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Forgetting My Memories by Listening to Yours: The Impact of Perspective-Taking on Socially-Triggered Context-Based Prediction Error

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Abstract: The mind is a prediction machine. In most situations in which it finds itself, it has expectations as to what might happen. But when people's expectations are invalidated by experience, the memories that gave rise to these expectations are suppressed. The present research explores the effect of these prediction errors on listener's memories during social interaction. We reasoned that listening to a speaker recounting experiences similar to one's own would trigger prediction errors on the part of the listener that would result in the suppression of his/her memories. Study 1 offers evidence for the effect of socially triggered context based prediction errors on listener's mnemonic representations. Study 2 replicates these findings and shows that this effect is sensitive to a perspective-taking manipulation. Taken together, these findings provide evidence for a yet unrecognized phenomenon by which our conversations shape the memories that we come to hold.