is critical.

4.3. Enacting the designed work: day-to-day work experiences

Business founders' work design not only served the creation of their new ventures but also generated day-to-day work experiences that offered rewarding and direct feedback about whether and how to redesign their work. We identify three important types of the day-to-day experience of work associated with their identity, resources, and social meaning work design, respectively: meaningful, realistic, and socially acceptable work.

4.3.1. Meaningful work

Because our informants sought to infuse work with personal values, their work had a purpose: to serve their personal values, thus infusing their work with meaning. For instance, Gamila founded a business to develop people's potential at work by having them play board games. Based on her belief that playing can be educational, she thought that the playing of board games would create a much better training context than any other existing training method. It was thus genuinely rewarding and intrinsically motivating when she felt her customers' excitement and sense of achievement when they learned something through playing a board game. Such positive feedback suggested that she had a real, positive influence on people who wanted to become better at work. In addition, Joy, as a mother and entrepreneur, opened a kids' land in which children could play with toys because she wanted to enact work that allowed her to enjoy quality time with her daughter while she was at work. Such new work, which was intertwined with, rather than separated her from, her family, fulfilled her needs and, thus, was meaningful.

4.3.2. Realistic work

The second experiential characteristic of business founders' work was the sense that their work was doable, controllable, and practicable mainly because they could utilize resources at hand. For example, Hamlet renovated a vacant old house owned by his family and opened a burger restaurant. His family's old house, which was in a familiar neighborhood, became his workplace, for which he did not have to pay rent. He stated:

I grew up in this house and was very familiar with this neighborhood. I clearly knew which parts of this house needed to be renovated. Opening a restaurant here reduced many risk factors. I was not a professional in the restaurant industry, so this decision greatly lowered my anxiety about potential uncertainties.

Flora, a former senior magazine marketing associate in the publishing industry, also utilized her knowledge (an available resource) to reduce risk when she decided to leave the declining publishing industry. Based on her understanding of educational publishing, she created a company that developed interactive digital techniques with high potential for applications to educational publishing. By making use of her knowledge regarding publishing, her entrepreneurial work was possible, realistic, and down to earth.

4.3.3. Socially acceptable work

The third experiential characteristic of work was its social acceptability, as business founders tried to incorporate social meaning into work outcomes. They needed to ensure that, along with themselves, their customers also appreciated the work that they created. For instance, Greg and his partners not only grew organic vegetables but also used them as ingredients in skin-care products. Made with natural ingredients without chemical additives, their asking price for these products was higher than for those of other brands. As reported in an online news article that featured Greg and his partners' venture, Greg stated, "When our customers realize that our products are truly safe and healthy, they appreciate what we produce and show high levels of loyalty." Similarly, Ben started to make organic steamed buns, because he could freely adjust his

working hours to accommodate his health condition. Soon realizing that the reason that he began this business did not make his products relevant to his customers, he learned to emphasize the healthy, organic essence of his buns when he interacted with his customers. Customers increasingly returned, due to their improved health status, demonstrating that Ben was able to earn his customers' recognition and respect.

4.4. The emergence of settled work: the role of commitment

The three types of work experiences led to the emergence of business founders' commitment to work. That is, based on the extent to which business founders experienced the meaningful, realistic, and socially acceptable aspects of their work, they not only enacted and justified but also validated their work design; their originally unsettled work became settled. If unsettled work design was an experimentation process that involved business founders' enactment and justification, the settled work design added validation to the list. By validation, we mean that business founders experienced a positive and rewarding attainment that aligned with their enactment and justification. The settled work was, thus, an enacted arrangement of work that had been well reasoned (as revealed in identity, resource, and social meaning work design) and proven useful (validated by business founders' subjective experience of work) so that certain work arrangements and the corresponding rationales for the arrangement were validated and closely coupled. We found that, when work design was highly validated, a strong sense of commitment to work settled and stabilized business founders' work arrangement, regardless of the ever-evolving nature of their new venture development. As a result, their settled work tended to restrict their ventures' adaptability to change, and result in the departure from the economic realities (i.e., of business models, competition, revenues, costs, risk, or failure) that any entrepreneur should carefully deal with. In contrast, when work design had not been well validated, business founders' commitment to work was not so strong, and the remaining unsettled work played an important role in broadening their new venture development.

