

Gendered Perceptions of Date Rape: Is Sex an Exchangeable Commodity?

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Introduction

- Previous research has shown that 15% of female college students have been raped, 85% of the victims were acquainted with their attacker, and 57% of the assaults occurred while on a date.
- Rape is one of the only crimes where the victim's behavior influences the amount of blame attached to the perpetrator.
- The existence of a prior relationship between the victim and the perpetrator lessens the perceived seriousness of the crime.
- The high incidence of victim blame and the differences in opinion about whether a sexual act between acquaintances is considered rape, point to the importance of understanding observers' perceptions of date rape.

Theme

- The hypothesis and central theme of this research paper was focused around the question of whether men, compared to women, view sex as a commodity that can be obtained in exchange for other goods and services.

Socialization Theories

- The theory of socialization has sought to explain these perceived differences in terms of learned sex role expectations, false learned beliefs about date rape (myths), and social exchange theory.
 - Learned sex role expectations suggest that men and women have been socialized to act along proscribed lines during sexual encounters.
 - Ex. A woman may be expected to refuse her partner's sexual advances initially and to accept them later after repeated pressure from him.
 - Rape myths shift the blame for rape onto the victim and excuse the perpetrator.
 - Ex. Victim masochism: "She enjoys/wants it"
 - Ex. Victim Precipitation: "She asks for it/deserves it"
 - Ex. Male sexuality: "If he can't control his sexual urges, than it is her responsibility not to provoke him"
 - Social exchange theory states that social behavior is an exchange of goods, material and non-material goods. For the amount a person gives, they expect the same amount in return.

Quid Pro Quo

- This study sought to determine whether a *quid pro quo* exchange altered perceptions of date-rape differently for men and women
- Specifically, I applied this concept by examining whether providing the service of cooking dinner altered empathy and blame for the victim and perpetrator in men and women participants
 - The idea that a female owes the male a sexual favor in return for his provided service of cooking dinner

Current Study

- In this study, I compared three different service exchanges
 - A service provided by the male
(Male cooks dinner for the female)
 - A service provided by the female
(Female cooks dinner for the male)
 - One in which no service is provided
(Take-out dinner is shared)

Scenarios

Scenario 1: Jim Provides the Service (Cooking Dinner)

Jim and Susan just started dating. On their third date, *Jim offered to cook Susan dinner* at his apartment. Jim and Susan were having a great time together and made good conversation during dinner. Since neither of them had to work the next day Susan decided to stay awhile after dinner. Jim gave her a tour that ended in his bedroom. He asked Susan to test out his mattress and pushed her down onto the bed. Susan resisted but intercourse followed.

Scenario 2: Susan Provides the Service (Cooking Dinner)

Jim and Susan just started dating. On their third date, *Susan offered to cook Jim dinner* at his apartment. Jim and Susan were having a great time together and made good conversation during dinner. Since neither of them had to work the next day Susan decided to stay awhile after dinner. Jim gave her a tour that ended in his bedroom. He asked Susan to test out his mattress and pushed her down onto the bed. Susan resisted but intercourse followed.

Scenario 3: Service is Shared (Take-out Dinner is split)

Jim and Susan just started dating. On their third date, *Jim and Susan split take-out* and brought it back to Jim's apartment to eat. Jim and Susan were having a great time together and made good conversation during dinner. Since neither of them had to work the next day Susan decided to stay awhile after dinner. Jim gave her a tour that ended in his bedroom. He asked Susan to test out his mattress and pushed her down onto the bed. Susan resisted but intercourse followed.

Methodology

- Participants were provided a questionnaire with five scenarios depicting conflict situations where it was questionable who the responsible individual was
- Twelve different versions of the questionnaire that contained different orders of the scenarios were distributed
- The date rape scenario, the scenario being studied, always remained in the second position on each version of the scenarios
- Participants were only given one version of the date rape scenario
- After participants read the scenarios, they were asked to answer questions about the two individuals depicted in the scenario
- Participants were given a second sheet of paper with one version of the date rape scenario, corresponding to the version they had on the first part of the questionnaire where they were asked, in a written response, about how they thought each individual in the scenario felt about the incident that occurred in the scenario

Hypotheses

- 1) When presented with an ambiguous scenario describing a forced sexual interaction, women would be more sympathetic to the victim and more blaming of the perpetrator than would men – and women more likely to view the incident as a date rape
- 2) Men would be more likely to blame the victim when the male provided the service (women's perceptions would be unaffected to any service exchange)

Preambles

Composite Variable 1: Jim's Personal Attributes

What kind of person do you think Jim is?

