



# FOR YOUR REFERENCE

---

## EPISODE : <IT'S THE GUNS; IT'S NOT THE GUNS>

Guest Scholar: Brad Serber

Contact Information for Participants:

Robin: [rbedenbaugh@utk.edu](mailto:rbedenbaugh@utk.edu)

Paris: [pwhalon@utk.edu](mailto:pwhalon@utk.edu)

Joshua: [jortizba@utk.edu](mailto:jortizba@utk.edu)

Brad: [serberus@psu.edu](mailto:serberus@psu.edu)

Topic Notes: A link to a Brad's Gershman/Ahler Distinguished Lecture:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fP-be8Zc3B4>

## COLD OPEN:

Robin : Anybody got a good joke for this week?

Paris: \*shakes head\*

Joshua:

Robin: Me either. Let's just do this.

<play intro>

## INTRODUCTION:

Hello and welcome to For Your Reference, brought to you by the Council on Library and Information Resources.

Robin: I'm Robin





# FOR YOUR REFERENCE

---

**Paris:** I'm Paris

**Joshua:** I'm Joshua

**Robin:** And this is not going to be an easy show today, because we are going to be talking about some pretty dark stuff. In particular, we'll be discussing gun violence and school shootings. So, two things before we start: First, we're shooting this in these United States in the year of our lord 2023, and Second, we are recording this show in advance. Given those two things, the likelihood that this will air on a day that has included yet another mass shooting is quite high. Be aware that the content herein may not accurately reflect the gravity of the moment in which you are watching.

**Robin:** So, before we dive into the meat of this conversation, I'm guessing that we're all old enough not to have had to go through any active shooter drills in our childhood days. What drills do y'all remember having to do?

**Paris:** Um, Because I'm from a small town, in Texas, I remember tornado drills. going into the hallway, placing your back against the wall, squatting down, covering the base of your neck while tucking your head in. You know to protect your spine and such from the crumbling bricks around you. There might have been others, but that one I have a clear memory of. What about you Joshua?

**Joshua:** No tornadoes in the Caribbean, so all I remember were fire drills. We all loved those because it was almost like a free class period. Those tornado drills sound terrifying. Hurricanes are terrible but at least you have a solid couple of days of warning.

**Robin:** I'm from SC, so I'm intimately familiar with hurricanes, fire drills and tornado drills. Since we landed on the idea of this discussion, I've been questioning my memory a bit about whether I remember doing the duck and cover drills that seemed to suggest you could survive a nuclear weapon by hiding under a rickety school desk or if I just remember hearing a lot about them. I do remember the signs pointing to the nuclear fallout shelter, though. Active shooter drills came long after I was an adult, which might make them slightly less traumatizing, if not less depressing.

**Robin:** And now it's time for us to talk about some of this with our special guest in Reviewer 2.

**PARIS:** <play reviewer 2 intro>





# FOR YOUR REFERENCE

---

## REVIEWER 2:

**Paris** <insert CLIR Overlay for 5 seconds; remove>

This is Reviewer 2, where we invite scholars on to the show to ask them questions about their work, hopefully in a way that is productive and not soul-destroying.

**Paris** <Pull out overlay

Our guest today is Dr. Brad Serber Assistant Teaching Professor at Penn State University.

Welcome to the show, Brad.

**Robin:** To start us off, why don't you give us something of a broad overview of your work and a little background on how you came to it.

QUESTIONS:

**Robin:** You note in your work a shift from mass shootings to “targeted violence.” Can you help us understand that move and why it was important?

You also talk about something called the rhetorical void. What exactly is that and what's getting lost in there?

Viral emptiness and empty virality are terms that you use in relation to the 24 hour news cycle and to what most of us think of as “the copycat effect.” Can you talk about that?

**Paris:** Based on your research so far, where do you currently land on whether and how the media ought to be covering such stories?

**Robin:** As a society (and I want to be clear that I'm thinking of the United States here), we tend to talk a lot about how to prevent mass shootings, or, in your terms “targeted violence” from happening. Do you feel like that's the conversation we ought to be having? If not, what then?

