

# Character and . . .

## Screen Life

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Annalee R. Ward, Executive Editor  
Mary Bryant, Managing Editor

*The faculty essays presented here emerge from a semester-long process of reading and writing together in an environment of critique and review. Nevertheless, this invited journal of essays represents the authors' views and not necessarily the views of the Wendt Center for Character Education or the University of Dubuque.*

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## Contact Information

Wendt Center for Character Education  
University of Dubuque  
2000 University Avenue  
Dubuque, IA 52001

563-589-3440 (office)  
563-589-3243 (fax)  
wendt@dbq.edu (email)  
www.dbq.edu/wendt (website)

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This issue is dedicated to Allison Cress, 1998-2017.

# Navigating a Pokémon Go World

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Rafic Sinno

## Abstract

*Pokemon Go is one of the most popular and widely adopted augmented reality games in the world. The benefits and consequences of playing the game have been highlighted in local, national, and international news stories and are the subject of emerging academic research. Yet the larger questions to consider: how can we exhibit good character in augmented reality world? How does such technology shape our personal and social interactions outside the game? What role do we play in shaping how we interact with augmented technology? And, ultimately, how should we respond in our desire to be people of good character?*

For Allison, my inspiration

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"Honey, I am going to get some pokeballs," I told my wife over the phone as I made a quick detour to Dubuque's Arboretum and Botanical gardens before heading home. "Okay, how long will you be?" she asked with a hint of inquisitiveness. "Oh, only 30-45 minutes...it shouldn't take me that long," I replied with a bit of self-doubt. As I arrived at the Arboretum, I quickly launched the Pokémon Go app on my smartphone. The app unveiled a brand-new world overlaid on the existing one.



*Dubuque's Arboretum and Botanical Gardens*

The Arboretum became filled with pokestops and Pokémon all within reach. Excited, I circled the arboretum filling my virtual backpack with pokeballs while catching Pokémon—I felt a deep sense of accomplishment! I looked forward to sharing my accomplishments with my stepdaughters who were levels ahead of me. How could this get any better?

As I got in the car and checked my watch, I realized that I had spent two hours playing Pokémon Go. “Wow,” I thought, “time to go home—my wife is waiting for me!” The drive back home eroded any sense of accomplishment. I felt a deep sense of guilt that I had allowed this game to override my responsibilities. I could not shake the feeling, which prompted me to assess my interaction with the game. What motivated me to play the game? How had I allowed it to affect my priorities, behavior, and personal interactions?

This experience prompted me to reflect more deeply on Pokémon Go’s allure. While Pokémon Go has its positives, the negative consequences of playing it can quickly overcome our desire to be people of good character, compromising our commitment to responsible technology, both in design and use.

## **Pokémon Go: a Global, Record Setting, Cultural Phenomenon**



*A screenshot of a “Pokémon” that can be captured in augmented reality.*

Pokémon Go is an augmented reality treasure hunt game in which players use their smartphones to capture virtual animal-like creatures known as Pokémon. Players explore their cities and neighborhoods to capture Pokémon.

One of the first widely-adopted augmented reality apps, Pokémon Go was released by game developer Niantic, Inc., in July 2016 on the Apple and Android app stores. Since its release, the augmented reality game has become a global phenomenon. According to Guinness World Records, Pokémon Go became the most

simultaneously downloaded game in 70 different countries since its release. As of June 2017, the game reached 752 million downloads (Minotti) and generated over \$1.2 billion in global revenue in July (Hollister, “The Rise and Not-Quite-Fall of Pokemon Go”).

Although the number of monthly players have dropped 80% since it came out, by July 2017 the numbers had leveled off to a steady 65 million gamers actively playing the game each month (Anthony). 38 percent of Pokémon Go players are millennials (19 to 34) and 32.5% are 18 or younger (Minotti). The game’s popularity, innovative augmented reality design, and ease of use offers players young and old a captivating experience.



