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ATLAS.ti-The Qualitative Data Analysis Software

Making Sense of Research Data

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Agenda

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Research Applications

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- It assists researchers in the process of identifying and making sense of people‘s points of view and perspectives on issues.
- It allows for rich analysis of complex studies involving different sources of information.
- It allows for the study of single cases as well as for comparative studies across cases.
- The researcher is always in control: methodological freedom (from hypothesis-testing to grounded theory).

Central Concept: Hermeneutic Unit (HU)

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- Integrated context for data description, analysis, and interpretation.

- Container that holds the sources of information and all of the analytical work done around them.

- Every research project requires a single hermeneutic unit holding all of the sources of information to be analyzed.

The HU Interface

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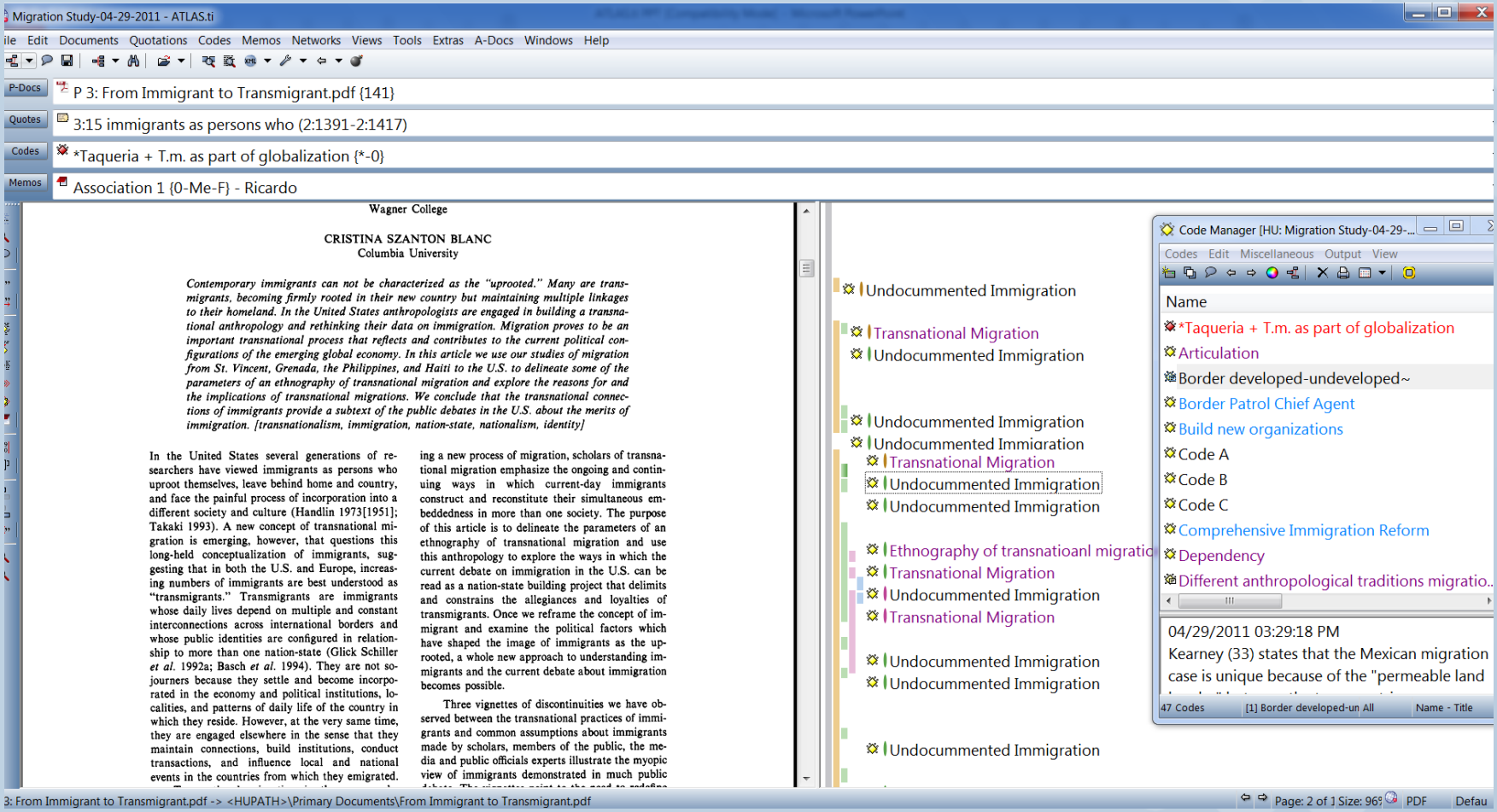

The Objects of the HU

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- Primary documents
- Quotations
- Codes
- Memos
- Families
- Networks

Objects of the HU: Primary Documents

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- Sources of information to be analyzed (no limit in terms of quantity).
- Triangulate different methods of data collection, such as:
  - Structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews
  - Focus groups
  - Surveys with open-ended questions (Excel format)
  - Field notes from observations
  - Archival sources: institutional records, websites, e-mails, blogs, etc.
  - Literature reviews
  - Drawing and pictures
  - Videos
  - Mapping
- Accepts documents in different formats:
  - Text: Word, RTF, PDF, TXT
  - Excel
  - Audio
  - Video
  - Graphic
  - Google Earth