You mention that you are using Stasis Theory as a framework. Can you tell us a bit about that and how it can help us understand how we need to rethink how we talk about this kind of violence?





# FOR YOUR REFERENCE

---

**Joshua:** Your research keeps you in some very dark places for extended periods of time. How do you keep yourself from staring too long into the abyss?

**Paris:** Since our time with you is almost over, I think it's fitting of us to ask if you have any advice for those who might want to learn more about targeted violence or mass shootings. Where do you suggest they start?

**Robin:** That's all we have time for today. Thank you so much, Brad, for joining us today.

And now, to help us think better about how to do further research on this topic, we head over to Joshua and Paris with "Check This Out."

<play check this out intro>

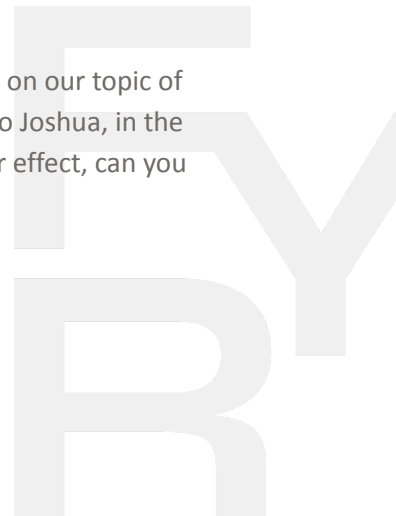
## CHECK THIS OUT:

**Paris:** Welcome back everyone, I'm Paris & this is my co-host Joshua, **PAUSE FOR JOSHUA HELLO**, and we're going to have a conversation covering the media literacy perspective of the Reviewer 2 segment.

This time we'll be discussing the heavy and all too familiar topic of communication & violence or violence as a type of communication. We'll give you some vocabulary, resources and key questions to help you on your journey to understanding the topic in relation to the world around you.

**Joshua:** There's a lot of overlap for me in digital scholarship and media literacy when it comes to this topic. Since digital literacy is associated with the ability to use computers, social media, and the Internet, and Media Literacy is the ability to critically analyze the narratives created by mass media- SM, the internet, and so on, you can see the overlap. The data gathered is often presented in different modes, some commercials promoting a candidate's stance on a trending topic, but it can also be data visualizations like graphs and interactive maps, but we'll talk more about that in a bit.

**Paris:** Yea let's not rush, and start from the beginning, let's try to gain some perspective on our topic of communication & violence. **This process begins** with what you know & search terms.. So Joshua, in the episode with our Reviewer two guest Sam Martin, you mentioned the Dunning-Krueger effect, can you briefly remind us what that theory has to do with what we already know?





# FOR YOUR REFERENCE

---

**Joshua:** Yea so, the Dunning-Kruger effect is a theory that tries to explain why people that are unskilled in a particular area believe they are more competent than they actually are. So because you might be familiar with violence & communication through your experiences, listening to the news or in this case the Reviewer 2 segment, you have preconceived notions on the subject. Know that there's a difference between informed opinions and what you believe to be true.

**Paris:** Cool thank you for explaining, so moving through the media literacy process, with your previous knowledge about this subject you can build a vocabulary to search.

## **SHOW Serber\_instruction image**

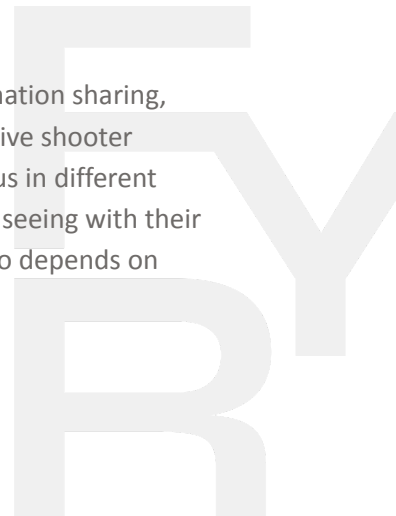
So for example when doing library instruction, I do an activity I use to help students build a vocabulary. I provide an image related to their assignment, from a database along with the metadata or the image record/description. Students submit words that may be used to search for related sources using the record provided, clues from the image, and often their preconceived notions. It's anonymous so it's a great way to participate without judgment and build confidence.

