

**Culture, Self-Construal and Sexual Assertiveness; a Mediation Analysis Among Dutch
and Greek Women**

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Abstract

Are women from collectivist cultures, like the Greek culture, more sexually assertive than women from individualist cultures, like the Dutch culture? Is this because women from collectivist cultures have a more interconnected and less independent self than women from individualist cultures, meaning a stronger interdependent and a weaker independent self-construal? The present study was the first to examine these questions. The responses of 57 Greek and 65 Dutch women (median age 25-33) were included in a mediation analysis in PROCESS MACRO. Surprisingly, Greek women reported higher levels of sexual assertiveness than Dutch women. The indirect effect of culture on sexual assertiveness through interdependent self-construal was significant but inconsistent with the direct; Greek women reported a stronger interdependent self-construal than Dutch women, which was negatively associated with sexual assertiveness. Independent self-construal was not a significant mediator as it was associated with higher levels of sexual assertiveness but not with culture. Differences in collectivism-individualism between the Greek and Dutch cultures and those previously studied, along with the timing of the data collection in Greece, might account for the findings. The present study extends knowledge on sexual assertiveness, informs interventions aiming to enhance it, and provides valuable directions to future cross-cultural research.

Keywords: sexual assertiveness, culture, collectivist, individualist, interdependent self-construal, interdependent self-construal, Dutch women, Greek women

There is critical evidence that sexual assertiveness, a term used to describe a decisive, confident, and straightforward way of communicating about sex with one's partner, is associated with positive sexual outcomes for women (Alvarado et al., 2020). In particular, it can function as a protective factor against negative and unsafe sexual experiences, such as non-violent sexual coercion and unprotected sex (Noar et al., 2006; Testa & Dermen, 1997). Moreover, sexual assertiveness can function as an effective means for women to achieve sexual pleasure and higher orgasm frequency (Morokoff et al., 1997; Hurlbert, 1991; Greene & Faulkner, 2005). Considering the low levels of sexual satisfaction and the high instances of sexual coercion and unsafe vaginal sex among women, investigating factors that might hinder or enhance sexual assertiveness is critical (Kontula & Miettinen, 2016; Loshek & Terrel, 2015). Scholars have postulated that one such factor is the culture where a woman lives, with individualist cultures creating a favorable and collectivist an unfavorable context for sexual assertiveness among women (Alvarado et al., 2020). The present study is the first to investigate this claim empirically; it compares women from a collectivist to women from an individualist culture in sexual assertiveness. Furthermore, it takes the first step in exploring the underlying mechanisms that might connect culture (collectivist vs. individualist) to sexual assertiveness.

Scholars have described sexual assertiveness as a negotiation strategy for achieving sexual goals and well-being (Morokoff et al., 1997). Its conceptualization presupposes the endorsement of a woman's fundamental right to sexual autonomy, which she can exercise through active requests for desired sexual contact and rejections of unwanted or risky sexual initiations (Morokoff et al., 1997). Thus, being sexually assertive presupposes open communication about sex in an active, direct and verbal way (Loshek & Terrel, 2015). Inviting or avoiding body language, such as smiling or avoiding (eye) contact, are argued to be more implicit and thus less assertive (Morokoff et al., 1997). The same holds for indirect verbal statements, like "I am busy, I have to go" instead of "I do not want to have sex" (Loshek & Terrel, 2015).

This active and direct element of sexual assertiveness might not be equally encouraged or tolerated across cultures and might even clash with some cultures' standards of socially appropriate behavior (Morokoff et al., 1997). Synthesizing existing literature, Alvarado et al. (2020) argued that collectivist cultures do not favor sexual assertiveness among women in contrast with individualist cultures that facilitate or at least tolerate it. Alvarado et al. based this hypothesis on evidence of differences between individualist and collectivist cultures in

gender ideology and sexual scripts that influence the extent women assert their sexual needs. Specifically, collectivist cultures endorse conformity to cultural traditions, which, regarding women's sexuality, typically reflect a stereotype of sexual submissiveness (Cukur et al., 2004; Endendijk et al., 2020). Women are often expected to adhere to this stereotype rigidly and refrain from non-fitting actions or impulses, such as expressing desire or lack thereof in a direct, verbal manner (Goicolea et al., 2012; Morokoff et al., 1997). In addition, collectivist cultures highly value social harmony (Cukur et al., 2004). To ensure it, they tend to embrace scripts describing socially (in)appropriate behavior (Triandis, 1989). Regarding sex, these scripts commonly dictate that men initiate and control sexual encounters (Goicolea et al., 2012). In contrast, individualist values are associated with more flexible (gender) ideologies and social scripts (Cukur et al., 2004; Manago et al., 2015). These values encourage individuals to regulate their sexual pleasure based more on their own wishes and preferences than on predetermined scripts, regardless of their gender (Lo et al., 2010). It follows that individualist cultures are likely to favor a more active role of women in sexual encounters than collectivist.

Furthermore, whether women actively, verbally, and directly assert their sexual needs might also be tied to how the culture where they live shapes their sense of self. In particular, Triandis (1989) proposed that a collectivist or individualist culture influences individual behavior by first forging one's sense of self as a collective or private entity, also called *self-construal*. In other words, Triandis proposed that self-construal mediates the relationship between culture and individual behavior. The following paragraphs explain how this theory might be applicable to sexual assertiveness.

Although some studies report four types of self-construal, the vast majority report two; the interdependent self-construal (InterSC) and the independent self-construal (IndSC) (Guo et al., 2008; Zampetakis et al., 2015). Singelis (1994) provided evidence that all individuals possess both types of self-construal with varying strengths. When the InterSC is active, individuals experience themselves as inherently connected to others and perceive relationships with others as a core of the self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). When IndSC is active, the focus is on the self as distinct from others with unique and "own" internally residing attributes and states (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Elaborating on the idea of Triandis (1989), Singelis (1994) further explains that collectivist cultures tend to stimulate the development and activation of InterSC more than IndSC. In particular, since collectivist cultures encourage connectedness, their members create, store and use more cognitions about the self as tight to a

collective than as an independent agent (Singelis, 1994). The opposite is the case in individualist cultures. Due to the latter encouraging independence, self-determination and individual achievement, individuals in these cultures create and store more cognitions of themselves as independent agents than as part of a group (Singelis, 1994). Subsequently, they are more likely to use these cognitions than those of an interdependent self (Singelis, 1994). In other words, individualist cultures tend to stimulate the development of IndSC more than InterSC.

Several empirical studies have supported these claims, with individuals from collectivist cultures reporting a stronger InterSC than IndSC, and individuals from individualist cultures a stronger IndSC than InterSC (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Singelis et al., 1999). Furthermore, several studies found a stronger InterSC and weaker IndSC in samples from collectivist cultures like Asian American, Korean and Chinese than in samples from individualist cultures like Caucasian American and Australian (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Krull et al., 1999; Singelis, 1999). Cross-cultural comparisons of self-construal or related concepts using European samples are scarce; Pouliasi and Verkuyten (2012) compared individuals from Greece, a collectivist culture, with individuals from the Netherlands, an individualist culture, on self-perceptual connectedness and uniqueness, concepts comparable to InterSC and IndSC, respectively. The findings confirmed the authors' hypothesis as the Greeks reported higher levels of self-perceptual connectedness and lower levels of uniqueness than their Dutch counterparts (Pouliasi & Verkuyten, 2012).