*Players select an avatar to represent them in Pokémon Go.*

Pokémon Go is such a phenomenon that it has attracted more viewers than primetime cable networks. In 2016, Pokémon Go surpassed the primetime daily viewership of U.S. TV networks including CBS, NBC, ABC, and FOX (Boxall). For example, Pokémon Go had 19 million daily peak users, more than double that of the leading cable network CBS, which garnered 7 to 8 million viewers.

How did Pokémon Go become such a global phenomenon? In part, Pokémon Go’s success stems from the popular international Pokémon franchise. Established in 1996, the Pokémon franchise consists of several Nintendo video game releases, trading cards, an anime and magna series, movies, merchandise, and more (“History of Pokémon”). In March 2017, the Pokémon Company shipped 23.6 billion cards to 74 countries, aired its animated shows in 98 countries, and had over 450 licensees (“Pokémon in Figures”).

*Positive Effects* According to the Pokémon Go official blog, trainers (those who play Pokémon Go) have been getting out into the real world, becoming healthier, and meeting neighbors. In addition, Pokémon Go has helped kids cope with social anxiety and depression. Niantic’s developers believe these stories reflect the intent of the game “we set out to create an experience that encourages discovery, exercise and real

world connections and it has been incredible to see that mission come to life” (Hanke).

Among many stories and examples of neighborhood poke-gatherings, coping with social anxiety, and getting exercise, the developers’ blog features the story of Kelly, a Pokémon Trainer in Findlay, Ohio, who describes her Pokémon Go experience as giving her a new lease on life:

Ever since my husband passed away close to two years ago, I’ve been living the life of a recluse. . . . This morning I went to the park and WALKED for 30 minutes. Now, keep in mind I use either a cane or walker to get around and walking is very difficult for me. I am usually embarrassed about this. But I found today people don’t really see that. . . . They SMILED at me and made the sun shine just a little bit more. Thank you for this wonderful new game and a new lease on life. (Hanke)

The game’s positive impact is also the subject of emerging scholarly studies. For example, researchers at Duke University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison investigated the effect of Pokémon Go on the emotional and social lives of 399 participants aged 18-75. Survey respondents associated playing Pokémon Go with positive outcomes including: “increased positive affect, nostalgic reverie, friendship formation, friendship intensification, and walking, most of which predicted enhanced well-being” (Bonus et al.). According to Alex Bonus, one of the study’s researchers,

the more people were playing, the more they were engaging in behaviors that reflected making new connections -- making Facebook friends, introducing themselves to someone new, exchanging phone numbers with someone, or spending more time with old friends and learning new things about them. (Barncard)

In addition to the positive social and well-being effects, Pokémon Go is noted for the physical benefits it promotes. Researchers at Duke University’s Clinical Research Institute conducted a study in which 167 Pokémon Go players, ages 21-29, tracked their physical activity three weeks before the release of Pokémon Go and three weeks after. Players

increased their physical activity while playing Pokémon Go as they walked an additional 2,134 steps a day or about a half mile (Alexander).

In a statement on the findings, researcher Ying Xian, MD, PhD said “Even if marathon runners or regular joggers won’t benefit much from Pokémon Go, the game provides an alternative way to engage people who live in a sedentary lifestyle and otherwise would never participate in any traditional form of exercise.” Xian suggests that increased physical activity by an average of 2000 steps among high risk groups will prevent “thousands of deaths and save millions of dollars in health-care costs a year” (Alexander).

*Negative Consequences* While Pokémon Go’s engaging game play can lead to positive and enriching outcomes, it also has a dark side. For example, stories relating to crashes, trespassing, and death are linked to playing the game (*Pokémon GO Death Tracker*).

In Clearwater, Florida, a 38-year-old middle school teacher hit two pedestrians while playing Pokémon Go and fled the scene (ricrussowfla). In Tokyo, Japan, a man playing Pokémon Go while driving his truck hit a nine-year-old. The child died two hours after the incident from his injuries (Sim).

In Southern California, the Santa Clarita Valley Sheriff’s Station and the Garden Grove Fire Department encouraged users in separate social media posts to keep their heads up and their phones down as they navigate city streets issuing the following tweet: “Warning: Gamers using #PokemonGO-Don’t get so engrossed you aren’t aware” (Bloom and Pascucci).

