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You get me: Examining the implications of couples' depersonalization agreement for employee recovery

Kelly Schwind　Wilson[1]　|　**Catherine E.　Kleshinski[1]**　|
Fadel K.　Matta[2]

[1]Krannert School of Management, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana

[2]Terry College of Business, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia

Correspondence
Kelly Schwind Wilson, Krannert School of Management, Purdue University, 100 S. Grant Street, West Lafayette, IN 47907.
Email: kellysw@purdue.edu

Abstract

Previous research demonstrates that depersonalization is harmful for employee outcomes. In addition, research is beginning to examine employees' family context along with their experiences both at work and at home. We advance these literatures using shared reality theory as a foundation for investigating couples' dyadic agreement surrounding employee depersonalization and its implications. Using polynomial regression and response surface methodology of data from employee-significant other dyads, in Study 1, we find that agreement between partners on employee depersonalization is associated with lower work-to-family conflict (following general shared reality theory arguments) and increased subsequent recovery for the employee. In Study 2, we examine more specific shared reality theory arguments using the same analytic approach. We show that agreement between partners on employee depersonalization is associated with less distress and an increased perception that one's depersonalization is understood, and ultimately increased recovery for the employee via reductions in distress. Taken together, these results suggest the harmful effects of depersonalization are largely minimized if an employee's partner accurately recognizes their depersonalization. Interestingly, our collective results show it is better for employees to have agreement with their partners surrounding a high level of employee depersonalization

than have low levels of depersonalization accompanied by disagreement.

KEYWORDS

agreement, couples, depersonalization, distress, recovery, shared reality, work–family conflict

1 | INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Stress in America survey found work, money, and family responsibilities among the most common stressors in adults (American Psychological Association, 2015, 2019). It is not surprising, then, that work stress and its impact on the family (Frone, 2003; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly, 1983) receive substantial attention in the management and organizational psychology literatures. A critical form of prolonged work stress is burnout. Overall, numerous studies conclude a bleak outlook regarding the effects of burnout and its facets (Derks & Bakker, 2014; Liu et al., 2015; ten Brummelhuis, Haar, & Roche, 2014). Specifically, previous meta-analyses and studies examining burnout in individuals, including depersonalization, consistently find positive relationships with the interference of work and family (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Amstad, Meier, Fasel, Elfering, & Semmer, 2011; Derks & Bakker, 2014; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996), positive relationships with negative affect and distress (Pomaki, Maes, & ter Doest, 2004; Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren, & de Chermont, 2003; Zellars, Hochwarter, Perrewé, Hoffman, & Ford, 2004), and negative relationships with recovery and coping (e.g., Lee & Ashforth, 1990; Oerlemans & Bakker, 2014; Upadyaya, Vartiainen, & Salmenal-Oro, 2016).

However, several of the meta-analyses also suggest that the effect sizes of these burnout-related relationships are inconsistent (i.e., the variance explained by artifacts in the meta-analyses were low; e.g., Amstad et al., 2011; Byron, 2005), yet contexts that may help explain this are not fully understood. A key contextual concern that may be particularly important when investigating relationships between work-related stress and family-related outcomes is the inclusion of family members' perspectives (Hammer, Bauer, & Grandey, 2003; Hammer, Neal, Newsom, Brockwood, & Colton, 2005). We address this by examining the unique implications of employee and partner agreement surrounding the employee's depersonalization for the employee's work-to-family conflict (WFC) (in Study 1), distress and perceived understanding (in Study 2), and its indirect effects on recovery (both studies). Importantly, we challenge the general conclusion that depersonalization (i.e., cynicism toward others; Maslach & Jackson, 1981) is always harmful for employees. Given the importance of context for depersonalization (Garden, 1987), we provide insights regarding how employee–partner agreement puts employee depersonalization in context. The present research asks the question: might the family context influence whether some high depersonalization situations may be ultimately less detrimental to employees compared to certain low depersonalization situations?

Given our dyadic agreement approach, we focus on depersonalization—defined as negative, callous, and detached feelings and attitudes toward others (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001)—because this component "represents the interpersonal context dimension of burnout" (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 399). As such, the depersonalization dimension presents "'social symptoms'…easily…observed by one's spouse" (Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2005, pp. 666–667) and, as we argue, has the potential to be accurately assessed by partners. We define depersonalization agreement, specifically, as the extent to which perceptions of one individual's level of depersonalization align across two individuals. In our studies, we examine alignment between employee and partner ratings of the employee's depersonalization. Although prior depersonalization research has typically focused on the level of depersonalization (i.e., high vs. low), agreement focuses on the degree of alignment in perceptions and is agnostic on the level of depersonalization. A strength of the present approach is our focus on the effects of employee–partner agreement at every level of depersonalization.
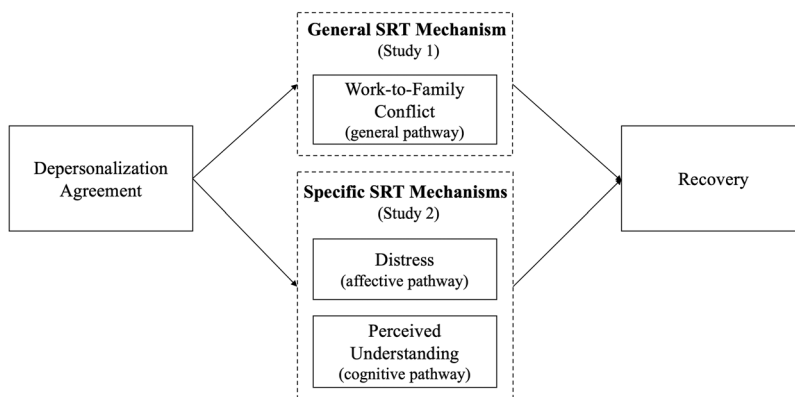
FIGURE 1 Conceptual model
Abbreviation: SRT = shared reality theory

To develop our predictions regarding the effects of couples' dyadic agreement for employees, we draw from shared reality theory. Specifically, this theory proposes that individuals desire agreement with others, even surrounding something negative, because it is beneficial for the individual's understanding, judgment, and experience (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). Given the benefits of sharing reality for well-being (Hardin & Higgins, 1996), we focus on mechanisms linking depersonalization agreement to a critical health and well-being outcome—recovery. Overall, we predict that couples' depersonalization agreement will facilitate employee recovery through several pathways (as shown in Figure 1). First, we theorize that the greater the agreement between the employee and partner regarding the employee's depersonalization (at various levels), the lower the employee's WFC (Study 1), which occurs when work pressures are incompatible with one's family (Kopelman et al., 1983). Building from WFC as a general shared reality theory pathway, in Study 2 we test more precise shared reality theory mechanisms. These include distress (an affective pathway), defined as unpleasant feelings or aversive affective/mood states (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1998; e.g., feeling unsettled), and perceived understanding (a cognitive pathway), defined as the subjective belief that one's interaction partner "gets" or comprehends one's perceptions (in our case, surrounding the employee's depersonalization; Pollman & Finkenauer, 2009; Reis, Lemay, & Finkenauer, 2017). We propose that in situations where the employee's depersonalization reality is shared by the partner—even if it is high—the employee's distress will be lower and their perception that the partner understands this reality will be greater. We expect WFC, distress, and perceived understanding to mediate the effects of depersonalization agreement on recovery. Given that depersonalization is believed to have a "significant negative impact" (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004, p. 859), our work reveals novel insights that could not be extrapolated from existing literature.

By examining couples' depersonalization agreement across two studies, we offer several notable contributions. First, we expand theory on depersonalization and work–family by introducing the notion of depersonalization agreement. Thus, we help address the "relative neglect" of the depersonalization component of burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 2016, p. 98) and extend this area beyond the traditional individual level of analysis. Specifically, we advance a dyadic approach involving similarity between the employee's and their partner's perceptions of the employee's depersonalization. Past dyadic approaches typically examine crossover (e.g., social transmission of burnout from one person to another; Bakker et al., 2005; ten Brummelhuis et al., 2014). Instead, we examine the interplay of both dyad members' perceptions. By utilizing a dyadic and objective approach[1] to assess one's actuality or "objective reality" (Hardin & Higgins, 1996, p. 28), we also contribute to shared reality theory. Indeed, we find support for the linkage between objective agreement (i.e., alignment of employee and partner perceptions) and the employee's subjective sense of sharing their reality (Echterhoff, Higgins, & Levine, 2009) (i.e., perception the partner understands their depersonalization).

Second, our focus on dyad-level agreement challenges prior burnout findings. Taking into consideration the partner's recognition of the employee's depersonalization provides important contextual information that may frame the employee's experiences differently. Prior research suggests depersonalization is a negative, stressful experience, yet sharing reality with others is beneficial (and failing to share it is detrimental; Echterhoff et al., 2009). We find it is better for employees to have agreement with their partners surrounding a high level of employee depersonalization than to have low levels of depersonalization accompanied by disagreement.

Finally, we contribute to the recovery literature by highlighting a unique route that employees can take to recover from job stress: achieving agreement with their partner. Research asserts that a healthy life includes recovering from job strains (Sonnentag & Zijlstra, 2006), yet "little is known regarding whether and how severely burned out employees recover" (Hakanen & Bakker, 2017, p. 361). We find that employee recovery can be ultimately facilitated by the partner's recognition of the employee's job stress via reduced WFC (Study 1) and distress (Study 2), which challenges the conclusion that recovery is "impaired when individuals are facing a high level of job stressors" (Sonnentag, 2018, p. 170). These novel dyadic agreement discoveries enhance our understanding of job stress and work–family dynamics by offering new conclusions that may help employees with depersonalization.