Scholars expect self-construal to, in turn, influence behavior. Markus and Kitayama (1991) describe self-construal as an overarching schema of the content of self that strongly influences various aspects of one's psychological and social functioning. One of those aspects is communication and the extent and way one asserts desires, needs and limits (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Markus and Kitayama (1991) claim that the stronger one's IndSC, the higher the chance that (s)he will use a direct and assertive communication style as a means to realize internal, unique attributes. On the contrary, the stronger one's InterSC, the higher the chance that (s)he perceives direct and assertive communication as a risk for harmony and relatedness (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). An indirect communication style, using gestures, body language, and language nuances, is then more likely to be used, as it is perceived as less likely to disturb relatedness and harmony (Gudykunst et al., 1996). Schouten (2007) found empirical evidence supporting this claim; in a multicultural student sample, a positive relationship was detected between InterSC and a tendency for indirectness in conversations, whereas the opposite was

the case for IndSC. Gudykunst et al. (1996) found that self-construal partly mediated the relationship between culture (individualist vs. collectivist) and communication style, with IndSC being associated with a more explicit and direct communication style and InterSC with a more implicit and indirect.

No research to date has examined the association between self-construal and communication specifically in sex (among women). However, it is reasonable to speculate that InterSC and IndSC are associated with sexual assertiveness in the way way they are associated to general assertiveness. Put differently, the stronger a woman's IndSC the more likely she might be to directly and verbally assert her sexual desires, like saying "I do not want" as a response to sexual initiations she does not desire. On the contrary, the strongest a woman's InterSC, the more likely she might be to express desires indirectly and thus less assertively, for instance, by sitting further away, avoiding eye contact, or putting her coat on as a means of avoiding undesired sex.

At this point, it is important to note that collectivism-individualism is not the same as InterSC and IndSC. Collectivism-individualism is typically considered the two sides of a continuum describing cultures on a macro-level, while InterSC and IndSC are two different dimensions that co-exist within individuals defining their sense of self on a micro-level (Guo et al., 2007; Matsumoto, 2003). Although a culture's collectivist or individualist orientation seems to stimulate the development and use of one type of self-construal more than the other, within-culture variation has also been reported (Singelis & Sharkey, 1995). Hence, InterSC and IndSC cannot be used to describe or replace the concept of collectivist and individualist culture, respectively.

The present study

Sexual assertiveness in women has been associated with positive sexual outcomes, like less unprotected sex, less sexual coercion, and more sexual pleasure (Loshek & Terrel, 2015). Hence, the study of sexual assertiveness is critical. Alvarado et al. (2020) proposed a relationship between culture, collectivist vs. individualist, and sexual assertiveness. The present study is the first to investigate Alvarado's et al. claim empirically; it compares women from an individualist and a collectivist culture in sexual assertiveness. Given the arguments presented above about a relationship between culture and sexual assertiveness, the present study hypothesizes that:

H1: There is an association between culture and sexual assertiveness; women in a collectivist culture report lower levels of sexual assertiveness than women in an individualist culture.

Furthermore, inspired by Triandis (1989), the present study proposes that InterSC and IndSC mediate the relationship between culture and sexual assertiveness. For establishing these mediation effects, the effect of culture on InterSC and IndSC and that of InterSC and IndSC on sexual assertiveness are also examined. Considering the evidence on a relationship between culture and self-construal, and self-construal and assertiveness, as presented above, the present study expects the following:

H2a: There is an association between culture and InterSC, with women in a collectivist culture reporting a stronger InterSC than women in an individualist culture.

H2b: There is an association between culture and IndSC, with women in a collectivist culture reporting a weaker IndSC than women in an individualist culture.

H3a: There is a negative association between InterSC and sexual assertiveness.

H3b: There is a positive association between IndSC and sexual assertiveness.

H4a: There is a partial indirect effect of culture on sexual assertiveness through InterSC; women in a collectivist culture report a stronger InterSC than women in an individualist culture, which is negatively associated with sexual assertiveness.

H4b: There is a partial indirect effect of culture on sexual assertiveness through IndSC; women in an individualist culture report a stronger IndSC than women in a collectivist culture, which is positively associated with sexual assertiveness.

Considering the underrepresentation of European cultures in the self-construal and sexual assertiveness literature, the present study compares two European samples: a sample from Greece, a collectivist culture, to a sample from the Netherlands, an individualist culture (more information on the operationalization of culture follows under Methods).

By spotting cross-cultural differences in sexual assertiveness, the present study aims to locate where women are more at risk for low levels of sexual assertiveness which might, in turn, threaten their sexual well-being. This information can inform policy makers and interventions aiming to enhance sexual assertiveness. Furthermore, by examining the mediating role of InterSC and IndSC the present study hopes to shed light on how a culture's

collectivist or individualist orientation is connected to sexual assertiveness in women. Failing to address this question would mean fewer insights into how to enhance sexual assertiveness where needed.

Methods

Participants and Procedures

Participants were recruited by applying convenient and snowball sampling techniques. In particular, the author shared a digital link to the survey on her social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) and distributed it via private messages on her social network and that of her family. Due to difficulties in recruiting sufficient Dutch participants, the study was also published in the online booking system of Erasmus University (ERAS). There it became accessible to students of the Psychology Bachelor and Master programs who could fill it in in exchange for study credits.

A total of 220 participants opened the survey link. As presented in detail in Figure 1, the eligibility criteria resulted in the exclusion of 98 participants, leading to a final sample of 122 women. The eligibility criteria were the following:

1. Country of residence Greece or the Netherlands; women not providing information on their country of residence, women from third countries or who reported being Dutch or Greek but residing in a third country were excluded from the study.
2. No experience abroad for longer than six months; Greek women who had lived in a country other than Greece and Dutch women who had lived in a country other than the Netherlands for more than six months were excluded from the study. The reason is that cultural influences from the host country might have affected these women's self-construal and sexual assertiveness levels in a way that does not represent the home culture's average (Mooradian, 2004).
3. Both parents of Greek women born and raised in Greece and both parents of Dutch women born and raised in the Netherlands. This eligibility criterion was set based on evidence that individuals raised in multicultural families often carry a bicultural self-construct which is not representative of the average of the culture where they reside (Alexander et al., 2021).
4. Age of 18 or above; considering the topic's sensitive nature, participants who reported being younger than 18 were not allowed to complete the survey.

5. Female sex and gender, as individuals with a different sex or gender orientation, could be expected to show different levels of sexual assertiveness compared to female-born women (Alvarado, 2020).
6. No missing demographic information.
7. No more than 30% missing data on the scales measuring sexual assertiveness and self-construal (see under Measures). Women with less than 30% missing data on any of the two scales but more than 30% missing data on any of the subscales of these scales were also excluded from the study.

Table A1 presents the exact questions and answer options used to apply the eligibility criteria. All this information, except age and country, was exclusively recorded to apply the eligibility criteria and was further not relevant for the present study. A chi-square test for independence indicated that participants excluded due to missing data did not differ significantly from those included in age and country of residence, $\chi^2(4) = 2.27, p = .686$ and $\chi^2(1) = 0.65, p = .421$, respectively.