Primary Documents

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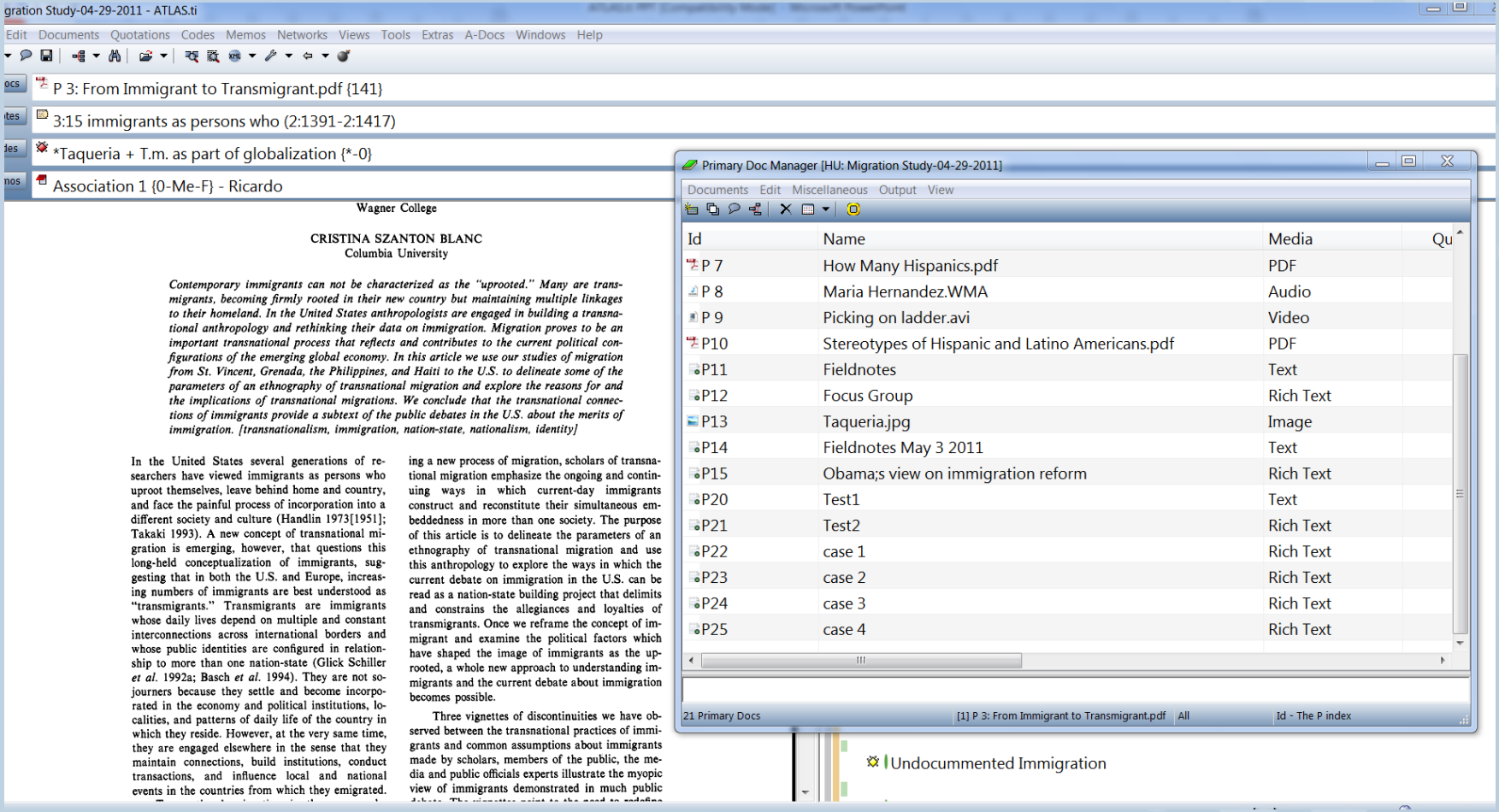

Objects of the HU: Quotations

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- Segments of the text that the researcher selects according to research interests.
- Quotations can be as short as a single character and as long as the entire primary document.
- All quotations become part of a ‘database’ of the quotations from all primary documents used in the analysis.
- Quotations can be linked to codes (concepts), and memos (reflections).
- Quotations can be linked to each other semantically (hyperlinks).
- Quotations are always shown within their larger context.
- Quotations can be described, renamed, and outputted in Rich Text Format.