2 | THEORY AND HYPOTHESES FOR STUDIES 1 AND 2

Shared reality is defined as experience that is "recognized by others" and shared in an ongoing process of confirmation from others (Hardin & Higgins, 1996, p. 28). Hardin and Higgins postulate that *any* experience "survives as a reliable, valid and predictable state of the world to the extent that it is socially verified" (1996, p. 29). In other words, "shared reality includes explicit agreement and consensus" (Hardin & Conley, 2001, p. 10) in perceptions. Heider (1958, p. 22) argues that in addition to spatial and physical properties, we develop perceptions of other people's intangibles including emotions and sentiments (e.g., evaluations concerning one's stress or depersonalization), by some form of "immediate apprehension" that typically involves important cues (e.g., objects, actions, or what a person communicates). This suggests that one's work stress, particularly depersonalization that has "visible symptoms" (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993, p. 623), can be perceived by relationship partners. In line with this theorizing, prior studies show agreement and disagreement between self and other reports of burnout and depersonalization (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Our overarching focus on couples naturally aligns with shared reality theory. Hardin and Higgins find that "many experiences and beliefs have a history of being shared with significant others" (1996, p. 33). Beginning with why individuals often share realities, people have innate motives to do so. Indeed, people want to share reality due to relational motives to regulate relationships with others and fulfill affiliative needs, as well as epistemic motives to minimize threat and discomfort and increase predictability and stability in individuals' environments (Echterhoff et al., 2009; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Jost, Ledgerwood, & Hardin, 2008). Moreover, this is enhanced when individuals share a common environment. Indeed, a common environment is a critical factor influencing perception (Heider, 1958). Couples share the home environment and that facilitates significant others' ability to observe and understand various employee experiences after work. For example, previous research examined couples' congruence or similarity in work–family conflict (Wilson, Baumann, Matta, Ilies, & Kossek, 2018), as well as whether couples agree on when a partner's work interferes with one's family (Streich, Casper, & Salvaggio, 2008).

Turning to outcomes, consensus with others and being accurately understood is beneficial for individuals' inner processes (Hardin & Higgins, 1996) as well as their judgments, actions (Echterhoff, Higgins, & Groll, 2005), and ultimately their well-being (Asch, 1952; Echterhoff et al., 2009). When individuals feel their partner shares their self-views, they are less likely to be anxious, lonely, and confused (Hardin & Conley, 2001), whereas "when others deny an expected shared reality," individuals are more likely to feel uncomfortable and agitated (Echterhoff et al., 2009, p. 496). Perceptual accuracy in close relationships also facilitates adjustment (Iafrate, Bertoni, Margola, Cigoli, & Acitelli, 2012; Peterson, Newton, & Rosen, 2003) and makes it easier to coordinate daily activities in life (Pollman & Finkenauer,

	Employee Rating of Employee Depersonalization	
	Low Employee Depersonalization Employee *does not* face depersonalization	**High Employee Depersonalization** Employee faces depersonalization
High Employee Depersonalization Significant other perceives employee faces depersonalization	**Disagreement Low/High Employee Depersonalization (Quadrant 3)** The significant other fails to share the employee's positive reality of *not* facing depersonalization. This lack of shared reality is expected to maximize employee discomfort (i.e., more WFC and distress) and minimize perceived understanding from the significant other, compared to agreement scenarios (i.e., when shared reality exists; Quadrants 1 and 2) (**H1**). However, failing to share a positive reality (i.e., low depersonalization) will be less harmful than failing to share a negative reality (i.e., high depersonalization; Quadrant 4): although the reality is not shared, it is positive nonetheless (**H3**).	**Agreement on High Employee Depersonalization (Quadrant 2)** The significant other shares the employee's negative reality of depersonalization. Sharing reality (even on the negative experience of depersonalization) is expected to minimize further employee discomfort (i.e., less WFC and distress) and maximize perceived understanding from the significant other, compared to disagreement scenarios (i.e., when shared reality is absent; Quadrants 3 and 4) (**H1**). However, sharing a negative reality (i.e., high depersonalization) will be more harmful than sharing a positive reality (i.e., low depersonalization; Quadrant 1): although the reality is shared, it is negative nonetheless (**H2**).
Low Employee Depersonalization Significant other perceives employee *does not* face depersonalization	**Agreement on Low Employee Depersonalization (Quadrant 1)** The significant other shares the employee's positive reality of *not* facing depersonalization. Sharing reality (including on the positive experience of low depersonalization) is expected to minimize employee discomfort (i.e., less WFC and distress) and maximize perceived understanding from the significant other, compared to disagreement scenarios (i.e., when shared reality is absent; Quadrants 3 and 4) (**H1**). Moreover, sharing a positive reality (i.e., low depersonalization) will be more beneficial than sharing a negative reality (i.e., high depersonalization; Quadrant 2) because it is doubly beneficial: positive reality that is combined with being shared (**H2**).	**Disagreement High/Low Employee Depersonalization (Quadrant 4)** The significant other fails to share the employee's negative reality of depersonalization. This lack of shared reality is expected to maximize employee discomfort (i.e., more WFC and distress) and minimize perceived understanding from the significant other, compared to agreement scenarios (i.e., when shared reality exists; Quadrants 1 and 2) (**H1**). Moreover, failing to share a negative reality (i.e., high depersonalization) will be more harmful than failing to share a positive reality (i.e., low depersonalization; Quadrant 3) because it is doubly harmful: negative reality that is combined with not being shared (**H3**).

(Row-spanning label, left margin: Significant Other Rating of Employee Depersonalization)

FIGURE 2 Two-by-two matrix of employee-significant other depersonalization agreement
Abbreviation: H = hypothesis

2009). Thus, given the increased ease of coordination and well-being-related benefits of having a partner who shares one's reality, in Study 1 we propose that employees will experience lower WFC (e.g., higher participation in family activities) following depersonalization agreement. In addition, because agreement with others affects individuals in affective ways, such as decreased discomfort noted above, as well as cognitive ways, such as an increased perception of being understood by others (Hardin & Conley, 2001; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Higgins, 2019), in Study 2 we theorize about the effects of depersonalization agreement on both employee distress and perceived understanding from their partner.

In the subsequent sections, we develop hypotheses about the relationships between depersonalization (dis)agreement and a general shared reality theory mechanism (WFC), as well as specific affective and cognitive mechanisms (distress and perceived understanding, respectively) and consequent recovery. For illustrative purposes, we develop a two-by-two matrix (see Figure 2), which crosses employee and partner ratings of employee depersonalization, resulting in four quadrants of example scenarios of agreement and disagreement.[2] Hardin and Higgins (1996) posit that "the preference for shared reality should hold for both positive and negative information, because the functions of shared reality are assumed to be principally independent of evaluative valence" (p. 57). Thus, in Figure 2, we elaborate on the valence of the realities (e.g., positive realities involve low depersonalization and negative realities involve high depersonalization) in each quadrant and foreshadow their effects on the three mechanisms.

2.1 | Depersonalization agreement and employee outcomes

To understand the effect of depersonalization agreement on our proximal outcomes (WFC/distress/perceived understanding), we first contrast the two scenarios of agreement (Quadrants 1 and 2) against the two scenarios of disagreement (Quadrants 3 and 4). Although depersonalization is a negative experience, "even the experience of one's own oppression is qualitatively changed when it is shared with others" (Hardin & Higgins, 1996, p. 31). Taken together with the arguments outlined below, we theorize that depersonalization *agreement* with one's significant other will be associated with reduced stress, an increased perception of being understood, and ultimately, increased recovery, compared to disagreement.

Before outlining our agreement predictions, it is important to note that prior research, largely composed of individual-level studies, has found that depersonalization is typically positively related to WFC and distress and we assume depersonalization is negatively related to perceived understanding (given the link between negative/depressive mood and perceived understanding; Gordon, Tuskeviciute, & Chen, 2013). Early work–family theory suggested that work stress can hinder the employee's family life and employees with "interaction fatigue" in the work domain might decrease their contact with others at home (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 81). Empirical studies have also found that depersonalization is related to increased WFC (Montgomery, Panagopolou, de Wildt, & Meenks, 2006), and Nohe, Meier, Sonntag, and Michel (2015) meta-analytically concluded that strain leads to subsequent WFC. Moreover, many studies find a positive relationship between WFC and distress (e.g., Frone, Barnes, & Farrell, 1994; Major, Klein, & Ehrhart, 2002; Schieman &Young, 2013; Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999) and between depersonalization and negative or distressed mood (Zellars et al., 2004). In terms of perceived understanding, a reciprocal relationship exists between well-being and perceived understanding (Oishi, Krochik, & Akimoto, 2010) and the flip of this would suggest that ill-being or depersonalization is negatively related to perceived understanding. However, we instead propose that the simultaneous examination of the partner's perception *alongside* the employee's self-perception of depersonalization will uncover new insights about the nature of depersonalization's relationships with WFC, distress, and perceived understanding.

Sharing one's reality holds implications for "the self" and the world one shares with others (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). In particular, experiencing shared reality or agreement with significant others is associated with less anxiety and greater ease of coordinating activities (Pollman & Finkenauer, 2009), which connects to activities in the family domain. Likewise, individuals who are denied shared reality or agreement experience discomfort and depression (Echterhoff et al., 2009; Hardin & Higgins, 1996), highlighting the importance of distress as an outcome of couples' (dis)agreement. Additionally, consistent with arguments concerning shared views (Hardin & Higgins, 1996), past research on couples notes that "individuals who sense their partner is suffering or distressed …validat(e) the job incumbent's feelings about the situation and assur(e) them that the stress of what they are experiencing is understood" (Ferguson, Carlson, Zivnuska, & Whitten, 2010, p. 306). This implies the greater the objective agreement between employee and partner perceptions, the higher the "subjective experience of sharing" or being understood (Echterhoff et al., 2009, p. 501). Shared reality serves to align an individual's inner experience with "the external world" or "environment" (Hardin & Higgins, 1996, pp. 36–37); hence, we expect an employee will perceive being understood when objective alignment is achieved between employee and partner perceptions of the employee's depersonalization.