Irresponsible	1	2	3	4	5	6	Responsible
Weak	1	2	3	4	5	6	Strong
Unintelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	Intelligent

Composite Variable 2: Susan's Personal Attributes

What kind of person do you think Susan is?

Irresponsible	1	2	3	4	5	6	Responsible
Weak	1	2	3	4	5	6	Strong
Unintelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	Intelligent

Composite Variable 3: Blame and Empathy

To what degree are you sympathetic with Jim's feelings?

Low Sympathy	1	2	3	4	5	6	High Sympathy
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How much do you blame Jim for what happened in this scenario?

Low	1	2	3	4	5	6	High
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To what degree are you sympathetic with Jim's feelings?

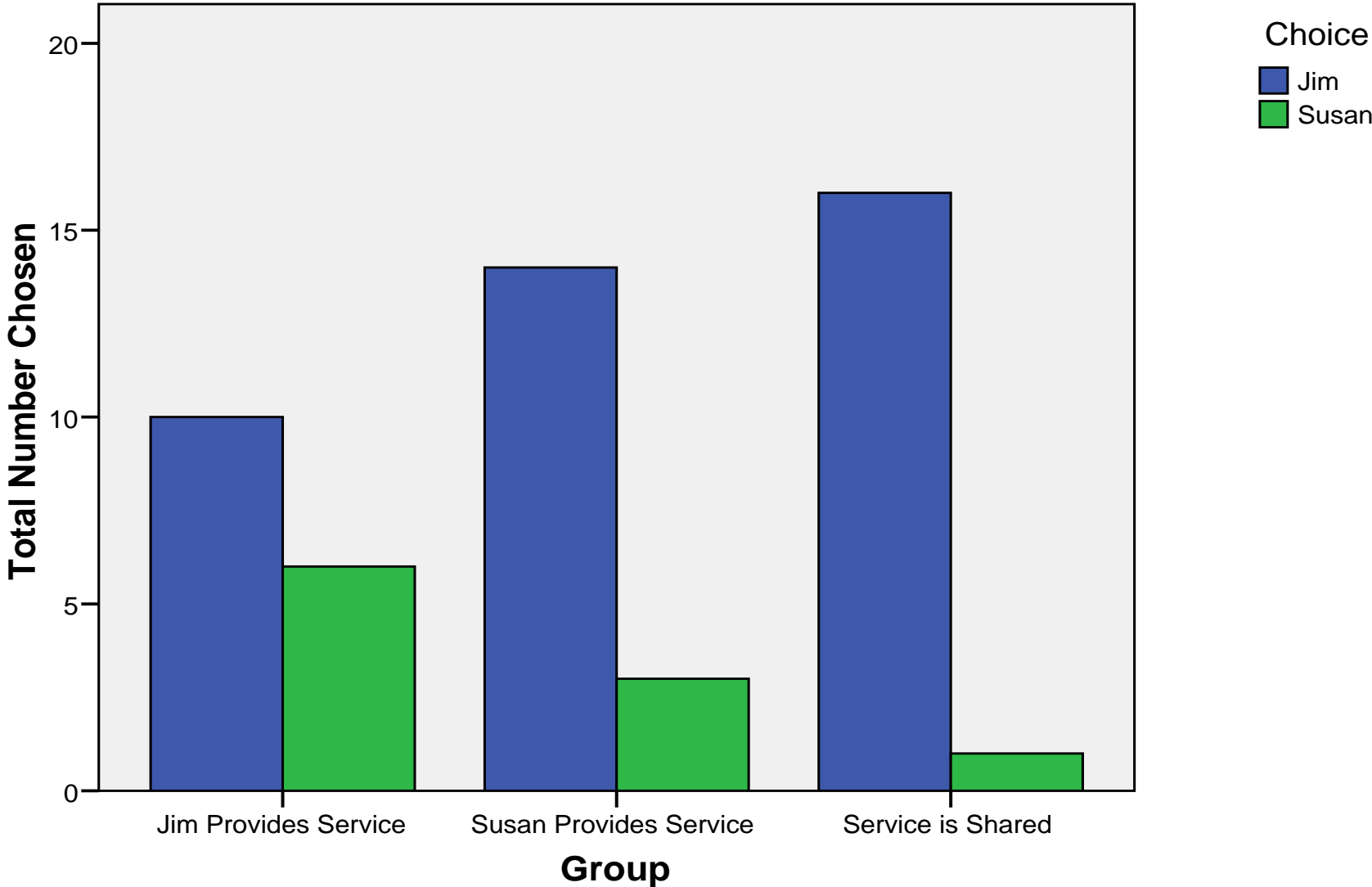
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How much do you blame Jim for what happened in this scenario?

