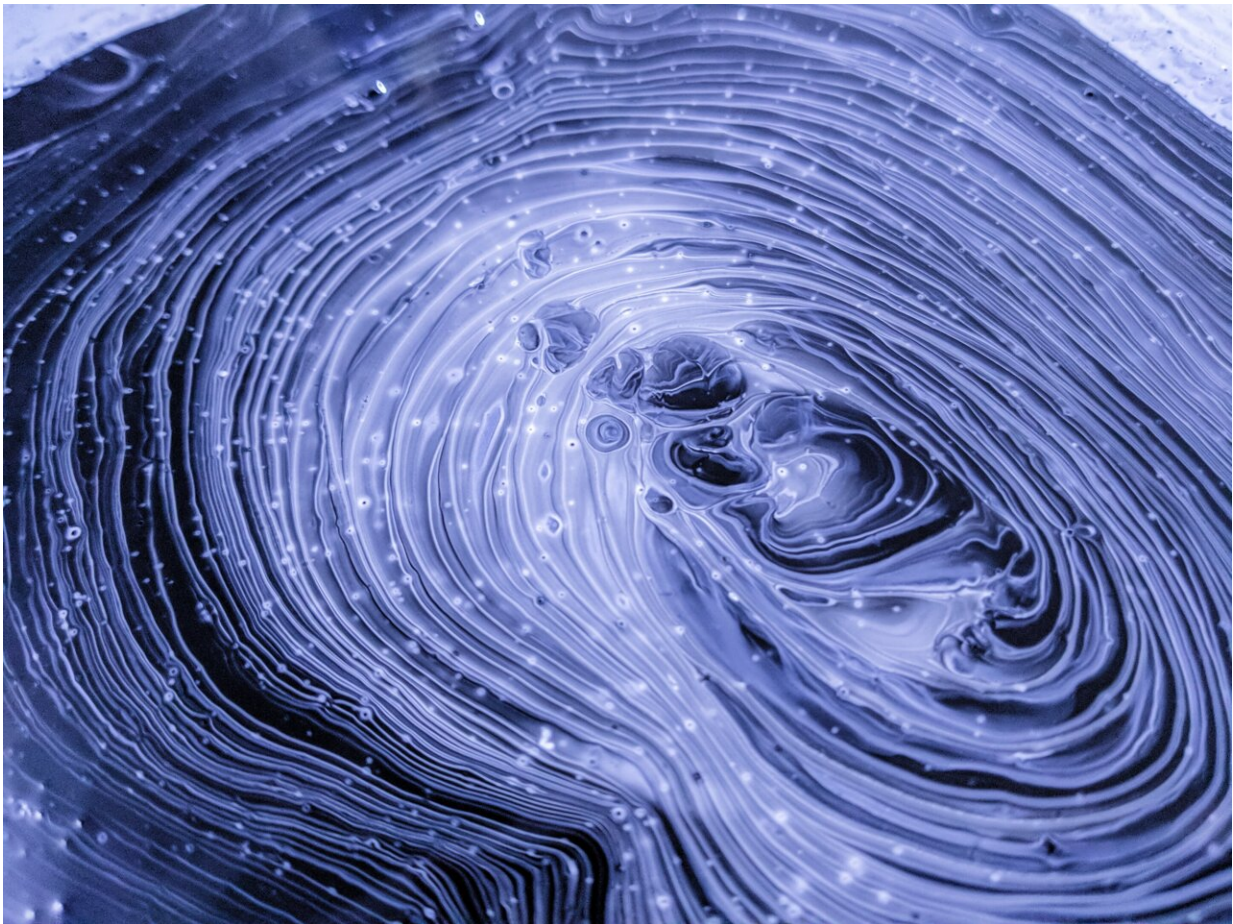


Our relationship with dick pics: It's complicated

October 17 2018, by Andrea Waling



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Why do men send [dick pics](#)? Some [research](#) and [popular commentary](#)

suggests it is for reasons of [narcissism and over-confidence](#). [Some men](#) no doubt send them in the hopes of receiving a [nude photo in kind](#), or because they [genuinely believe](#) that's what women desire.

Dick pics are widely considered a form of [technology-facilitated sexual violence](#), [misogynistic](#) and a sign of [sexual pathology](#) in the form of flashing/exhibitionism (disgraced U.S. congressman [Anthony Weiner](#) comes to mind here).

