



Reconceptualizing Mission Drift: An Affective Events Perspective

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Abstract

Mission drift, the derailing of practices from the mission, remains a persistent puzzle in hybrid organizations and mission-driven organizations. Existing literature, rooted in institutional theory and resource dependence, often portrays it as a strategic, macro-level response to external pressures. This conceptual article argues for a micro-foundational shift, proposing Affective Events Theory (AET) as a novel lens to explain the affective micro-processes that precipitate mission drift. We theorize how specific organizational events (e.g., funding shocks, investor interactions, leadership changes) generate discrete emotional episodes in employees. By introducing Affective Events Theory, we provide a dynamic model that explores how emotionally charged events, like resource constraints, stakeholder tensions, and governance shifts, cause emotional reactions that influence micro-decisions. This approach highlights the under-explored role of affect as a critical mediator between external events and internal mission fidelity, offering a more nuanced perspective.

Keywords: mission drift; affective events theory; emotions; Hybridity; micro-foundations.