Using the above theoretical arguments and discussed benefits of agreement for well-being (Echterhoff et al., 2009; Hardin & Higgins, 1996), we contend that couples' agreement is preferred at *any* level of depersonalization. That is, benefits of agreement for employee WFC, distress, and perceived understanding can be reaped in situations where both parties agree the employee is not experiencing depersonalization (Quadrant 1 in Figure 2) as well as in situations where both parties agree the employee faces depersonalization (Quadrant 2). Although this may seem intuitive for low depersonalization (Quadrant 1, positive shared realities), this is in contrast with extant literature on high depersonalization (Quadrant 2, negative shared realities). Taking a closer look at the latter scenario, previous research suggests that agreement in the form of showing concern is tied to improved well-being in the face of ongoing stress (Ferguson et al., 2010) and that an understanding environment is associated with increased energy to fulfill family role demands (Bird & Bird, 1986; Marks, 1977; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1969). Thus, we expect that when the employee's partner accurately perceives their depersonalization, even if it is high, the employee will be less likely to experience a negative impact on the family (i.e., less WFC) and more likely to experience benefits (i.e., lower distress, greater perceived understanding).

Turning to situations of disagreement surrounding depersonalization, failing to share one's depersonalization reality (whether low-high or high-low, Quadrants 3 and 4, respectively) is detrimental to the self (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). Given the negative affect-related effects of being denied shared reality (Echterhoff et al., 2009; Hardin & Higgins, 1996), disagreement is expected to be associated with distress (Echterhoff et al., 2009; Outlaw, Colquitt,

Baer, & Sessions, 2019). Work–family theory also suggests that "discrepancies between self-expectations and others' expectations within a given domain can produce strain…that may result in work–family conflict" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 83). Hence, we propose that in scenarios in which the negative reality of depersonalization is not shared by the partner (Quadrant 4), employees may be more preoccupied with work (i.e., the source of their depersonalization) while at home—that is, experience greater WFC—as well as greater distress and a decreased perception of being understood by their partner.

Similarly, in scenarios where a positive reality fails to be shared—the partner believes the employee is callous or a jerk toward others at work when the employee in fact is not (Quadrant 3)—employees will likely feel distressed and misunderstood. This notion is supported by previous research finding that individuals are less happy when their interaction partner inaccurately perceives them (Oishi, Koo, & Akimoto, 2008), and are more anxious and depressed when their significant other misunderstands them (Abbey, Abramis, & Caplan, 1985). These arguments are also consistent with findings that disagreement and perceptual incongruence on phenomena in the family domain are associated with damaging outcomes (e.g., Breland-Noble & Weller, 2012; Ho, Chen, Cheung, Liu, & Worthington, 2013; Lucas-Thompson & George, 2017; Peterson et al., 2003). Taken altogether, when it comes to depersonalization, failing to share one's positive reality (Quadrant 3) or one's negative reality (Quadrant 4) is more detrimental for individuals than sharing various realities (Quadrants 1 and 2). Hence, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: The more agreement between the employee and significant other's perceptions of the employee's depersonalization, (a) the less WFC, (b) the less distress, and (c) the more perceived understanding the employee experiences.

2.2 | Effects of depersonalization agreement scenarios

Now we will contrast the two scenarios of depersonalization agreement (i.e., the employee and significant other both appraise the employee's depersonalization as low versus high—that is, sharing a positive versus negative reality, Quadrants 1 vs. 2 in Figure 2). Integrating our theory with past empirical research, we expect that the employee's WFC and distress will be lower and perceived understanding will be higher when the employee and partner agree the employee does not face depersonalization (Quadrant 1), compared to when they agree the employee faces depersonalization (Quadrant 2). Indeed, in such situations, employees receive both the benefits of agreement and low depersonalization.

Although shared reality theory predicts that agreement is preferred to disagreement (Hardin & Higgins, 1996, see also Chun, Ames, Uribe, & Higgins, 2017), we propose that within agreement scenarios, low depersonalization will be preferable to high depersonalization. To date, research has found depersonalization is positively related to WFC and negative affect. In particular, Montgomery et al. (2006) found a positive correlation between cynicism (depersonalization) and WFC similar to Derks and Bakker (2014). Research also concludes that "burned out employees may have little energy left for family chores or family-enriching activities and thus perceive WFC" (Carlson, Ferguson, Hunter, & Whitten, 2012, p. 852). Additionally, depersonalization is positively related to psychological strain, negative mood, depression, and irritability (e.g., Alarcon, 2011; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Pomaki et al., 2004; Zellars et al., 2004). Relatedly, depersonalized employees tend to withdraw from others (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Garden, 1987; King & DeLongis, 2014), which we expect to relate to perceived understanding with one's partner. Indeed, prior research notes that burnout, including cynicism, negatively spills over to individuals' home life (Alarcon, 2011), suggesting that employees who have high depersonalization may also distance themselves from their partners at home. Following such distancing from their partners as a result of higher absolute levels of depersonalization, we propose that employees will be less likely to *subjectively* perceive a shared reality (i.e., perceived understanding) (Hardin & Higgins, 1996), even if the partner's assessment of the employee's depersonalization happens to align (i.e., objective agreement). In sum, we propose that when agreement exists, less depersonalization is preferable (i.e., a positive shared reality is better than a negative shared reality) for employees as follows:

Hypothesis 2: Employee (a) WFC is lower, (b) distress is lower, and (c) perceived understanding is greater when the employee and significant other are in agreement on a low level of employee depersonalization than when the employee and significant other are in agreement on a high level of employee depersonalization.

2.3 | Effects of depersonalization disagreement scenarios

Next, we contrast the two disagreement scenarios (i.e., when the employee experiences low depersonalization, but the partner appraises it as high, vs. when the employee experiences high depersonalization, but the partner appraises it as low, Quadrants 3 vs. 4 in Figure 2). Though disagreement (failing to reach a shared reality) is detrimental to the self, shared realities are important for regulating the self and can be used as a vehicle through which individuals control social distance with others (e.g., individuals may want to share different realities with their colleagues and partners; Hardin & Higgins, 1996). This follows Heider's argument that one might choose to "hide one's wishes, intentions, and attitudes from other people in order to keep them from the control of other people" (1958, p. 71). For example, if an employee is a jerk to others at work, they may not want their partner to know and potentially face negative consequences at home (i.e., the employee does not wish to share their negative reality of high depersonalization; Quadrant 4). Nonetheless, this is still distressing for the employee because they are experiencing depersonalization, but are trying to hide such stress at home (e.g., with self-regulation). Such regulation is positively related to distress (Adams & Webster, 2013) and WFC (Seery, Corrigall, & Harpel, 2008; Wagner, Barnes, & Scott, 2014). Additionally, if employees assume their depersonalization is hidden, they may be unlikely to perceive their partner understands it. Thus, we propose it is detrimental for WFC, distress, and perceived understanding to face depersonalization and have a partner who does not recognize it.

Situations where the employee does not experience depersonalization, but the partner believes they do (i.e., the employee's positive reality is not shared, Quadrant 3), are also likely to be distressing for the employee. For instance, we expect an employee will feel upset when their partner believes the employee is callous but the employee actually is not. Research shows that recipients of negative evaluations from others experience more stress, depressive symptoms, and distress (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). On the other hand, although disagreement surrounding a positive reality is distressing, it is not expected to be as harmful as disagreement surrounding a negative reality. This is because the significant other will likely show concern (and potentially help out more at home given their belief that the employee is stressed; i.e., tangible assistance, Viswesvaran, Sanchez, & Fisher, 1999), as well as listen to the employee talk about work and provide information and advice (French, Dumani, Allen, & Shockley, 2018). Finally, research on perceived understanding concludes that "feeling understood by a partner is conceptually distinct from actually being understood" (Reis et al., 2017, p. 6) and proposes that individuals "may feel understood in the absence of the others' actual understanding" (p. 3). Thus, an employee may perceive understanding with their partner even when objective agreement does not exist, and this is more likely when they are not facing depersonalization (Quadrant 3), compared to when they are attempting to hide the depersonalization they are actually experiencing as in the previous scenario (Quadrant 4).

Taken altogether, when depersonalization disagreement occurs and the employee rates their depersonalization as low and the partner rates it as high (i.e., failing to share a positive reality), reduced stress (WFC and distress) and increased perceived understanding are expected, compared to the doubly distressing combination of facing high depersonalization *and* it not actually being recognized by one's partner (i.e., failing to share a negative reality). Thus, in situations of disagreement, it is preferable for the employee to have low depersonalization but the partner to view it as high (Quadrant 3) than vice versa (Quadrant 4).

Hypothesis 3:   Employee (a) WFC is higher, (b) distress is higher, and (c) perceived understanding is lower when the employee experiences high depersonalization but the significant other rates it low, as compared to when the significant other rates the employee's depersonalization higher than the employee.

2.4 │ Indirect effects of depersonalization agreement on employee recovery

We now turn to the proposed distal effect of depersonalization agreement on recovery through general work–family, affective, and cognitive pathways. As noted above, achieving shared reality is important for well-being, such as addressing one's needs to protect and care for oneself (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). Recovery is one way to do this after exposure to stress (Sonnentag, 2018) and is defined as "unwinding and restoration during which a person's strain level that has increased as a reaction to a stressor or any other demand returns to its prestressor level" (Sonnentag, Venz, & Casper, 2017, p. 366). We argued above that sharing one's depersonalization reality with one's partner (i.e., depersonalization agreement) will be associated with less stress (WFC and distress) and greater perceived understanding from the partner. We extend these arguments to propose that this reduction in stress and increase in perceived understanding will facilitate unwinding at home and allow individuals to recover following their depersonalization. Exploring recovery as a distal outcome of depersonalization agreement via key mechanisms is important because little is known about how others in the employee's life can help or hinder the employee's recovery itself (Sonnentag et al., 2017). Overall, we see agreement with the partner regarding the employee's depersonalization as a nonwork, interpersonal experience that indirectly relates to the employee's recovery through reductions in WFC and distress and increases in perceived understanding.