Quotations

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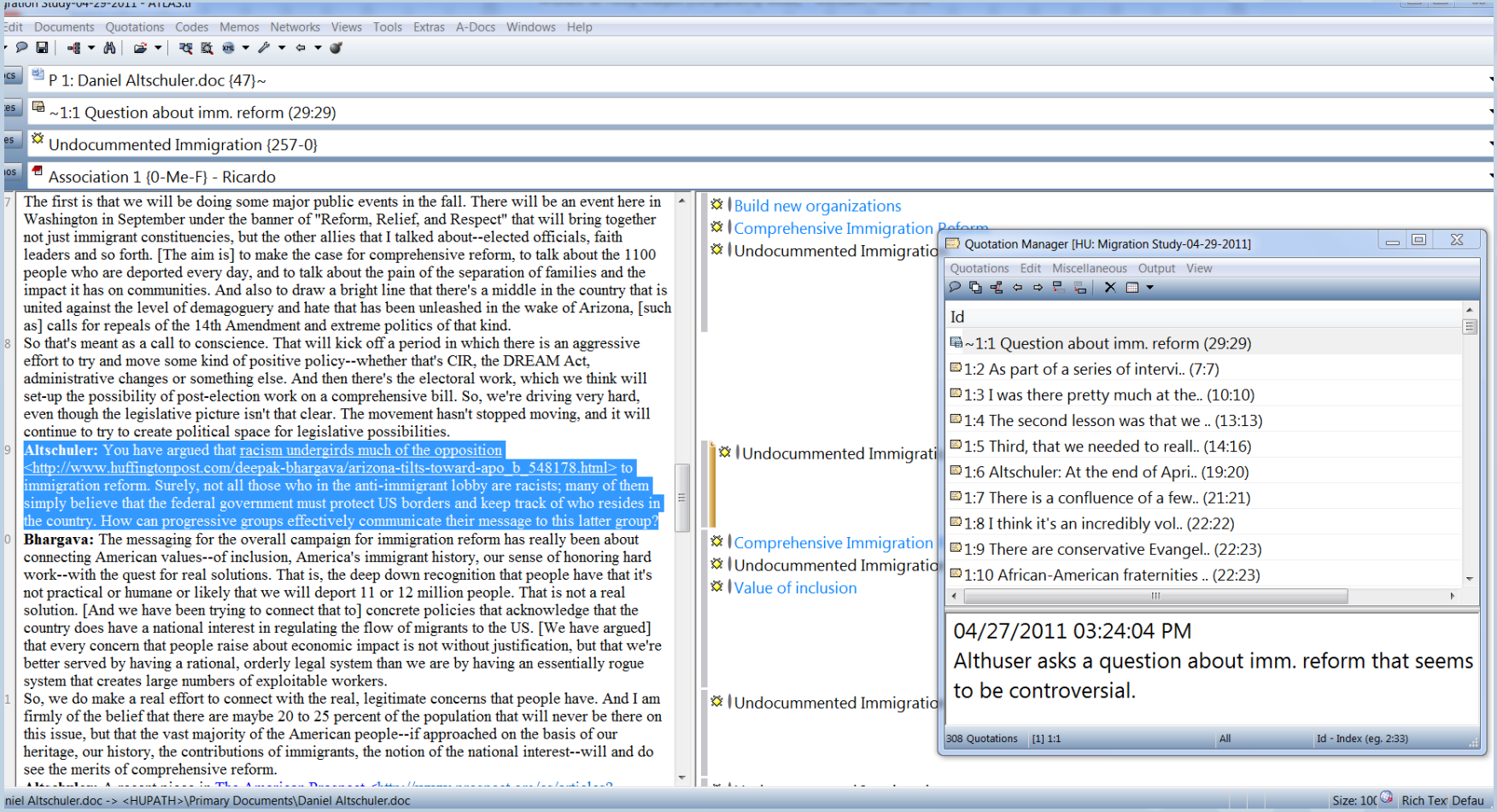

Objects of the HU: Codes

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- Concepts that can either derive from external frameworks of reference or emerge from the text.

- Codes are linked to quotations from any primary document of the HU, memos, and other codes through semantic relationships.

- Codes can be grouped together according to shared conceptual characteristics (eg., all codes that respond to research objective 1).

- Codes can be linked to quotations by the researcher or automatically by the system (auto-coding).

- Codes can be commented (operational definitions).

- All codes are stored in a database of codes, which allows for easy access and exploration.

Codes

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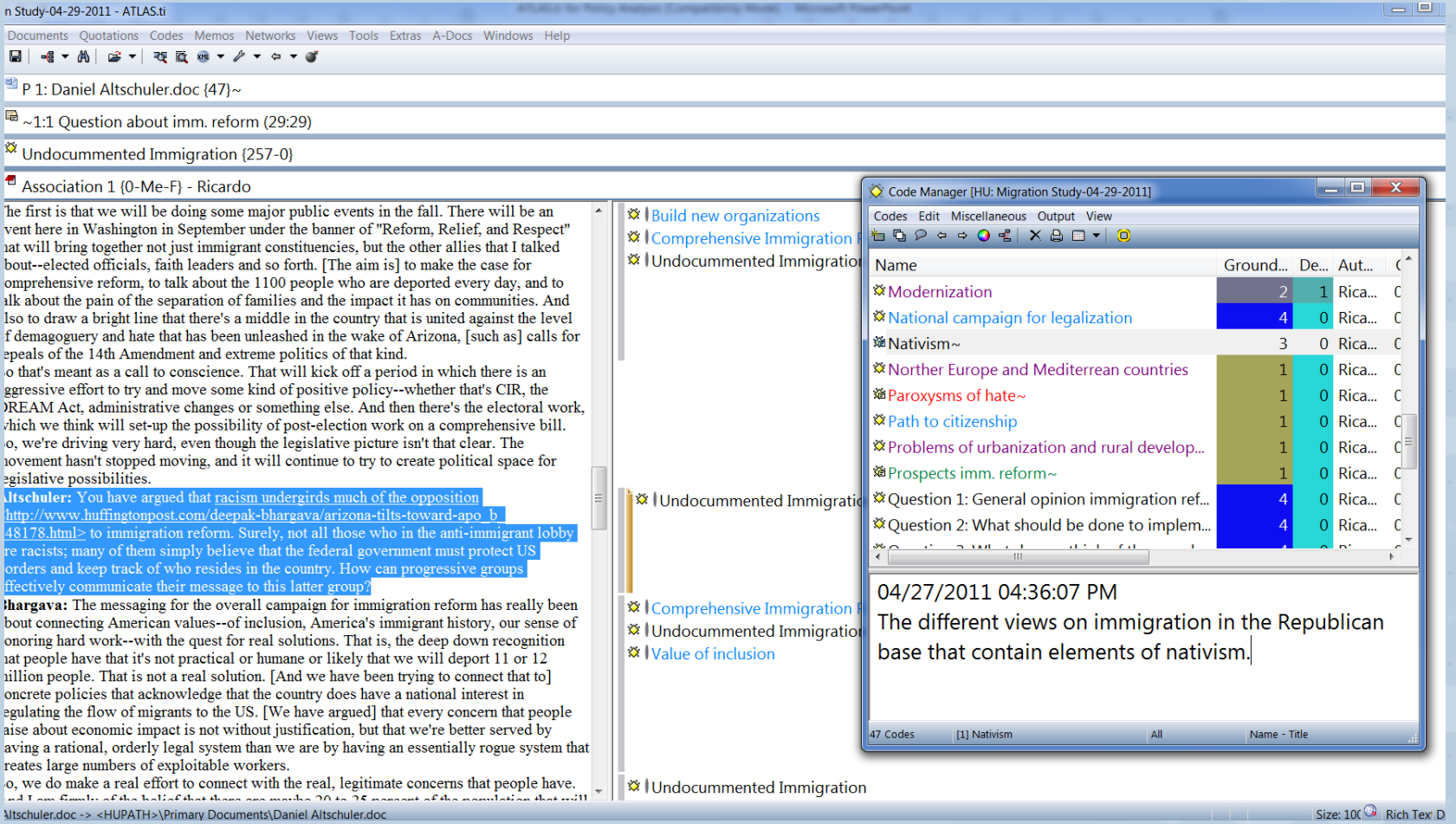

