Review of Life Thinning

This Stage 2 RR reports results of a longitudinal qualitative study of treatment-seeking gamers and amateur esports players to develop a phenomenological model of normative, intense playing vs. problematic gaming. The report builds on previous research characterizing types of players and seeks to describe players’ own meanings of the role of gaming in their lives. The findings suggest several themes that align closely with multiple concepts of normal development as well as mental disorders and should be carefully considered in understanding and treating problematic gaming.

The Stage 2 report satisfies the review criteria. I have a few suggestions that the authors might consider in light of their findings. Some are very minor; I will address the more substantive ones first.

Life thinning seems to me to be very close to the concept of salience of addictions. Apologies that I can’t find a great reference for this, but [Griffiths 2005](http://www.addictionpsychologist.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/griffiths-2005-addiction-components.pdf) provides a good overview. DSM-IV-TR mentions this on page 195, “In some instances of Substance Dependence, virtually all of the person’s daily activities revolve around the substance. Important social, occupational, or recreational activities may be given up or reduced because of substance use (Criterion 6).” To me, this behavioral aspect has always been separate from the cognitive preoccupation, and seems to fit well with the idea of life thinning. I was surprised that this wasn’t discussed, but I did appreciate the developmental aspects and the attention also to ways in which depression might develop. I hope the authors will consider whether there might be something worth including regarding theories of addiction and salience, especially as there seems to be a different type of salience involved in the esports players meaning-making.

One other theoretical concept that I didn’t see discussed was perhaps my own inkling of an idea based on the initial results presented through the stories of Caius and Frederika: the idea that there is a push-pull relationship to gaming.

Less important suggestions:

It might be worthwhile to have a native English speaker provide a review of the text. It is certainly readable, but every once in a while there is a phrase that is not perfectly clear and requires a bit of rereading.

It might also be worth checking the numbers for time gaming. It’s not clear to me how Frederika’s 10-16 hours of gaming relates to the table reported time, both on page 6.

Could you please discuss where the scale results can be found? It would also be worth including the table note about scales in the first table where they are reported. I also found myself guessing at gaming time/other gaming time, which I don’t think is explained until the note in Table 2.

For accessibility purposes, it might be worth considering whether to use something other than shading to add meaning to the cells in tables. Also, in some cases people may still be printing out papers (I do so when reviewing), and the shading is barely visible when printed.

Where “perceived availability” is used, this might be explained a bit more.

The idea of life domains is important. These are mentioned once or twice but I believe are vital to the idea of conative dynamics, so worth bringing out a bit more.

In the General Discussion, I note that clinical interviews weren’t carried out, which is fair. I also note that it seems that at baseline, Frederika only satisfied 4/5 IGD criteria. The concurrence between treatment seeking and scale scores might be worth considering, as subthreshold symptoms are a big topic of debate.

There are a few instances in which a lack of studies is asserted, eg page 16 “a lack of clinical validation studies with current quantitatively used gaming disorder scales”. It would be good to verify that.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this excellent paper.