First, we expect WFC to mediate the effect of depersonalization agreement on recovery. Above we argued that in situations where an employee's depersonalization is accurately recognized by the partner, the employee's work will be less likely to infringe upon their family (Quadrants 1 and 2); we expect this in turn to allow the employee to have more time and energy to recover at home. We also proposed above that in situations where the employee's depersonalization is not recognized by the partner, the employee's work will more likely disturb their family life (Quadrants 3 and 4); we expect that as a result of this, the employee will likely not have time or ability to recover. Our reasoning is supported by the effort–recovery model (Meijman & Mulder, 1998), which suggests that WFC mediates the effects of work stressors on well-being (Geurts, Kompier, Roxburgh, & Houtman, 2003; Hughes & Parkes, 2007; Janssen, Peeters, de Jonge, Houkes, & Tummers, 2004) and concludes that WFC "is a key indicator of recovery opportunities after work" (Hughes & Parkes, 2007, p. 274). Thus, the effort–recovery model suggests that WFC is a key mechanism linking depersonalization as a work stressor with recovery as a way to improve well-being after depersonalization. Supporting these arguments, research shows that WFC is negatively related to recovery experiences (Demsky, Ellis, & Fritz, 2014; Sanz-Vergel, Demerouti, Bakker, & Moreno-Jiménez, 2011; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Other research finds that when employees' work interferes with their family, they have little time or energy to engage in activities at home (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Ilies et al., 2007) (i.e., activities that assist with recovery). Sonnentag (2018) advises that fatigue impairs employees' ability to engage in leisure activities after work. WFC involves reduced time and energy (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) needed for the family role, which should similarly hinder recovery.

Next, we turn to distress as a more nuanced affective mechanism underlying the above arguments. Sonnentag (2018) identifies negative affect as a key pathway impeding recovery from job stressors. Negative moods inhibit recovery because negative feelings continue to surface, based on the mood-congruency hypothesis (Bower, 1981; Sonnentag, 2018). This is consistent with negative meta-analytic linkages between negative affective states and recovery experiences (Steed, Swider, Keem & Liu, 2019). Taken together with our arguments regarding the effects of depersonalization agreement on minimizing the negative affective experience of distress (Quadrants 1 and 2 vs. 3 and 4), we expect such reduced distress to enable recovery, consistent with the nature of recovery as restoration for well-being. Thus, we propose that reductions in distress will mediate the effects of depersonalization agreement on the employee's recovery.

Finally, we expect depersonalization agreement to facilitate recovery through the cognitive pathway of increased perceived understanding from one's partner. Research has found that perceived understanding from others is associated with fewer physical symptoms and greater well-being (Oishi, Schiller, & Gross, 2013), whereas a lack of it holds "a variety of ill-effects" for the individual (Finkenauer & Righetti, 2011, p. 333). One likely reason for this is that an understanding other will allow an individual time to recover following stress and depersonalization. Indeed, meta-analyses show recovery and well-being are inextricably linked (Steed et al., 2019). Thus, we expect the perceived understanding from a partner facilitated by depersonalization agreement (Quadrants 1 and 2) to be conducive to the unwinding at home that characterizes recovery. Likewise, we propose that a lack of perceived understanding arising from depersonalization disagreement (Quadrants 3 and 4) will hinder recovery. Altogether, we expect the following indirect effects of depersonalization agreement on recovery:

> **Hypothesis 4**: Employee (a) WFC, (b) distress, and (c) perceived understanding mediate the interplay of employee and significant other ratings of employee depersonalization on employee recovery.

3 | STUDY 1 METHODS

3.1 | Sample and procedure

Participants were composed of employees and former students of a large public Midwest university who were recruited through university email and online message boards (this study was approved by the Michigan State University Institutional Review Board [IRB], IRB #08-841, titled "Demands–Labor-Conflict Model of Work–Family Conflict and Well-Being"). The study invitation letter contained a description of the study and a web link to sign up for the study. Study recruitment was ongoing and the employee survey was closed once data were collected from 194 participants. Participants were asked to recruit their partner (i.e., significant other) who they were currently living with to report on the employee's depersonalization and 172 partners completed their survey. Due to missing data for the focal variables, the final sample consisted of 166 couples. As a reward for participation, participants were entered into a drawing for one of 40 $25 gift cards. To participate, employees were required to work at least 35 hr per week and have a cohabitating partner who would also be willing to participate. Participants held a variety of job titles in such fields as accounting/finance (19%), administrative/clerical work (11%), education (7%), marketing/communications (15%), human resources (10%), technology (7%), and other (e.g., engineering) (26%). A total of 62% of participants were female, 88% held at least a bachelor's degree, and 64% had at least one child living with them ($M = 1.11$; $SD = 1.07$).

3.2 | Measures

Participants responded using Likert-type scales that ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*, unless otherwise noted.

3.2.1 | Depersonalization

Both the employee and their partner rated the employee's depersonalization using the five-item depersonalization subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) which ranged from 1 = *never* to 5 = *always*. An example employee-rated item is "I feel I am callous toward others" and an example partner-rated item is "[Focal participant's name] is callous toward others." Coefficient α for employee-rated and partner-rated depersonalization were .77 and .81, respectively.

3.2.2 | Work-to-family conflict

Employees rated their WFC with Gutek, Searle, and Klepa (1991) four-item scale (see also Kopelman et al., 1983). An example item is "After work, I come home too tired to do some of the things I would like to do." Coefficient α was .76.

3.2.3 | Recovery

Employees rated their recovery outside work using the three-item scale developed by Sonnentag (2003). An example recovery item is "Because of the leisure activities I pursue after work, I typically feel recovered." Coefficient α for recovery was .91.

3.2.4 | Control variables

Several theoretically driven control variables were included in our analyses to address concerns regarding alternative explanations for the hypothesized relationships (Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016). Work–family integration can amplify work-to-family spillover (Ilies, Wilson, & Wagner, 2009) and thus may indicate whether the employee brings home their depersonalization, the partner's perception of it, and the employee's WFC. We controlled for employee work–family integration using the three-item scale from Desrochers, Hilton, and Larwood (2005) ($\alpha = .78$). We controlled for marital status (1 = not married and 0 = married) because it could represent the partner's ability to accurately observe the employee's depersonalization. Given that employee agreeableness is negatively related to depersonalization (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004) and WFC (Bruck & Allen, 2003), we controlled for agreeableness using the four-item scale from Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, and Lucas (2006) ($\alpha = .78$). Finally, because negative affect is positively associated with depersonalization (Thoresen et al., 2003) and WFC (e.g., Bruck & Allen, 2003; Ilies et al., 2007), we controlled for negative affect with the shortened scale used by Song, Foo, and Uy (2008), which includes a subset of five items developed by Watson et al. (1988) ($\alpha = .70$).

3.3 | Analyses

To test Hypotheses 1–3 (part a), we used polynomial regression and response surface methodology (Edwards, 2002; Edwards & Parry, 1993). First, we regressed WFC onto control variables and five polynomial terms needed for congruence analyses by estimating the equation below (for parsimony, control variables are omitted):

$$W = b_0 + b_1E + b_2S + b_3E^2 + b_4(ES) + b_5S^2 + e, \tag{1}$$

where W refers to employee WFC, E refers to employee ratings of their depersonalization, and S refers to partner-rated employee depersonalization. Before calculating the second-order terms (E^2, ES, and S^2), we mean-centered employee- (E) and partner-ratings (S) to reduce nonessential collinearity and to improve interpretability (Aiken & West, 1991). Following prior congruence research (e.g., Edwards & Cable, 2009; Matta, Scott, Koopman, & Conlon, 2015; Wilson et al., 2018), we plotted a three-dimensional response surface using coefficients from Equation 1, such that the vertical axis refers to WFC and the perpendicular axes refer to employee- and partner-ratings.[3]

Hypotheses 1–2 (part a) were tested following Edwards and Cable's (2009) criteria for a congruence effect, which involves examining three features of the response surface. The first feature is the curvature along the incongruence line ($E = -S$, computed as $b_3 - b_4 + b_5$). Hypothesis 1a would be supported if the curvature along the incongruence line is positive and significant (i.e., U-shape), such that WFC ratings increase as employee (E) and partner (S) ratings of

employee depersonalization diverge from each other. The second feature of the response surface, which would further support Hypothesis 1a, is the trough of the response surface where the outcome variable is minimized (Edwards & Cable, 2009). Hypothesis 1a predicts that WFC is minimized along the line of perfect congruence between ratings and would be supported if the second principal axis slope (p_{21}) equals (i.e., is not significantly different from) 1 and the second principal axis intercept (p_{20}) equals 0 (Edwards, 2002). To test whether these criteria were met, we estimated significance of the nonlinear combination of the regression coefficients using 20,000 bootstrap resamples to construct 95% confidence intervals (CIs) around the values of p_{21} and p_{20} and to determine whether their CIs contained 1 and 0, respectively.

The third feature of the response surface, required to support Hypothesis 2a, is the slope of the congruence line ($E = S$, computed as $b_1 + b_2$). Hypothesis 2a would be supported if this feature is positive and significant, which would indicate WFC is lower when employee and partner agree the employee's depersonalization is low, compared to when they agree it is high.

To test Hypothesis 3a, we examined the lateral shift quantity, computed as ($[b_2 − b_1] / [2 \times (b_3 − b_4 + b_5)]$), following recent research testing asymmetric incongruence effects (Cole, Carter, & Zhang, 2013; Matta et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2018). Hypothesis 3a would be supported if the lateral shift quantity is negative and significant using 20,000 bootstrap resamples and 95% CIs. Hypothesis 3a would receive additional support if the slope along the incongruence line ($E = −S$, computed as $b_1 − b_2$) is positive and significant (Matta et al., 2015).