Objects of the HU: Memos

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- Spaces for reflection.

- This is where the analyst brings together what has been discovered, described, and analyzed.

- Memos can be linked to quotations, codes, and other memos.

- A good memo (or a good system of memos) can become the basis for the research report.

- Memos can be grouped together according to shared characteristics.

Memos

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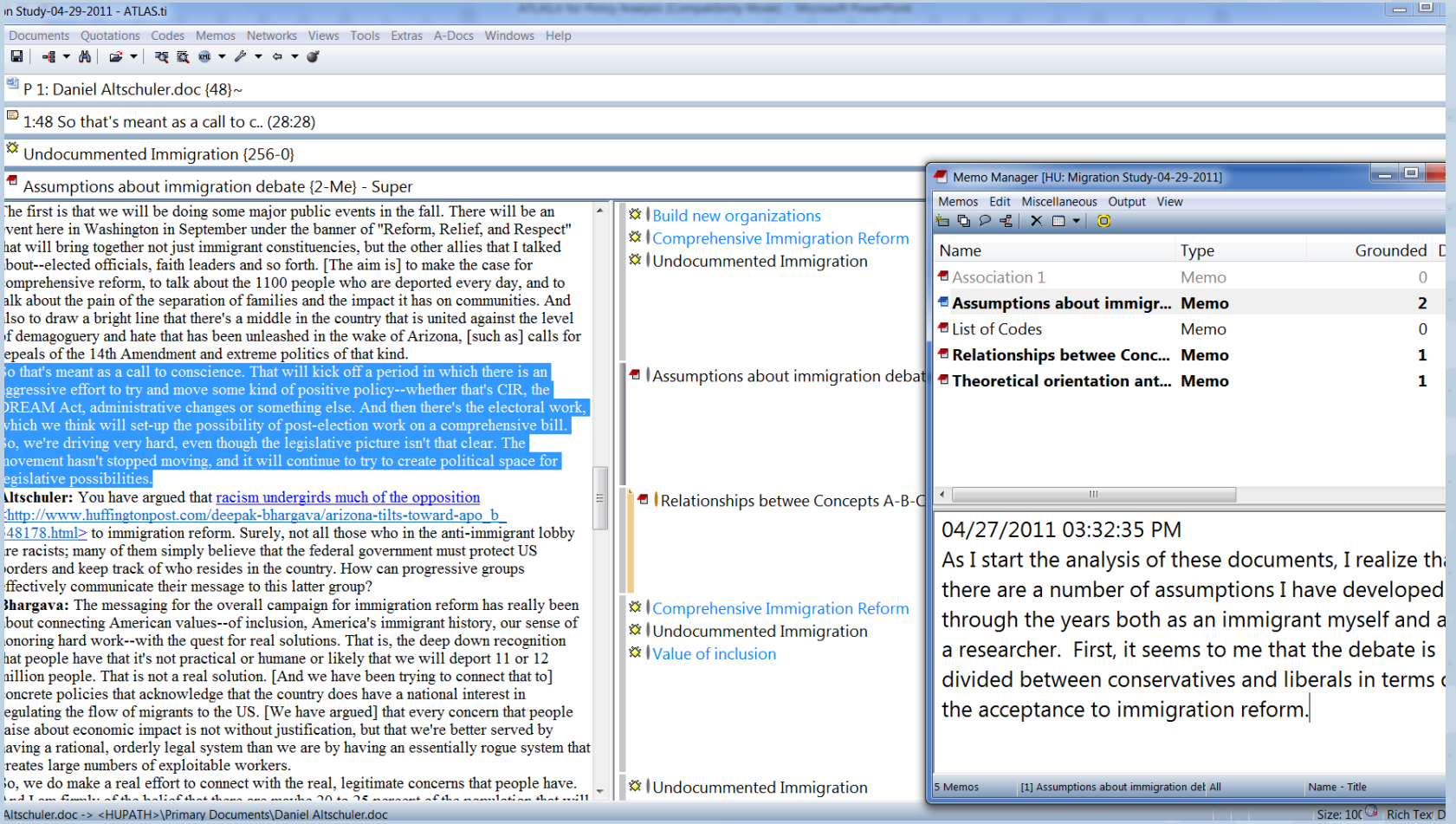

Objects of the HU: Families

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- **Primary document families**: group documents according to specific attributes, such as demographic (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity), sites (e.g., Belfast, London, Berlin), and waves of data collection (e.g, first wave, second wave).

