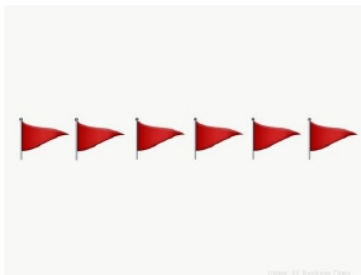


Calling a sex-positive community,  
group or event a  
“*FAMILY*”



and why it's a red flag



Introduction

In the many years we have been visiting or a part of different sex-positive scenes there has been a common word that made our whole bodies cringe and feel alarmed.

It's family.

*Family.*

It's supposed to sound nice, no?

It gives a comforting sense of community.

It's just a harmless way to sprinkle good vibes.

To generate camaraderie. To let you know: You are welcome! You are a part of us!

Gooble-gubble One of us!

And we want to belong, right? It feels good!

Family: A place of trust and commitment.

Family: A group holding together, bound by blood and experience.



When we  
have each  
other,  
we have  
*everything*

## The problem

To say it bluntly: It's manipulative as fuck!

Because it's so easily said but rarely taken serious. So it tends to serve more the people in power to save their own asses instead of really building a community for everybody.

Let's compare it with another sphere: Work.

me and my officemates hearing our boss saying that we're a family for the 69th times



It has become a popular meme to warn and make fun of the situation, in which a company calls themselves "family". It's easy to see through the trick: putting the emotional weight of the private term "family" into a professional context allows to exploit the workers. Asking for a raise becomes harder - after all the company has done for you! And why even ask for it? Is money all that counts? How superficial! You should be

thankful, you also get paid by the community, the fun, the Pizza Fridays... And you should be loyal! How dare you leave the company! We hold together no matter what! How dare you betray the holy family!

Family  
forever.  
for always.  
no matter  
what

And in a family it won't be too weird to get closer and more private, right? Cause we are family after all! So I am sure you won't mind helping my wife out with her birthday party plans? You are so good at it! I really see your talent! And if you do, I might just treat you as my favorite kid... That's what we long for deep down, don't we? To be loved...

Ok, now we don't go to sexpositive communities for work. It's different, for sure!

But the comparison is still fruitful.

Bosses: You don't need a union. We're all family here.



Me listening to my boss tell us 'we're all family', even though he shows no respect...



**Questions for journaling**

What comes to your mind when you think of the word “family”?

Should you be longing for a form of family-belonging in your community: What is it exactly that you are looking and longing for? (It might help to give an answer and then ask “Why” → give an answer and again ask “Why” → and so on around 5 times)

What do you think: Why do these associations come to your mind?

Could there be pitfalls in understanding it as a family? How would you describe them?

Do you observe typical family dynamics in one of your communities? How would you describe them?

The thing you are looking for in the term “family”: can you find it somewhere else than the sexpositive community?

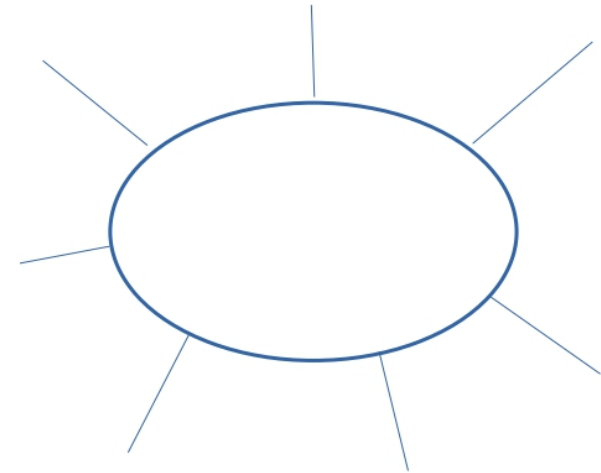
Who benefits how in your community when it is called a “family” and how?

What other metaphorical terms can be used to describe your sexpositive community? Maybe some that are more accurate, honest, less loaded?

You can draw a mind map and if you like you could start in the middle with something like “Sometimes [add name of festival/center/... here] feels like...”

What do you expect of a family? What do you think does a family expect from you?

How would you describe the relationship with your family that you have been born into?



## Family as metaphor

In a way I can also make peace with the word “family”, because it reveals itself to be highly ambivalent. It describes an ideal. A utopia that mostly crashes with reality. So there is something honest about calling a community a family. You think of cornflakes advertisements: Everybody smiling and happy and harmonious and caring for each other. But then you know: How many of these supposedly happy families smile over the fact that the creepy uncle is not caring about private boundaries? That the father is overworked and the mother frustrated? That the worst and most hypocritical time of the year is having to visit family over the holidays? That people try to find peace, practice meditation, journal and this hard work is immediately shattered after having to deal with a toxic family member? Horror: not being able to get rid of them.

So I guess our only wish is for us and you to think about and even call each other out next time we or somebody else describes the group as family. And take it serious:

- What do you/I/we mean by it?
- Is everybody consenting into this self-definition of the group?
- Are we aware of the pitfalls and blind spots the term brings, even if we mean well?
- How can we create feelings of commitment and belonging without using such loaded and ambivalent terms, that for many can carry quite eurocentric and patriarchal meanings...



Hoping that this allows us to move around more independent, empowered and in integrity; inventing new forms of solidarity together.

(Zine made by Beata from [www.luhmendarc.com](http://www.luhmendarc.com))

*luhmen d'arc*