A research letter entitled “Pokémon GO—A New Distraction for Drivers and Pedestrians” and published in JAMA Internal Medicine highlights the extent to which such incidents have occurred. John W. Ayers, Ph.D., MA, Eric C. Leas, MPH, and Mark Dredze, Ph.D. collected a random sample of 4,000 tweets and google news posts over a 10-day period in July 2016. Approximately one third of the tweets sampled referenced a driver, passenger, or pedestrian being distracted by Pokémon Go. Specifically, 18% of the sample involved a distracted driver, 11% involved a passenger, and 4% were about distracted pedestrians playing

Pokémon Go. They also found references to 14 separate car crashes that resulted from Pokémon Go gameplay.

Consider the case of two parents in San Tan Valley, AZ who left their toddler in their house to catch Pokémon. Their 2-year old son wandered the neighborhood for an hour and a half looking for his parents. Police found and arrested both parents, who admitted to leaving their toddler to catch Pokémon. Based on the charges of child endangerment and neglect, the Department of Child Protection Services took the toddler into their custody. The parents had no prior police reports prior to this incident. Remarking on the incident, Sheriff Paul Babeu stated "our agency and many other law enforcement agencies have been warning people about personal safety while playing this interactive smartphone game, but we never would have imagined that parents would abandon a child to play Pokémon Go. This goes beyond comprehension" (KPHO Broadcasting Company).

Certainly, Pokémon Go players do not download the app intending to commit involuntary manslaughter or cause injury. If such an app existed, it would be illegal. Yet, as they played the game, players started to prioritize their obsession for it over their personal well-being and the well-being of others. While these are dramatic examples, they point to a degradation of concern for community and personal relationships, despite any good original intentions were.

In my own experience, the prospect of using Pokémon Go to further connect with my stepdaughters had excited me. It could become our new "modern" pastime! Yet I found that we would be busy catching Pokémon on our screens while hardly paying attention to each other. Technology ceased to be a means to an end and became the end we sought. Real life gave way to screen life and so did our connections. We were disconnected in a connected world.

Not only was I failing to connect more with my stepdaughters, I also noticed changes in my behavior. Remember, I started out playing Pokémon Go with no prior interest in the game (nor did I really know what it was all about) beyond intending to develop a stronger bond with my stepdaughters. Yet what surprised me was how my behavior and priorities started to shift as I kept playing it. I would place gameplay



ahead of other obligations. I started my day thinking about how I could level-up or earn rewards. It was hard to resist playing; after all, the next Pokémon was just around the corner! I would walk for long distances looking at my phone. This led to many unintended mishaps including bumping into people, sidewalk signs, and yes, even my own car!

Given my observations, I took a two-week fast from playing Pokémon Go. The fast helped me see that I spent too much time, energy, focus, and resources on the game to the deficit of my responsibilities; I was addicted.

In his book *Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked* Adam Alter states “addictions are damaging because they crowd out other essential pursuits, from work and play to basic hygiene and social interaction” (20). Furthermore, addictions arise “when a person can’t resist a behavior, which, despite addressing a deep psychological need in the short-term, produces significant harm in the long term” (31).

Playing Pokémon Go became a concern when its addictive aspects shifted the balance of my priorities in its favor.<sup>1</sup> I was not sure how or why playing the game affected me. However, insights from Alter’s book shed new light on the addictive aspects of game design. According to Alter, some of the most popular games are purposefully designed to keep you hooked by incorporating six ingredients of behavioral addiction:

- compelling goals that are just beyond reach
- irresistible and unpredictable positive feedback
- a sense of incremental progress and improvement
- tasks that become slowly more difficult over time
- unresolved tensions that demand resolution
- and strong social connections

Sherry Turkle, a licensed clinical psychologist, professor of the social studies of science and technology at MIT, and author of *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less From Each Other*, highlighted the very addictive aspects of Pokémon Go and the disruption that immersive screen time creates between us and reality.

In an opinion article in *The New York Times* published shortly after the release of Pokémon Go, Turkle remarked,

Now, thanks to augmented reality, from the youngest age, a walk in our neighborhood doesn't have to put us in touch with the neighborhood at all. . . . Yes, we are tempted to flee from the real to screen worlds. But we are also tempted to remake the real by looking at it through our screens. Now, all time becomes screen time.