- **Code families:** group codes according to shared conceptual characteristics, such as codes representing the point of view of the participant, codes related to a specific research objective, codes that represent a given hypothesis.

- **Memo families**: group memos according to shared characteristics, such as memos exploring the findings related to a given research objective or hypothesis, memos reflecting upon the method of analysis, or memos analyzing the literature.

Families

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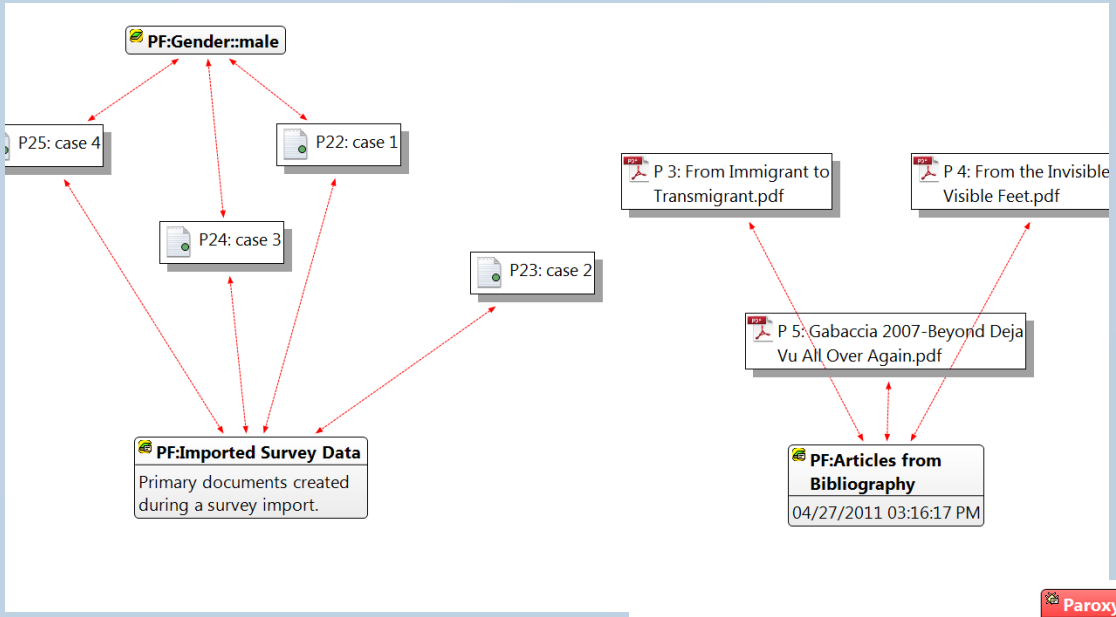

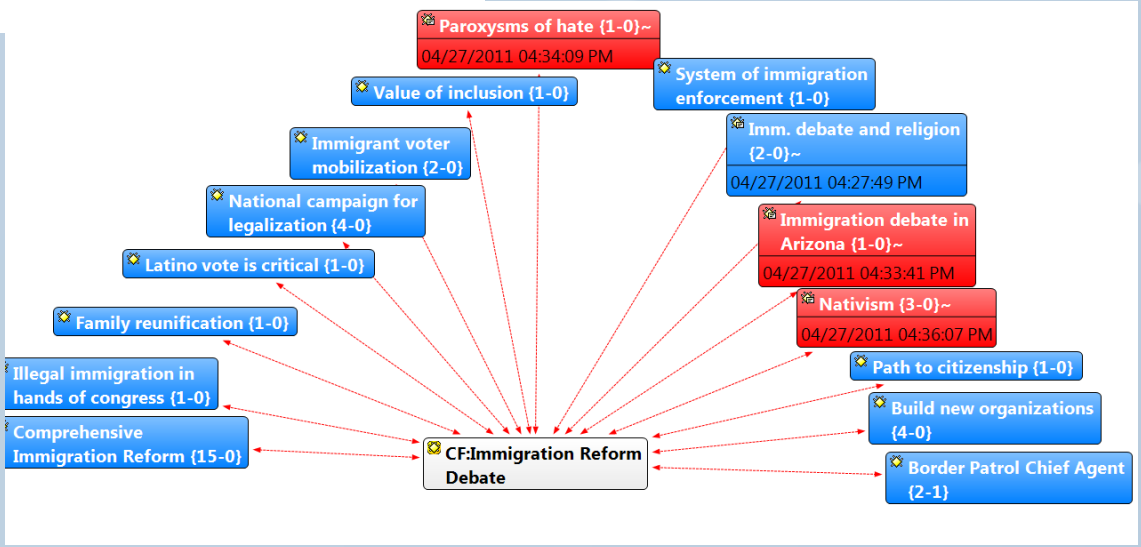

Objects of the HU: Networks

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Graphical representations showing linkages between objects of the HU. Conceptual maps.

- **Weak Link Networks**: Networks that are given by default by the system, such as the network of all the quotations created in a primary document, and all the codes linked to all quotations in that primary document.

- **Strong Link Networks**: Semantic networks connecting codes to codes through a given meaning (e.g., is part of, is a, is associated with), and quotations to quotations also through a given meaning (e.g., contradicts, explains, supports, illustrates).