Low	1	2	3	4	5	6	High
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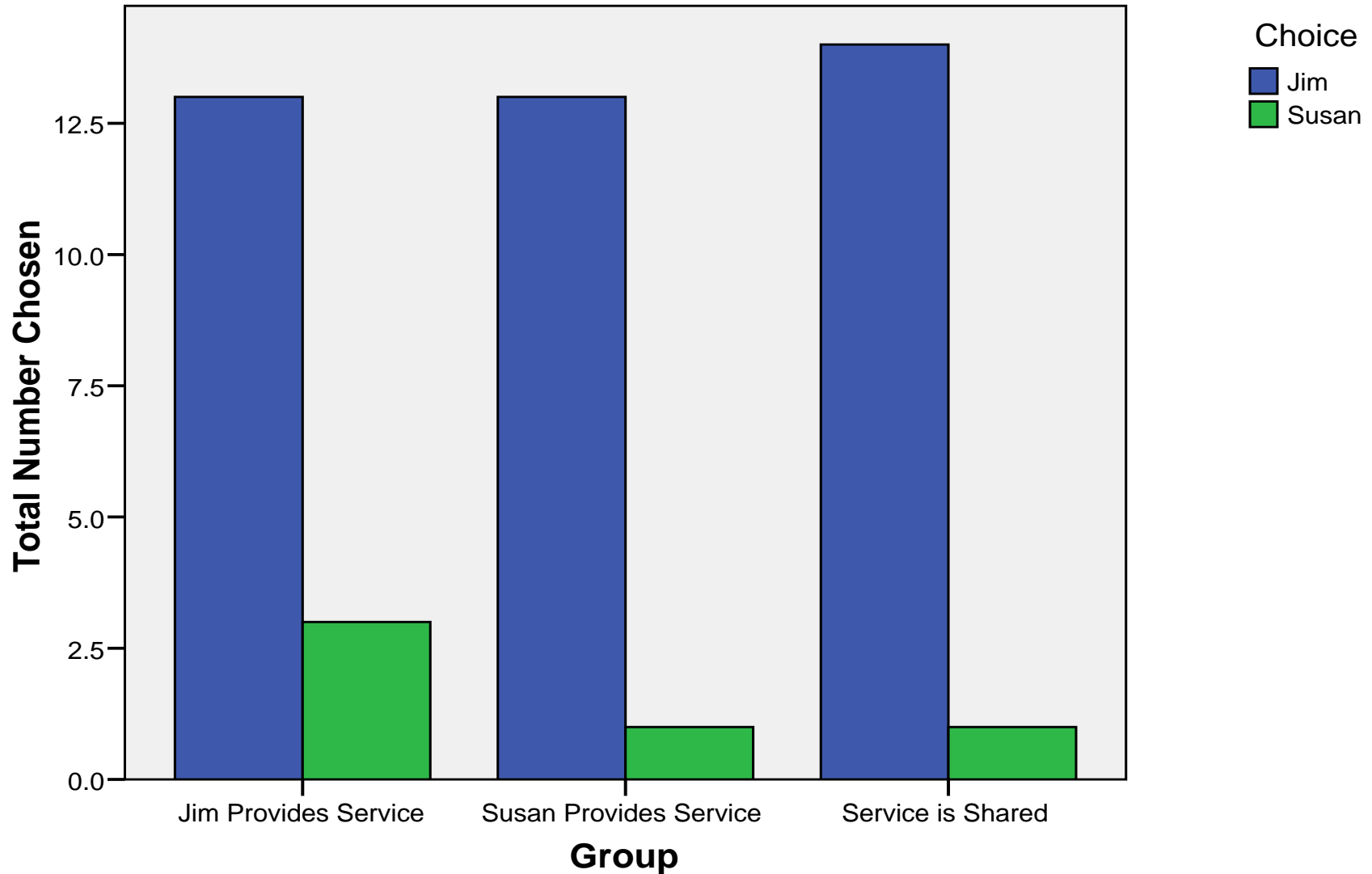
Frequency of Choice Allocating Blame to Jim or Susan in relation to group (service-provided) by Men