## Ingredients of Behavioral Addiction in Pokémon Go

### Addictive elements

**Compelling goals that are just beyond reach**

**Irresistible and unpredictable positive feedback**

**A sense of incremental progress and improvement**

**Tasks that become slowly more difficult over time**

**Unresolved tensions that demand resolution**

**Strong social connections**

### Pokémon Go Design

Players level up after achieving multiple goals (some of which take time or much game to achieve).

Rare Pokémon can suddenly appear in an area least expected.

Leveling up unlocks game items and features.

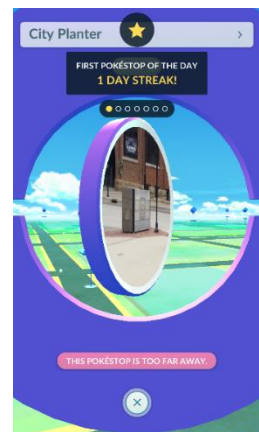
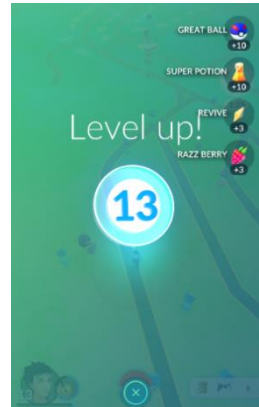
As players level up, catching Pokémon and earning medals demands increased time and effort.

A player may run out of items needed to catch a Pokémon. In order to catch the Pokémon, the player may entertain the option of purchasing virtual goods or visiting designated hotspots, known as Pokestops, to get the items.

Pokémon Go is built on community. Players customize an avatar, choose a team to affiliate with, and battle other teams. In addition, there are community-wide events in which players meet up to play the game.

In essence, Turkle is calling us to reflect upon how our constant engagement with smartphones can lead to detachment from our relationships. The immersive game play shifts our attention to a projected world that demands time, attention, and active engagement. A parent engrossed in playing Pokémon Go while neglecting his child's needs shows a form of detachment and a preference for screen time; especially in his child's eyes. This detachment highlights Egbert Schuurman's definition of technicism. According to Schuurman, technicism refers to "the drive for human autonomy and mastery apart from God and his will manifests itself in technology" (Monsma et al. 49). People who view and use technology this way begin to see technology itself as the solution for all human needs. Instead of a tool, a means to an end, technology becomes the end through which we find satisfaction, peace, and fulfillment. Is this a healthy relationship?

The child who sees his parent ignoring him because he is playing Pokémon Go learns that it is okay to be ignored and to ignore others. He also learns that the screen takes precedence. In her book *The Big Disconnect: Protecting Childhood and Family Relationships in the Digital Age*, psychologist Catherine Steiner-Adair relays the emotions expressed by 1,000 children ages 4 to 18 regarding how they felt about their parents use of mobile devices. Children reported feeling sad, mad, angry and lonely. Commenting on the study, Steiner-Adair said "we are behaving in ways that certainly tell children they don't matter, they're not interesting to us, they're not as compelling as anybody, anything, any ping that may interrupt our time with them" (Neighmond). Relationships developed in such an environment lead to a divide as they affect the relations we hold dear.



*Pokémon Go provides positive feedback and compelling goals that feed addictions.*

Playing Pokémon Go for fun, entertainment, physical activity, and socialization can be rewarding given the stories, studies, and yes, even my own personal experience. Yet, at what cost? At what point, does Pokémon Go cease to be a means to an end and rather an end itself? Integral to good character is seeking the well-being of the community, the people with whom we share the world. To have good character, our commitment to our community must extend even into our screen use.

When we start to prioritize and value a game over other aspects of our life, it can have negative consequences for ourselves and our community, as I found when I became addicted to the game. I wasted time, I was disturbed by feelings of guilt and shame, and my relationships suffered. I began to look for a guide to better inform my screen life choices, so that in the future I can feel confident that I am living out my commitment to good character by using technology responsibly and intentionally. In what ways could I evaluate the ethical and moral use of augmented games like Pokémon Go?

