

Becoming a Stock Image, and other Surrogates for the Online Self

May 18, 2016

sur·ro·gate

/ˈsərəɡət, ˈsərə,gāt/

noun

noun: surrogate; plural noun: surrogates

1. a substitute, especially a person deputizing for another in a specific role or office

I.

A year or so ago, a colleague of mine—let's call her Jane—told me how much she disliked the first photograph that appeared with a Google image search of her name. I didn't know what photograph she was objecting to so strongly, but I knew the feeling she meant. With images both of oneself and one's professional activities and interests collected through a variety of means—including direct tags, shared appearances on websites, and public archives of social media posts—it can be unnerving to confront the

algorithmically constructed photo album of our online existence. Without the editorial control we may be used to in other forms of both private and public image management, Google image search results dispassionately proclaim, “This is what you look like in public, online.”

Because Jane has professional interests in privacy and consciously cultivates a very light online footprint, rather than live with the slight unease caused by coming eye to eye with the accumulated presence of her online image, she gave herself a project. Her goal was to get the offending image removed from the search results. Though motivated by a substantial desire for online privacy, the pursuit—she readily admits—existed somewhere at the intersection of professional curiosity and personal vanity. Because the original image had multiplied online and appeared in at least three locations, their removal entailed contacting an international array of webmasters at multiple companies, and ultimately filing an image copyright claim with Google, which asserted the photographer’s right over the image (not, ironically, her own). Perhaps her greatest challenge was in seeing that her photograph had also been transferred to another person’s identity, a woman in eastern Europe who, for unknown reasons, was using it as her own profile image.

2.

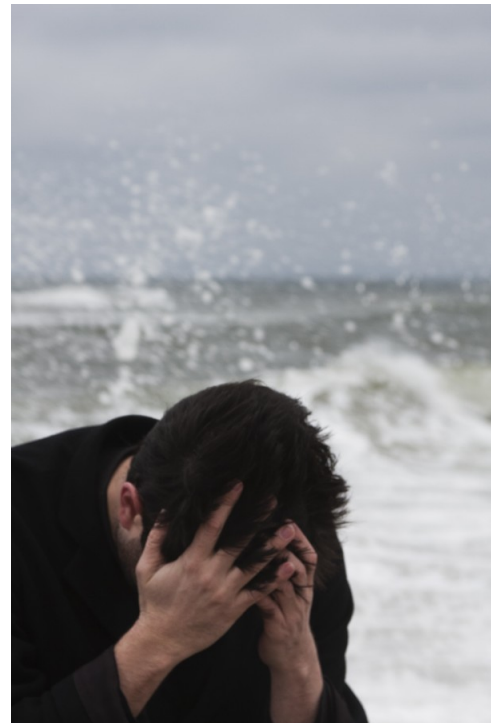
I found myself equally interested a number of questions raised by Jane’s reaction and responses, including 1) any individual’s desire or ability to manage self-image in an online public space—as opposed to a traditional public space, 2) the easy multiplication and spread of images, from one context to the next, and the corresponding difficulty of stopping that spread or removing the image entirely 3) the relationship between algorithms and people selecting a group of images, and 4) public access to the private self.

The easy and fluid movement of images online, from one immaterial context to another, can be seen, depending on one’s perspective, as either a utopian space offering infinite contextual flexibility, or a landmine-strewn field of copyright threats and complications. It is more common to see artists’

concern about the (perhaps alarmingly) freewheeling movement of authored images through this often undifferentiated series of spaces than it is to see artwork that engages seriously with the new realities and creative possibilities of that movement. And yet, how we, as a culture, come to understand these new types of image relationships within such emerging arenas of visual consumption and forms of visual display relates closely to the broad challenge of navigating ourselves through the shifting—and perhaps unfamiliar—terrain of online public space.

3.

