Key points from Renzetti & Curran, chapter 1

Sex (biological maleness or femaleness) vs. gender (socially constructed masculinity or femininity)

Structural Functionalism: Dominant sociological paradigm in 1940s-60s. Emphasizes how society is structured to maintain stability and how its institutions and practices are functional for society. Criticized for justifying status quo.

Feminist paradigm: “a school of thought that explains gender in terms of the political and socioeconomic structure in which it is constructed and emphasizes the importance of taking collective action to eradicate sexism in sociology as well as in society, and to reconstruct gender so that it is neither a harmful nor an oppressive social category.”

Three waves of feminism

First wave feminism (1830-1920): Identified with 1848 Seneca Falls conference and suffrage movement.

Second wave feminism (1960s-70s): Included the founding of NOW and other feminist organizations and campaigns for the ERA, employment rights, an end to abortion restrictions, etc.

Third wave feminism (contemporary): Term coined to describe contemporary feminism and how it differs with second wave feminism (e.g., rejection of “feminism” label, emphasis on intersecting inequalities).

Types of feminism (Lorber)

Gender-reform: emphasizes similarities between men & women and seeks to enable women to participate in social life as equals to men.

Gender-resistance: argues that male dominance is ingrained in everyday social relations (which can’t be eradicated by laws), focuses on differences between women’s and men’s experiences and ideas, urges women to break away from men by forming separate organizations and communities.

Gender-rebellion: Focuses on intersections of inequalities and fluidity of gender.