4.4.1. Strong commitment and the “repeating the right work design” principle

Although the “new venture first, work design second” principle in unsettled work suggests that work design should come after new venture development, we found that our informants who experienced strong commitment to their work were very likely to be satisfied with their jobs, tasks, and work roles but, unfortunately, left little room for their businesses to make changes. For instance, based on her personal value that she and her daughter could be together when she worked, Joy emphasized that her kids' land should be maintained with the highest standards of cleanliness for the toys. She thus insisted that all toys be sterilized with alcohol four times a day. She noted:

We sanitize each toy; we have more than 80 categories of toy and numerous items. The repeated work is so much that we have to hire part-time employees. But I know why we are doing this; I feel quite happy when I engage in these housekeeping chores.

This work arrangement was meaningful because it fit her personal values. Moreover, it was also realistic and socially acceptable; Joy was indeed able to find part-time workers, and this decision was highly praised and reinforced by parents, whose trust she won. The resulting high levels of

commitment thus led to a settled work design that Joy would like to maintain. The intention to be in alignment with such a work arrangement, however, limited business capacity greatly because the kids' land had to be closed several times a day during the sterilization process, which was laborious and time-consuming. Over time, the cost outran the revenue, but the settled work precluded Joy's business from necessary changes. After the interview with Joy, we later learned from the Facebook fan page of her store that it would be closing because it had not been profitable for several months.

Similarly, Kirk devoted himself to kiln-baked bread made in the “ancient” way (e.g., baked without food additives or in electrical machines) based on a strong belief that modern civilization is not actually a form of progress. Guided by such a belief, he built his own kiln, grew his own yeast, and spent more than three days a week collecting enough firewood from the forest. He said:

I consider finding firewood the leisure time in my working schedule. I deliberately go deep into the forest, trying to find trees that are about to wither, chop the wood, and bring my firewood back. In so doing, I feel that I am a part of the natural system.

As shown, Kirk's work design elicited strong commitment to work because his work was meaningful and realistic in the beginning. Moreover, his customers further strengthened the socially acceptable aspect of his work: They highly valued his bread because eating his additive-free bread greatly improved their health. Thus, although Kirk's work arrangement meant that it was difficult to commercialize his bakery, he was certain about his beliefs as enacted, justified, and validated in his work arrangements. He happily settled down with this seemingly ideal but inefficient way of making bread. Many customers expected him to expand his business, but he insisted on doing business only one day a week because he needed all of the remaining days for preparation. New possibilities were hence ruled out due his settled work design.

Pierce's organic pineapple farm was another example of settled work design. As noted earlier, he went back to his hometown and initiated a new business because he wanted to have more quality time with his mother, later switching his focus from his family to the whole township by developing the local community. His work was realistic because growing pineapples was the major industry in his hometown. It was also meaningful because the shortened physical distance between him and his mother enabled him to frequently be with his mother. Further, his work was highly acceptable to other villagers who found secure jobs and developed professional knowledge about organic farming. Pierce hence developed a strong sense of commitment to the new status quo. He noted, “I do know that what I am doing now is like burning cash. Luckily, I still have more to spend on this meaningful business.” We later learned that two of Pierce's partners left due to the lack of profitability, but he decided to keep investing and to be responsible for the beneficiaries.

4.4.2. Weak commitment and the “new venture first, work design second” principle

In contrast, work design that remained unsettled did not generate a sufficient level of commitment to work, and business founders still sought to find a balance among their personal values, new ventures' resources, and/or social meaning. When they attempted to redesign their

work, the enactment of their ever-evolving jobs, tasks, and roles also allowed them to experiment with different possibilities and bring the necessary flexibility to their new ventures. For example, Tina utilized her personal connections with several wholesalers to establish a company that sells fine Chinese tea. Although her business ran reasonably well based on her readily accessible resources, she decided to bypass the wholesalers and to find tea farmers on her own. She did so due not to self-interest but, rather, to a gradually developing prosocial motive in regard to Taiwanese tea farmers when she increasingly interacted with them. She noted:

People in Taiwan who grow and produce tea always define themselves as farmers. According to their logic, tea is just an agricultural product. Farmers sell it at a price just a little bit higher than its production cost. However, Taiwanese tea can be much more than a product. It represents the land and water of Taiwan and the kindness of the Taiwanese people. I should help customers understand its real value.

Tina's decision to find tea farmers on her own introduced new ways of doing business. Previously, she negotiated prices with the wholesalers only once. After she changed to contacting tea farmers directly, the negotiation process became more involved and time consuming. Her more recent, altruistic personal value also changed her entrepreneurial activities, leading to a move from trade to cultural industries. She began to focus more on marketing campaigns and product designs that imparted cultural meanings and pursued more acceptance from her customers than the maximization of her sales margins.

Tina's commitment to work was not strong because there was a trade-off between current realistic work and future meaningful, socially acceptable work. Eventually, Tina sacrificed the former and redesigned her work to fill the identity and social meaning gaps. Although she struggled with her unsettled work, changes initiated by her work redesign gave her new venture room to further evolve.