Sixty-five (53.3 %) women in the final sample were Dutch and 57 (46.7%) Greek. Table 1 presents the percentages of participants per age group for each culture sample. Variability in age among the Dutch participants was minimal, with more than 75% being between 18 and 24 years old. In the Greek group, variability was higher, with the distribution of the scores along the age categories resembling a normal. Greek and Dutch participants differed significantly in age, with Greek participants being older than Dutch participants, $\chi^2(4) = 65.62, p < .001$. This discrepancy is due to the sampling techniques used to address the difficulty in recruiting Dutch participants; whereas the Greek participants were recruited from the social network of the author and her family, most Dutch participants were university students and, as such, significantly younger.

The survey was set up in the Qualtrics X4 platform. Participation was voluntary, and anonymity was assured. All participants who filled in their email addresses participated in a lot for two gift vouchers of 10 euros each. For reasons of fairness, a lot took place separately for each culture, resulting in one gift voucher (of the bol.com Dutch sales website) for a randomly selected Dutch and one (of the multistore Public in Greece) for a randomly selected Greek participant. The study received ethical approval by the Ethical Review Board of Erasmus University with reference EC19-005.

Figure 1

Flow of Participants

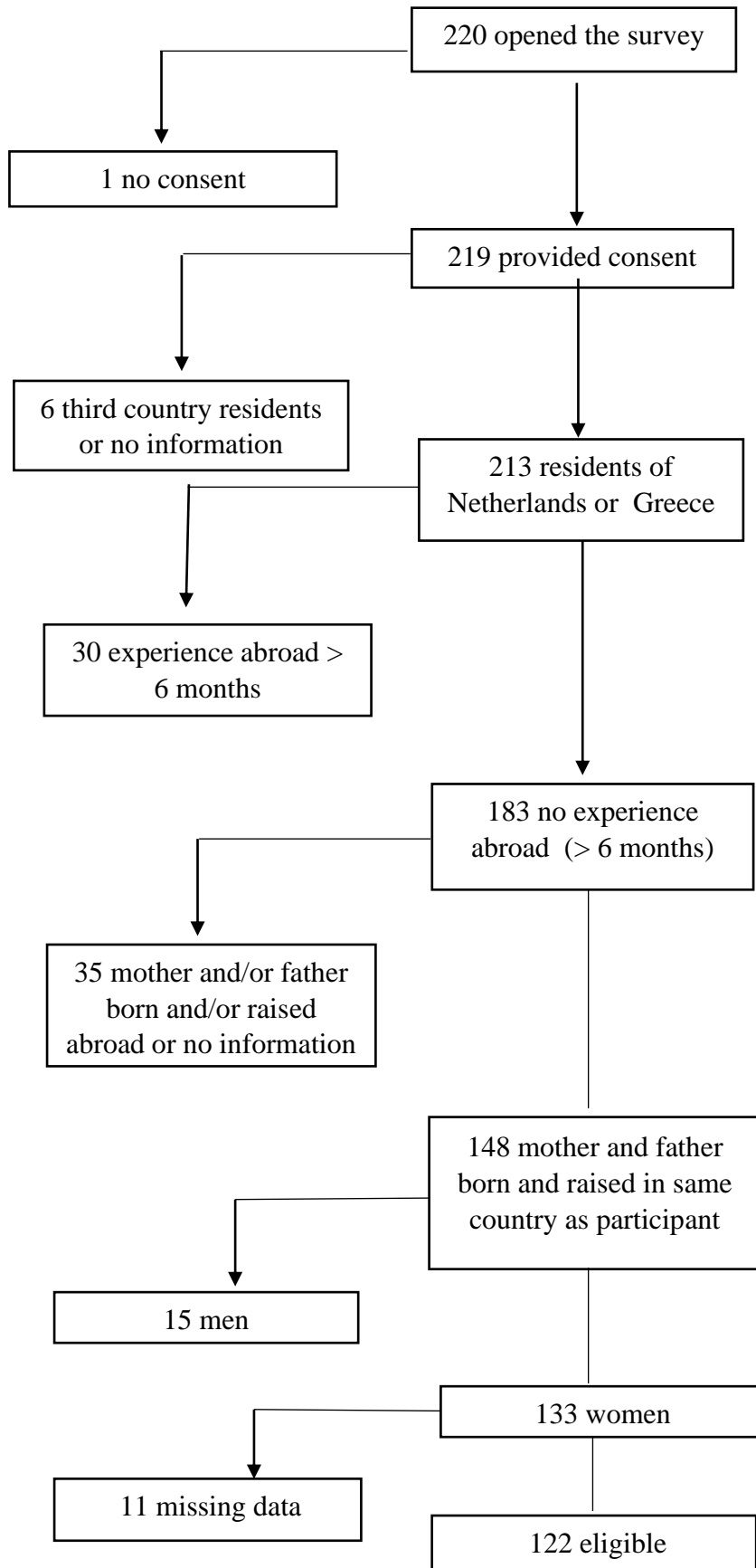


Table 1*Age per Culture Sample*

Age group	Dutch (<i>n</i> = 65)	Greek (<i>n</i> = 57)
	<i>N</i> (%)	
18-24	49 (75.4 %)	4 (7%)
25-34	12 (18.5%)	17 (29.8%)
35-44	1 (1.5%)	17 (29.8%)
45-54	3 (4.6%)	11 (19.3 %)
55-64	0 (0%)	8 (14%)

Measures

Demographic information. As mentioned above, except for the questions regarding country of residence and age, the rest of the demographic questions were used exclusively for the purpose of examining participants' eligibility and were further irrelevant for the present study.

Culture. Culture had two categories: (a) collectivist and (b) individualist. Country was used as a proxy of culture. Although the two concepts are not exactly the same, research has detected a significant overlap, and the two are used interchangeably (Taras et al., 2016). On the basis of evidence provided by previous studies (Hofstede, 2001; Pouliasi & Verkuyten, 2012), Greece was chosen to operationalize collectivist and the Netherlands to operationalize individualist culture. Greece was used as a reference group in the present study's analyses.

Sexual assertiveness. Sexual assertiveness was assessed with the refined version of the Sexual Assertiveness Questionnaire (SAQ), a comprehensive measurement scale developed by Loshek and Terrel (2015). SAQ measures assertiveness in communication during (the initiation of) sex and about sex-related topics. In particular, as described by Loshek & Terrel (2015), SAQ includes three subscales that capture: the extent to which a woman initiates sexual activity and communicates about desired sexual acts, the extent to which a woman denies unwanted sex, and the extent to which a woman asks her partners about their sexual history and the associated risk of a sexually transmitted disease.

Following the recommendations of Loshek and Terrel (2015), respondents indicated their agreement on the 18 SAQ items on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). Eight items were reverse coded. An average score on the 18 items represented each participant's score on sexual assertiveness. The minimum score was one and the maximum seven, with higher scores indicating higher levels of self-reported sexual assertiveness.

Previous studies have shown good reliability of SAQ, Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$. Similar results were found in the present study with Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$ for the entire sample and each subsample.

