

More than Fair: How Excessive Sympathy for Him (“Himpathy”) Obscures and Causes Misogyny

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According to my ameliorative definition, misogyny is, roughly, the “law enforcement” branch of patriarchy, which serves to police, enforce, or restore patriarchal social order—often by visiting hostility on girls and women for perceived violations of gendered norms and expectations. As well as complementary ideologies (most notably, sexism), there is also the flipside of misogyny which deserves to be considered: the exonerating narratives and excessive sympathy of which comparatively privileged men tend to be the beneficiaries. I call the latter ‘himpathy.’

This talk departs from the main example of himpathy I discuss in my recent book, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*: that of Brock Turner, the convicted sexual assailant and then student at Stanford University. (Turner’s trial became notorious when he received disproportionate and inappropriate sympathy over his female victim from multiple sources, including the judge who found him guilty.) But, as I will argue, this turns out to be only one variety of himpathy among many. Himpathy comprises a family of emotional biases that distort our moral thought and attention in ways that not only serve to obscure, but may even plausibly cause, damaging forms of misogyny—e.g., the hostility girls and women face when they try to testify against or seek justice vis-à-vis an antecedent recipient of himpathy for his misogynistic behavior, sexual violence, and so on.

I will close by exploring some implications of this claim about moral/social psychology for the future of the #MeToo movement.