Book Review

Serial Offenders:
Theory and Practice, by Kevin Borgeson and Kristen Kuehnle,
Jones and Bartlett Learning, 2012.

By Robert D. Keppel, Ph. D.

The book, Serial Offenders: Theory and Practice, offers the student of crime and the criminal justice professional an introductory and basic understanding into the field of criminal profiling and multiple victimizations committed by criminal perpetrators. Serial Offenders describes profiling as an effective and useful technique for criminal investigation that combines art and science. A brief overview of profiling and profiling definitions is provided. Borgeson and Kuehnle discuss the training and expertise required in profiling and illustrate the types of investigations in which profiling can be of assistance. For example, the book covers the applicability of profiling in arson and rape cases. Also, profiling can assist in the investigation and prevention of most types of violent crimes. It can be of particular assistance in series crimes and homicides.

The authors have wasted the space of one chapter in the book by devoting it to the elements of Muti Murder, a rare criminal behavior mostly recognized by South African authorities. Muti Murder is not a criminal term used by violent crime police professionals in the United States. Worse yet, the chapter has no bibliography from which further information can be gained.

While offender profiling has garnered a lot of attention, both as a viable investigative technique for law enforcement and an entertainment tool for television, movies, and media, little empirical research has focused on profiling. Unfortunately, the reliability and validity of offender profiling is often questioned, but this book lacks an adequate defense of criminal profiling as a tool for law enforcement cases. The reference does not make one a criminal profiler, but provides a beginning knowledge of the behaviors involved in committing serial crimes and understanding how the professional police officer utilizes serial profiling in the investigation of violent offenses.