

## **MIRG Report**

**Project Title:** Creating a Secondary School Climate Instrument Focused on Safety and Security

### **List of Internal PI/Co-PI:**

Dr. P. Michael Supancic  
Assistant Professor  
School of Criminal Justice

Ms. Kathy Martinez-Prather  
Director  
Texas School Safety Center

Dr. Joseph McKenna  
Associate Director of Research and Evaluation  
Texas School Safety Center

Dr. Glenna Billingsley  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Dr. Jennifer Greene  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Counseling, Leadership, Adult Education, & School Psychology

Dr. Gloria Martinez-Ramos  
Associate Professor  
Department of Sociology

Dr. Larry Price  
Director  
Initiative for Interdisciplinary Research Design and Analysis

Dr. Gail Ryser  
Research Fellow & Project Manager  
Initiative for Interdisciplinary Research Design and Analysis

### **Project Abstract:**

Our research team developed and piloted a comprehensive safety and security climate instrument for students at secondary campuses. The development and pilot testing included 1) utilizing team member experience to develop 90 items in eight construct areas, 2) conducting focus groups with middle and high school students and staff to assess the initial items, 3) garnering national expert feedback on the instrument, and 4) pilot testing the instrument with just under 1,000 students to assess validity and reliability of each item and the survey instrument.

In order to examine the extent to which the covariance structure of these 90 items was consistent with this implied eight-factor structure, several factor analyses were performed. Based on these analyses, new scales were sought that would be factorially unidimensional, have 10 or fewer items, have high internal consistency reliability, and still consist of items with cogently monothematic manifest content. Based on factor analyses of the entire set of 90 items, factor analyses of subgroups of items, and reliability analyses of subgroups of items, and with a consideration of the manifest content of each item, revised scales comprised of 60 items across seven scales, were produced. Additionally, three subscales from the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory were included for the purpose of evaluating the validity of scores from the newly developed scales. All Pearson correlations among the seven new scales and the three CSCI subscales showed considerable positive manifold across the correlation matrix, including the correlations between the new measures and the validity scales.

### **List external grants submitted related to the MIRG grant:**

In 2015, after receiving notification of MIRG funding, the research team developed and submitted a grant proposal to the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) under their 2015 Comprehensive School Safety Initiative opportunity. The proposal was to further develop a set of instruments that could be used to comprehensively measure school safety and security climate (expanding to school staff and parents). Additionally, the NIJ proposal called for targeted interventions to be developed for each school based on results from the survey instruments, and the surveys to be re-administered after such interventions to assess impact. If funded, the NIJ grant would have begun as the MIRG project concluded, which would have aligned with our larger research agenda and goals.

### **List of external grants awarded related to the MIRG grant:**

Not applicable, no external grants have been awarded at this time.

### **List any planned external grant submissions related to the MIRG grant:**

Since completing our MIRG project, our research team has met several times to discuss prospects for future research, the development of additional data collection/assessment opportunities, and general school climate and safety

improvement products related to our work produced from the MIRG. A primary initiative centers on determining how our MIRG results and the newly created Secondary School Climate Instrument Focused on Safety and Security can be incorporated and tested in future grant submissions. . Based on our preliminary results, we believe the Secondary School Climate Instrument Focused on Safety and Security created through the MIRG funding can be an invaluable tool as we seek additional grant funding related to the broad area of school safety. For instance, we believe the instrument can be used as a measure of overall school safety, which is often an objective outcome and initiative in not only our planned future work, but exists as a dynamic focal point of strategic planning for all levels of school administrators in efforts to address security and safety on their own campuses. We also believe the newly designed instrument can serve as a measure of the impact of intervention initiatives (program, practice, etc.) aimed at improving school safety at local campuses across the state of Texas and nation. For example, recent funding opportunities from the National Institute of Justice, the Department of Education, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Science Foundation, and others, have expressed interest in school safety related areas. We believe having a comprehensive and well-rounded instrument that has demonstrated evidence of reliability and validity will increase our success in future grant endeavors.

**List any problems encountered that prevented you from fully accomplishing the outcomes of the MIRG grant.**

Although we fully accomplished all aspects and outcomes outlined in our MIRG project, we did request approval for a short-term extension in the project as the original PI (Dr. Sarah Nelson) departed from the University. After a brief delay appointing a new PI (Dr. Michael Supancic), we were able to continue our data collection efforts and accomplish all objectives initially outlined in the MIRG grant.

**Any additional comments about what the MIRG grant enabled/empowered you to accomplish.**

The MIRG grant gave the research team the opportunity to advance their interests in the area of school safety and security. We are currently working on the following products and activities:

- A number of additional grant opportunities are being explored where our newly developed school safety climate instrument might serve as either an appropriate outcome measure for school safety and security or as a measurement tool to test the impact of an intervention in school safety and climate at the campus or school-wide levels.
- Two articles are being prepared for submission to peer-reviewed journals. One article is focused on the need for a better and more uniformed approach

to study school safety and our new construct of school safety climate, which we believe fills this gap. The second article is focused directly on the pilot test results from the MIRG that allowed us to gather evidence of reliability and validity.

- Several academic and practitioner-based conferences and meetings are being identified where we can present and share our MIRG findings and conclusions.
- Process and procedures are in the planning and development stage to disseminate the newly created instrument online through the Texas School Safety Center. When available, this information will allow schools across the state and country to use the Secondary School Climate Instrument Focused on Safety and Security to measure safety and security on their own campuses.
- Future plans include the development of companion administrator, staff, and parent instruments that can be administered and later provided to school staff and parents in an comprehensive effort to collect and developed a school-wide picture of safety and security at their campus-level from a diverse number of critical stakeholder perspectives.