

A SANDWICH BY ANY OTHER NAME...

By Ivette Flores, May 2018

- **Overview.** My friends and I play this game: What is a sandwich? In which we try to create logical arguments for why one outlandish thing or another is in reality nothing but a sandwich. Some arguments work better than others, a burger is a sandwich but two rocks with peanut butter in between is not a sandwich. After taking this class, I realized that the bigger discovery was not whether something was or was not a sandwich, it was the arguments we used to quantify our latest “sandwich” discovery.

That is what I am organizing, the cultural, individual, and institutional arguments (categories) utilized to create a single cohesive argument.

- **What Is Being Organized?** Not sandwiches! Once I realized that what I was organizing was not the various object that could be contrived as sandwiches ^[Figure 1] but the various arguments for what constituted a sandwich, I saw that what I wanted to look at and examine was compressed in the lines in between sandwiches and the various things that could be sandwiches. I tackled cultural categories first and interviewed various friends, which led to a completely different taxonomy that I the one I had initially created. ^[Figure 2] This new taxonomy branched into cultural categories instead of straight into examples, it also allowed me to see a pattern emerge. In many cases, rather than there being actual names for foods thought of as sandwiches a pattern that emerged was that of the “bread with stuff in it” instead of an official name. This was definitely a broader definition than I expected but it made a lot of sense since the word sandwich is a word that only exists in English.

Moving from cultural to institutional categories, I saw many of the same patterns emerging and I decided that in this instance cultural categories and individual categories blended together. In describing what a sandwich was to them, people drew not only on their cultural knowledge but also their individual experiences with food both at home and at restaurants.

This led me to institutional categories for sandwiches, which were surprisingly hard to find, but there do exist formal rulings on what constitutes a sandwich. In California, a hot dog is considered a sandwich (but it is not considered a meal) ^[1], in New York practically everything is a sandwich ^[2], but in Massachusetts a burrito is not a sandwich ^[3]. In this instance, institutional categories cohesively end up being a lot more of a restrictive and volatile definition than cultural categories, mostly due to various interests (corporations, state taxes, etc.) hinging on the definition and in this case what is and is not a sandwich is critically important.

- **Why Is It Being Organized?** For fun! Well for fun and an attempt at creating the end all be all process for determining whether something is a sandwich. My goal is to find create a composite of all the various arguments for sandwich declaration and emerge with a

unified concept for what a sandwich is and how it fits into various cultural, individual, and institutional categories.

- **How Much Is It Being Organized?** This organizational system is incomplete because I drew on upon my own friend group in order to conduct the research regarding the cultural and individual category. This in no way encompasses every single culture, future improvements would involve potentially sending out a survey in order to get a larger sample size.

Regarding the institution categories, time constraints prevented me from gathering information about sandwiches regarding, for example, all fifty states. Future improvements would involve scouring more government resources for mentions of sandwich rulings and stipulations.

However, I feel like splitting the arguments into cultural and institutional categories is worth sticking to as it encompasses two ends of the spectrum. On one end you have cultural categories that dictate not only generational preferences but also individual opinions and on the other you have institutional categories that encompass community and business interests which are subject to continual and ongoing change.

- **When Is It Being Organized?** One half of this organizational system is a one time organizing task, cultural categories are passed down over time and are not subject to huge amounts of change over a long period of time. The other half, the institutional arguments, are more volatile and would require more maintenance to make sure that any new rulings do not go unnoticed, what could be a sandwich in California one month might be ruled the opposite in the next due to ever-changing role of government.
- **Who (or What) is Organizing It?** The author, that would be me, is doing the organizing. It is very informal and subject to the constraints of both my sample size and ability to access and skim through official documents for anything related to sandwiches.
- **Other Considerations.** This organization of sandwich arguments, in the end, was purely for fun and self serving. Here's to winning any and all future sandwich arguments (at least in New York since almost everything is considered a sandwich there.)
- **Notes:** The following notes relate to this case study.
 1. BTLG Table of Contents > Sales and Use Tax Law > Chapter 4 > Section 6359. <http://www.boe.ca.gov/lawguides/business/current/btlg/voll/sutl/6359.html>
 2. White City Shopping Center, LP, Plaintiff, v. P.R. Restaurants, L.L.C., Defendants. <http://madisonian.net/downloads/sandwiches/affidavit1.pdf>
 3. Tax Bulletin Sales and Use Tax TB-ST-835 April 13, 2011. https://www.tax.ny.gov/pdf/tg_bulletins/sales/b11_835s.pdf

Figure 1.

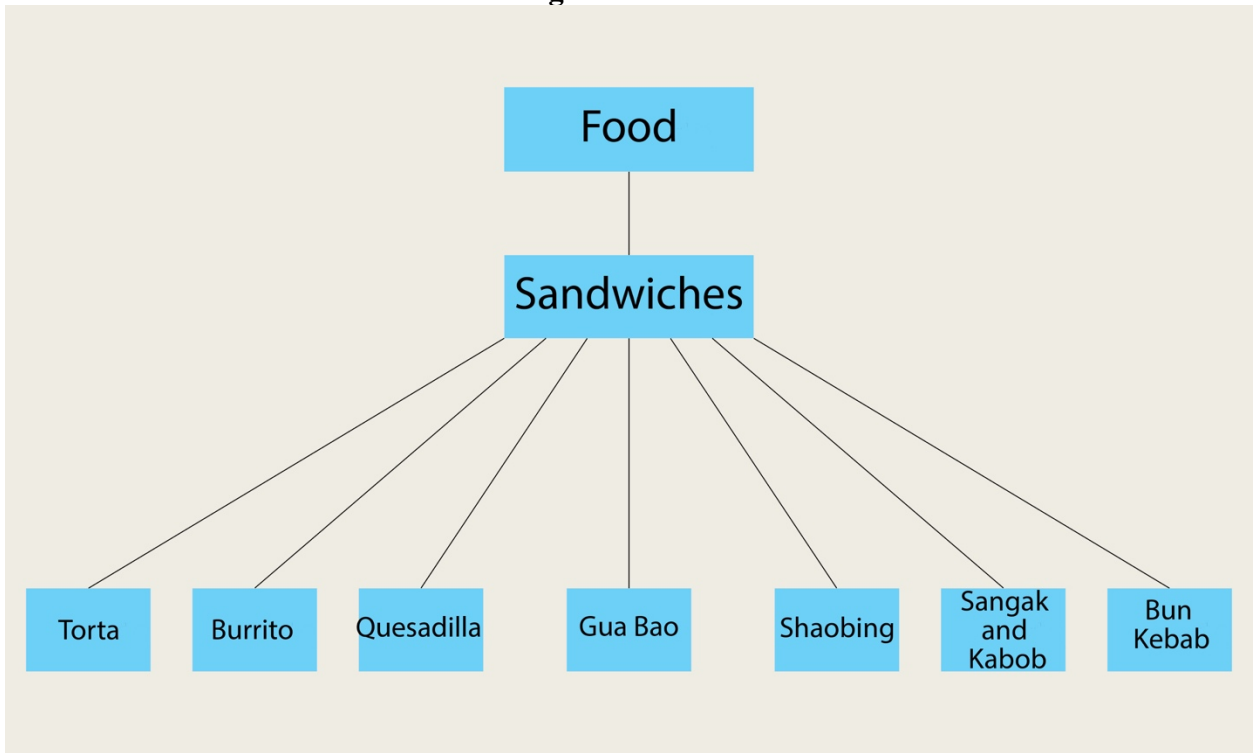


Figure 2.