But in this case we're going to use the sources we used to prepare for this segment as well as our own experiences to frame our search.

## **IMAGE OF SEARCH TERMS**

So, here's our list of terms, you'll notice that some of them from our conversation earlier, some are significant tragic events, others policies, people and so on. These terms may return varied results, you might get news articles, interviews or videos, but keep in mind resources aren't limited to text. Gun violence prevention ad campaigns and NRA sponsored advertisements are still resources you can use to aid in your search, and help you build context from different perspectives.

**Joshua:** Sorry to interrupt, but I'm glad you brought up the multimodal aspect of information sharing, like the campaigns and ads on daytime TV. Very similar to the multimodal messaging active shooter training messages, Serber and Eberly wrote about in an article... information comes to us in different modes. Those modes come together for the audience when they interpret what they're seeing with their own background. So the way that we interpret an ad, sponsored to build a narrative, also depends on our basic understanding of a subject.





# FOR YOUR REFERENCE

---

Let me backtrack to multimodal itself. A traditional article which only uses text to communicate information is only using one mode: textual. Once we add images, audio, layouts, together to support each other, then we can say it is multimodal content.

## IMAGE FROM MASS KILLING DATABASE

**Joshua:** Here's a screenshot of the homepage for the Mass Killing Database- note that in the description we have the sponsors or contributors and the visual map that indicates hotspot right off the bat. There's also a dropdown menu adding the interactive perspective

**Paris:** As a visual learner I always appreciate data visualizations especially when they're interactive. It's also a unique way to share and digest important information. I'm glad you talked about the multimodal aspect of data visualizations especially since they came up in both of our searches when we were researching this topic

Getting back on track, record the sources that you agree and disagree with. Use the metadata and your ever expanding search terms, like author affiliations, sponsors, events and organizations attached to the subject to collect different perspectives.

Now, There's a lot that goes into choosing your sources, I'd like to suggest starting with an information professional or reputable sources first. I'm referring to a few community driven institutions, like your libraries, museums, and even local organizations.

## SHOW Evaluate sources

**Paris:** Some of the questions you might ask yourself as you vet your resources AND try to draw your own conclusions, you might ask ... How credible is this source? Who might be harmed by this message? Who might benefit from this message... and many other questions listed here.

So, putting everything we've discussed together, we've got a nice list of search terms, we've identified starting points for locating different perspectives and some advice for evaluating the sources and their context. These are the first steps in thinking critically about mass shootings, communication, and violence.



# FOR YOUR REFERENCE

---

**Joshua:** Yea, and I just want to add, explore this topic at your own pace, each source may lead you to another source like related events, correlating data (Pew Research Center), organizations (NRA), local or discipline specific data (ALA libguide or APHA American public health association). Assessing their influence of resources will take time at first, but as you practice it'll get easier.

To save you time though... we've provided some sources including those we used for the show. There are databases, government websites, and other references that can help you build an informed opinion.

**Paris:** That's enough for this time around, let's take a break from accessing and collecting sources on communication & violence. Join us next time where we'll discuss analysis of sources and what activism might look like.

Thanks for hanging around, hope you've learned something. If you'd like to join us in the media literacy process, and let us know what sources caught your attention, or voices that altered your perspective feel free to share with us on IG @fyrpod, that's fyrpod.

'Til next time...

## **SHOW Resources Slide (Post Production)**

### **OUTRO:**

Robin: And that's another wrap for us. Thank you both for all that great information. Anything else before I go curl up with my cat?

Paris: I'm going to do some self-care and take a walk in the sun, we've been in a dark place and we only touched the tip of the iceberg on this one

Robin: Thank you for watching, and we'll see you next time!

<Roll Credits>





FOR YOUR  
**REFERENCE**

---

FYR