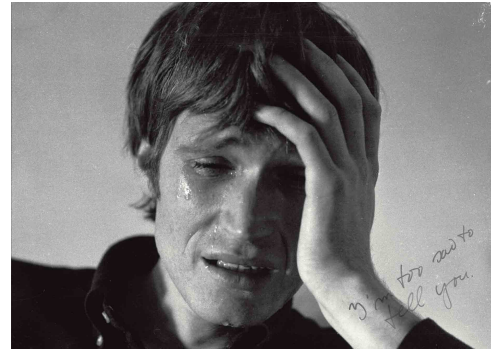
In 2014, the artist David Horvitz made a photograph of himself portraying a visual stereotype of internal despair. The resulting image is simultaneously evocative of both a legacy of conceptual art and the banalities of stock photography. In the former category, Horvitz summons his conceptual forebearer Bas Jan Ader's most well-known piece, *I'm Too Sad To Tell You* (1970-1971), a video of the artist weeping, conveying the incommensurable space between sorrow and speech.



David Horvitz, "Mood Disorder," 2014

But unlike Ader's direct confessional, which strikes a heartfelt tone, Horvitz obscured his own face, making his self anonymous, and built in the visual clichés of depression: a lone male figure, dressed in black, lowered head-in-hands, a tumultuous sea behind him. Having created an image suitable for the generic needs of those wishing to visually signal "inner turmoil", Horvitz uploaded the image to Wikimedia Commons—a

growing database of, at present, 31,595,596 freely usable media files to which anyone can contribute—and then linked that image to the Wikipedia page for Mood Disorder, an overarching psychological diagnosis classification, the most common of which is clinically diagnosed depression. (A more accurate image for this page would no doubt be a person of perfectly average appearance, but that's a separate matter.)



Bas Jan Ader, "I'm Too Sad to Tell You,"
1971

W Mood disorder - Wikipedia

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mood_disorder

Create account Log in

Article Talk

Read Edit View history Search

WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Main page
Contents
Featured content
Current events
Random article
Donate to Wikipedia
Wikimedia Shop

Interaction
Help
About Wikipedia
Community portal
Recent changes
Contact page

Tools

Print/export

Languages

العربية
Català
Čeština
Deutsch
Ελληνικά
Español
Esperanto
فارسی
Français
Italiano
עברית
Nederlands
日本語
Polski
Português
Pycckий
Simple English
Slovenčina
Српски / srpski
Srpskohrvatski / српскохрватски
Suomi
Svenska
Türkçe
中文

Edit links

Mood disorder

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Mood disorder is a group of diagnoses in the **Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV TR)** classification system where a disturbance in the person's **mood** is hypothesized to be the main underlying feature.^[1] The classification is known as *mood (affective) disorders* in ICD 10.

English psychiatrist **Henry Maudsley** proposed an overarching category of *affective disorder*.^[2] The term was then replaced by *mood disorder*, as the latter term refers to the underlying or longitudinal emotional state,^[3] whereas the former refers to the external expression observed by others.^[1]

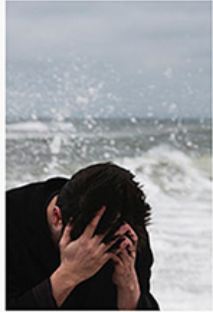
Two groups of mood disorders are broadly recognized; the division is based on whether a **manic** or **hypomanic** episode has ever been present. Thus, there are depressive disorders, of which the best-known and most researched is **major depressive disorder (MDD)** commonly called *clinical depression* or *major depression*, and **bipolar disorder (BD)**, formerly known as *manic depression* and characterized by intermittent episodes of mania or hypomania, usually interlarded with depressive episodes. However, there are also psychiatric syndromes featuring less severe depression known as *dysthymic disorder* (similar to but milder than MDD) and *cyclothymic disorder* (similar to but milder than BD).^[4]^[*page needed*] Mood disorders may also be substance-induced or occur in response to a medical condition.

Contents [hide]

- Classification
 - 1.1 Depressive disorders
 - 1.2 Bipolar disorders
 - 1.3 Substance-induced mood disorders
 - 1.3.1 Alcohol-induced mood disorders
 - 1.3.2 Benzodiazepine-induced mood disorders
 - 1.4 Mood disorder due to a general medical condition
 - 1.5 Mood disorder not otherwise specified
- Origin
- Sociocultural aspects
- Epidemiology
- Prevalence
- Treatment
- See also
- References
 - 8.1 Notes
 - 8.2 Cited texts

Mood disorder

Classification and external resources



ICD-10	F30–F39
ICD-9	296
MeSH	D019964

Classification [edit]

Depressive disorders [edit]

