Chapter 13

Discussion Questions.

1. As reported in the textbook, at the end of 2013, the federal and state inmate population in the U.S. was more than 1.6 million. Though the U.S. represents only 5 percent of the world’s population, the number of incarcerated in our country represent nearly 25 percent of the world’s prison population. Data reveals that the U.S. has the highest prison population rate in the world. Do we imprison too many people? Why do you feel our prison population is so high?
2. Data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics revealed that among 300,000 prisoners released in 1993, 67.5 percent were rearrested (i.e., the recidivism rate) within three years. Among those rearrested, 46.9 percent were reconvicted for a new crime, and 51.8 percent were back in prison for a new sentence or for a technical violation of their release. What does this tell us about our prison system?
3. The number of U.S. women incarcerated since 1999 has increased by 75 percent. What explanations can you think of to explain the significant increase in female incarceration?
4. Turn on the local evening news any night of the week and you are guaranteed to hear stories about car jackings, home invasions, and attempted murder. These individualistic crimes are referred to as blue-collar crime because of the type of people committing the crime. Blue-collar crimes are typically much more apt to make the evening news than white-collar crimes. Why do you feel this is the case?
5. The “Three Strikes Law” is found in 24 U.S. states. This law increases the prison sentences of persons who are convicted of a felony for the third time. There are some who disagree with this law. Ask your students how they feel about this law and present some specific cases that have taken place.
6. Many individuals are fearful of becoming a victim of a crime although in reality this may never take place. Discuss with the class why people are fearful of becoming a crime victim. What factors lead to this fear?