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The smell of gumbo was in the air...

There's a magic to gumbo, the spicy stew (or is it soup?) that is the signature dish of Cajun and Creole country. Years ago, in college, I learned to make gumbo from Stella, a dear friend who hails from New Iberia, Louisiana. She taught me to brown the flour and oil to a dark rich color, to ease in the finely chopped onions, bell pepper, and celery and cook them gently until they soften, to add spices and broth, and then to simmer everything together for hours until the meat falls off the bones and the vegetables melt into the broth and the smell fills the air. When I cook gumbo at home, people make excuses to walk through the kitchen, taking deep breaths and eagerly awaiting the moment when we sit down at the table to eat big bowls of gumbo poured over mounds of white rice, using slices of crispy garlic bread to mop up the last drops. The smell always lingers overnight so that I wake up the next morning savoring memories of a delicious meal with good friends.

This past June, I had the pleasure of participating in a very special day of presentations and discussion at the 19th National Conference on Prevention, Research, and Treatment of Problem Gambling organized by the National Council on Problem Gambling. The Louisiana Association on Compulsive Gambling was our gracious host at the lovely Hotel Monteleone in the French Quarter of pre-Katrina New Orleans.

The goal of the day was to bring together some of the best and brightest minds in the problem gambling field and ask these people to consider our present knowledge and likely future directions for research in the areas of etiology, treatment, prevention, policy, and public health, and considerations for DSM-V. Each speaker was asked to prepare and present only five slides, with time after each presentation for discussion among the presenters and members of the audience.

The day started with a presentation by Alex Blaszczynski on the “pathways model” that is proving to be an important theoretical breakthrough in the field. This was followed by a session on problem gambling etiology that started with considerations of genetics and neurobiology but then moved to environmental issues. The session on problem gambling prevention addressed harm reduction

and the possibilities of designing “safe” gaming machines and considered how states can develop a continuum of problem gambling services with a particular focus on the role of problem gambling help lines. This was followed by a session on problem gambling treatment that considered pharmacology, cognitive behavioral therapy, and brief interventions, as well as outcome assessment and training and certification issues. The final session of the day took up questions related to improving our understanding of problem gambling and included consideration of theoretical models and empirical data, asking where pathological gambling best fits in the larger DSM universe.

Something magical happened in New Orleans that day—we cooked up a “gumbo” that brought together established researchers and young Turks, put important ideas on the table for extended consideration, and left a real legacy for others in the field. It was a day filled with old and new friends and with stimulating conversation that lasted through the full arc of a long summer day and left us all with deeply satisfying memories to wake up to the next day. May this gumbo perfume the air again soon!

Rachel Volberg

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Statement of purpose

The *Journal of Gambling Issues (JGI)* offers an Internet-based forum for developments in gambling-related research, policy and treatment as well as personal accounts about gambling and gambling behaviour. Through publishing peer-reviewed articles about gambling as a social phenomenon and the prevention and treatment of gambling problems, it is our aim is to help make sense of how gambling affects us all.

The *JGI* is published by the [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#) and is fully funded by the Ontario Substance Abuse Bureau of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. We welcome manuscripts submitted by researchers and clinicians, people involved in gambling as players, and family and friends of gamblers.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this journal do not necessarily reflect those of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Ethics and accountability

The *Journal of Gambling Issues* is a member of the International Society of Addiction Journal Editors and supports the Farmington Consensus statement on ethical standards in publishing: <http://www-users.york.ac.uk/~sjp22/isaje/farmington.htm>

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