The items were translated into Dutch and Greek by the author of the present study. The back-translation method was applied (Cha et al., 2007). All items were once more translated in Dutch, this time from Greek, using the items translated in Greek. This extra step was taken to increase the equivalence of the Dutch and Greek translations. The translations were compared in every step, and necessary adjustments were made. Besides the author, two native Greek and two native Dutch speakers, all experts in the field of social sciences, checked the translations and provided feedback. In Table A2, the original items, together with the Greek and Dutch translations, are presented.

Self-construal. Self-construal was measured with the Self-Construal Scale (SCS) developed by Singelis (1994). The SCS is widely used in self-construal research (Cross et al., 2011). It asks participants to indicate the extent they (dis)agree with statements regarding identification with group membership, loyalty to groups, relational harmony as a source of self-esteem, stance towards authority figures, reliance on the context for communication, and more. It captures IndSC and InterSC in two distinct subscales, containing 15 items each.

Following Singelis's (1994) instructions, responses were given on 7 Point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). An average score was created for each subscale. The minimum score was one and the maximum seven, with higher scores indicating higher levels of IndSC or InterSC (depending on the subscale). Table A3 presents more information on the items belonging to each subscale.

SCS has been translated into Greek by professor Dimitrios Georgas. Theodoros Singelis, the developer of SCS, provided this translation to the author of the present study on request. The author of the present study translated SCS from English to Dutch using the back-translation method (Cha et al., 2007). The same as for the SAQ, the items were once more translated in Dutch, this time using the Greek translation as a base. The translations were compared, and necessary adjustments were made in each step. Two native Dutch speakers,

experts in the social sciences, checked the translations and provided feedback. Table A3 presents the original items and the Greek and Dutch translations.

Singelis (1994) reported acceptable reliability of SCS, with Cronbach's α ranging from .60 to .70. Similar results were found in the present study. For IndSC, Cronbach's $\alpha = .73$ in the entire sample and Cronbach's $\alpha = .72$ in both the Greek and Dutch culture samples. For IndSC, Cronbach's $\alpha = .66$ in the entire sample, Cronbach's $\alpha = .64$ in the Greek and Cronbach's $\alpha = .71$ in the Dutch sample.

Invariance Testing

In order to examine whether the SAQ and SCS had the same measurement properties in the Greek and Dutch population, measurement invariance analyses were conducted in the IBM SPSS Amos 28 statistical software. The recommendations of Fischer and Karl (2019) were followed. Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analysis (MCFA) was deemed the most appropriate for SAQ and SCS; both scales are multidimensional and assume that an individual's score on the scale items reflects their ability level on an underlying factor, for example, that of initiating desired sexual activity.

The steps of invariance testing, as described by Fischer and Karl (2019), were followed. Model fit and change in fit statistics were used on each step to evaluate model fit. The expectation was that SAQ and SCS were intercept-invariant across the two cultural samples, which presupposes an invariant factor structure, the same loading pattern, at least one equal factor loading and equality of intercepts across the two samples. For more details on the steps followed, the statistics used to evaluate model fit and the results of the MCFA, see Appendix B.

The expectation of intercept invariance was not met for the two scales. Following these results, Exploratory Factor Analyses (EFA) were conducted for each scale to investigate the reasons for the misfit and detect possible solutions. Interestingly, EFA on the SCS did not support its theoretical two-factor structure (IndSC-InterSC) in any of the two culture samples. On the basis of EFA, model modifications were attempted for both SAQ and SCS to enhance fit and invariance. However, the modifications did not bring the desired results for any of the scales.

Considering the above, the interpretation of the IndSC and InterSC was subject to question. Furthermore, according to Fischer and Karl (2019), lack of intercept invariance renders a comparison of scores across the groups without meaning. Further attempting to

resolve the issues above on a theoretical or methodological level in order to achieve intercept invariance was beyond the scope of the present Master thesis.

Fischer and Karl (2019) underline that MCFA in samples < 200 , without multivariate normality, has its limitations. The sample size of the present study was smaller than 200, and the data of both scales and in both samples were not multivariate normally distributed, as assessed by the Mahalanobis distance statistic. Considering the limitations of the MCFA in the sample and data of the present study, as well as for reasons of completeness of the Master thesis project, it was considered prudent to proceed with the analyses assuming model fit and invariance for both SCS and SAQ. The results are interpreted with caution.

Analytical Strategy

Preliminary and correlation analyses were conducted in the IBM SPSS v.28. To describe the samples in terms of self-construal and sexual assertiveness, the means and standard deviations on SAQ, SCS and their subscales were calculated for the entire sample and per culture sample. The results are displayed in Table 2. A paired samples t-test was used to compare the scores on InterSC and IndSC within the two culture samples.

A mediation analysis was conducted in PROCESS MACRO v.4 to examine the effect of culture on sexual assertiveness and the mediating role of InterSC and IndSC. Prior to the analysis, potential violations of the assumptions of regression were checked. Boxplots, scatterplots, and comparisons between original and trimmed means were used to detect extreme outliers on SAQ and SCS. Non-extreme outliers that represented possible values were not removed from the analysis. Subsequently, residual plots were used to assess the assumption of linearity and homoscedasticity. The distribution of residuals was assessed with a histogram of the residuals. The multicollinearity assumption was checked by calculating and inspecting the correlations between culture, age, InterSC and IndSC, all used as independent variables in the analysis. These correlations are presented in Table 3.

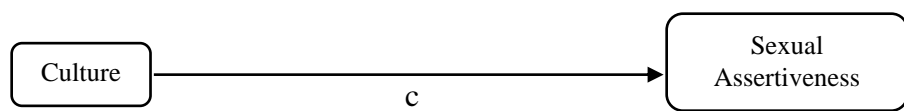
Figure 2 presents the mediation model tested in this study. InterSC and IndSC were used as parallel mediators, assuming no causal relationship between the two (Hayes, 2013). For the partial mediation hypotheses to be supported, the direct effect must be smaller than the total effect (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007). To infer the significance of the mediated effect, PROCESS MACRO computed Bootstrap confidence intervals (Hayes, 2013). Considering research that detected age differences in sexual assertiveness (Rickert et al., 2002), the study intended to use age as a control variable.

To calculate the power of the indirect effect, a Monte Carlo power analysis was conducted on https://schoemanna.shinyapps.io/mc_power_med/, developed by Schoemann et

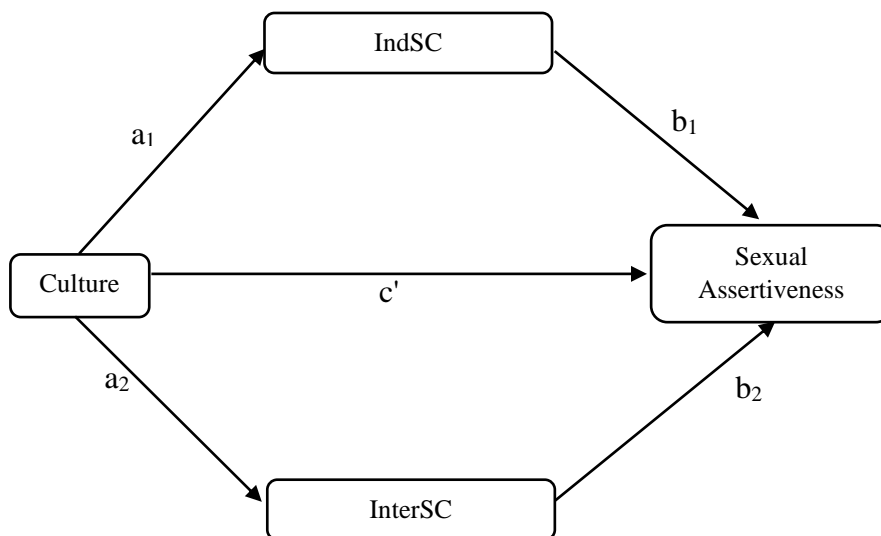
al. (2017). The default number of power analysis replications (1000) and Monte Carlo draws per replication (20000) were selected. In order for the application to compute a covariance matrix, the effect sizes of a, b and c', as depicted in Figure 2 and Table 4, were inserted. The power of the direct effect was calculated in GPower v 3.1. The test family was defined as t-tests, the statistical test as multiple linear regression, and the type of power analysis as post hoc.

