Drug Attitudes and Behaviors in Trailer Parks on the US/Mexico Border

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The aim of this project is to extend and diversify an on-going epidemiological study of substance use and abuse among adults living on the Texas-Mexico border, by expanding the sample to include residents of trailer parks, who are expected to be at high risk of substance abuse.

The parent study, funded under a NIDA R01 grant, is based on surveys of urban and colonia residents of border sites, and investigates levels and patterns of alcohol and drug use, substance abuse and dependence, correlates of use and abuse, acculturation, treatment needs, and barriers to treatment. Like colonias, trailer parks can be considered economically distressed or sub-standard residential subdivisions, but people who live there are more likely to be unmarried or divorced and less likely to own their own homes.

Due to their young average age, high proportion of single inhabitants, social isolation, non-owner housing, lack of community organization, and economic distress, inhabitants of trailer parks may be at a heightened risk for substance abuse. The present project supplements the urban and colonia samples of the parent study with a survey of 100 residents of trailer parks in Hidalgo county, using the same instrument and methods as the parent survey.

The results will allow an assessment of treatment needs and barriers among this population, as well as an evaluation of differences in demographic characteristics, perceived social support and community characteristics between residents of trailer parks and colonias. They will also document the feasibility and
desirability of a future R01 grant proposal to study drug problems and service utilization among residents of various types of high-risk residential settlements, such as trailer parks, that have not been extensively studied. The study is currently in the analysis phase.