Gender: male

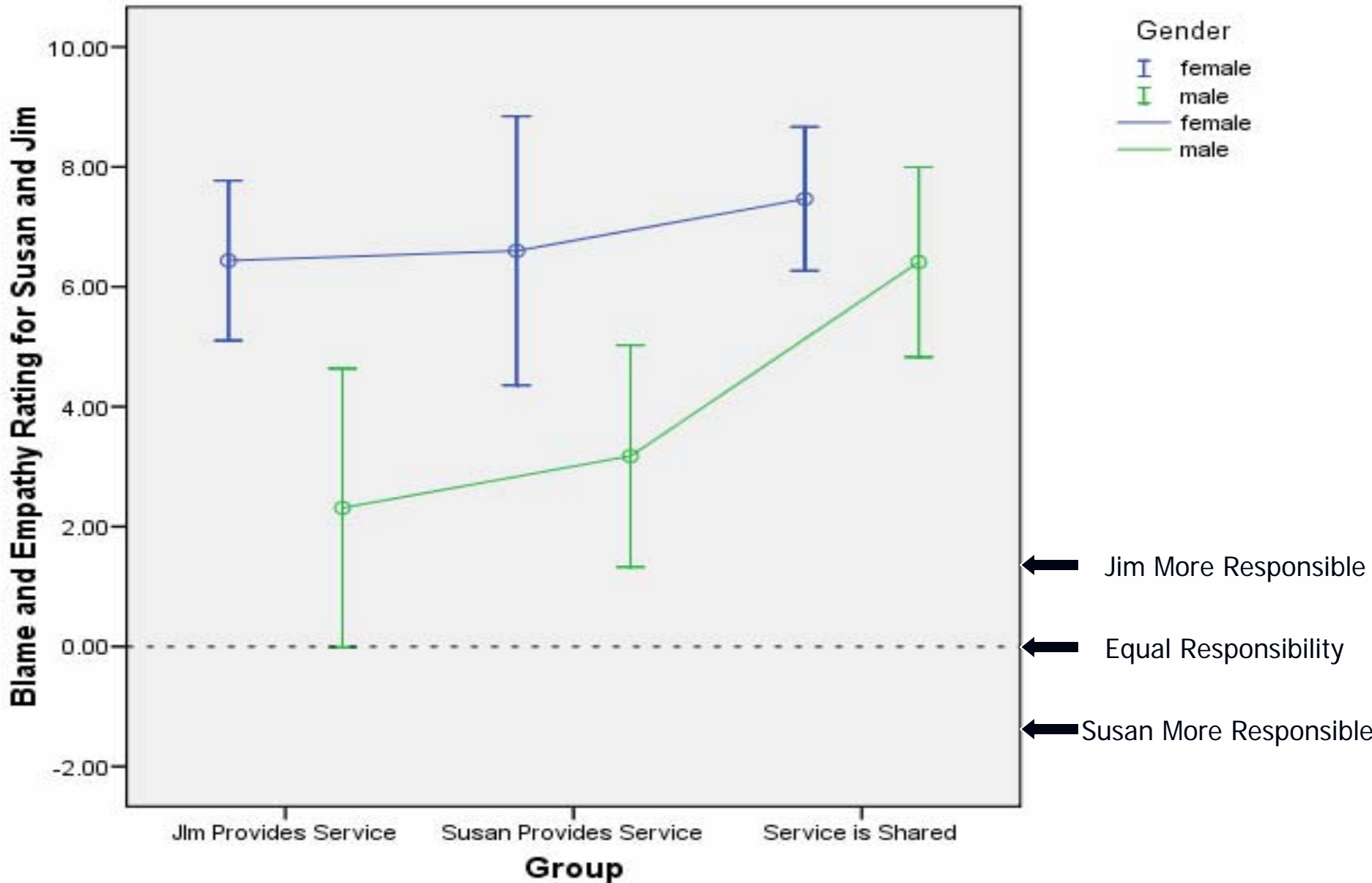


Frequency of Choice Allocating Blame to Jim or Susan in Relation to Group (service-provided) by Women

