

# Sociology: Common Sense OR Science?

## Lecture 5

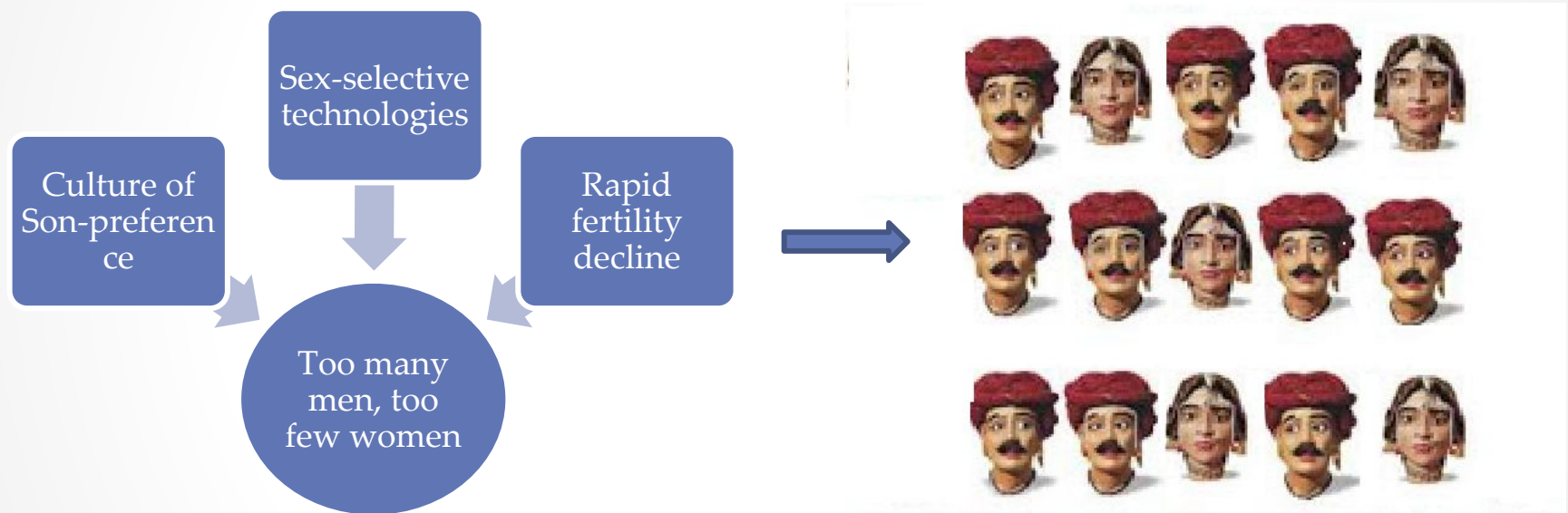
# Social Issues Interests Many

- Sociologists study 'Social Problem' or 'Social Issues'
- It appears that media and sociologists study stuff which is quite similar.
- Also common people have opinions on these things.



# Let us start with an Example (Mishra, 2017)

- Relationship between population numbers and forms of social organization
- Researching on Impact of Demographic Imbalance on north Indian marriage market



- Emergence and Proliferation of Cross-region Marriages
- Completely different from normative marriages
- Media Literature on this topic since early 2001 onwards..





# What broad research findings revealed

- Trafficking not really happening, very very miniscule proportion
- Arranged marriages through 'networks'
- Money transfer – Not for 'bride buying'
- Consent/Agency
- Stable conjugal homes / No changing hands



## HOW MEDIA CONSTRUCTED ITS STORY

- Faulty/Unclear definition of concepts
- Fabricated Statistics
- Authorizing Descriptions
- Tantalizing Images



## More Examples (Drawn from Henry L. Tischler)

- **Example 2:** Child Kidnapping in US – National Concern; Problem of epidemic level – 58,000 annually
- Intense debate – Newspapers, Talk shows
  - “tip of the iceberg” - creates a moral panic amongst parents, society and policy makers
  - Citing numbers for ‘objectivity’
- However, systematic studies show – only 115 cases qualify as “stereotypical kidnapping” (stranger involved, ransom, kidnapping)
- About 43% kids missing for less than an hour
- “Non-family” members may include – friends, romantic partners, acquaintances
- Chance of murder – 1/450000 (Cooper, 2005)
- **Example 3 :** Western World practices love marriage (Stephanie Coontz work – marriage an economic, political alliance) ; Even who you fall in love with is based on values you are brought up with.

## Media motives and Question of Objectivity/ Lack of bias

- With constant bombardment of information on various social issues, we come to believe that everyone is doing sociology. This is not the case.
- As some groups, people may have no interest in putting forth objective information. They are guided by very different motives
- Media – News brought to us is actually a **representation of perception of others.**
  - Wider Readership , element of entertainment
  - Sensational News Reporting – Ratings, TRP
  - Political Reasons
  - Profit Motive, Competition
  - Promoting concern, influencing policy
- We may feel they too are studying social phenomenon but they are not really doing sociology.

# Motives very different for Sociologists

- Further Knowledge – answerable to wider community
- No Pressure to Sensationalize
- Mundane is important for us – Lived Reality
- Goal is '**Scientific Study** of Society'
- Look for repeating patterns in society/groups
- No selective study of facts



# Sociology is not Common Sense

- Because sociology concerns everyday social world we think we know it!
- Imagine entering a class on DM- unfamiliar subject matter
- Common sense is what developed through everyday life experience – provides guidelines to human behavior – ‘self-evident’ , ‘obvious’
- Prior knowledge can actually put you in a disadvantage because views have not being gathered in a scientific manner.
- Common sense is often Vague, oversimplified and **contradictory**
- Proverbial statements rooted in common sense are often illogical
  - Pen is mightier than sword ; Actions speak louder than words
  - Absence makes the heart grow fonder ; out of sight, out of mind
  - Haste makes Waste, Time waits for no man
  - The more the merrier, Two’s company, three’s a crowd
  - Opposites attract ; Birds of a feather flock together
- Sociology is geared towards understanding under what conditions something happens, say, opposites attract.