In truth, these questions can be asked about myriad screen technologies, including apps, games, and augmented (and virtual) realities yet to be designed. The Pokémon Go phenomenon may eventually fade away, to be replaced by the next big all-absorbing app, but the questions will remain. Pokémon Go is merely the frame I will use to consider the bigger questions about how we can interact with technology so that our screen behavior is reflective of our own good character.

## **Responsibility in a Pokémon Go World**

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*Mutual Responsibility* In *Responsible Technology*, authors Stephen Monsma, Clifford Christians, Eugene Dykema, Arie Leegwater, Egbert Schuurman, and Lambert Van Poolen, guide us in a faith-based consideration of technology. According to the authors, technology serves the community well when it embraces the blessings, riches, and potentials God has put into creation (68). The Great Commandment to love God above all else and one's neighbor as oneself forms the foundation of the authors' analysis and informs the principles they propose to guide the use and development of technology: cultural

appropriateness, information or openness, communication, stewardship, delightful harmony, justice, caring, and trust (71–76).<sup>2</sup>

*Technology should serve society to enhance and sustain it.*

Technology should serve society to enhance and sustain it, and both consumers and designers have a vested interest in preserving and enhancing the well-being of their community. If we consider Monsma et

al.'s principles, we can identify best practices for developers and consumers to follow to promote responsible and virtuous behavior and serve the community as a whole.

*Designer and Producer Responsibilities* Responsible technology is based on clear, open and constant communication between the producer and consumer. At minimum, the producer should share information pertinent to the safe and legal use of its products. Often the terms of service is set in legal language that requires a lawyer to interpret it. The developer should make every attempt to communicate the essence of the terms of service so that a broader audience can understand it without consulting a lawyer.<sup>3</sup> Game players who cannot understand the terms of service will not be able to make safe or responsible choices.

To show real character, a producer will also respond to problems found regarding the safe and healthy use of their product. In designing a game like Pokémon Go, are the developers considering aspects of gaming addiction, safety, transparency and privacy? If so, to what extent? The question, “to what extent” is central. Developers must care more deeply about others’ well-being than about what it takes to satisfy social norms, legal requirements and compliance standards. If the developer is aware of stories involving death, injury, and addiction, they must consider them in developing their app.

When asked in an interview about his feelings about the fatalities associated with Pokémon Go gameplay, CEO of Niantic John Hanke responded that they had put in place speed locks to prevent people from driving while playing, and did not address either his feelings about the issue or the deaths associated with Pokémon Go, probably for

liability reasons. He also stated that distracted use of cell phones is an industry-wide problem and that the solution is technological in nature (Hollister, “Pokemon Go Turns One”).

I agree that the problem of distracted screen use is widespread, but that does excuse individual developers from making the extra effort to improve safety. Furthermore, Hanke was only telling half of the truth. If you drive a vehicle while the Pokémon Go app is running, you will receive a prompt stating “Pokémon Go should not be played while driving” however, you can override the prompt with a simple click of a button stating, “I’M A PASSENGER.”



*A Pokémon Go high-speed warning prompt.*

Indeed, Hanke is likely correct that there could be technological solutions to some of these accidents. To limit the dangers of playing Pokémon Go, researchers Ayers, Leas, and Dredze suggest steps Pokémon Go designers could take to improve the safety of consumers of their game, including making gameplay inaccessible to anyone, even passengers, moving at any driving speed, as well as causing the game to become disabled near roadways and parking lots.

I propose steps beyond technological solutions, too. The company could run marketing campaigns promoting best practices for gamers and include clearer information on their website about the risks associated with playing Pokémon Go, going beyond basic guidelines for safe gameplay. Niantic’s website features positive aspects of the game, including a blog and FAQs, information on safe gaming and privacy information, but they do not feature or address stories about the accidents and injuries reported by the media. If they were more transparent about these dangers and demonstrated that they were sincere about wanting to improve safety, they would engender much more trust from the community.

