# Crisis Information Vetting in Social-Mediated Crisis and Risk Communication: A Conceptual Framework

Xuerong Lu[1], Yan Jin[1], LaShonda Eaddy[2], Lucinda Austin[3], Brooke Liu[4] & Toni van der Meer[5]
University of Georgia[1], Southern Methodist University[2], University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill[3], University of Maryland[4], University of Amsterdam[5]

## ABTRACT

Crisis information flow online and offline is typically explained by the social-mediated crisis communication (SMCC) model. However, little is known about whether and why (not) influential social media creators and followers verify the accuracy of the crisis information received before their enactment of further information seeking and sharing activities. Therefore, we call for a SMCC model update, adding information vetting as one key component of crisis coping.

Dual process model and meta-cognition theory suggest that information vetting is a process for an individual to make judgment of content's correctness and of the validity of one's judgement.

yanjin@uga.edu
+1 706-542-5042

## INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of news sources and user-generated content, which is flooded by misinformation (Southwell, Thorson, & Sheble, 2018), present an urgent need for research that investigates audiences' information consumption behavior in current media environment. In the past decade, one of the key tasks for crisis and risk scholars was to study the "social mediated dialogue between organization and its publics" (Fearn-Banks, 2002). By identifying crisis information flow online and offline across three key publics, the social-mediated crisis communication (SMCC) model has examined the role of crisis information form, content, and source in how publics cope with crises cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally (e.g., Jin & Liu, 2010; Austin, Liu & Jin, 2012).

Although where and how publics seek and share crisis information have been studied extensively by SMCC scholars (Liu, Fraustino, & Jin, 2015, 2016; Zhao, Zhan, & Liu, 2018; Zhu, Anagondahalli, & Zhang, 2017), little is known about whether and why (not) influential social media creators and followers verify the accuracy of the crisis information received before their enactment of further information seeking and sharing activities. Therefore, we call for a SMCC model update, adding information vetting as one key component of crisis coping, grounded primarily in dual process model and meta-cognition.
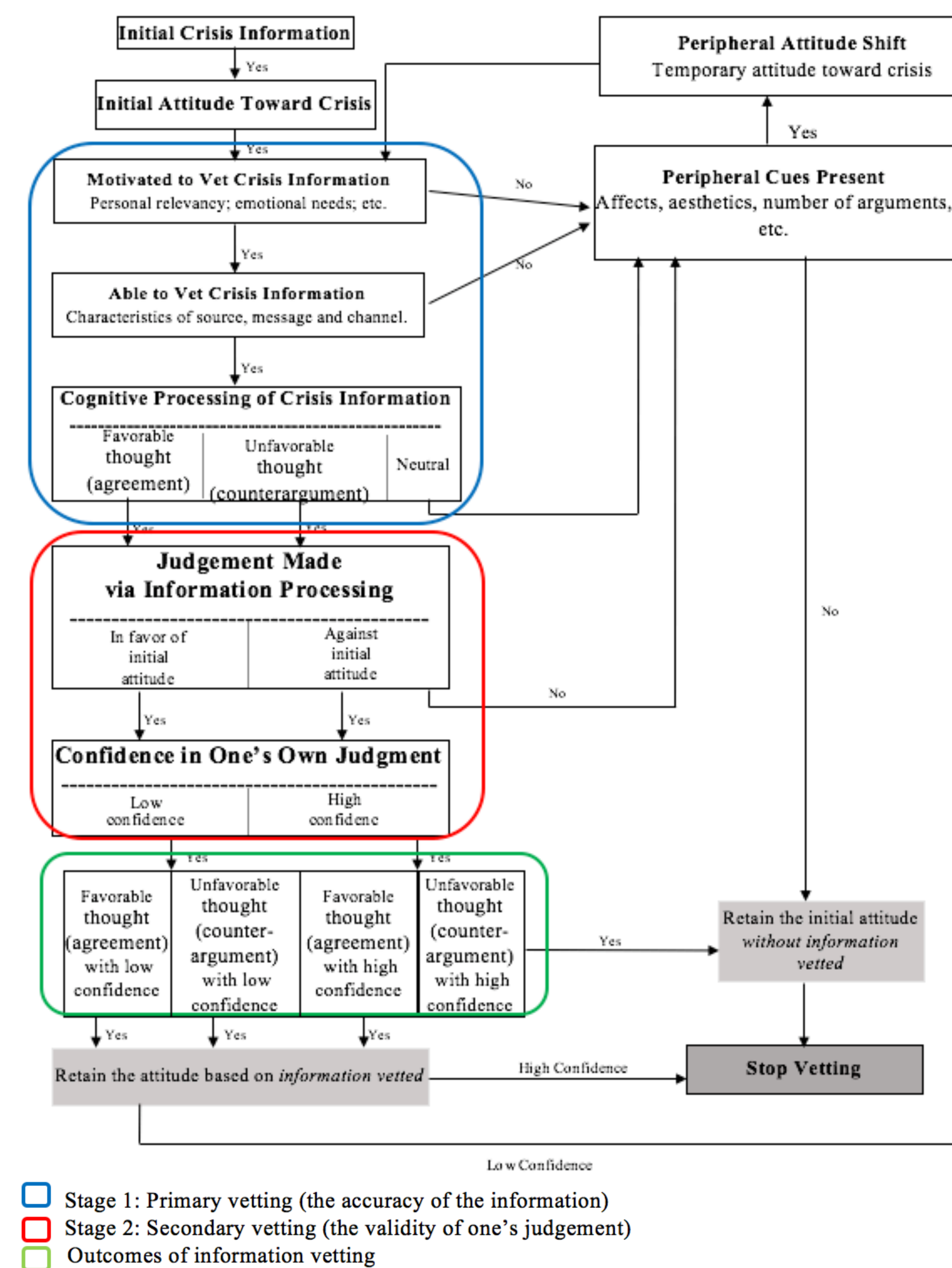
## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Fig. The Process of Information Vetting.

□ Stage 1: Primary vetting (the accuracy of the information)
□ Stage 2: Secondary vetting (the validity of one's judgement)
□ Outcomes of information vetting

Crisis information vetting is the judgment-making processing during an individual's purposeful effort to change the knowledge states .

Based on the meta-cognition theory (Petty et al., 2007), *crisis information vetting* is individuals' psychological process of making judgment of :

**1. The accuracy of crisis information (Stage 1: primary vetting)**
• Whether the crisis information an individual initially receives is accurate and credible in terms of its multiple characteristics: (a) source, (b) channel , and message content.

**2. The validity of one's own judgment (Stage 2: Secondary vetting)**
• Whether the conclusion made by the individual based on the initial crisis information is valid in terms of : (a) to what degree the crisis information is consistent with one's initial attitude toward or belief about the crisis situation, (b) to what degree it triggers doubt or sustain confidence about one's initial assessment of the crisis, and (c) to what degree one is willing to seek further information in order to validate or modify one's initial judgment .

## DISCUSSION

• This study provides a conceptual foundation for empirical studies that examine how individual differences, crisis features, and message characteristics influence publics' motivation for and ability of information vetting. Future empirical studies will generate insights for tailoring social-mediated informational interventions during misinformation triggered or aggravated crises.