Networks

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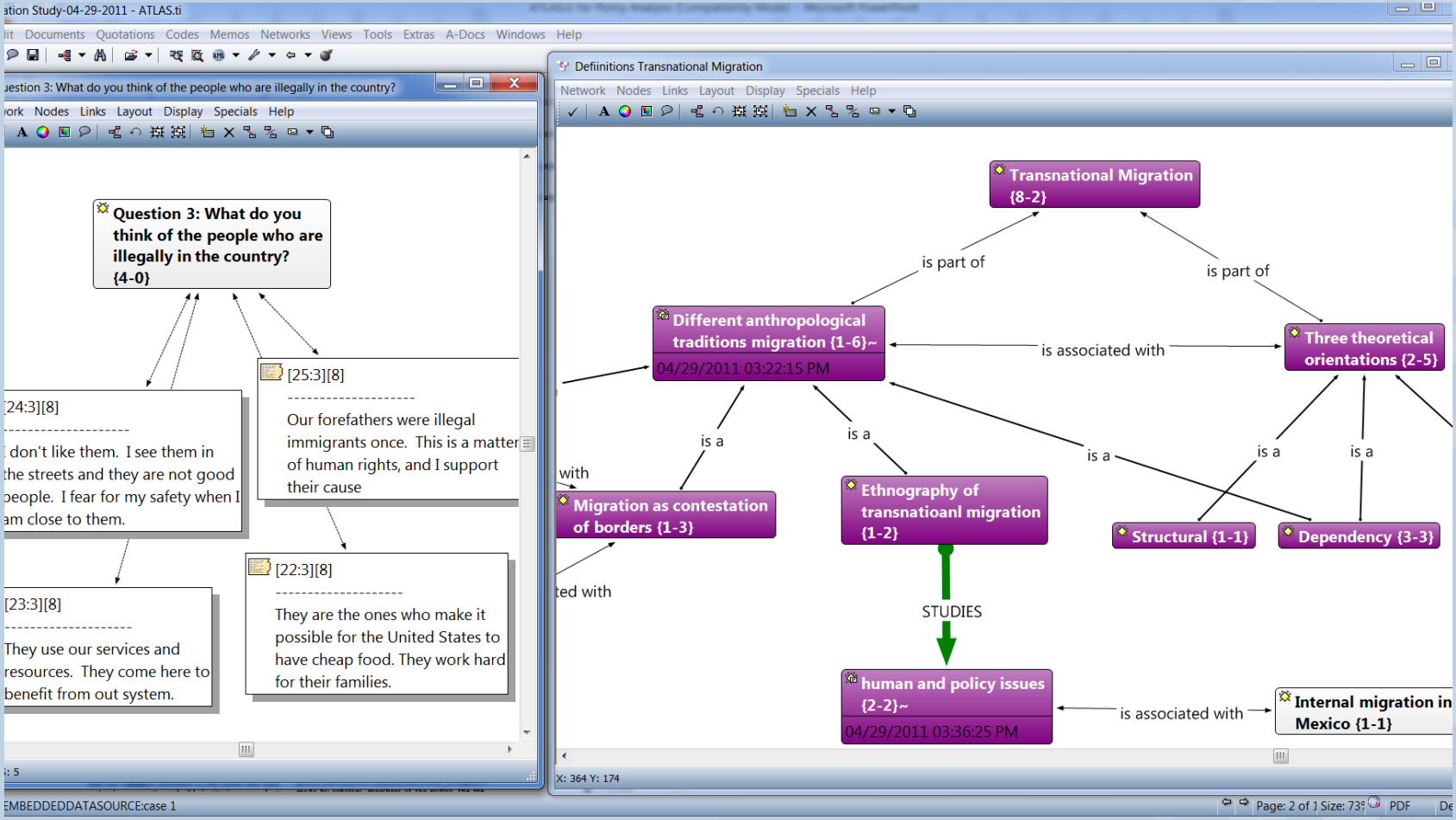

What kinds of questions to ask?

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Examples of research questions that can be asked

• What themes are found in the data? What themes are more/less significant from a quantitative perspective?

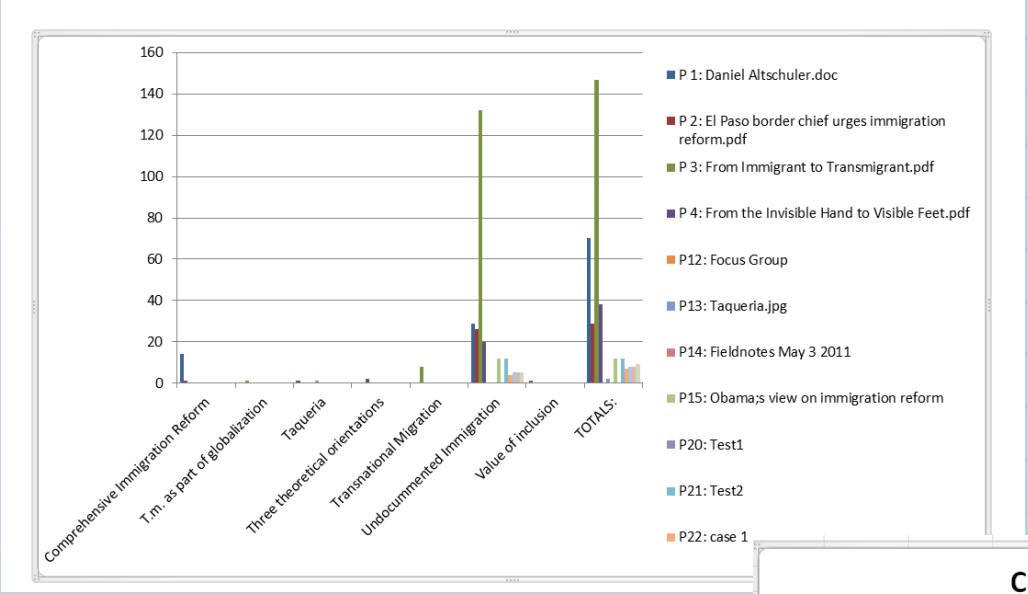
• What is the qualitative signficance of themes? Does it vary accross cases, participants, or waves of data collection?