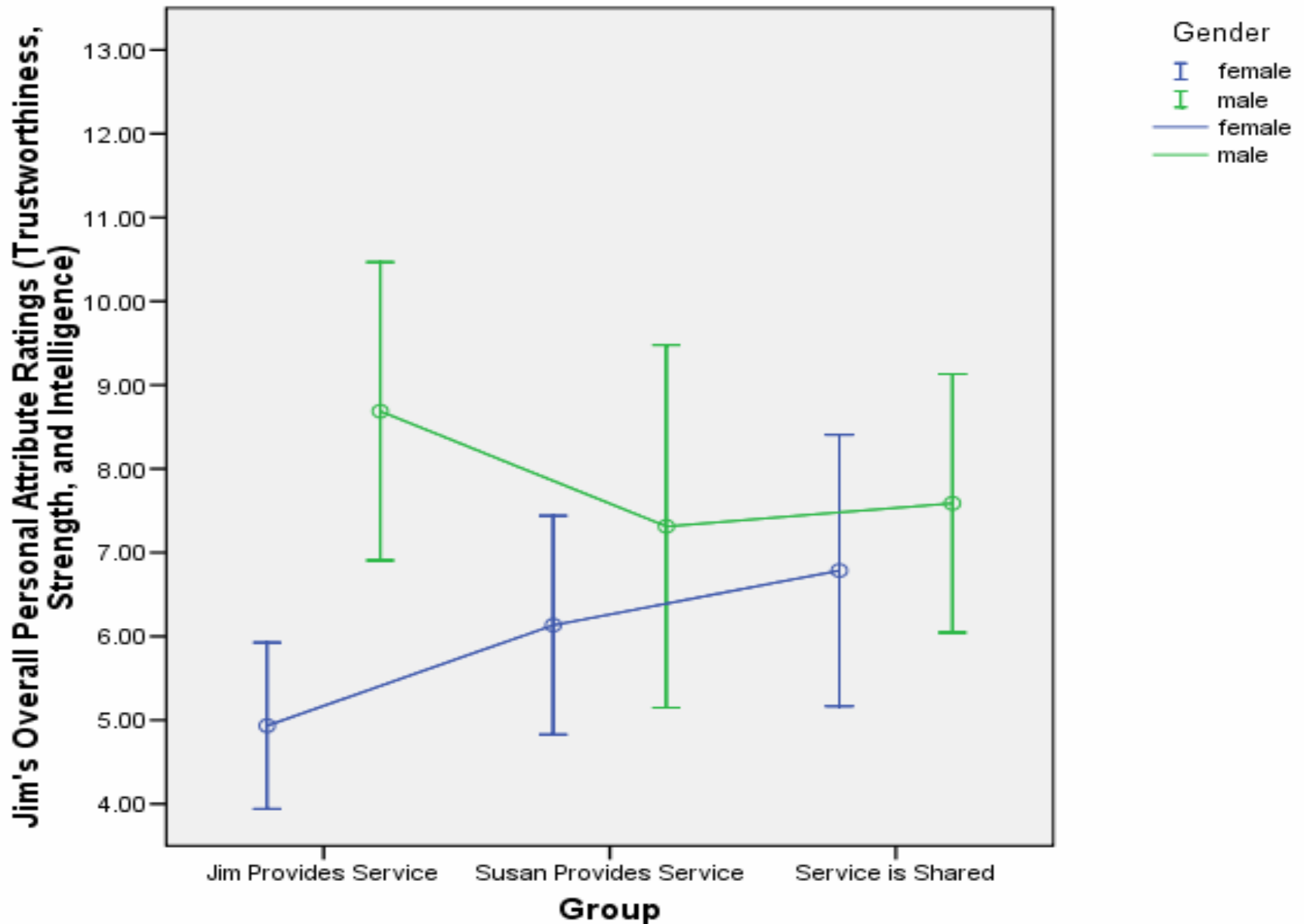
Gender: female



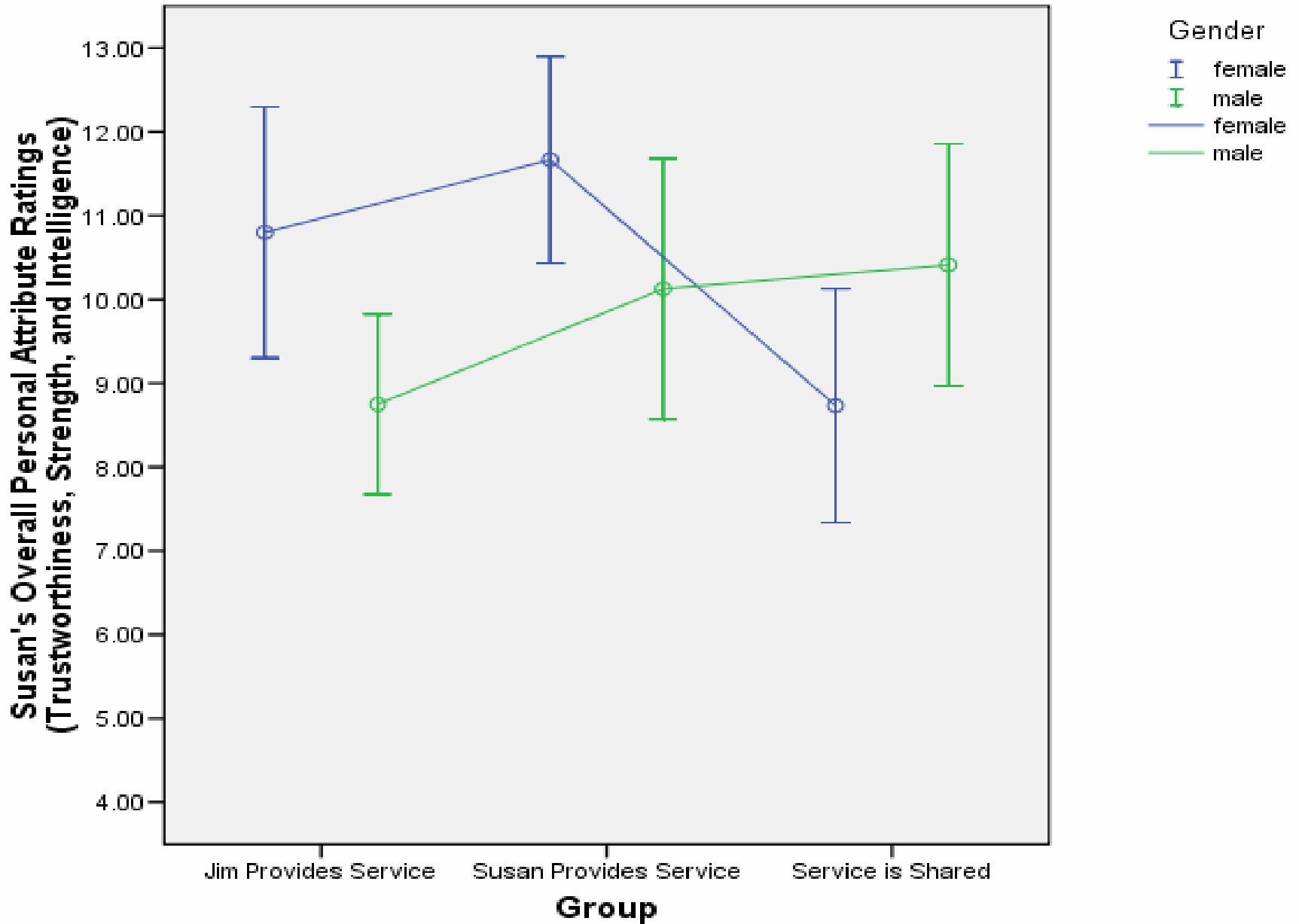
Responsibility for Sexual Encounters in Relation to who Provides the Service



Ratings on Jim's Overall Personal Attributes in Relation to who Provides the Service of Cooking Dinner



Ratings on Susan's Overall Personal Attributes in Relation to who Provides the Service of Cooking Dinner



Qualitative Analysis: Susan

3 most prevalent themes stated by *female participants* regarding *Susan's feelings* about the incident

1. Susan was forced, helpless, weak, violated, afraid

Ex. "I believe Susan felt violated, she was forced and raped. Going into a bedroom does not give an invitation" – Female, age 19