Figure 2

Parallel Mediation Model of Culture on Sexual Assertiveness through IndSC and InterSC



a) Total effect (c)



b) Direct effect (c') and indirect or mediated effects (a_1b_1 and a_2b_2)

Results

Descriptive Statistics, Preliminary analyses and Power

As shown in Table 2, Greek and Dutch women reported, on average, relatively high levels of sexual assertiveness. Average scores on both IndSC and InterSC were also relatively high. Both Greek and Dutch women scored significantly lower on InterSC than on IndSC, $t(56) = 2, p = .025, t(64) = 5, p < .01$, respectively.

The assumptions of no extreme outliers, normally distributed errors, as well as the assumptions of homoscedasticity and linearity, were met. Non-extreme outliers were identified but not removed, as, although lying further at the right or left end of the distributions, they reflected possible values.

As portrayed in Table 3, the assumption of multicollinearity was met for InterSC and IndSC but not for age and culture, which were significantly and highly correlated. A common solution to multicollinearity is including only one of the two collinear variables in the study unless the violation is minor to moderate or theoretical considerations point to a different solution (Field, 2013). A possible solution in the present study would be to include only culture, a main variable in the analyses, and not age, a control variable. To decide whether this solution was meaningful and carried more benefits than risks, the following were considered:

- a) The correlation between culture and age was high, indicating a severe violation of the multicollinearity assumption (for rules of thumb for interpreting the size of a correlation coefficient, see Hinkle et al., 2003, p. 109).
- b) The correlation of age with sexual assertiveness was very weak and not significant for the entire sample, as shown in Table 3 and within the Greek and Dutch samples, *Point Biserial coefficient* = $-.17$, $p = .176$, and *Point Biserial coefficient* = $-.08$, $p = .572$, respectively. These findings are not in line with previous research that found a relationship between age and sexual assertiveness (Rickert et al., 2002), but they point to the limited value of including age in the present study's analysis.
- c) The correlation of age with IndSC and InterSC, also used as dependent variables in the mediation analysis, was also weak and non-significant, as shown in Table 3.
- d) Three hierarchical regression analyses were conducted in IBM SPSS v.28 to examine the unique effect of age. PROCESS MACRO, the software where the mediation analysis was performed, does not allow hierarchical insertion of variables. Thus the unique effect of age could not be examined as part of the mediation analysis. Sexual assertiveness, InterSC and IndSC were the dependent variables, one in each of the three analyses. In all three analyses, culture was the independent variable in the first step, and age was added to the model in the second. Age was treated as a continuous variable, as it had five categories (Sullivan & Artino, 2013). The inclusion of age led to no significant increase in the explained variance of InterSC, InterSC and sexual assertiveness, $FChange = 0.15$, $p = .701$, $FChange = 0.04$, $p = .852$, $FChange = 1.51$, $p = .222$, respectively. In all analyses, an increase in the standard error of the b

coefficient of culture was noticed when age was included in the model, exactly as Field (2013, p. 404) described. An increase in standard error can increase the probability of making a Type II error (Field, 2013). In other words, age did not explain additional unique variance but led to potentially untrustworthy b coefficients and increased probability of making a Type II error.

Considering all those mentioned above, the inclusion of age in the mediation analysis seemed to carry few benefits and many risks. Hence, it was decided to conduct the mediation analysis without age.

The power of the indirect effect was found to be as high as .98. However, this result should be interpreted with caution, as it is uncertain if the application which calculated the power of this effect could take into account that culture was a dichotomous predictor. The power of the direct effect was also found to be high, approximately .93.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Scores on SAQ, InterSC and IndSC per Entire Sample and per Culture Sample

Scale	Entire sample	Dutch	Greek
	(<i>n</i> = 122)	(<i>n</i> = 65)	(<i>n</i> = 57)
	<i>M (SD)</i>		
SAQ	5.25 (0.80)	5.08 (0.74)	5.45 (0.82)
SAQ-1	5.13 (0.92)	4.93 (0.80)	5.35(1.00)
SAQ-2	5.38 (0.98)	5.39 (0.91)	5.33 (1.06)
SAQ-3	5.42 (0.98)	5.08 (1.31)	5.81(1.15)
IndSC	4.98 (0.59)	4.98(0.60)	4.98(0.58)
InterSC	4.56 (0.66)	4.40 (0.65)	4.74 (0.64)

Note. SAQ = Sexual Assertiveness Questionnaire. SAQ-1 = SAQ subscale Initiation of Sexual Pleasure. SAQ-2 = SAQ subscale Refusal of Unwanted Sex. SAQ-3 = SAQ subscale Asking about Sexual History. IndSC = Self-Construal Scale subscale independent self-construal. InterSC = Self-Construal Scale subscale interdependent self-construal.
* *p* < .05; ** *p* < .01.

Table 3*Correlations Between Study Variables*

Variable	1 ^a	2 ^a	3	4	5
1. Culture	–				
2. Age	-.71**	–			
3. SAQ	-.26**	.1	–		
4. IndSC	.00	-.04	.35**	–	
5. InterSC	.25**	.12	-.20*	-.12	–

Note. SAQ =Sexual Assertiveness Questionnaire. IndSC = Self-Construal Scale subscale independent self-construal. InterSC = Self-Construal Scale subscale interdependent self-construal.

^a Point Biserial coefficients, except for the coefficient of the correlation between culture and age, which was a Spearman Rank.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Mediation Analysis

Table 4 presents the results of the mediation analysis conducted to investigate the effect of culture on sexual assertiveness and the mediating role of InterSC and IndSC.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that Dutch women score significantly higher than Greek women in sexual assertiveness. The results did not confirm this hypothesis; when controlling for InterSC and IndSC, Greek women reported higher levels of sexual assertiveness than Dutch women.

In line with hypothesis 2a, culture was a significant predictor of InterSC, with Greek women reporting significantly higher levels of InterSC than Dutch women. The model, in total, explained approximately 7% of the variance on InterSC and was significant, $p = .004$. Contrary to hypothesis 2b, culture had no effect on IndSC, meaning that Greek and Dutch women did not differ in the IndSC level they reported. The model, in total, explained 0% of the variance on IndSC and was not significant, $p = .975$.

