

## Abstract

Past research in impression formation generally suggests that people tend to individuate a target by using stereotype-inconsistent (SI) information (e.g., Fiske, Neuberg, Beattie & Milberg, 1987). This finding is in line with the memory research which showed that people recall the expectancy-incongruent information better (see Stangor & McMillan, 1992). Similarly, communication research sometimes found that people prefer to communicate more SI information about an individual when they are asked to reproduce the *firsthand* information to a communication partner (Kashima, 2000). These past findings seem to suggest that SI information is a piece of individuating information; and that when processing stereotype-relevant information, a task with a communication goal seems analogous to that with an impression formation goal. In this paper, we argued that this may not be the case. We illuminated that not all SI information is individuating, and that the communication goal determines what type of information is individuating. In Experiment 1, participants were presented with stereotype-consistent (SC) and stereotype-inconsistent (SI) information that is either useful (diagnostic) or non-useful (non-diagnostic) to individuate the target. They were randomly assigned to do tasks which entailed different goals: a single reproduction task, a referential communication task, and a memory task. Results showed that participants used more SI information (regardless of its diagnosticity) in the reproduction condition; but more diagnostic information (regardless of its stereotypicality) in the referential communication condition. Results from the memory condition revealed that this task effect was not due to a memory bias. Experiment 2 showed that such task effect was not affected by time pressure. Results have implications for understanding the role of communication goal in social information processing.