- Major depressive disorder (MDD)**, commonly called major depression, unipolar depression, or clinical depression, wherein a person has one or more *major depressive episodes*. After a single episode, Major Depressive Disorder (single episode) would be diagnosed. After more than one episode, the diagnosis becomes Major Depressive Disorder (Recurrent). Depression without periods of mania is sometimes referred to as *unipolar depression* because the mood remains at the bottom "pole" and does not climb to the higher, *manic* "pole" as in bipolar disorder.^[5] Individuals with a major depressive episode or major depressive disorder are at increased risk for *suicide*. Seeking help and treatment from a health professional dramatically reduces the individual's risk for suicide. Studies have demonstrated that asking if a depressed friend or family member has thought of committing suicide is an effective way of identifying those at risk, and it does not "plant" the idea or increase an individual's risk for suicide in any way.^[6] Epidemiological studies carried out in Europe suggest that, at this moment, roughly 8.5 percent of the world's population are suffering from a depressive disorder. No age group seems to be exempt from depression, and studies have found that depression appears in infants as young as 6 months old who have been separated from their mothers.^[7]

Depressive disorder is frequent in primary care and general hospital practice but is often undetected. Unrecognized depressive disorder may slow recovery and worsen prognosis in physical illness, therefore it is important that all doctors be able to recognize the condition, treat the less severe cases, and identify those requiring specialist care.^[8]

Diagnosticians recognize several subtypes or course specifiers:

- Atypical depression (AD)** is characterized by mood reactivity (paradoxical anhedonia) and positivity, significant **weight gain** or increased appetite ("comfort eating"), excessive sleep or somnolence (**hypersomnia**), a sensation of heaviness in limbs known as *lead paralysis*, and significant social impairment as a consequence of hypersensitivity to perceived *interpersonal rejection*.^[9] Difficulties in measuring this subtype have led to questions of its validity and prevalence.^[10]
- Melancholic depression** is characterized by a loss of pleasure (*anhedonia*) in most or all activities, a failure of reactivity to pleasurable *stimuli*, a quality of depressed mood more pronounced than that of *grief* or loss, a worsening of symptoms in the morning hours, early-morning waking, *psychomotor retardation*, excessive weight loss (not to be confused with *anorexia nervosa*), or excessive guilt.^[11]
- Psychotic major depression (PMD)**, or simply psychotic depression, is the term for a major depressive episode, in particular of melancholic nature, wherein the patient experiences psychotic symptoms such as *delusions* or, less commonly, *hallucinations*. These are most commonly mood-congruent (content coincident with depressive themes).^[12]
- Catatonic depression** is a rare and severe form of major depression involving disturbances of motor behavior and other symptoms. Here, the person is mute and almost stuporose, and either is immobile or exhibits purposeless or even bizarre movements. Catatonic symptoms can also occur in *schizophrenia* or a *manic episode*, or can be due to *neuroleptic malignant syndrome*.^[13]
- Postpartum depression (PPD)** is listed as a course specifier in DSM-IV-TR; it refers to the intense, sustained and sometimes disabling depression experienced by women after giving birth. Postpartum depression, which affects 10–15% of women, typically sets in within three months of *labor*, and lasts as long as three months.^[14] It is quite common for women to experience a short-term feeling of tiredness and sadness in the first few weeks after giving birth; however, postpartum depression is different because it can cause significant hardship and impaired functioning at home, work, or school as well as, possibly, difficulty in relationships with family members, spouses, or friends, or even problems bonding with the newborn.^[15] In the treatment of postpartum major depressive disorders and other unipolar depressions in women who are breastfeeding, *nortriptyline*, *paroxetine* (Paxil), and *sertraline* (Zoloft) are in general considered to be the preferred medications.^[16] Women with personal or family histories of mood disorders are at particularly high risk of developing postpartum depression.^[17]
- Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)**, also known as "winter depression" or "winter blues", is a specifier. Some people have a seasonal pattern, with depressive

Safely categorized as fair use and with no fees to anyone who wished to take it, Horvitz's uploaded image followed the laws of online nature and, over time, circulated—or, “propogated,” to use Horvitz's term—away from the Wikipedia page and became absorbed into new contexts. As Horvitz had observed in a previous project, “My photographs depict my own presence in a place and are intended to move, to circulate, to be sourced and re-sourced. Like the postcard, the digital photograph is meant to embark on its own travel. Instead of a singular object moving through time and space, its movement is defined by multiplication through copying, re-posting, forwarding, etc.”¹

Horvitz's challenge then became tracking the image—a surprisingly elusive task given the ubiquity of images online. Whether archives of material objects or networks of jpegs circulating online, large image collection sites challenge easy access for all but the most iconic of images. Though the image depicts Horvitz, it was not identified with his name. This disassociation meant that the easiest textual search term, “David Horvitz” was ineffective in tracking the image's movement.