Hypothesis 4a, which corresponds with the indirect effect of the interplay of employee and partner ratings of employee depersonalization on recovery through WFC, was tested using the block variable approach advocated by Edwards and Cable (2009). This involves estimating "α" and "β" paths of the mediation model as follows. First, we multiplied regression coefficients from Equation 1 with the raw data to obtain a block variable (i.e., weighted linear composite) that refers to the association between terms from Equation 1 and WFC. To examine the "α" path (i.e., effect of five terms from Equation 1 on WFC), WFC was regressed on the block variable together with control variables. Next, the "β" path was tested by regressing recovery on WFC, controlling for the effects of the five polynomial terms and control variables. Significance of the indirect effect was computed by generating 20,000 bias-corrected bootstrap resamples.

We ran several sets of supplemental analyses to test the robustness of the hypothesized causal order and to explore whether the effects of depersonalization agreement generalize to the other burnout dimensions. These results are summarized in the Online Appendix.

4 | STUDY 1 RESULTS

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations, and correlations for Study 1 variables. Simple mean differences revealed that 30% of employee–partner dyads were in agreement regarding the employee's depersonalization (i.e., their ratings were within ±.2 of each other), in 43% of dyads the employee's ratings were higher than the partner's, and in 27% of dyads the partner's ratings were higher than the employee's. Before testing our hypotheses, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of our constructs to verify they could be distinguished from one another. CFA results supported our hypothesized four-factor model (i.e., employee ratings of their own depersonalization, partner ratings of employee depersonalization, employee WFC, and employee recovery), χ^2 (113) = 168.88, $p < .01$, CFI (comparative fit index) = .95, RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation) = .06, SRMR (standardized root mean square residual) = .06; all indicators significantly loaded onto their respective factors. We compared the hypothesized four-factor model to all six possible constrained models that combined any two of the factors, revealing that the constrained models added significant misfit to the data (135.27 $\leq \chi^2$s ($\Delta df = 3$) $\leq$ 368.86.

Results from polynomial regression analyses pertaining to Equation 1 are shown in Model 1 of Table 2, and the corresponding response surface plot is shown in Figure 3. Because tests of part a of Hypotheses 1–3 are calculated using terms from Equation 1 (e.g., incongruence line curvature uses the higher order terms, the congruence line slope uses

TABLE 1 Means, standard deviations, and correlations for Study 1

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Marital status	0.10	0.30	—							
2. Employee negative affect	1.84	0.50	−.01	(.70)						
3. Employee work–family integration	2.55	0.92	−.06	.09	(.78)					
4. Employee agreeableness	3.88	0.72	.08	−.06	.10	(.78)				
5. Employee depersonalization (employee-rated)	1.85	0.57	−.09	.32**	−.07	−.36**	(.77)			
6. Employee depersonalization (significant other-rated)	1.69	0.60	−.10	.13	−.10	−.18*	.30**	(.81)		
7. Employee WFC (employee-rated)	3.01	0.86	−.16*	.24**	.43**	.04	.30**	.03	(.76)	
8. Recovery (employee-rated)	3.35	0.93	.08	−.36**	−.13	.12	−.25**	−.07	−.37**	(.90)

Note. $N = 166$ employee-significant other dyads. Marital status was coded such that 1 = not married and 0 = married. Coefficient alpha are displayed along the diagonal.

Abbreviation: WFC = work-to-family conflict.

†$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

the lower order terms, and the lateral shift quantity uses all five terms from Equation 1), we examined the significance of Equation 1 terms as a set, following Graham, Dust, and Ziegert (2018). As shown in Model 1 of Table 2, the terms from Equation 1 significantly predicted employee WFC ($F = 5.56$, $p < .01$).

Hypothesis 1a predicted that the more agreement between the employee and partner's perceptions of the employee's depersonalization, the lower the employee's WFC. The surface along the incongruence line curved upward ($[b_3 - b_4 + b_5] = .78$, $p < .05$). Figure 3 displays the response surface plot of the joint effects of employee and partner ratings of employee depersonalization on WFC, such that the incongruence line ($E = -S$) indicates a U-shape pattern (moving from the back left corner to the front right corner of the plot). That is, WFC increases when employee and partner ratings diverge from the congruence line ($E = S$) (i.e., as disagreement increases). Thus, the first feature of the response surface supports Hypothesis 1a. To further test Hypothesis 1a, we examined the second feature of the response surface: its trough (i.e., second principal axis). Results of 20,000 bootstrapped resamples showed that $p_{21} = 1$, as the 95% CI contained 1.0 [−0.348, 3.183] and $p_{20} = 0$, as the 95% CI contained 0 [−0.090, 2.806]. This supports the contention that WFC was minimized along the congruence line (which moves from the front left corner to the back right corner of Figure 3). In sum, Hypothesis 1a was supported.

Hypothesis 2a predicted that employee WFC is lower when the couple is in agreement on a low level of employee depersonalization than when they are in agreement on a high level of employee depersonalization. As shown in Table 2 (Model 1), the slope along the congruence line ($E = S$) was positive and significant ($[b_1 + b_2] = .31$, $p < .05$). The response surface plot in Figure 3 also shows that employee WFC is lower when the employee and partner are in agreement on a low level of employee depersonalization (front left corner of the plot) than on a high level of employee depersonalization (back right corner of the plot). Thus, Hypothesis 2a was supported.

Hypothesis 3a predicted that employee WFC is higher when the employee rates their own depersonalization higher than the partner rates it, compared to when the partner rates it higher. Given that the curvature along the incongruence line is significant (i.e., Hypothesis 1a was supported), Hypothesis 3a is supported with a significant negative lateral shift quantity (Carter & Mossholder, 2015). Response surface results revealed that the lateral shift quantity was negative and significant, −.308, 95% CI [−1.226, −0.150]. As seen in Table 2 (Model 1), the slope along the incongruence line was positive and significant ($[b_1 - b_2] = .60$, $p < .01$), which further supports Hypothesis 3a. In addition, Figure 3

TABLE 2 Study 1 polynomial regression results of employee-significant other (SO) depersonalization agreement on employee WFC and recovery

Variables	Employee WFC Model 1		Distal DV: Employee recovery Model 2		Model 3	
Constant	1.01*	(.40)	4.36**	(.49)	4.69**	(.49)
Controls						
Employee negative affect	0.20†	(.12)	−0.56**	(.15)	−0.49**	(.14)
Marital status	−0.32†	(.18)	0.16	(.23)	0.06	(.22)
Employee agreeableness	0.14	(.08)	0.09	(.10)	0.13	(.10)
Employee work–family integration	0.40**	(.06)	−0.12	(.08)	0.01	(.08)
Polynomial terms						
b_1 Employee depersonalization (E)	0.46**	(.12)	−0.18	(.15)	−0.03	(.15)
b_2 SO ratings of employee depersonalization (S)	−0.14	(.12)	−0.01	(.15)	−0.06	(.14)
b_3 E^2	0.19	(.12)	−0.13	(.15)	−0.07	(.15)
b_4 $E \times S$	−0.34†	(.20)	0.17	(.25)	0.05	(.24)
b_5 S^2	0.25*	(.12)	0.01	(.15)	0.09	(.15)
Mediator						
Employee work-to-family conflict					−0.33**	(.10)
Variance explained						
R^2	.36**		.17**		.23**	
ΔR^2	.12**		.02		.06**	
Congruence line (E = S)						
Slope ($b_1 + b_2$)	0.31*	(.15)	−0.19	(.19)		
Curvature ($b_3 + b_4 + b_5$)	0.10	(.21)	0.04	(.26)		
Incongruence line (E = −S)						
Slope ($b_1 - b_2$)	0.60**	(.18)	−0.18	(.23)		
Curvature ($b_3 - b_4 + b_5$)	0.78*	(.33)	−0.29	(.40)		
F for Equation 1 terms	5.56**		2.85			

Note. N = 166 employee-significant other (SO) dyads. Unstandardized regression coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses) are displayed. Marital status was coded such that 1 = not married and 0 = married. Model 1 refers to the effect of the polynomial terms on employee WFC (α path in our mediation model). Model 2 refers to the total effect of the polynomial terms on employee recovery (τ path in our mediation model). Model 3 refers to the effect of employee WFC (the mediator) on employee recovery controlling for the polynomial terms' overall effect and our control variables (β path in our mediation model).

Abbreviation: WFC= employee-rated work–family conflict.

$^\dagger p < .10$; $^* p < .05$; $^{**} p < .01$.

shows that employee WFC is higher when the employee rates their own depersonalization higher than the partner (front right corner of the plot), compared to when the partner rates it higher than the employee (back left corner of the plot).