Pokémon Go could further earn the trust of its consumers if it were to reverse the addictive nature of its game to support the wellbeing of its players and their communities. Certainly game players themselves must

ultimately take responsibility for their behavior, but they need be able to trust that the game is not hiding devices that manipulate their behavior.

As I discovered, Pokémon Go has many features that encourage behavioral addiction. The common user may not understand the intricacies of game design and simply trust that they are playing a fun game. A developer who has included addictive qualities in the game is abusing that trust. Similarly, a gambler plays on a slot machine in anticipation of getting a jackpot. After several attempts, the machine gives a random reward but not necessarily a jackpot. Yet the random reward is enough of an incentive to keep the gambler hooked in anticipation of getting a highly unlikely jackpot. Ultimately, slot machines work in favor of the casino, not the gambler (Harrigan).

The point here is not to equate Pokémon Go with gambling but to discuss the issue of trust. Yes, gamblers know they are gambling but do they know to what extent the odds are stacked against them? Furthermore, do they know how slot machines and similar gambling devices are designed to keep them captivated and playing for as long as possible? Likewise, Pokémon Go players may understand that it goes against the terms of service to drive while playing Pokémon Go but they may not understand aspects of game design and gaming addiction that may lead to severe consequential behaviors.

Take the example of Vietnamese game developer Dong Nguyen who introduced Flappy Bird in May 2013. Flappy Bird had a simple objective: fly a bird through obstacles. The game received little fanfare during its introduction. However, eight months later, the game became one of Apple's most downloaded apps earning Nguyen \$50,000 a day from ad revenue. A month later, the developer took down the game.

What happened? Why did Nguyen stop something so popular, profitable and successful? Nguyen could not rest with the fact that his game was highly addictive. Players complained that the game was ruining their lives, and that they could not stop playing it. Before he took the game down, Nguyen made the following tweet: "I am sorry 'Flappy Bird' users, 22 hours from now, I will take 'Flappy Bird' down. I cannot take this anymore" (Alter 56–57).

Nguyen's intention in designing Flappy Bird was to make a fun game. He never imagined it would become an addictive "harmful" game. His consciousness and care guided his decision to end a highly profitable endeavor. Since then, Nguyen shifted his focus to developing more complex games that would not be addictive (Alter 56–57).

*Consumer Responsibilities* Technology often gets us to act before we think. The ease at which we can install and use apps prompts us to try something without first exploring it. Knowing what we are getting into is an essential aspect of safeguarding our time, privacy, health and relationships while mitigating risk. The convenience of pervasive smartphone technology makes it easy to prioritize an app's demands over the duties, gifts, and relationships God has bestowed upon us weakening our sense of stewardship.


Stewardship calls us to appreciate and account for the proper and limited use of finite material and human resources in the development and consumption of technology (Monsma et al. 73, 174). Cognizant stewardship starts with awareness and introspection regarding the purpose and use of technology. A consumer might ask: what's my intent in playing Pokémon Go? Is it to socialize with others, connect with family, create meaningful dialogue, or exercise? To what extent can this game facilitate that end? Are there more effective and appropriate ways to spend my time?

Upon the decision to play Pokémon Go, a player has the responsibility of researching the game to understand its risks and benefits. To develop a holistic view of the game, consumers should consider the game's developer, user experiences, reviews, news stories and more. Multiple sources of information are required in developing a holistic view as the developer's site may primarily feature the positive aspect of playing the game.

Reading and comprehending the terms of service is essential to understanding the legal aspects of the game in addition to how the game uses personal data. Just as the designer must commit to being open and trustworthy with its consumers, players must also play responsibly, keep conscious of the dangers, and follow the rules.



Furthermore, as stewards, we should seek to understand the game's addictive aspects, which may tempt us to bypass warning prompts while driving or opt out of real life, at the cost of personal relationships in the long term. It is far too easy to play it at times when we should be more present with a child, mother, friend or significant other. If stimulation ceases, we often revert to our smartphones to fill the void. Yet that void is needed for us to process our thoughts and engage in the conversation. When such technology is ever-present the lines between real and virtual blur as do boundaries for cultivating and supporting relationships.



