**Ultimate attribution error and memory distortion support racial bias in moral judgment**

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Although racial bias in moral judgment is a widely researched phenomenon, little is known about what validates biased judgment and makes it resistant to change. In present study, we hypothesized that ethnic (racial) identity of people committing a morally ambiguous act influences the judgment of this act, dispositional and situational attributions about the actors, and the memory of factual information about their behaviour. We presented a representative sample of 387 Slovak participants with a story of a man working illegally while his family was receiving social assistance. In a between-subject design, participants were randomly allocated to one of the three conditions according to the ethnicity of the family (manipulated by ethnically typical family name: Kováč (Slovak), Nagy (Hungarian) and Lakatoš (Roma). Participants were stricter when judging and punishing the same acts committed by the Roma than by Slovak or Hungarian persons. Bias in moral judgment was significantly related with negative stereotypes about the Roma. Participants made biased attributions – explaining the Roma family’s reliance on social assistance by dispositional features (lack of moral character) while opting for situational factors (unfavourable economic situation) for Slovak and Hungarian families. Participants who judged the Roma family recalled significantly more negatively distorted factual information about the Roma family than those who judged the Slovak family. Our findings indicate that memory distortion and ultimate error in attribution contribute to validation of biased moral judgment. Moreover, our findings also make a case for a group-centred approach to moral judgment that complements the existing act-based and person-centred approaches.

Keywords: memory, attribution error, stereotypes, moral judgment, racial bias