In accordance with hypothesis 3a, when controlling for culture and IndSC, InterSC was negatively associated with sexual assertiveness, indicating that the stronger InterSC women had, the lower levels of sexual assertiveness they reported. As predicted by hypothesis 3b, when controlling for culture and InterSC, IndSC was positively associated with sexual assertiveness. This result indicated that the stronger a woman's IndSC was, the higher levels of sexual assertiveness she reported. This model explained 22% of the variance in sexual assertiveness and was significant, $p < .01$.

Hypothesis 4a proposed that InterSC partly mediates the effect of culture on sexual assertiveness. The data corroborated this hypothesis. However, the mediation was

inconsistent, as the total and direct effect had a different direction to the indirect effect (MacKinnon et al., 2007); the total and direct effects indicated lower scores in sexual assertiveness for Dutch than for Greek women, while the mediated effect indicated the opposite. When controlling for IndSC, the mediated effect of culture on sexual assertiveness through InterSC predicted higher scores on sexual assertiveness for Dutch women, because of their, on average, lower scores on InterSC. An inconsistent mediation is statistically possible and meaningful (as total effect = direct + mediated effects) but can pose challenges in the theoretical interpretation of the results (MacKinnon et al., 2007). Inspecting and comparing the standardized effects, also presented in Table 4, provided some aid in the interpretation; the total standardized effect was much higher than the mediated through InterSC. This suggests that from the total variance on sexual assertiveness explained by culture, only a small proportion was a result of the effect of culture on InterSC, which in turn was associated with sexual assertiveness.

Contrary to hypothesis 4b, when controlling for InterSC, IndSC did not mediate the relationship between culture and sexual assertiveness, as Greek and Dutch women reported equal levels of IndSC.

When added together, the indirect effect of culture on sexual assertiveness through InterSC and IndSC was not significant.

Discussion

The present study examined differences in sexual assertiveness between women from a collectivist culture, the Greek, and an individualist culture, the Dutch. In addition, the present study took the first step in understanding the underlying mechanisms that connect culture to sexual assertiveness by examining the mediating role of InterSC and IndSC. The ultimate aim of the present study was to gain insights that future researchers and practitioners can use in promoting sexual assertiveness and its positive potential for women's sexual well-being.

Greek women reported significantly higher levels of sexual assertiveness than Dutch women. InterSC partially mediated the relationship between culture and sexual assertiveness; Greek women reported a stronger InterSC than Dutch women, which, in turn, was negatively associated with sexual assertiveness. In contrast, IndSC was not a significant mediator as it was associated with higher levels of sexual assertiveness but not with culture.

Table 4*Mediation Analysis of Culture on Sexual Assertiveness Through InterSC and IndSC*

Effect	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	beta	95% <i>CI</i>
Direct Effect			
Culture on InterSC	-0.35** (0.12)	-.52	[-0.58, -0.11]
Culture on IndSC	-0.00 (0.11)	-.01	[-0.22, 0.21]
Culture on SAQ	-0.46** (0.13)	-.58	[-0.72, -0.20]
InterSC on SAQ	-0.28** (0.10)	-.23	[-0.48, -0.08]
IndSC on SAQ	0.43** (0.11)	.32	[0.21, 0.65]
Indirect Effect ^a			
Culture on SAQ through InterSC	0.10 [†] (0.05)	.12	[0.02, 0.21]
Culture on SAQ through IndSC	-0.00 (0.05)	-.00	[-0.11, 0.13]
Total Indirect Culture on SAQ	0.09 (0.07)	.12	[-0.04, 0.24]
Total Effect Culture on SAQ	-0.37* (0.14)	-.46	[-0.65, -0.09]

Note. CI = confidence interval; [lower limit, upper limit]. Beta = standardized coefficient. SAQ = Sexual Assertiveness Questionnaire.

IndSC = Self-Construal Scale subscale independent self-construal. InterSC = Self-Construal Scale subscale interdependent self-construal.

^aComputed with bootstrapping. Beta is partially standardized.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

[†]Singificant on the basis of Bootstrap confidence interval.

The higher levels of sexual assertiveness reported by Greek compared to Dutch women are surprising as they are theoretically incongruent. Possible reasons for this incongruity are differences in the samples used in the present and previous studies, modernization processes setting Greece in a cultural transition, and the timing of the data collection.

In particular, Alvarado et al. (2020) claimed that collectivist cultures, in contrast with individualist, discourage sexual assertiveness among women and based this claim on studies of sexuality and general assertiveness. Those studies compared primarily Latin or Asian (American) samples representing collectivism with Caucasian American samples representing individualism (Rodríguez et al., 2001; also see Yoshioka, 2000). The present study's findings trigger the question as to what extent the Latin/Asian and Caucasian American cultures are comparable with the Greek and Dutch, respectively. First, perhaps the Greek and Dutch cultures are less or differently collectivist and individualist, respectively, compared to Latin/Asian (American) and Caucasian American cultures. Indeed, Kafetsios et al. (2018) proposed that Asian and Caucasian American cultures represent the extremes of collectivism and individualism and are not always representative of other collectivist and individualist cultures. The same author suggests that the Greek culture, although predominantly collectivist, also endorses individualist values that have been gaining ground under historical and societal forces. Evidence supporting this claim is the higher levels of IndSC than InterSC among Greek women in the present study. Evidence also exists that the Dutch culture, although predominantly individualist, holds some collectivist values that are more salient in interpersonal than in other situations (Maas et al., 2019). Second, perhaps the Greek and Dutch cultures differ from those in previous studies in other dimensions of cultural variation, which might be salient in understanding the extent women assert their sexual needs. Power distance, a cultural dimension that reflects values related to "keeping your voice down" and femininity, a dimension related to interpersonal sensitivity, are two examples (Cukur et al., 2004). Indeed, a country comparison on <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/>, developed by the renowned social psychologist Geert Hofstede, indicated that Greece scores lower than most Latin and Asian cultures on power distance. It also indicated that values in the Netherlands are more directed towards interpersonal sensitivity than those in the United States. Last, although collectivist cultures typically conform to traditional gender and sexual roles, often oppressing women's sexuality, gender equality ideas are progressively gaining ground in Greece, granting more autonomy to women (Krikkis, 2022; Zampetakis et

al., 2015). It is unknown if this is also the case in the collectivist cultures studied by previous research.

