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Book Review: i-Minds: How Cell Phones, Computers, Gaming, and Social Media are Changing our Brains, our Behavior, and the Evolution of our Species by Mari Swingle

Amy M. Moore
Oak Ridge National Laboratory

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Swingle, Mari. *i-Minds: How Cell Phones, Computers, Gaming, and Social Media are Changing our Brains, our Behavior, and the Evolution of our Species.* **New Society Publishers, 2016. 240 pages. Paperback, $19.95.**

Technological advances, namely the internet, smartphones, and other platforms to view social media, inevitably penetrate almost every aspect of daily life. Most find this technology to be helpful; allowing friends to stay in-touch over great distances, finding information on a myriad of different subjects, discovering and purchasing rare collectible items, and even finding a future spouse are all made possible by the internet and associated technologies. However, many are beginning to realize that the pervasiveness of this technology is quickly causing problems; some of these problems may not even be recognized initially. Mari Swingle makes the realization of this possibility evident throughout her book, *i-Minds: How Cell Phones, Computers, Gaming, and Social Media are Changing Our Brains, Our Behavior, and the Evolution of Our Species*, by incorporating actual accounts from her experience as a neurotherapist and drawing from various sources within the field to highlight quickly-changing attitudes and responses towards what she calls "i-tech."

An introductory theme in the book is that i-tech affects almost everyone, on a daily basis, in some way. Swingle refers to a division of the general population between two groups: "Digital Natives" (Millennials and youth, raised with i-tech) and "Digital Immigrants" (Generation Xers and Baby Boomers). She claims that the latter can either incorporate technology into their lives healthfully ("technological integration") or in an unhealthy manner in which i-tech prevents them from living their lives normally ("technological interference.") Although technological interference seems extremely detrimental to Digital Immigrants, Swingle maintains that, in her experience as a neurotherapist, Digital Natives appear to be the most negatively-affected by i-tech.

Swingle is evidently an advocate of reducing children's time spent on electronic devices and i-tech, providing several case studies involving formerly healthy, well-adjusted children and adolescents, who, after constant and prolonged exposure to i-tech, quickly became anxious, depressed, and even exhibited "failure to launch" (where a young adult is unable to obtain/maintain a job or education after high school and continues to live at the parent's home, and thus, suffers extreme anxiety and depression). She is also a proponent of more traditional forms of recreation and communication, insisting several times throughout the book to encourage children (and adults) to be active, play games, and talk in-person to friends and family. She evidently stresses this to her patients as well, as is evident in her reported instructions to parents of the aforementioned formerly well-adjusted children and youth who have been otherwise harmed by i-tech, as well as parents of children with behavioral disorders.

The increasing frequency of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) diagnoses in children are commonly referenced throughout the book, as Swingle claims that many of these diagnoses may in-fact be inaccurate and if they are indeed accurate, can be remedied by reducing a child's exposure to i-tech. Using both very simple detail, assuming that the majority of readers

of this book are novices in the field of neuropsychology, and somewhat wordy and seemingly unnecessary detail in her "Scientific Corner" sections, she identifies specific brainwaves that she has seen during Electroencephalograms (EEGs) of children and youth who have received a diagnosis of ADHD and those who have a predisposition for developing what she calls "i-addiction" (an actual addiction to i-tech and associated devices). She compares i-addiction to other types of real addictions (gambling, eating, sex, etc.) and explains how i-tech is both a means and an end to these addictions, mainly due to its effect on arousal states and the increasing amount of stimuli necessary for a person to feel satiated.

As technology advances, i-tech will continue to penetrate more and more aspects of our daily lives. While it will likely continue to help in disseminating an abundance of information to every corner of the globe (although Swingle mentions twice the difference between obtaining information from the Internet and gaining actual knowledge—or being able to apply the information in a particular context), it will also likely continue to exacerbate predisposed conditions that will negatively affect many people with underlying disorders. Ultimately, the take away message throughout Swingle's book is that i-tech can be a wonderful and almost magical tool to connect people, create fantasy worlds, entertain, and educate people, but it should not be a substitute for real human interactions. Regardless of whether one is a Digital Immigrant or a Digital Native, Swingle encourages technological integration and using i-tech when necessary or when efficient, rather than technological interference or obsessing over the use of technology, resulting in i-addiction, anxiety, and depression when it is lacking.

Amy M. Moore, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Research Associate
Oak Ridge National Laboratory
Oak Ridge, Tennessee