Sociology: Common Sense OR Science?

Lecture 5

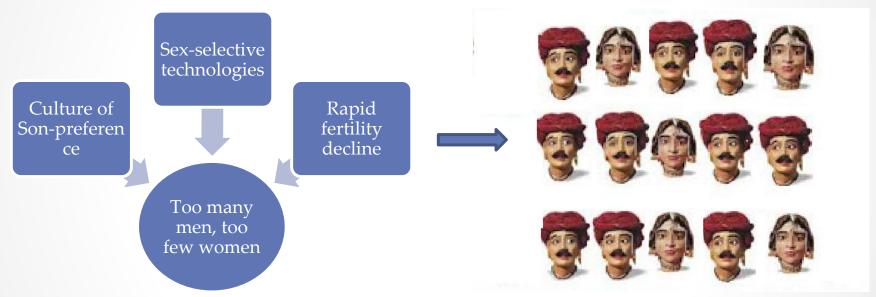
Social Issues Interests Many

- 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...

Media/Popular view of cross-region marriages

The marriage bazaar: How female foeticide has made bride trade a roaring business Danish Raza, Hindustan Times, New Delhil Updated: Dec 28, 2014 14:18 IST

When women come cheaper than cattle

Danish Raza, Hindustan Times

Updated: Mar 23, 2014 15:36 IST

Assam girls trafficked & forced to

THE CENTRE has expressed concern over the disturbing trend of girls being trafficked from Assam to Baryana, where they are forced into marriage and then dumped or pushed into fiesh trade after they had given birth to a male child.

The issue came up for discussion at a review meeting held in the home ministry on Wednesday which was attended by nodal officers from all the states and union territories. Haryana, which has the lowest sex ratio in the country, is notorious for girls being trafficked from other states for marriage and the nodal officer from Assam, superintendent of police Violet Baruah said the practice is still rampant.

"in most of the cases involving girls from Assam, we found them to have been trafficked to Hisar in Heryana where they had been forcibly married off. There have been incidents that after

Raped, then sold off as a bride in

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Brides purchased, then exploited in Haryana, Punjab

With Shewwed Sex ratios it is difficult to find a local mate

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Haryana's bride bazaar ~ a saga of exploitation

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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
 - o The more the merrier, Two's company, three's a crowd
 - o Opposites attract; Birds of a feather flock together
- Sociology is geared towards understanding under what conditions something happens,
 say, opposites attract.