Social Network Analysis: Migrant Labor on Vermont Dairy Farms

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For this research project I will identify the social networks of Hispanic migrant laborers on Vermont Dairy Farms in order to better understand this population and make policy recommendations that reflect the reality of Vermont Agriculture and Vermont Dairy Farms in particular. The face of Agricultural labor in United States has been changing, and as there are less "willing and able" US workers these positions has been filled by migrant laborers, almost all of whom have Mexican origins. Dairy farms in Vermont are no exception. Over the past five years the number of dairy farms that employ migrant workers has tripled. Ten years ago migrant laborers either did not exist or were very well hidden (Baker, Chappelle, 2010). Very little is known about these workers, and because of their undocumented status many of them live "in the shadows" (Holch, 2009). Using census data and surveys conducted as part of Daniel Baker and Dave Chappelle's research on Agricultural Labor, I will provide some background information about this population. The focus of my research is to use a systems approach to do a social network analysis for migrant laborers of Vermont Dairy farms. I will be using a mixed method approach of analyzing survey data, and conducting unstructured interviews with local organizations, activist groups, lawyers, and community members. Identifying who these laborers are and understanding their networks will allow us to give more effective, efficient, and concrete Agricultural Policy recommendations' that will reflect the reality of the Vermont Dairy Industry.