It was a situation curiously opposite the one experienced by my colleague who didn't like her Google search results: where she objected to the image (of herself) that the search algorithm produced as a match for her name in text form, and wanted the terms disassociated, Horvitz, by contrast, sought to create a condition whereby his own image (made anonymous) would travel freely through online space. Yet, now disassociated from the search term of his name, tracking the proliferation of the image had to be determined through a reverse image search, a still-rudimentary process of algorithmic vision that attempts both to replicate a human's ability to differentiate among like visual forms and recognize individual forms or places within those broader categories. The results of this search became Horvitz's book, *Mood Disorder*.

4.

My first introduction to Horvitz was through an online search, in 2012, when a friend of a friend suggested I might be interested in his work. I looked him up, and while I must have found his website, all I remember from that first search is his Wikipedia page, where I was curious to find a number of obvious irregularities for a typical artist's biography. I was interested enough in that fact alone to check back on the page, and found that every time I looked, it had changed in some puzzling way—never quite what I remembered, but also never quite seeming like a usual, or accurate, artist's profile. So it seemed not entirely surprising to learn, in July 2014, that Horvitz had been banned from Wikipedia, after extensive, and now archived, discussion among Wikipedia editors largely stemming from unusual activity on the artist's Wikipedia profile and his performance/intervention *Public Access*, and coalescing around the "Mood Disorder" image, which was deemed, in short, inappropriate self-promotion at odds with the goals of Wikipedia.

Consequently, Horvitz's man-and-the-sea (self-)image was removed from the "Mood Disorder" page, and Horvitz himself was indefinitely banned from Wikipedia, which is actually to say that the name "David Horvitz" along with its associated username and IP address, was prohibited from editing Wikipedia entries. In the material world, an act of "banning" conjures legal action such as a restraining order, whereby the person's physical body is barred from entry into the designated parameters of a particular physical space, or must keep a particular physical distance from another person, both acts that would generally be prevented or surveilled through traditional visual means: the eyes of cameras, guards, or other interested parties. Yet to "ban" someone digitally is necessarily premised on establishing personhood through other categories. Horvitz was not banned from physically walking into Wikipedia headquarters in San Francisco. However, the digital extension of him, his online and immaterial surrogate, as expressed through a configuration of words, place and source code, is not welcome in that online space.

5.

And yet, despite his ostensible absence, Horvitz manages to perpetuate a degree of uncertainty. In the course of trying to determine which, if any, of the other Wikipedia editors who had become involved in images and edits was associated with Horvitz (one of them, for instance, shares his name, but is not thought to be him), one of his most vocal dissenters wrote in apparent frustration, in July 2014, “I’m simply doubting that if it’s even the right person. There’s no telling with this guy.”—Ryūlong (琉竜) 13:44, 13 July 2014 (UTC)

I could relate. In my own online sleuthing trying to understand for myself the circulatory patterns of the “Mood Disorder” image, I came to feel a lot like I imagined the befuddled yet persistent Wikipedia editors who were discussing his case to be. By way of example, I came across two other photographs that struck me as potentially “authored” by Horvitz, on some level, if only as existing, by virtue of his connection, within the same image sphere. The first was another photograph of a crashing ocean, in a book by yet another (?) David Horvitz, that appeared on his Instagram feed, and the second is the current (as of this writing) image on the Wikipedia page for Mood Disorder: an 1869 illustration of a man standing by himself in the rain that already, 150 years ago, oozed self-awareness about its own status as visual cliché, a tongue-in-cheek “stock image” of its day.



