

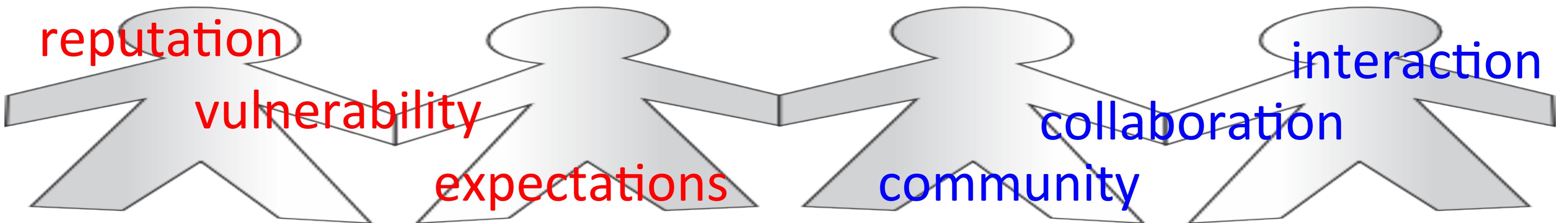
Aligning learning theory, learning design and Trust in MOOCs

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Do conventional understandings of online learning community and trust apply in MOOCs?

Social constructivist approaches to online education emphasise interaction and communication and rely on the development of community to support deep and critical thinking online. This implies the need for trust between participants as an important dimension of community. However, the potentially massive numbers of learners involved in MOOCs, and the distinctive patterns of behaviour and motivations of these participants raise questions about the nature (or perhaps even existence) of community and trust in MOOCs.



Online trust

*“a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another”*¹

- pervasive and distinct from F2F contexts²
- risk and uncertainty in online interactions³

Trust systems

Reputation-based approaches – focus on behaviour⁴
Predict future behaviour from past actions
Inform judgements of benevolence/credibility of counterparts⁵

Trust as under-researched in e-learning

- “new interaction paradigms” demand trust⁶
- “dearth of literature on ... trust in online learning”⁷

Learning theory, community and trust

FutureLearn social constructivist underpinnings:

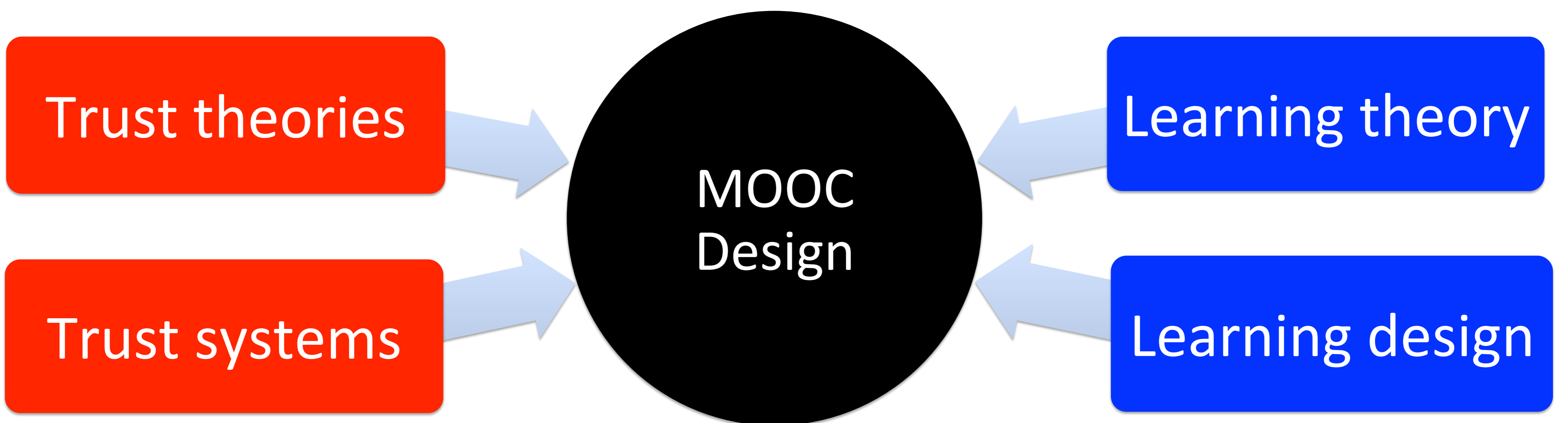
- Conversational learning⁸
- Development of learning communities⁹
- Interaction and critical thinking¹⁰

Trust as fundamental aspect of community in social constructivist learning theory:

- Foster cooperation¹¹
- Enables successful group learning¹²
- Required in MOOC learning¹³

Need for “support structures” in design

- Participant interaction has limits in MOOCs¹⁴
- Building trust challenging in MOOCs¹⁵
- Need mentor curation, aggregation, and presence¹⁵
- Recognise “boundaries of openness”¹⁵



Mixed methods research design

Quantitative

- Surveys of participant perceptions of community and trust
- Analytics of learner data

Qualitative

- Literature review on educational communities / crowds
- Virtual ethnography of discussion fora

Research directions

- Can MOOC participants be seen as a ‘community’ as understood in educational theory?
- What is the nature and extent of trust relationships that exist between MOOC participants, and between participants and mentors?
- How can MOOC designers best align learning theory, MOOC design, and technical systems facilitating development of trust?

