

## Roy on the social construction of gender

People are divided into gender but so are roles, activities, qualities, traits, emotions, or objects (e.g., doctoring, leadership, rage, souped-up cars, child care, cooperation, sentimentality, flowers).

### Cross-cultural variation

Other sex/gender categories: *berdache* (male bodies but third gender), *Hijras* (intersexed males who become social women), eunuchs (males with genitals removed).

Yoruba: male/female bodies don't determine social position, age is most important category.

Gender of behaviors varies: Tahitians have few differences between men and women (pronouns don't indicate sex), Semai of Malaysia are all "retiring and submissive."

### History of gender

Gender differences probably arose with tools and permanent settlements.

The shift to agricultural production led to reduction in women's economic roles and rise of patriarchy.

Dominant sex model in the West until recently was one-sex model (women were inferior version of men).

"About 1800, Anglo-Europeans reconceptualized how they imagined sex differences, treating men and women not as superior and inferior versions of the same creature but as polar opposites."

## **Roy on Changing Gender in Anglo-European Society**

In pre-modern times, women and men were more alike than they are now. “The modern sense of women being ‘feminine’ —as being weak, soft, emotional, and in need of male protection— was not common.”

Roy thinks a key moment in defining women as subordinate was when “a new class of celibate men gained control of the Catholic Church and educational institutions.” This led to the exclusion of women (and married men) from positions of leadership, the defining of women as sexual temptresses, and the association of celibacy with virility.

“Modern Anglo-European notions of femininity and masculinity arose with the separation of private and public life,” which was connected to capitalism moving workers out of their homes.

“A woman’s place is in the home”: femininity became associated with the holistic and emotional social relations of the private sphere and the “authentic self,” which was a new construction.

“It’s a man’s world”: masculinity “means being objective, rational, nonemotional, and able to play a specific role without getting too wrapped up personally.”

Opposition to women’s suffrage and the creation of Mother’s Day must be understood within the framework of the separate spheres. The fight for women’s suffrage was successful because it embraced, rather than challenged, this construction.