Unlike Tina, who redesigned her work due to her changing identity, Medus valued trying new things. He quit his job as an elementary school teacher and opened a social media company. Driven by his strong belief that he should always identify new challenges, he transformed his company several times and developed many complete new projects, despite his shareholders' support for the already successful business models. To realize his new ideas, Medus frequently found new collaborators, novel opportunities, and new resources that were not readily available. He stated:

It is hard to say whether engaging in entrepreneurial activities makes my life better. I am so busy and tired now. I couldn't help wondering: If I have two weeks off, or if I only need to work two days a week, would I become happier? Maybe not, actually. All I know is that I am in the middle of a very long process. I just have to ask new questions and search for new answers to them.

Medus did not develop strong commitment because he constantly gave priority to his everlasting pursuit of meaningful work over the achievement of realistic and socially acceptable work. This preference kept his work highly unsettled and led to substantial confusion and fatigue. Nevertheless, it also brought momentum for him to redesign his work. As such adaptability to

change spilled over from his work redesign to his company, it survived the keen competition with social media giants and realized increasing profits.

As another example, Trevor opened a B&B nearby his home originally because he wanted to spend more time with his family. When he had more contact with tourists who visited his hometown, however, he gradually developed a mission to bring the best part of this town to others. Moreover, as time went by, he had more access to local, useful resources. Thus, he formed a strategic alliance with other B&B owners in the neighborhood who have a strong cultural (rather than commercial) emphasis, old restaurants that sell delicious local food, and travel agencies that focus on local cultural attractions. Trevor continuously utilized local resources that were increasingly accessible to fill the increasing gaps in meaningful and socially acceptable work by fulfilling his mission and earning recognition from the local community. Unlike some other settled-down B&B owners whom we interviewed, Trevor did not reach the satisfaction point of commitment to work, and his work remained unsettled. Accordingly, he opted to do more: He even opened another B&B and a new restaurant.

5. A reciprocal model of new venture development and work design

Based on our data analysis, we propose a theoretical model to explain the reciprocal relationship between new venture development and entrepreneurial work design (Fig. 1). As shown, when business founders establish new ventures, their entrepreneurial activities naturally result in unsettled work that needs to be continuously shaped and crafted. Business founders then engage in entrepreneurial work design; they create, adjust, and/or revise jobs, tasks, and work roles to fit their work with their evolving identity, accessible resources, and the social meaning of their work as mirrored by their audience. Their identity, resource, and social meaning work design then lead to the day-to-day evaluation of their work in terms of the meaningful, realistic, and socially acceptable aspects, respectively. Based on such evaluation, varying degrees of commitment to work emerges.

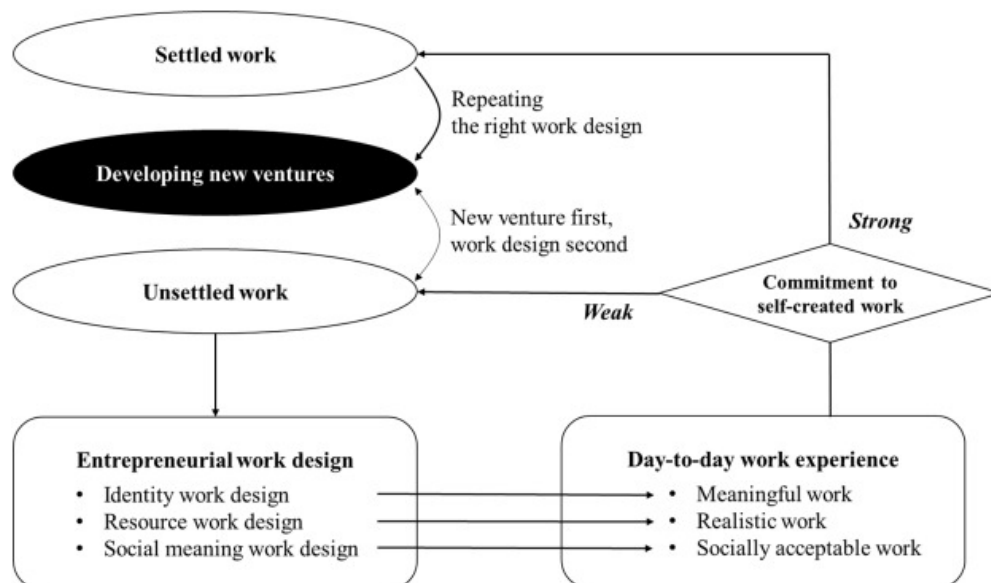


Fig. 1. A reciprocal model of new venture development and work design.