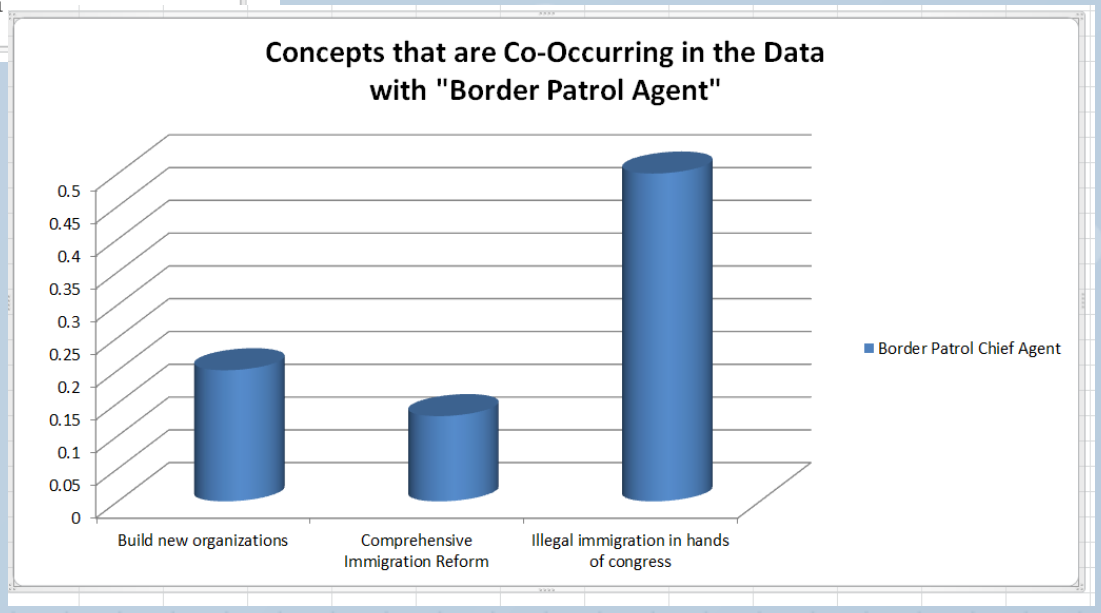
• Whenever study participants talk about Theme X, what else are they talking about?

• What do participants say about Theme X AND/OR Theme Y? Any variation across cases, participants, or waves of data collection?

• How does the literature/theory inform the study‘s findings?

What questions to ask: the co-occurrence explorer





Is team work possible?

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- Each team member can be in charge of coding a specific set of primary documents.

- Each team member can be in charge of exploring a specific conceptual domain.

- No limit in terms of the number of people working in different aspects of the analysis in a team setting.

- Need for strong coordination and transparency in collaboration.

- Inter-rater reliability may be required.

Team Work: Merging HUs

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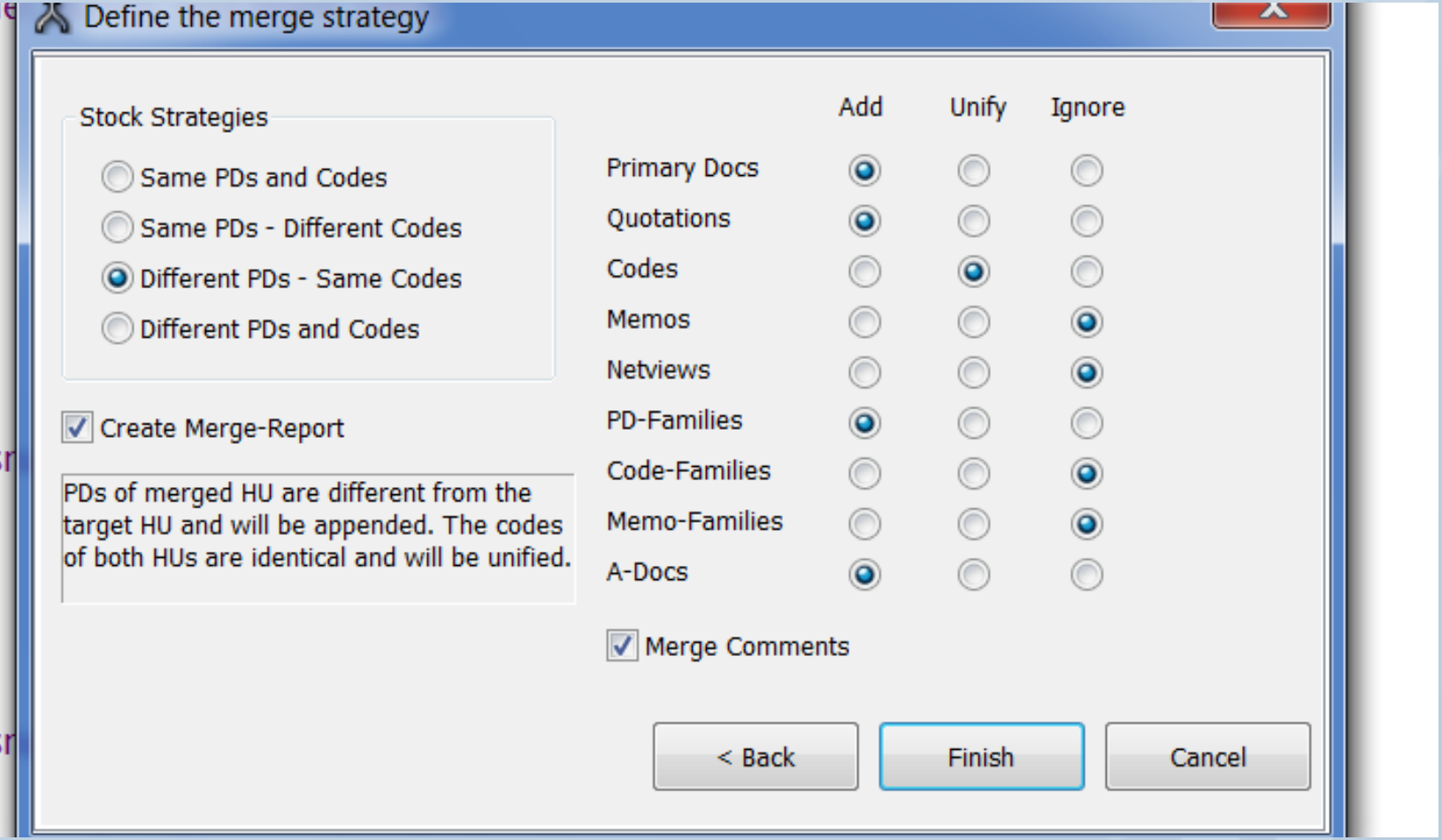