*We were alone in our own worlds, more and more consumed by the needs of the game than by the needs of each other.*

I had thought that playing Pokémon Go with my step-daughters would help us build our relationships. Perhaps it did at first, but I soon discovered that we each fell into patterns of playing together but alone. We were alone in our own worlds, more

and more consumed by the needs of the game than by the needs of each other. In *Alone Together*, Turkle states:

Technology is seductive when what it offers meets our human vulnerabilities. And as it turns out, we are very vulnerable indeed. We are lonely but fearful of intimacy. Digital connections and the sociable robot may offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship. Our networked life allows us to hide from each other, even as we are tethered to each other.

According to Turkle, reality offers “the details of life as it is lived and the people we live it with. The real teaches you to pay attention. It demands that you slow down to its pace. When we talk to other people about real problems, we learn to put ourselves in their place” (Turkle, “There Are Dangers”).

Indeed true, meaningful, spiritually fulfilling relationships are not without investment. That investment includes time, attention, empathy, respect, faith, guidance and steadfast love. Furthermore, relationships

do not exist without challenge. We strengthen our love and resolve through these challenges and commune to celebrate God's providence. Yet, our relationship with technology, in this case a highly engaging augmented reality game, allows us to choose what's easiest and most convenient to us. Therefore, it's easy to let our relationships wither away given a perceived substitute. As relationships are the foundation of any society, our vested awareness and reflection is needed in determining how technology can affect us.

Slowing down, like Nguyen did, is essential to applying normative principles in our accelerated technological environment. In turn, we can better observe commitments to our relationships, our stewardship, and our desire to be people of good character amidst an augmented reality world.

## **Conclusion**

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My journey into Pokémon Go started with the enthusiastic encouragement from my stepdaughters. Their enthusiasm for the game was infectious and soon I would follow suit by downloading the app, setting-up an avatar, and going on hunts for these cute mythical creatures. The game provided me with another avenue to interact with my teenage stepdaughters; however, soon it would evolve to become a preoccupation. I was obsessed with catching Pokémon! Minutes of gameplay turned into hours of gameplay. That time was often spent alone capturing various Pokémon. I was always thrilled to catch Pokémon, yet the thrill was not without void as I missed the opportunity to play the game with family. In addition, I started to prioritize and spend more time playing the game to the detriment of my responsibilities and obligations. I decided to take a fast from the game to refocus and gain perspective.

Like a fork in the middle of the road, journeying on the Pokémon Go route led me far and away from my original motivation to play the game—connecting with my stepdaughters. This paper prompted me to reflect deeply upon my relationship with this augmented reality game. It also uncovered many aspects relating to addiction, the nature of human relationships, and role of character in a ubiquitous technological environment.

Certainly, although I became addicted, I do not consider Pokémon Go gameplay as essentially bad. It can be helpful and create connections, but it can also be harmful if abused. In truth, my two-week fast extended into an indefinite hiatus. I have done my due diligence, researched the game, and considered how my intentions for my gameplay have lined up with reality. Armed with my knowledge, I think I could play the game again someday, and do so more responsibly, but I probably won't. The time I spend in augmented reality is time I am not fully present in *real* reality – cultivating relationships with family and friends. It is my hope that this experience and my research will help you evaluate your relationship with augmented technologies such as Pokémon Go and find ways to develop and enjoy them responsibly

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*Rafic Sinno is Assistant Professor of Business Administration at the University of Dubuque. His areas of scholarly interest include applied psychology, productivity, digital marketing, digital behavior, interpersonal communication and education. He is passionate about exploring how these fields influence his students' development and holistic potential.*

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Photo credit p. 33: Annalee Ward

Photo credit p. 34: Rafic Sinno

Photo credit p. 35: Sharon Boer

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Forshey's article in this issue covers screen addiction in more depth, including thoughts on reinvesting in your offscreen life and ways to break a screen habit.

<sup>2</sup> For an insightful discussion on living out your commitment to service and integrity by responsibly using technology to support the global community, see Franklin Yartey's article in this issue.

<sup>3</sup> See Sarah Slaughter's article in this issue for more on online privacy and character.

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