It is noteworthy that business founders' commitment to work is based on direct and rewarding experiences that can be continuously strengthened via day-to-day activities. In contrast to creating new products and services, entering new markets, adopting innovative technologies, and implementing new ways of organizing business activities that are crucial to new venture development but, at least to some extent, uncertain, ambiguous, and unpredictable, enacting the settled work to which founders are committed tends to be certain, direct, and predictable. As suggested in our model, those rewarding experiences gained from enacting their design work develop founders' commitment to their self-created work. Thus, their work becomes settled. A feedback loop from work design to new venture development can be established, and work design is not always a byproduct of new venture development.

We thus argue that a weak commitment to work could lead to business founders' evaluation that their work is still unsettled. Such an evaluation not only perpetuates their entrepreneurial work design by maintaining the “new venture first, work design second” principle but also broadens future possibilities of their new ventures. They are more likely to adapt to, or even initiate, changes that may reshape their businesses. This model also suggests that, when business founders' unsettled work broadens future possibilities for new venture development, changes implemented in their businesses should further reinforce their unsettled work status, and, therefore, strengthen the ever-evolving nature of their new ventures. In contrast, a strong commitment to work may lead to the conclusion that a business founder's work is relatively settled. Because business founders are no longer strongly motivated to redesign their work, such settled work design tends to activate a new principle for their work design (i.e., “repeating the right work design”), thereby restricting the future development of their new ventures. As a result, there is a trade-off between settling work design and further developing new ventures, and business founders' settled work should be able to predict the stabilization, stagnation, or even decline of their new ventures.

6. Discussion

6.1. Theoretical contributions

Our study makes three contributions to the extant literature. First, we answer Baron's (2010) call to study business founders' work design and disentangle the dynamic interplay between business founders' work design and their new venture development. By building on the enactment perspective (Weick, 1979), our work provides evidence that a business founder's work arrangement could be distinguished as unsettled or settled. In the unsettled work, business founders' work is unstable and ever-evolving in response to what they consider critical to their new ventures' survival and thriving. This represents an agentic side of business founders and aligns well with the extant literature, which often assumes that entrepreneurs have the freedom to design their work arrangement in a way that suits them (e.g., Kirkwood and Tootell, 2008; Shabbir and di Gregorio, 1996). In contrast, our findings reveal that, in the settled work, business founders could become less responsive to potentially needed changes in their new ventures as their commitment to certain work design emerges. This, interestingly, reveals an alternative way of understanding business founders' work design and suggests that business founders are not as agentic as we would like to believe. Such a difference between unsettled and

settled work is important because it reveals the differing roles of business founders' work design in developing new ventures.

Second, we contribute to the extant literature by accounting for the condition by which business founders' work design could become less responsive to potentially needed changes in their new ventures. Our reciprocal model of new venture development and work design thus adds to the current understanding of entrepreneurship endurance, or repeated entrepreneurial acts that continuously result in successful outcomes (Jaskiewicz et al., 2016). Prior research on entrepreneurship mainly hold a view that some individuals repeat acts of entrepreneurship over time due to certain individual attributes, such as entrepreneurial passion (Cardon et al., 2009) and ability to create opportunities (Suddaby et al., 2015), or because they are imprinted with some important entrepreneurial features, such as entrepreneurial legacy (Jaskiewicz et al., 2015). Our work extends this line of research by showing that, whereas these factors set the tone for the continuous engagement in entrepreneurial acts, work design, which are less trait-like but involve more behavioral factors, may further strengthen or weaken such engagement because founders' settled work leads to a strong sense of commitment to work that substantially restricts future possibilities for new venture development. Studying business founders' work design is thus important because business founders' work involves a subtle structure and because enacting such structure would produce direct and psychological rewarding experiences that can perpetuate or suspend the endurance of entrepreneurship.

Third, our findings regarding the three entrepreneurial work design justifications deepen our understanding of the work design in the context of new venture development. This also extends Baron's (2010, p. 391) insightful comment that “new ventures offer an exceptionally useful context in which to gain insights into the process of job-crafting and its important effect.” Focusing on employed jobs in established organizations, extant job crafting theory puts its predominant emphasis on identity- (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001) and resource-based (Tims and Bakker, 2010) job crafting (e.g., Bruning and Campion, 2018). Meaning-based job crafting, however, has not gained much attention. We speculate that it has received less attention because, in organizational settings, meaning and identity are often shaping and shaped by each other (Hsu and Stanworth, 2018; Pratt and Ashforth, 2003), and identity itself is sufficient in explaining employees' job crafting. Because we focus on business founders' work design, we are able to distinguish between identity- and meaning-based crafting by highlighting the central role of social meaning work design. Social meaning is fundamentally social information (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978) that concerns how the external audience understands the purposes of the new ventures' products and services. Our work thus contributes to the work design literature by navigating a potentially new realm for work design scholars to consider: External audiences may play a role in the focal person's job crafting practices. This implication is actually more consistent with the earliest theorization of job crafting that not only identity but also meaning contributes to job crafting processes (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001).