Hypothesis 4a predicted that employee WFC mediates the relationship between the interplay of employee and partner ratings of employee depersonalization and employee recovery. As seen in Table 2 (Model 3), WFC was negatively related to recovery, (b = −.33, p < .01). Moreover, the indirect effect of the interplay of employee and partner

FIGURE 3 Study 1
Employee-significant other
depersonalization agreement
(congruence) effects on employee
work-to-family conflict (WFC). *X*-axis is
mean-centered employee ratings of
depersonalization. *Y*-axis is
mean-centered significant other ratings of
employee depersonalization. *Z*-axis is
employee WFC (employee-rated)
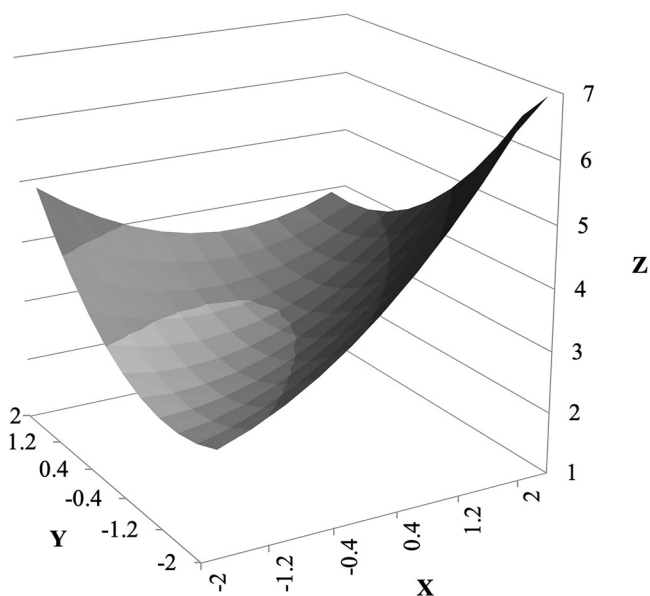
ratings of employee depersonalization on recovery through WFC was negative and significant ($b = -.327$, 95% CI [$-0.604, -0.129$]). Thus, Hypothesis 4a was supported.

5 | DISCUSSION OF STUDY 1 AND OVERVIEW OF STUDY 2

Using polynomial regression and response surface methodology with a sample of employee–partner dyads, in Study 1 we found that couple-level agreement regarding the employee's depersonalization is associated with lower employee WFC (even when depersonalization is high) compared to when disagreement occurs (even when depersonalization is low). That is, WFC was generally minimized when the employee and partner were in agreement about the employee's depersonalization. Moreover, indirect effect analyses revealed that depersonalization agreement facilitated employees' recovery at home via reduced WFC, showing this agreement is a nonwork, interpersonal experience that ultimately ties to recovery.

Although we found support for WFC as a general mechanism linking depersonalization agreement and recovery, our theorizing points to other mechanisms that may more precisely explain this relationship and connect to our theory. Specifically, our line of reasoning for WFC focused on broad shared reality theory tenets; thus, WFC served as a general proxy for a shared reality theory mechanism in Study 1. Shared reality theory, however, offers more nuanced mechanisms: distress and perceived understanding from one's partner. We focused on the idea that employees face distress as a result of disagreeing with their partner regarding their depersonalization, such that a lack of shared reality fosters "agitation and visceral discomfort" (Hardin & Conley, 2001, p. 10; Asch, 1952). We also theorized that perceived understanding is important based on how shared realities validate individuals' perceptions (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). Thus, the primary goal of Study 2 was to test these more precise shared reality theory mechanisms. Specifically, distress and perceived understanding capture specific affective and cognitive pathways, respectively, linking depersonalization agreement to recovery.

6 | STUDY 2 METHODS

6.1 | Sample

Participants for Study 2 were composed of 151 staff employees at a large Midwestern university and their partners (i.e., 151 couples) (we received IRB approval from Purdue University for this study, IRB #1812021452, titled "Couples, Work, and Well-Being"). Employee participants were required to work at least 30 hr per week and live with their partner and held roles such as administrative/clerical work (21%), academic advising (11%), data analysis (9%), marketing/communications (7%), operations (7%), and other (e.g., HR and custodial) (34%). Eighty-six percent of partner participants were employed, including in a variety of industries such as sales, healthcare, technology, and manufacturing. The mean age was 44.68 ($SD = 10.93$) for employees and 45.91 ($SD = 11.91$) for partners. The average relationship length was 20.74 years ($SD = 11.65$) and 93% of the couples were married. Sixty-seven percent of employees were female, 80% had at least a bachelor's degree, and 58% had at least one child currently living with them ($M = .97$; $SD = 1.05$).

6.2 | Procedure

Potential participants were recruited via email using their publicly available contact information. Data were collected from employee participants across two surveys separated by approximately 2 weeks and collected from partner participants in one survey. In the initial employee survey, we collected employee demographics and ratings on the control variables. After completing the initial survey, employees were asked to recruit their partner to participate. In the second employee survey, we collected employee depersonalization, distress, perceived understanding, and recovery. In the partner survey, partners were asked to provide their demographic information and rate the employee's depersonalization. As compensation and participation incentive, participants were offered electronic gift cards as follows: $8 for completing the employee surveys, $4 for the partner survey, and a bonus of $10 if employees and their partners completed their respective surveys. Study recruitment was ongoing and the first employee survey closed after data were collected from 250 participants. Of those, we received 168 completed partner surveys and 151 employee participants completed the second survey.

6.3 | Measures

Unless stated otherwise, employee and partner ratings were captured using Likert-type scales ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*.

6.3.1 | Depersonalization

Similar to Study 1, employee depersonalization was rated by the employee ($\alpha = .75$) and partner ($\alpha = .73$) using Maslach and Jackson's (1981) five-item scale.

6.3.2 | Distress

Employees rated their distress using the three-item scale from Outlaw et al. (2019), which included the items "distressed," "unsettled," and "disquieted" ($\alpha = .81$).

6.3.3 | Perceived understanding

Employees rated their perception that their partner understood their depersonalization with the item "To what degree does your partner understand your feelings or behaviors described in the above questions?" with the anchors 1 = *no understanding* and 5 = *complete understanding* and was positioned directly below the depersonalization items. This approach is consistent with the "direct construct method" of assessing perceived understanding from others such as partners (Reis et al., 2017, p. 5) and with the item from Gordon et al. (2013).

6.3.4 | Recovery

As in Study 1, employees rated their recovery using the three-item scale from Sonnentag (2003) ($\alpha = .91$).

6.3.5 | Control variables

Following Study 1, we controlled for employee work–family integration using the three-item scale from Desrochers et al. (2005) ($\alpha = .83$), employee agreeableness using the four-item scale from Donnellan et al. (2006) ($\alpha = .79$), and marital status (1 = not married and 0 = married). We also controlled for couples' relationship length (in years).

6.4 | Analyses

As in Study 1, we used polynomial regression and response surface methodology to test our hypothesized effects of employee–partner depersonalization agreement on distress and perceived understanding. We regressed distress and perceived understanding on the control variables and the five polynomial terms capturing the effect of depersonalization agreement, following the two Equations below (to maintain parsimony, control variables are not displayed):

$$D = b_0 + b_1 E + b_2 S + b_3 E^2 + b_4 (ES) + b_5 S^2 + e, \tag{2}$$

$$P = b_0 + b_1 E + b_2 S + b_3 E^2 + b_4 (ES) + b_5 S^2 + e, \tag{3}$$

where D refers to employee-rated distress, P refers to employee-rated perceived understanding, E refers to employee self-rated depersonalization, and S refers to partner-rated employee depersonalization. To test parts b and c of Hypotheses 1–4, we used the exact procedures used to test part a of Hypotheses 1–4 in Study 1 (with reversed signs for perceived understanding because of the positive rather than negative valence of the criterion).

Given our examination of two distinct mediators or pathways in Study 2, we computed our hypothesized indirect effects by constructing two block variables (one each for distress and perceived understanding) and estimated each of the "α" paths following the procedures described for Hypothesis 4 in Study 1. We examined the "β" paths of the Study

TABLE 3 Means, standard deviations, and correlations for Study 2

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Marital status	0.07	0.25	—								
2. Employee work–family integration	2.42	1.02	−.08	(.83)							
3. Employee agreeableness	4.08	0.75	−.07	.10	(.79)						
4. Relationship length (in years)	20.74	11.65	−.25**	.18*	.09	—					
5. Employee depersonalization (employee-rated)	1.93	0.56	.15†	.17*	−.48**	−.11	(.75)				
6. Employee depersonalization (Significant other-rated)	1.76	0.56	.02	−.06	−.28**	.00	.43**	(.73)			
7. Employee distress	1.78	0.82	.12	.10	−.03	−.00	.28**	.10	(.81)		
8. Employee perceived understanding	3.66	0.84	.04	−.12	.10	−.12	−.28**	−.09	−.28**	—	
9. Employee recovery	3.43	0.86	.05	−.28**	.07	−.05	−.32**	−.17*	−.44**	.24**	(.91)

Note. $N = 151$ Employee-significant other dyads. Marital status was coded such that 1 = not married and 0 = married. Coefficient alpha are displayed along the diagonal.

†$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

2 mediation model by regressing employee recovery on distress and perceived understanding, while controlling for the effects of the five polynomial terms and control variables. This allowed us to test our hypothesized indirect effects with both mediators in the model simultaneously, such that we could examine the effects of one while controlling for the other.

7 | STUDY 2 RESULTS

Table 3 provides the means, standard deviations, and correlations for variables in Study 2. Notably, 39% of employee–partner dyads were in agreement regarding the employee's depersonalization (i.e., again using a cutoff of ±.2), in 41% of dyads the employee's ratings were higher than the partner's, and in 20% of dyads the partner's ratings were higher than the employee's. Prior to testing Study 2 hypotheses, we conducted a CFA of our hypothesized 4-factor model (employee and partner ratings of the employee's depersonalization, employee distress, and employee recovery). The results of this CFA revealed that our hypothesized model demonstrated a good fit to the data $\chi^2 (93) = (167.01), p < .01$, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .10, and all indicators loaded significantly onto their appointed factor. We compared the hypothesized model to all possible six models that were constrained to combine any two factors. The constrained models added significant misfit to the data, $110.01 \leq \Delta\chi^2 s (\Delta df = 3) \leq 327.58$.

In Table 4, we show the polynomial regression results corresponding with Equations 2 and 3, which indicate that the terms in Equation 2 (Model 1) were significant in predicting employee distress ($F = 3.30, p < .01$) and the terms in Equation 3 (Model 2) were significant in predicting employee perceived understanding ($F = 3.70, p < .01$). Figure 4 displays the response surface plots for the Study 2 mediators, distress (Panel 1) and perceived understanding (Panel 2).