The current illustration for "Mood Disorder" on Wikipedia, originally published in the satirical magazine "Punch" in 1869

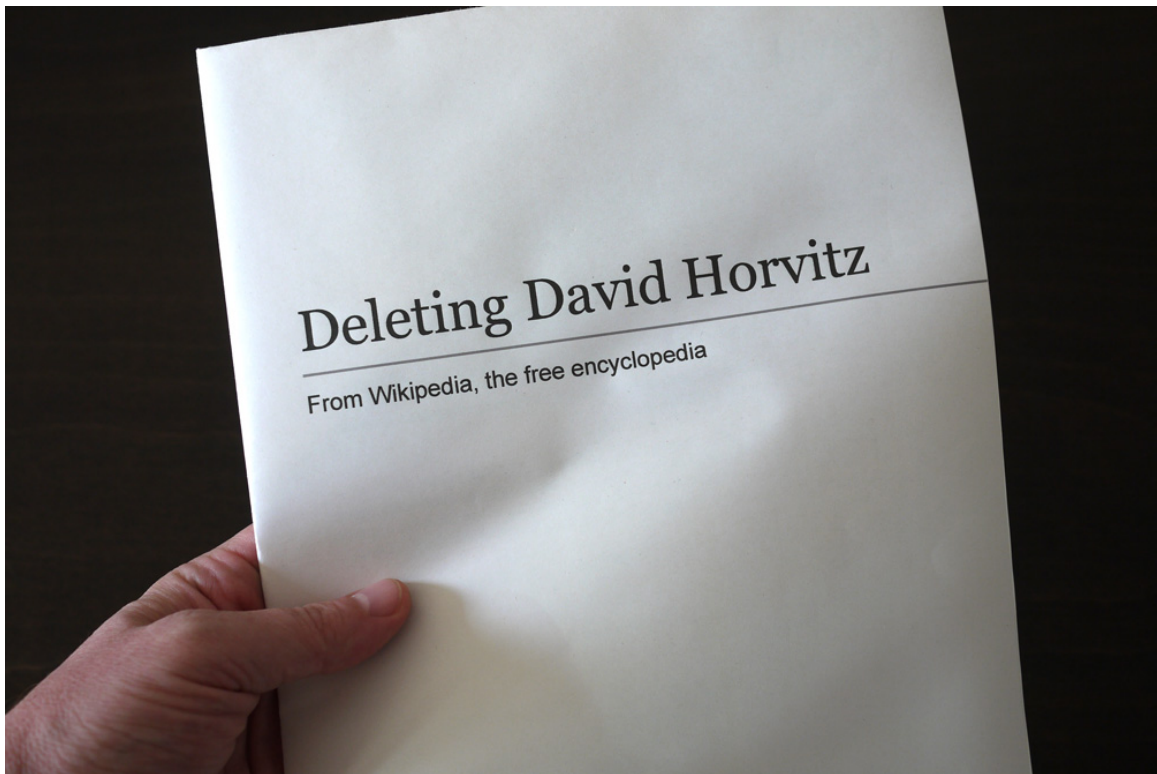
Drawing on essentially the same visual stereotypes as Horvitz, instead of the lowered-head-in-hands gesture it features a visage obscured by a rain hat and umbrella and swaps out the trope of crashing waves for the pathetic fallacy of a heavy downpour to indicate human emotion. The illustration, published in 1869 in the satirical magazine *Punch*, was captioned to indicate its own absurdity as a serious image.

Whether or not Horvitz uploaded this image as well hardly matters: the more interesting point is that I wondered if he had, if the man standing in the pouring rain could be a surrogate image for the first, now removed, crashing wave image. The idea of a surrogate for an imposter stock image is funny, or at least absurd (and so meta it hurts), but if the strategy of hiding in plain

sight fails, it is a reasonable (if also funny and absurd) extension of the same impulse.

6.