Ex. "She felt horrible, taken advantage of, and out of control in her element. She felt hopeless and weak like she couldn't have done anything, regret, dirty, molested, and broken" – Female, age 19

2. Susan feels mad at herself, blames herself, feels guilty, feels like its her fault

Ex. "Susan might have felt as though it was her fault because she stayed longer. She didn't stop it from happening" – Female, age 18

Ex. "Susan felt violated and stupid – and somehow felt it was her fault" – Female, age 19

3. Susan was mad, disgusted, upset

Ex. "She did not expect to be attacked on their date. Afterward, she probably felt shame, anger, and frustration" – Female, age 19

Ex. "Susan was scared, pissed, upset, and she probably felt hatred" –Female, age 18

3 most prevalent themes stated by *male participants* regarding *Susan's feelings* about the incident

1. Susan was forced, helpless, weak, violated, afraid

Ex. "She felt helpless and possibly overpowered by Jim" – Male, age 22

Ex. "Susan felt used and dirty. She had sex forced on her and no woman wants that" – Male, age 19

2. Susan was mad, disgusted, upset

Ex. "She was mad, disgusted, and rage against Jim for being such a weak and cowardly person" – Male, age 19

Ex. "Susan was incredibly upset by it. Her rights were violated in such a personal way. It must have shaken her foundation" – Male, age 20

3. Susan really wanted to have sex

Ex. "Susan wanted to resist until she realized she wanted to have sex. If she really didn't want to, all she had to say was "no." I think she allowed it to happen and wanted it to" – Male, age 18

Ex. "She accepted her desires and followed along with it" – Male, age 18

Qualitative Analysis: Jim

3 most prevalent themes stated by *female participants* regarding *Jim's feelings* about the incident

1. Jim didn't think about it, no regrets, didn't care

Ex. "I don't expect him to feel much by means of remorse; if he committed that kind of violent act his mentality is not likely one that has anything to do with guilt. He probably doesn't even recognize what he did as rape" – Female, age 18

Ex. "Jim is a selfish, stupid man who has no concern for others feelings" – Female, age 19

2. Jim felt powerful, in control

Ex. "Jim probably felt powerful and 'manly' to violate her trust and disregard her feelings by forcing her to have sex" – Female, age 18

Ex. "Jim felt powerful and excited because of the control he had" – Female, age 19

3. Jim waited long enough, got what he wanted

Ex. "Jim was the dominating person. He was probably pleased the event took place and he received what he wanted" – Female, age 19

4. Jim feels proud, happy, excited, pleased, good

Ex. "He felt good that he had her upstairs, he was just hoping that he could get a piece of ass" – Female, age 19

3 most prevalent themes stated by *male participants* regarding *Jim's feelings* about the incident

1. Jim feels proud, happy, excited, pleased, good

Ex. "Jim felt satisfied and glad that he got another notch on his belt" – Male, age 19

Ex. "He was probably excited to have her over and enjoyed the situation" – Male, age 18

2. Jim didn't think about it, no regrets, didn't care

Ex. "Jim probably didn't think about the incident. They had sex – 'nuff said" – Male, age 19

Ex. "He has no regrets. If he has the guts to do it he won't feel guilty like an assassin" – Male, age 19

3. Jim waited long enough, got what he wanted

Ex. "Jim probably felt like a 'man' because he was able to get what he wanted through force" – Male,

Discussion: Social Exchange Theory

- It was hypothesized that, due to social exchange theory, when Jim cooked dinner for Susan, he would expect something in return
 - This is partially consistent with the findings, when Jim provided the service of cooking dinner, both male and female participants rated Susan the lowest
 - This suggests that both men and women may view sex as an exchangeable commodity
 - However, both men and women rated Susan lower when she cooked dinner as well
 - This suggests that there is more going on here than simply quid pro quo

Additional Theme

- The fact that participants had the most empathy for Susan in the scenario where the service was shared and were more often to label this situation as “rape,” demonstrates the increasing awareness and decreasing acceptance for the crime of date rape
- Participants written responses, rather than express the notion that Susan “owed” Jim for the service, demonstrated that they viewed the service as a signal of Jim and Susan’s intent
 - Both male and female participants stated that Susan misread Jim’s signals, therefore placing more of the blame onto Susan
 - Both male and female participants felt that Susan miscommunicated her intentions, again more victim blame