Furthermore, the social timing when data collection took place in Greece might also account for the higher scores of Greek women in sexual assertiveness. Specifically, seventeen homicides of women from their (ex-)husbands in less than a year shocked Greek society in 2021 and triggered extensive discussions on the gender dynamics in Greece (Dalatariof, 2021). At exactly the same period, multiple cases of rape and sexual coercion with women as victims and Greek men of high social status as perpetrators were publicly revealed (Dalatariof, 2021). Although no academic papers on this topic have been published yet, scholars in the Greek media suggest that these crimes might be an unacceptable and extreme reaction of some men to the autonomy granted to women in Greece in the last decades (Krikkis, 2022). Namely, the modern ideas about women's right to self-direction contradict those of their traditional role that have been deeply rooted in Greek society (Dalatariof, 2021; Krikkis, 2022). Greek newspapers report that women in Greece reacted with a revolutionary attitude against the homicides and the revelation of sexual victimization cases, mobilizing social (feminist) clubs to denounce gender-based violence and claim their rights (Zaravela, 2022). In sum, at the time of the data collection, Greek women were receiving messages about a series of homicides and sexual crimes targeting women, doubts on whether Greek men are ready to accept female autonomy, and calls to take action against gender-based violence and assert their rights. It is reasonable to speculate that the social timing, as described above, has alerted Greek women and influenced their responses or/and actual sexual communication behavior in reflecting more assertiveness. At the same time, issues related to gender stereotypes are much less prominent in the Netherlands, where gender-related ideology and sociosexual scripts do not attribute very distinct behaviors to men and women (Emmerink et al., 2018; van Lunsen & Laan, 2017, p. 75). Dutch women, although sexually assertive, as indicated by their high scores in sexual assertiveness, may not need to be as alert as Greek women in claiming their sexual needs and protecting their limits; the threats are less. Future replications of the present research are necessary for distinguishing between a transient effect of timing and actual and stable differences in women's sexual assertiveness between the Dutch and Greek culture.

InterSC partially mediated the relationship between culture and sexual assertiveness. This finding is intriguing. First, it constitutes the first empirical evidence that the stronger a woman's sense of self as inherently connected with others, the less she asserts her sexual needs. Second, it indicates that culture, collectivist vs. individualist, is associated with

women's sexual assertiveness partly because it influences women's interconnected sense of self. The mediation effect was inconsistent with the direct and total effect of culture. In particular, Greek women reported higher levels of sexual assertiveness, but the mediation effect predicted lower scores for them because they reported a stronger InterSC than the Dutch, which was, in turn, negatively associated with sexual assertiveness. To interpret this inconsistency, it is worth noting that the mediation effect was partial and small. Thus, culture was related to sexual assertiveness, but only a small part of this relationship was explained by the relationship of both with InterSC. Although not included in the model tested in the present study, it can be speculated that other mediating factors might function in an opposite direction to InterSC and might, collectively or individually, explain a bigger part of how culture relates to sexual assertiveness. For instance, as mentioned earlier, modernization processes and the data collection timing in Greece are plausible explanations for the direction of the cultural differences in sexual assertiveness detected in this study.

Another potential mediator that might function in the opposite direction of InterSC is whether a culture defines a situation as more relevant for one's InterSC or IndSC. Specifically, culture defines some situations as more relevant for a person as a distinct and unique agent and some as more relevant for one as an inherent part of a collective (Triandis, 1989). Following those definitions, which, in statistical terms, would function as a causal mediator, the relevant self-construal is activated and influences behavior (Triandis, 1989). It is possible that although the Dutch culture generally stimulates InterSC less than Greek culture, it defines sexual situations as more relevant for women's InterSC than the Greek culture does, which is in turn associated with lower levels of sexual assertiveness. This proposition is in line with the findings of Maas et al. (2019) that Dutch natives show higher sensitivity in interpersonal situations than Dutch immigrants from collectivist cultures. Empirical studies examining which self-construal Greek and Dutch women use during sexual interactions are necessary to support this claim further.

IndSC was not a significant mediator of the relationship between culture and sexual assertiveness. Consistent with the hypothesis, higher scores on IndSC were associated with higher levels of sexual assertiveness. This finding constitutes the first empirical evidence of a relationship between IndSC and sexual assertiveness. However, in contrast with the expectations, Greek and Dutch women did not score differently on IndSC, rendering the mediation effect of IndSC insignificant. This finding is puzzling, considering previous research reporting a higher IndSC among individuals from individualist than those from collectivist cultures. Similarly to the finding of higher sexual assertiveness among Greek

women, the incongruity of this findings might be explained based on potential differences between the culture samples used in the present study and those used in previous studies. The samples used in previous studies represent the extremes of collectivism, individualism, and self-construal (Kafetsios et al., 2018). As such, they might not accurately represent the self-construal orientation of other cultures with collectivist or individualist values, such as Greece and the Netherlands. Indeed, research on self-construal in Greece found evidence for a "neo-collectivist" self, high both on self- and on others-orientation (Pouliasi & Verkuyten, 2011). Furthermore, a recently published study by Kryś et al. (2022) suggests that under the influence of some other cultural or societal features, such as indulgence and high emotional expression, which also characterize Greek culture (Hofstede, 2001), it is possible that collectivist societies foster independent selves.

All things considered, the present study's findings reveal that the research questions posed by the present study are not straightforward to answer. We have data and can draw some conclusions on comparisons between the Greek and Dutch cultures, but it is questionable whether these can be extrapolated to those of other cultures. Do women from collectivist cultures score lower in sexual assertiveness than women from individualist cultures? The present study's findings imply a negative answer, but perhaps only to the extent the cultures at hand resemble the Greek and Dutch culture in terms of collectivism-individualism and other cultural and societal dimensions. The same reasoning applies to the other research questions of the present study.

The present study has several limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings, but can be addressed by future research. First, the interpretation of the results of MCFA for SCS and SAQ remains unclear. MCFA might have suggested a lack of model fit for SCS and measurement invariance for both SCS and SAQ due to its limitations in small samples with no multivariate normality. However, it is also possible that the findings of MCFA are accurate. This would imply that the scores on SCS do not represent participants' levels of InterSC and IndSC and that despite significant differences between the two samples on SCS and SAQ, it is unclear if the two samples actually differ on the underlying concepts (Fischer & Karl, 2019). Replications of the present research can explore alternatives to MCFA or different factor structures of SAQ and SCS that may stay invariant across groups. Furthermore, SCS assesses self-construal in general, and as such, it does not provide information on which self-construal women use during intimate, sexual contact. Combining quantitative with qualitative research can provide valuable insights in this direction. In addition, the present study tested the effect of each type of self-construal on sexual

assertiveness while controlling for the other type. It does not answer what the effect is on sexual assertiveness when one scores high or low on both types of self-construal. Using a difference score of InterSC and IndSC would help address this question. Besides, although the present study followed a long tradition of cross-cultural research using country as a proxy of culture, it is acknowledged that this approach ignores substantial between-group overlap and within-group variation and that other approaches are worthy of being explored (Taras et al., 2016). Additionally, although the theoretical framework of this study sometimes implies causal associations (for instance, the mediation claim), the cross-sectional study design does not allow for causal claims. Yet, this is a common issue in cross-cultural studies where manipulating culture is not possible (Gudykunst et al., 1996). Last, the high correlation between age and culture limits the generalizability of the findings to the Greek and Dutch population. The possibility that age, and other variables associated with age, like relationship status, (sexual) experiences and educational level, have confounded the relationship between culture and sexual assertiveness cannot be excluded. That being said, the lack of correlation between age and sexual assertiveness in the present samples renders the chance of a confounding effect of age low. Interested researchers are called to replicate this study using probability sampling techniques.

An important strength of the present study is that it was the first to empirically examine theoretical propositions on an association between culture and the extent women assert their sexual needs. Its main strength, however, is that it went a step forward in understanding this association by examining the mediating role of InterSC and IndSC. It did so because it acknowledged that culture is a very broad concept; finding cross-cultural differences without specifying which underlying cultural elements account for these differences would not be very informative. Choosing self-construal as a mediator constitutes one more of the strong points of this study. The relationship between one's sense of self in relation to others and behavior has been proposed long ago but had yet to be researched in the context of sexual behavior. Moreover, in contrast to most cross-cultural research on self-construal that uses American, Asian and Latino cultures, the present study compared two European samples. Last but not least, in contrast with other cross-cultural studies which have neglected cross-cultural measurement biases (Fischer & Karl, 2019), the present study tested, reported and reflected on measurement invariance.