How can data be exported?

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- XML
- HTML
- SPSS
- Excel
- Rich Text Format (RTF)
- PDF
- Graphic formats

Outputs: Different formats

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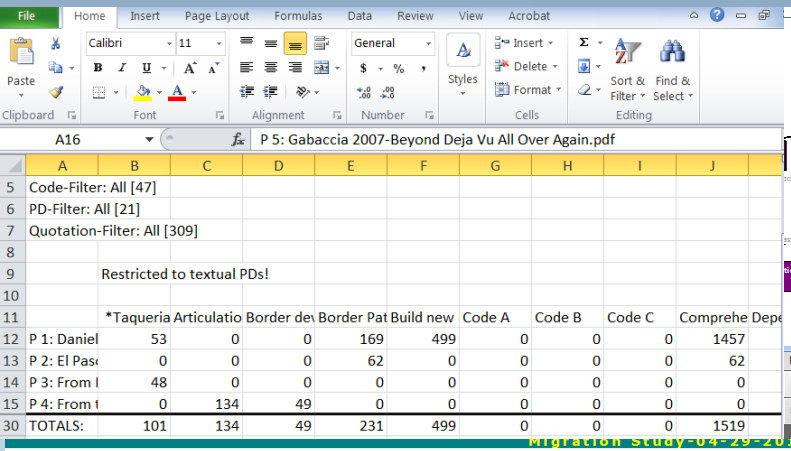

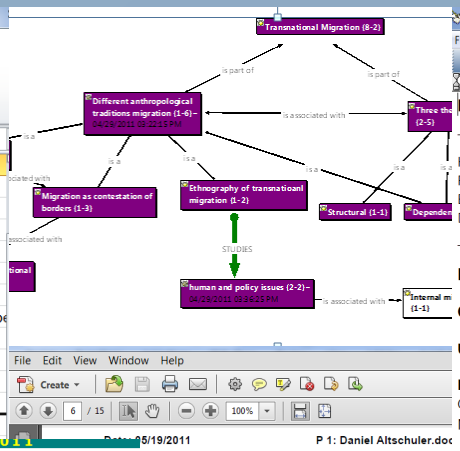

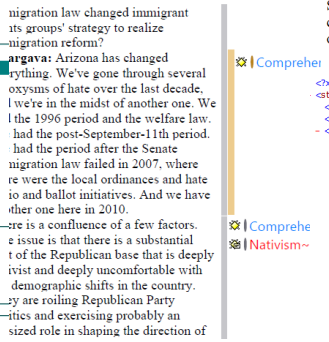

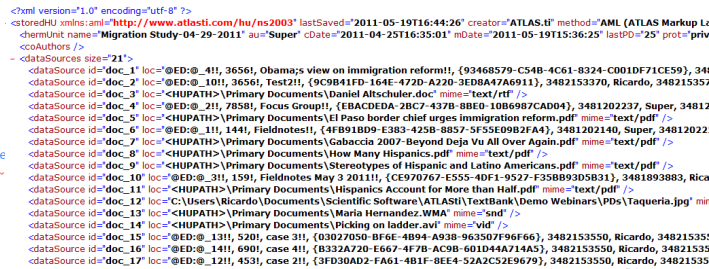

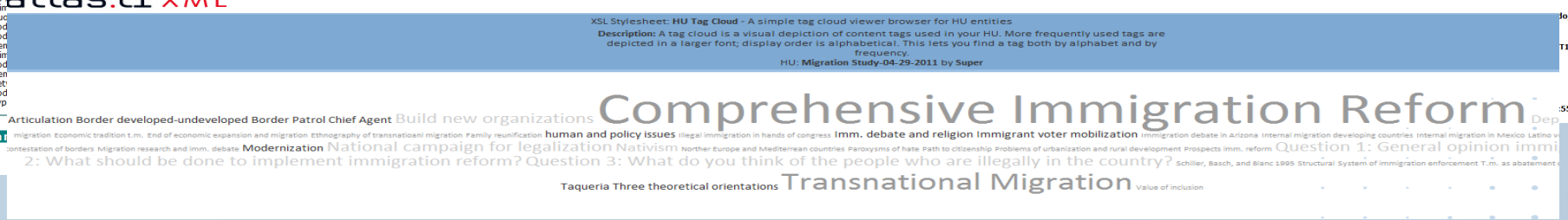

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Thank you!

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