Turning to our hypothesis tests, for distress, the surface along the incongruence line was positive (i.e., curved upward) and significant ($1.00, p < .05$) supporting Hypothesis 1b. For perceived understanding, the surface along the

TABLE 4 Study 2 polynomial regression results of employee-significant other (SO) depersonalization agreement on employee distress, perceived understanding, and recovery

Variables	Employee distress		Employee perceived understanding		Distal DV: Recovery	
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Constant	0.93[*]	(.45)	4.16[**]	(.45)	4.57[**]	(.54)
Controls						
Marital status	0.29	(.28)	0.12	(.28)	0.43[†]	(.26)
Employee agreeableness	0.15	(.10)	−0.04	(.10)	−0.08	(.10)
Employee work–family integration	0.02	(.07)	−0.03	(.07)	−0.18	(.06)
Relationship length (years)	0.00	(.01)	−0.01	(.01)	0.00	(.01)
Polynomial terms						
b_1 Employee depersonalization (E)	0.50[**]	(.15)	−0.53[**]	(.15)	−0.22	(.15)
b_2 SO ratings of employee depersonalization (S)	−0.04	(.14)	0.04	(.14)	−0.22[†]	(.13)
b_3 E^2	0.28	(.21)	−0.27	(.21)	−0.34[†]	(.19)
b_4 $E \times S$	−0.51[*]	(.25)	0.66[*]	(.26)	−0.00	(.24)
b_5 S^2	0.21	(.19)	−0.17	(.19)	0.42[*]	(.17)
Mediators						
Employee distress					−0.38[**]	(.08)
Employee perceived understanding					0.06	(.08)
Variance explained						
R^2	.13[*]		.15[**]		0.34[**]	
ΔR^2	.10[**]		.11[**]		0.13[**]	
Congruence line (E = S)						
Slope ($b_1 + b_2$)	0.46[**]	(.17)	−0.49[**]	(.18)		
Curvature ($b_3 + b_4 + b_5$)	−0.01	(.21)	0.22	(.21)		
Incongruence line (E = −S)						
Slope ($b_1 − b_2$)	0.54[*]	(.24)	−0.58[*]	(.24)		
Curvature ($b_3 − b_4 + b_5$)	1.00[*]	(.49)	−1.11[*]	(.49)		
F for terms in Equation 2 (distress) and Equation 3 (perceived understanding)	3.30[**]		3.70[**]			

Note. N = 151 employee-significant other (SO) dyads. Unstandardized regression coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses) are displayed. Marital status was coded such that 1 = not married and 0 = married. Model 1 refers to the effect of the polynomial terms on employee distress (first α path in our mediation model). Model 2 refers to the effect of the polynomial terms on employee perceived understanding (second α path in our mediation model). Model 3 refers to the effect of employee distress and perceived understanding (the mediators) on employee recovery controlling for the polynomial terms' overall effect and our control variables (β path in our mediation model).
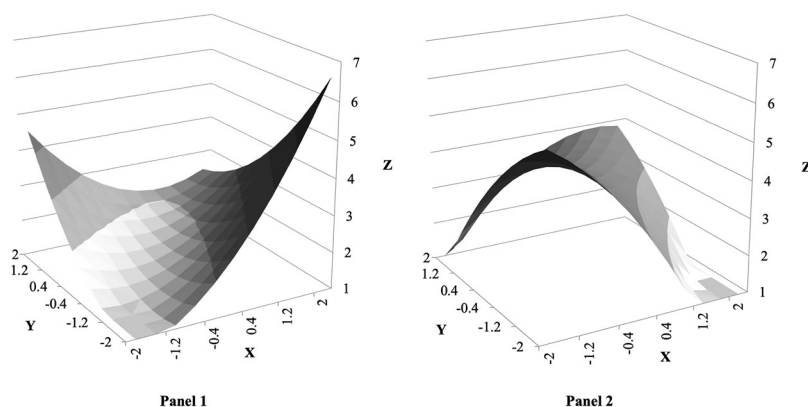†$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

FIGURE 4 Study 2 Employee-significant other depersonalization agreement (congruence) effects on employee distress (Panel 1) and employee perceived understanding (Panel 2). X-axes are mean-centered employee ratings of depersonalization. Y-axes are mean-centered significant other ratings of employee depersonalization. The Z-axis is employee distress in Panel 1 and employee perceived understanding in Panel 2

incongruence line was negative (i.e., curved downward) and significant (-1.11, $p < .05$) supporting Hypothesis 1c. As shown in Figure 4, as employee and partner ratings of employee depersonalization deviate from the congruence line ($E = S$), distress increases (Panel 1) and perceived understanding decreases (Panel 2).

Next, we tested whether employee distress is minimized along the line of perfect agreement between employee and partner ratings of employee depersonalization by inspecting the slope (p_{21}) and intercept (p_{20}) of the second principal axis (i.e., the response surface trough) (Edwards, 2002). Results of 20,000 bootstrap resamples revealed that the second principal axis slope (p_{21}) = 1, as the 95% CI contained 1.0 [0.053, 5.249] and the second principal axis intercept (p_{20}) = 0, as the 95% CI contained 0 [-0.084, 3.763]. This indicates that distress was minimized along the congruence line. We tested whether perceived understanding is maximized along the line of perfect agreement by examining the slope (p_{11}) and intercept (p_{10}) of the first principal axis (i.e., the response surface ridge) (Edwards, 2002). The first (rather than the second) principal axis was used in order to examine the maximization of a positively valenced outcome (rather than the minimization of a negatively valenced outcome). Results of 20,000 bootstrap resamples revealed that the first principal axis slope (p_{11}) = 1, as the 95% CI included 1.0 [0.412, 3.316] and the first principal axis intercept (p_{10}) $\neq$ 0, as the 95% CI did not include 0 [0.094, 2.494]. Thus, Hypothesis 1b was fully supported and Hypothesis 1c was partially supported.

For Hypothesis 2b, as Table 4 (Model 1) indicates, the slope along the congruence line was positive and significant (.46, $p < .01$). For Hypothesis 2c, the slope along the congruence line shown in Table 4 (Model 2) was negative and significant ($-.49$, $p < .01$). As seen in Figure 4, distress is lower (Panel 1) and perceived understanding is higher (Panel 2) when the employee and partner agree on a low level of employee depersonalization (toward the front left corner of the response surface) than on a high level of employee depersonalization (toward the back right corner of the response surface). Thus, Hypothesis 2 (parts b and c) was supported.

For Hypothesis 3, the lateral shift quantities were negative and significant (i.e., confidence intervals did not contain 0) for distress (Hypothesis 3b) ($-.350$, 95% CI [-1.078, -0.052]) and perceived understanding (Hypothesis 3c) ($-.343$, 95% CI [-0.868, -0.070]). As seen in Table 4, the slope along the incongruence line was positive and significant for distress (.54, $p < .05$) and negative and significant for perceived understanding ($-.58$, $p < .05$). This is shown in Figure 4: when employees rate their depersonalization higher than their partner (front right corners of the plots), compared to when the partner rates it higher (back left corners), distress is higher (Panel 1) and perceived understanding is lower (Panel 2). Hypothesis 3 (parts b and c) was supported.

Turning to Hypothesis 4b, as Model 3 of Table 4 shows, distress was negatively related to recovery ($b = -.38$, $p < .01$). The indirect effect of the interplay between employee- and partner-rated employee depersonalization

through distress was negative and significant ($b = -.38$, 95% CI [−0.689, −0.156]) supporting Hypothesis 4b. For Hypothesis 4c, Model 3 of Table 4 indicates that perceived understanding did not predict recovery ($b = .06$, $p = $ ns). The indirect effect of the interplay of employee and partner ratings of depersonalization through perceived understanding was not significant ($b = .06$, 95% CI [−0.134, 0.325]). As such, Hypothesis 4c was not supported.

8 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

Although depersonalization stems from the employee's interpersonal context at work (Maslach et al., 2001), little research attention has been paid to how the employee's interpersonal context at home ties to their experience of depersonalization and eventual recovery. Shared reality theory offers a novel perspective on this process by proposing that agreement on various attributes (even negative ones) is preferable and beneficial for well-being (Echterhoff et al., 2009; Hardin & Higgins, 1996). This implies that couple-level agreement, even on high depersonalization, may minimize further discomfort such as WFC and distress, and in turn encourage recovery. In two studies, we investigated whether depersonalization agreement facilitates recovery and the general work–family, affective, and cognitive pathways through which this occurs. The pattern of effects was consistent across our studies: couple-level agreement about the employee's depersonalization is related to reduced WFC (Study 1) and distress and increased perceived understanding from the partner (Study 2). Across both studies, this reduction in discomfort (WFC and distress) facilitated recovery.[4]

The present results are novel and suggest that burnout is not always harmful. The ideal scenario remains when the couple achieves agreement at low levels of depersonalization. However, if the employee experiences high depersonalization and the partner accurately recognizes or shares this negative reality (agreement at high levels), the employee is less likely to experience WFC and distress and more likely to perceive understanding from the partner. This is consistent with research indicating that "high levels of agreement between couples and families often reduces the stress they experience" (Peterson et al., 2003, p. 65). The worst possible scenario is when the employee experiences depersonalization, but the partner does not accurately perceive it. Altogether, couple agreement (even when employee depersonalization is high) is better for the employee than disagreement (even when employee depersonalization is low). That is, low employee depersonalization accompanied by high partner ratings may be preferred over the other form of "disagreement," yet it is still aversive to have your partner see you as callous when you are in fact not, as discussed earlier. This is consistent with the idea that the benefits of sharing one's reality are independent of its valence (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). In other words, agreement or sharing the same reality is more important than the employees' level of depersonalization itself for WFC, distress, and perceived understanding.

