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Gender symbolism and usage expectations for five basic food groups are examined; milk, eggs, fruit, vegetables, and meat. All possible comparisons are given to 48 respondents. For each paired comparison, the respondent is asked which item is masculine, which is feminine, and why.

The data yield the anticipated femininity hierarch, with milk being the most feminine (least masculine), then eggs, then fruit, then vegetables and mean being the most masculine (least feminine).

The qualitative data was coded and analyzed thematically. Usage expectations emerged from the qualitative data that milk and eggs and meat are for male consumption and fruit and vegetables are for female consumption. There is not a simple mapping then of masculine products to male consumption or vice versa. The qualitative data is examined to understand the drivers, and a symbolic, feminist interpretation emerges.

Men symbolically dominate and totemically gather strength from the feminine sphere through oral incorporation of female's reproductive capabilities. Men symbolically dominate and totemically gather strength from the animal sphere through oral incorporation and animal muscle. Women are expected to rely more on the "fruits" of "mother" earth. These gender expectations also have the net effect of providing men with the more nutritionally dense foods, a phenomenon found in many male dominant cultures.