

Book Review: Genetics, Crime and Justice by Debra Wilson

Midhat Farzeen

Health Services Academy, Pakistan

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/issr>

 Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#), [Communication Commons](#), [Economics Commons](#), [Geography Commons](#), [International and Area Studies Commons](#), [Political Science Commons](#), and the [Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Farzeen, Midhat () "Book Review: Genetics, Crime and Justice by Debra Wilson," *International Social Science Review*: Vol. 92 : Iss. 2 , Article 18.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/issr/vol92/iss2/18>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by Nighthawks Open Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Social Science Review by an authorized editor of Nighthawks Open Institutional Repository.

Wilson, Debra. *Genetics, Crime and Justice*. Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2015. viii + 260 pages. Hardcover, \$125.00.

In *Genetics, Crime and Justice*, Debra Wilson, a senior lecturer in the School of Law at New Zealand's University of Canterbury, dissects one of the most widely discussed dilemmas that started in the last century and is still under critique by scientists, lawyers, sociologists, ethicists, and human rights activists today. In her book, Wilson discusses how the advancements in scientific research and knowledge have increased our understanding of human genetics along with its implications for the criminal justice system.

This book examines the extent to which genes account for the criminality of an individual. The scientific evidence that supports this argument is laid out and the various ethical, sociological, and legal issues that originated as a result of such an understanding of 'the criminal gene' are discussed. The text also highlights the response of the criminal justice system to the genetic argument presented at court and its tendency to adapt accordingly.

In *Genetics, Crime and Justice*, Wilson raises a critical question regarding a civilized society's priority, that is, is protection from crime more important than an individual's right to be protected from unwanted invasion into his/her genetic makeup? This, in turn, results in other ethical dilemmas concerning confidentiality, the willingness of an individual to give a DNA sample, discrimination on the basis of genetics, and the influence of genetic evidence presented in court on verdicts and sentencing.

The book defines and examines 'the criminal gene' from various perspectives including criminal law, behavioural genetics, neuroscience, philosophy, and sociology. Wilson not only takes the reader through the historical background of this debate and the changes it has undergone over time, but she also sheds light on where it can lead us. Students of medical law and criminal justice, as well as sociologists, psychologists, geneticists, lawyers, policy makers, and any other academics or practitioners intent on exploring issues related to criminal justice and genetics, can benefit immensely from this book.

Genetics, Crime and Justice is a work of significance. This book enlightens its readers to the debate revolving around human genetics and criminal justice, and provokes thought on how to address the competing interests of society and the individual. Overall, the book presents to its readers, those new to the field or its followers, a comprehensive understanding of the role of genetics in relation to criminality and the judicial system along with the myriad of issues surrounding them.

Midhat Farzeen, M.Sc. (Public Health)
Health Services Academy, Pakistan
Research Assistant - Human Development Research Foundation