However, [research](#) by myself and [Tinonee Pym](#) has uncovered a more complicated picture. Looking at social media, digital news articles, comics, and blogs, we examined how people, and in particular [women](#), are "speaking back" to [dick](#) pics.

We found that while they were often understood as a form of sexual violence, they were also often regarded as funny or mocked for being gross. Some women actually liked receiving dick pics; others treated them playfully, situating them in a queer context. Men were also using dick pics to bond with each other.

In popular commentary, the dick pic is mostly seen as [sexual harassment](#) (often, rightly so); an attempt to make women feel threatened in online spaces. Women have pushed back by engaging in [public shaming practices](#), and calling for dick pics to be [prosecuted under the law](#). In Victoria it is now [illegal](#) to engage in [malicious sexting practices](#).

Yet the dick pic can also demonstrate a playfulness around men's bodies not [generally afforded to women](#). Some see these photos as an expected element of online sociality. In some cases, they are also understood as a [form of bonding](#) between straight men (known as "frexting"). As one [bloke put it](#), "if you don't send dick pics to your boys, they're not your boys".

Some people regard the dick pic, and male genitalia more broadly, as being [gross](#). Observations that male penises (especially uncircumcised ones) are unattractive and that no one actually desires the phallus, were common online.

Yet recent research has found that women are increasingly aroused by gay male pornography, which often features the penis in erotic ways. Women have also written about enjoying receiving dick pics, and being shamed for this. As [commentator Suzannah Weiss](#) has observed, "Ever since I started hearing about how gross they are and how much women supposedly hate them, I've become afraid of coming off like some kind of freak if I admit I enjoy them."

New Zealand-based [Madeline Holden's](#) blog (warning: this link may be NSFW—not safe for viewing at work), CritiqueMyDickPic, invites people to send in dick pics for her appraisal. She notes that some men who approach her for a critique are [in need of reassurance](#) regarding the look of their genitalia.

Indeed [research has found that some men](#) who [view](#) mainstream pornography – which often features a particular penis aesthetic (large, circumcised, thick) – have reported [increased concern](#) about their [penis size](#). It can be [difficult for men to discuss anxieties](#) relating to their body image and genitalia. For some men, dick pics may be an expression of these anxieties.

[Holden's](#) blog invites all users (transgender, gay, heterosexual, those using strap-ons, etc) to submit photos. This challenges the idea that only cisgender, heterosexual men can send dick pics. She offers a space in which these photos can be seen as beautiful, artistic, and erotic, rather than inherently violent and aggressive.

Another blog, Yourdicklooksgratinthoseheels (warning: this link may

be NSFW), features photos of erect and flaccid penises inserted into high heeled shoes, accompanied with witty captions ("are you entertained" and "soggy but serious"). Here, the wearing of heels challenges the dick pic's association with aggressive male heterosexuality—capturing some of the queer and erotic flexibility of the penis.

[Some](#) argue that unsolicited dick pics are common, and expected, within gay and bisexual men's dating cultures, where "many men are happy to get such pictures, and usually respond in kind." (Mind you, [others](#) point out that unsolicited dick pics are a no in these circles too.)

Framing the dick pic as only violent and grotesque forgets other ways in which it might be sent and received, as well as ignoring how it might be understood in non-heterosexual [subcultures](#).

Recognising the various meanings of dick pics is not meant to undermine people's experiences of finding them harmful, nor is it to excuse those who send unwanted, unsolicited photos. But dick pics don't have to be creepy or even outlawed. Between consenting adults, or in certain online spaces, like Holden's blog, they can also be queer, fun, and sexy.

Anyone seeking support or information about issues discussed above can contact National sexual assault hotline on 1800 737 732; Lifeline on 13 11 14 or [crisis support chat](#); Qlife on 1800 184 527 or [online chat](#); esafetywomen [online](#); mensline on 1300 78 99 78 or [online chat](#); Australia-Wide List of Support Services [online](#)

This article is republished from [The Conversation](#) under a Creative Commons license. Read the [original article](#).

Provided by The Conversation

Citation: Our relationship with dick pics: It's complicated (2018, October 17) retrieved 27 July 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-10-relationship-dick-pics-complicated.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.