

### 2023 Conference Theme

# *The Way We Are Now: Families and Communities at the Center of the Syndemic*



**Program Chair**  
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**“Syndemics are characterised by biological and social interactions between conditions and states, interactions that increase a person’s susceptibility to harm or worsen their health outcomes”**  
(Horton, 2020).

The 2023 NCFR Annual Conference will highlight and critically examine the ways in which the current syndemic has and continues to change the lives of families across the globe. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, communities and nations are also struggling with a variety of social injustices (e.g., racism, gun violence, homophobia, climate change). Together these constitute a syndemic. Syndemic theory, which has evolved out of medical anthropology, draws our attention to the many public health and societal influences on human life that cause multiple layers of harm.

As Family Scientists and practitioners, we have much work to do to understand how a syndemic impacts individuals, families, and communities and develop various methods to help best navigate the syndemic and to promote health and well-being. The syndemic has made many societal issues more visible including existing and new health disparities, the profound loss that affects communities in diverse ways, and policies that actively disenfranchise so many. We are experiencing a historically significant moment in history that will distinctly influence families and communities in the near- and long-term future.

Some might say that the syndemic began with the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, the United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, offered a comparison between the pandemic and World War II with regard to the international impact both will have had on human lives (Lederer, 2020). In 1944, as the end of World War II neared, NCFR’s conference theme was Problems Facing the Family in the Post-War Period.

**Wed.–Sat., Nov. 8–11, 2023**

*Preconference workshops: Tues., Nov. 7*  
Orlando, Florida | Rosen Centre

**Proposal Deadline:**

**March 1, 2023 at 11:59 p.m.**  
Pacific Standard Time



**Stephanie Coontz**  
Council on Contemporary  
Families



**Tashel Bordere**  
University of Missouri



**Abbie Goldberg**  
Clark University

The conference theme, *The Way We Are Now: Families and Communities at the Center of the Syndemic*, is meant to adopt the forward-looking theme from 1944, and call our attention to how families and communities have been and continue to be impacted by what has become a syndemic.

Given the historical significance of the syndemic, I have invited family historian, **Stephanie Coontz**, to return as a plenary speaker for this year’s conference. Coontz’s book, *The Way We Never Were*, inspired the phrasing of this year’s conference theme. Coontz will share her perspectives on the historical moment of the syndemic and offer new insights into how we can view our history through a lens that focuses on human strength, advocacy, and perseverance in the face of incredible barriers.

The syndemic has brought with it many losses. Not just loss of loved ones due to illness and violence but also the loss of normalcy, human interactions, relationships, identities, etc. **Tashel Bordere**, who identified the concept of suffocated grief in the context of systemic oppression, will share insights during her plenary about the complexities of loss during the syndemic.

It is essential to acknowledge this year’s conference in the state of Florida. The state’s Parental Rights in Education measure has been the subject of much social unrest and political turmoil impacting teachers and families alike. **Abbie Goldberg**, an expert on mental

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health and LGBTQ+ families and youth, will discuss how research can help families navigate homophobia amid anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.

The theme allows for a wide variety of topics, debates, and policy analyses.

Find examples and more information about submitting your proposal at **ncfr.org/ncfr-2023**. The online proposal submission system will open in early 2023.

## Conference Goals

1. To feature high-quality research that are aimed at engaging scholars
2. To highlight and critique social policy changes that have developed during the syndemic and how those changes have or will affect families.
3. To demonstrate how the work of practitioners, Family Life Educators, family therapists, and others, has evolved during the syndemic.
4. To encouraging discussion and networking throughout the conference

## Criteria for Proposals

The proposal describes work that meets BOTH of the following criteria:

- (a) The work is sufficiently developed.
- (b) Regardless of focus (e.g., research, practice), bring an appropriate, rigorous approach is used.

The proposal is written clearly, logically organized, and includes references.

Proposals can be based on qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods; literature reviews; or analyses of a theoretical, pedagogical, or policy nature, and must include:

- (a) A strong connection to existing research
- (b) A strong connection to theory
- (c) The potential to stimulate new knowledge and or innovative practices

## Submission Questions

### **May I submit a previously published/presented paper?**

No. Papers that have been published or previously presented are not accepted.

### **When will I know if my proposal has been accepted?**

You will be notified by June 1, 2023.

### **If my proposal is accepted, what is expected of me?**

At least one author of accepted proposals must attend the conference, register, and pay the registration fee to present.

Upload copies of the PowerPoint slides you will be using to the NCFR website by one week prior to the conference.

If your presentation is accepted as a paper, symposium, or lightning paper, a copy of your presentation must be sent to the session facilitator/discussant by Oct. 16, 2023. You also are required to upload your presentation PowerPoint slides to the NCFR website (except poster symposium).

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