In addition to the contributions presented above, it is noteworthy that the identity, resource, and social meaning work design appear to have some conceptual overlap with several well-established lines of entrepreneurship research, such as founder identities (e.g., Fauchart and Gruber, 2011), new ventures' acquisition and use of resources (e.g., Baker and Nelson, 2005; Sarasvathy, 2001), and legitimacy of new products and services (e.g., O'Neil and

Ucbasaran, 2016), respectively. Whereas these related topics concentrate directly on entrepreneurial activities themselves, work design practices emphasize the arrangement of jobs, tasks, and work roles. Because work design and new venture development are two intertwined processes in entrepreneurial settings, it is reasonable that they share the same set of available resources or that the same founder features or external factors affect both. But work design practices highlight how the realization of personal values, the use of resources, or the socially constructed meaning provides feedback on founders' direct, day-to-day experiences more than how these factors facilitate the success of entrepreneurial acts.

6.2. Practical implications

Our work highlights an important but often overlooked role of the entrepreneur: work designer. Work design is indispensable part of entrepreneurship, and our findings on business founders' work design suggest that business founders could better prepare themselves for entrepreneurship in three ways. First, business founders, particularly those who envision what constitutes ideal work, should manage their expectations about entrepreneurial work design because it is likely not a one-time activity. Our findings reveal that enduring entrepreneurs constantly make and remake their work as a response to their personal values, available resources, and markets' social meanings. Business founders' acknowledgment that entrepreneurial work design is a highly varied activity is critical because it helps business founders to develop resilience when facing unexpected or salient changes.

Second, business founders should acknowledge that their work design involves multi-faceted decisions. Entrepreneurial work design practices can be considered a founder's way of incorporating certain elements (identity, available resources, and social meanings) into their day-to-day work routines. Business founders should examine the outcomes of their work design by reflecting on the extent to which their work is meaningful, realistic, and socially acceptable. Our findings provide a basic lexicon by which they can recognize their current status and make changes to create an experientially fulfilling work experience.

Third, business founders should be aware that there are trade-offs between settled work design and enduring entrepreneurship. Whereas entrepreneurs' strong commitment to a certain arrangement of work can provide a sense of stability, it also could result in the loss of needed flexibility when their new ventures are taking shape. In contrast, it may be possible to leverage the lack of commitment to a specific arrangement of work design because it gives their new ventures more room to evolve. We thus recommend that founders frequently reflect on their work status and be aware of its potential impacts on their ventures.

6.3. Limitations and future research

The primary data from our interviews, which were collected at only one point in time, were retrospective in nature. This partially limited our ability to make longitudinal inferences regarding how entrepreneurial work design unfolds. Future research may extend our findings by proposing research questions related to process over time (Langley, 1999). For example, research could examine what and how work design helps the sustainability of the business over time. Our interview protocol also only allowed us to examine entrepreneurs' work creation and

modification for those new ventures that were successfully created. Thus, our theorizing cannot account for those ventures that were halted in the middle of the creation, that failed to sustain, and that ended after our study. Future research may extend this line of inquiry by considering the personal as well as contextual obstacles that entrepreneurs may encounter in designing their work in new venture creation. For example, how do entrepreneurs adjust their work design in their next venture after they experience failure in the previous venture due to a focus on realizing personal values or social acceptance? How do they prioritize the different motives in the next round of venture creation?

In addition, our informants were all career-transition entrepreneurs, which had quit their employed jobs to start new ventures. We viewed career-transition entrepreneurs as extreme cases that offer richness in our data, and this sampling decision was thus justifiable in exploratory, qualitative studies. However, future research may be thus in need to replicate our study among other entrepreneurs. Additionally, it is likely that career-transition entrepreneurs tend to enter industries with fewer barriers to entry due to the lack of prior expertise, knowledge, or experience. This may, at least partly, explain why many of our informants were farm, store, restaurant, or other relatively small-scale business owners. Do the differences between settled and unsettled work identified in this study as well as the interplay between work design and new venture development hold for relatively large-scale, high-tech entrepreneurial activities? We encourage more future research to test our model with such samples.

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