It is worth noting that the offending “Mood Disorder” photograph is archived on the website’s editorial talk boards. So, too, for that matter, is Horvitz’s expressed wish to delete his own Wikipedia page—a wish that has been commemorated in the form of a fixed material life by the designer Sabrina Montimurro, working with Paul Soulellis.²



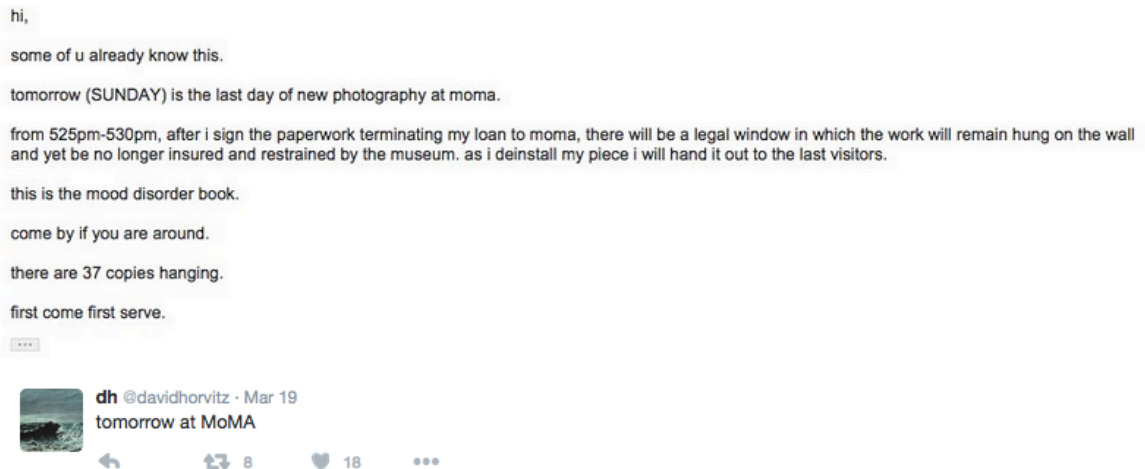
Sabrina Montimurro, "Deleting David Horvitz," 2015

Horvitz more closely shares the goal of erasure with my colleague who worked to get her “bad” photograph removed from public online space. The difficulty of the two projects, and the differences between them, however, illuminate the complexity of online privacy rights for individuals and for individuals who also exist as public figures. In Horvitz’s case, as an individual,

he can aesthetically disrupt the typical circuitry of public knowledge production on a site like Wikipedia, in a manner that directs his audience to consider the parameters and possibilities of such an interface, but as a figure about whom a Wikipedia page exists, a page that is written by other people on the basis of previously published information, Horvitz can do relatively little to control the narrative.

In the face of the durability of online data, then, the existence of a public surrogate or, better yet, a band of surrogates all slightly different from one another, to act as a collective form of decoy, becomes an appealing possibility. It is a strategy not unrelated to that practiced by the artist Hasan Elahi, who, since 2003, has been making the aesthetic and political point that a torrential deluge of information—photographs, coordinates, records—is not unlike no information at all. This mirrors the proposals of some online privacy advocates: in the absence of the possibility of the total erasure of an online identity, adding data, and particularly misinformation, rather than subtracting it is a viable alternative.

Of course, Horvitz and Elahi are artists, so ultimately, if known, their gestures of anonymity bolster their own aesthetic authorship, refracting back through the multiplicity of online space to coalesce around their professional identities. In Horvitz's case, for example, the image that was set free through its Wikimedia Commons status, was reconstituted in all of its new permutations at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, an institution nearly synonymous with aesthetic authorship. Fittingly, at the close of the exhibition, Horvitz gave away the exhibited copies of *Mood Disorder* to friends and strangers, setting them back into unknown paths of circulation.



Text of an email from Horvitz, tweeted

Notes

1. David Horvitz with Ed Steck, *Public Access* (2012). The self-published book emerged from a commission by San Francisco Camerawork for their exhibition *As Yet Untitled: Artists and Writers in Collaboration* (2011) and is available in modified form as a freely downloadable PDF. ↩
2. Horvitz, too, produced a zine with Franklin Street Works that documented, among other things, the archived debate about deleting the page. ↩

Kate Palmer Albers, "Becoming a Stock Image, and other Surrogates for the Online Self," in *Circulation|Exchange: Moving Images in Contemporary Art* (May 18, 2016). http://circulationexchange.org/articles/Online_surrogates.html.

Any updates or corrections to this article made after May 18, 2016, are tracked in full in the GitHub repository for this project: https://github.com/katepalbers/circ-exchg/commits/gh-pages/_posts/2016-05-18-Online_surrogates.md

Circulation | Exchange: Moving Images in Contemporary Art is supported by the Creative Capital | Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant Program.