Our findings contribute to work–family and burnout literatures by integrating shared reality theory with arguments from research on couples to understand how depersonalization *agreement* affects recovery. We found that this occurs via both a general and affective pathway—WFC and distress, respectively—which answers calls in the burnout literature to test nonwork experiences (Sonnentag, 2005) and ways in which employees recover from burnout (Hakanen & Bakker, 2017; Salminen, Andreou, Holma, Pekkonen, & Mäkikangas, 2017). Focusing on agreement also broadens our understanding of depersonalization, which has received far less attention than the emotional exhaustion dimension of burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 2016). Supplemental analyses indicate that the effects of agreement on employee WFC are specific to depersonalization and do not generalize to the other burnout dimensions (emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment). Although we do not dispute the importance of emotional exhaustion, we contend that because research has historically focused on this dimension, it has inadvertently neglected to consider the unique effects of depersonalization and how it should be managed by employees and organizations.

Finally, our investigation of dyadic depersonalization agreement also contributes to shared reality theory. Shared reality has been characterized as objective agreement (Hardin & Conley, 2001) and much of its early research occurred in laboratory experiments (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). To our knowledge, studies invoking this theory have not considered using polynomial regression and response surface methodology to objectively examine both self and other

perceptions. By testing the joint influence of the employee's and partner's perceptions of employee depersonalization, we reveal effects of couple-level agreement in an objective way across two field settings. This analytic approach provides a novel way to operationalize shared realities and can be applied to any dyad type, including those beyond couples. We also found support for the theoretical tie between objective agreement and the subjective experience of shared reality (i.e., perceived understanding). Moreover, incorporating both reality valence and sharedness shifts current understanding about how shared realities are studied. By doing so, we theoretically extend shared realities to include both positive and negative realities (i.e., agreement on low or high depersonalization) as well as positive and negative realities that fail to be shared (i.e., depersonalization disagreement). Finally, by integrating shared reality theory with research on burnout and work–family, we shed light on general (WFC) and more precise (affective and cognitive) effects of sharing one's depersonalization reality.

8.1 | Practical implications

Our findings regarding the effects of depersonalization agreement on WFC, distress, and recovery offer a number of practical implications that apply in both work and home domains. Depersonalization cannot always be avoided or easily reduced (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004), but our results suggest that employees can minimize WFC and distress by sharing their work experiences at home with their partner, even if such experiences are negative. This connects to the idea that "the more you bring work-related topics home, the more…understanding the partners are going to have for each other in the current challenges that they experience at work" (Powell et al., 2018, p. 100). In terms of work implications, prior workplace interventions have mainly focused on supervisor training to improve employee well-being (e.g., Kelly et al., 2014; Moen et al., 2016), yet our findings suggest employees themselves can make changes at home (i.e., depersonalization agreement with the partner) to temper WFC and distress, and ultimately recover. Future intervention studies may train employees on ways to achieve depersonalization agreement (e.g., communication tactics) and further explore the partner's role in recovery following depersonalization.

The employment landscape suggests that a growing proportion of jobs are becoming automated (Atkinson, 2016; Wells, 2017), portending greater demand for jobs requiring considerable interpersonal skills (e.g., nursing, sales, and teaching; McNeal & Brynjolfsson, 2015), which are difficult to automate. Although such occupations may be "safe" from automation (Shapiro & Brynjolfsson, 2017), they are often linked to burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). This trend emphasizes the need for organizations to effectively manage burnout's harmful effects. Although prevention and reduction in burnout is ideal, it might not always be feasible. Our findings empower managers to avoid negative effects (i.e., WFC and distress) of depersonalization. Specifically, managers might encourage their employees to be mindful of (i.e., aware and attentive; Good et al., 2016), "own" their depersonalization, and remove any stigma or embarrassment around experiencing depersonalization. For example, managers could express when they themselves feel detached or callous toward others, anticipate when employees are likely to experience depersonalization (e.g., tax season for accountants and flu season for nurses), and provide a safe space to discuss depersonalization experiences with each other.

8.2 | Limitations and opportunities for future research

The present study offers several notable strengths, including a similar pattern of effects across two studies with samples from diverse organizations and/or jobs, a focus on couple-level perceptions from multiple sources, use of polynomial regression and response surface methodology to jointly examine employee and partner perceptions, and integration of new routes to recovery following work stress. Despite its strengths, our work also faces limitations. First, some concerns could exist over common method bias and our presumed causal order. Although these are reasonable concerns, we mitigated them to some extent through the analytical method and supplemental analyses

(which can be found in the Online Appendix). For example, although common method bias is a large concern in a typical correlational field study, it is unlikely to serve as a potential confound in polynomial regression analyses (Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010). Moreover, the polynomial effects that make up the most novel aspects of our studies relied on multiple sources. As another example, concerns over the causal ordering of our variables are somewhat mitigated by our supplemental analysis in Study 1 testing our proposed model against the reverse causal model. That said, we recommend future work in field and lab settings continue to establish causality as well as consider the potential reciprocal relationship that may exist between depersonalization agreement and mechanisms (WFC and distress), considering Nohe, Meier, Sonntag, and Michel's (2015) findings. Moreover, we used a one-item measure of perceived understanding, consistent with prior research (Gordon et al., 2013). We suggest future research build from our findings to develop a multi-item measure of perceived understanding and continue to explore its connection with employee strain.

Given that shared reality theory is generally agnostic with respect to time, we adopted a between-person approach focusing on person-to-person differences in our model variables, instead of day-to-day differences occurring within people and relationships (which hold constant between-person differences). Yet, time is an important consideration that does not receive sufficient research attention (George & Jones, 2000; Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010), particularly on relational processes. The processes in our model may unfold over time, across both short (e.g., days and weeks) and long durations (e.g., months and years) and as such, time is a worthy direction for future research. Experience sampling methodology (ESM) is one promising approach to examine the dynamics of shared realities within relationships (Gabriel et al., 2019; McCormick, Reeves, Downes, Li, & Ilies, 2020). For example, on days when the partner "gets" the employee more or less than their baseline level of agreement, would the effects of agreement be magnified? If so, what is the role of relational dynamics, such as daily social interactions, entrainment (Sonnentag, 2012), or partner responsiveness (e.g., Reis, 2012) in the couple? Another methodological approach would be a panel design that incorporates cross-lagged and autoregressive paths (Selig & Little, 2012) to uncover whether reciprocal relationships exist between the key variables in our model.

Although we focused on couples given shared reality theory's emphasis on significant others (Hardin & Higgins, 1996), another fruitful avenue is to examine depersonalization agreement in work dyads, such as supervisor–employee dyads or coworkers. Given that "dyadic studies should pay close attention to the shared domain of the individuals in the dyad as it may carry more relevance for shaping perceptions and attitudes" (Wilson et al., 2018, p. 731), effects of depersonalization agreement may differ based on whether it is achieved with one's partner versus supervisor or coworker. Future research could also test antecedents of depersonalization agreement. Shared reality theory (Hardin & Higgins, 1996) holds several clues. For example, relationship satisfaction and empathy could influence agreement, whereas disagreement might stem from deliberately deceiving the partner or from more unintentional processes such as denial or lack of self-awareness. Pinpointing behaviors that increase depersonalization agreement, such as by integrating our findings with research on work–family interpersonal capitalization (employees sharing daily positive work events with their partners) (Ilies, Keeney & Goh, 2015; Ilies, Keeney, & Scott, 2011) also offers promise. Perhaps sharing depersonalization-related work events (e.g., challenging interaction with a client) with one's partner could foster agreement.

9 | CONCLUSION

Our work advances a novel approach to improve recovery from work stress: dyadic depersonalization agreement. We show that employees facing depersonalization experience lower WFC and distress and subsequently, greater recovery if their partner "gets" their depersonalization, whereas those whose partner disagrees experience greater WFC and distress and are less likely to recover. Although depersonalization itself is harmful, our findings challenge the assump-

tion that it always yields harmful effects by showing that agreement in couples, even on high depersonalization, helps employees maximize their recovery via reduced WFC and distress.

ORCID

Kelly Schwind Wilson 🄳 https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8242-280X

Catherine E. Kleshinski 🄳 https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9536-5840

Fadel K. Matta 🄳 https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2056-0139

ENDNOTES

[1] Similar objective approaches to perceptual agreement have been used in other management and organizational psychology literatures (e.g., Carter, Mossholder, & Harris, 2018; Matta, Scott, Koopman, & Conlon, 2015).

[2] The presented quadrants offer examples of depersonalization agreement and disagreement; however, the quadrants are not exhaustive because they only include examples of high and low levels of depersonalization. Importantly, our analyses examine agreement and disagreement at each level of our continuous measure of depersonalization.

[3] The coefficients and standard errors for the slope and curvature of the congruence line ($E = S$) and the incongruence line ($E = -S$) of the response surface were derived using procedures for calculating standard errors of linear combinations (DeGroot, 1975; Edwards & Parry, 1993).

[4] We did not find support in Study 2 for the proposed mediating mechanism of perceived understanding. One explanation for this is that the impact of depersonalization agreement on recovery is transmitted through a reduction in discomfort, consistent with how recovery taps the reduction of strain (Sonnentag, Venz, & Casper, 2017). Another possibility is that perceived understanding connects to different motives for sharing reality than WFC and distress. Relational motives "induce people to affiliate and feel connected to others," whereas epistemic motives capture "the need to achieve a valid and reliable understanding of the world," which "increases the subjective efficacy in dealing with the environment" and is more well-being-related (Echterhoff, Higgins, & Levine, 2009, p. 500; see also Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Jost, Ledgerwood, & Hardin, 2008). Given their nature, perhaps relational motives tie more to perceiving understanding, and epistemic motives tie more to WFC, distress, and recovery. Thus, it is possible perceived understanding would transmit effects of agreement on a relational outcome such as marital behaviors or conflict, rather than the well-being-related outcome of recovery. We encourage future research to incorporate shared reality motives to test these possibilities.

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