Thanks to these strengths, the present study can contribute to theory and policy in important ways. It extended the knowledge about sexual assertiveness and its relationship with culture and self-construal. It set the stage for exploring the mechanisms connecting

culture with sexual assertiveness and made various suggestions for future research. The present study's findings suggest the importance of using more European samples in cross-cultural comparisons as extrapolating conclusions based on American and Asian samples might not lead to accurate hypotheses about cultural comparisons inside the European borders. The present study's findings also inform future research that generalizing conclusions from one culture to another based on a broad cultural dimension like collectivism-individualism without taking into account elements specific to the culture(s) at hand might be risky. Last, on a practical level, the finding of an association between IndSC, InterSC and sexual assertiveness might help in efforts to enhance sexual assertiveness and its positive role on women's sexual well-being.

It is critical to clarify that the present study and its findings do not imply that women with a strong InterSC or low in sexual assertiveness are to blame for potentially lower levels of sexual well-being or negative sexual experiences. Having a more interconnected self or not being assertive are certainly no “negative” traits, and depending on the situation and the woman’s social environment might also be beneficial and adaptive (Alvarado et al., 2020). The goal of the present study was simply to detect factors that are associated with sexual assertiveness and thus can be used to enhance the latter, when needed and appropriate.

In conclusion, the present study provided evidence for a relationship between culture as collectivist vs. individualist and sexual assertiveness, which InterSC partly mediates. These findings are important as they extend knowledge on the factors associated with sexual assertiveness. Furthermore, these findings reinforce Triandi's (1989) proposition that culture is connected to individual behavior as a result of the association of both culture and behavior with an individual's sense of self. Surprisingly, Greek women reported higher levels of sexual assertiveness than Dutch women. They also reported an equally strong IndSC with Dutch women, rendering the indirect effect of culture on sexual assertiveness through IndSC non-significant. These findings challenge theoretical claims and previous empirical evidence. Therefore, they inspire hypotheses about quantitative and qualitative differences in collectivism and individualism between Greek and Dutch cultures and those studied by previous research. Furthermore, these findings imply that collectivism-individualism is perhaps not the only cultural feature associated with sexual behavior. Hence, research questions exclusively on the basis of this dimension might be complicated to answer. Despite limitations, the present study makes significant contributions to the field. It has the potential to inspire future research and interventions aiming to enhance sexual assertiveness and its protective potential on women's sexual well-being.

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Appendix A
Demographic Questions, SAQ and SCS

Table A1

General and Demographic questions in Greek and Dutch

Question Number	Question		Answer Options	
	Greek	Dutch	Greek	Dutch
Q1	Σε ποιά χώρα κατοικείτε;	In welk land woont u?	1. Ελλάδα, 2. Ολλανδία, 3. Σε άλλη χώρα, ονόματι..	1. Griekenland, 2. Nederland, 3. Ander land..
Q2	Έχετε ζήσει ποτέ στο εξωτερικό για διάστημα μεγαλύτερο των 6 μηνών;	Heeft u ooit in het buitenland gewoond voor langer dan 6 maanden?	1. Ναί, 2. Όχι 3. Δεν ξέρω/Δεν απαντώ	1. Ja, 2. Nee. 3. Ik weet het niet/ Ik geef geen antwoord.
Q3	Πόσο χρονών είστε;	Hoe oud bent u?	1. Κάτω των 18, 2. 18-24, 3. 25-34, 4. 35-44, 5. 45-54, 6. 55-64, 7. 65-75, 8. 75-84, 9. Άνω των 85	1. Jonger dan 18, 2. 18-24, 3. 25-34, 4. 35-44, 5. 45-54, 6. 55-64, 7. 65-75, 8. 75-84, 9. Ouder dan 85
Q4	Ποιά απο τα παρακάτω ισχύει για την καταγωγή της μητέρας σας;	Welke van de volgende is waar wat betreft de afkomst van uw moeder?	1. Η μητέρα μου γεννήθηκε και μεγάλωσε στην χώρα στην οποία κατοικώ, 2. Η μητέρα μου γεννήθηκε σε άλλη	1. Mijn moeder is geboren en getogen in het zelfde land als waar ik nu woon. 2. Mijn moeder is niet geboren maar wel getogen in het zelfde land als waar

			<p>χώρα, αλλά μεγάλωσε στην χώρα στην οποία κατοικώ,</p> <p>3. Η μητέρα μου γεννήθηκε στην χώρα στην οποία κατοικώ, αλλά μεγάλωσε σε άλλη χώρα,</p> <p>4. Η μητέρα μου ούτε γεννήθηκε ούτε μεγάλωσε στη χώρα στην οποία κατοικώ,</p> <p>5. Δεν ξέρω/ Δεν απαντώ.</p>	<p>ik nu woon.</p> <p>3. Mijn moeder is geboren in het zelfde land als waar ik nu woon maar getogen in een ander land.</p> <p>4. Mijn moeder is niet geboren en ook niet getogen in het zelfde land als waar ik nu woon.</p> <p>5. Ik weet het niet/ Ik geef geen antwoord.</p>
Q5	Ποιό απο τα παρακάτω ισχύει για την καταγωγή του πατέρα σας;	Welke van de volgende is waar wat betreft de afkomst van uw vader?	<p>1. Ο πατέρας μου γεννήθηκε και μεγάλωσε στην χώρα στην οποία κατοικώ,</p> <p>2. Ο πατέρας μου γεννήθηκε σε άλλη χώρα, αλλά μεγάλωσε στην χώρα στην οποία κατοικώ,</p> <p>3. Ο πατέρας μου γεννήθηκε στην χώρα στην οποία κατοικώ, αλλά μεγάλωσε σε άλλη χώρα,</p> <p>4. Ο πατέρας μου ούτε γεννήθηκε ούτε μεγάλωσε στη χώρα στην οποία κατοικώ,</p> <p>5. Δεν ξέρω/ Δεν απαντώ.</p>	<p>1. Mijn vader is geboren en getogen in het zelfde land als waar ik nu woon.</p> <p>2. Mijn vader is niet geboren maar wel getogen in het zelfde land als waar ik nu woon.</p> <p>3. Mijn vader is geboren in het zelfde land als waar ik nu woon maar getogen in een ander land.</p> <p>4. Mijn vader is niet geboren en ook niet getogen in het zelfde land als waar ik nu woon.</p> <p>5. Ik weet het niet/ Ik geef geen antwoord.</p>
Q6	Έχετε γεννηθεί ως..	U bent geboren als..	<p>1. Γυναίκα,</p> <p>2. Άνδρας,</p> <p>3. Άλλο, για παράδειγμα intersex</p>	<p>1. Vrouw,</p> <p>2. Man,</p> <p>3. Ander, bijvoorbeeld intersex</p>
Q7	Θεωρείτε τον εαυτό σας ως..	U beschouwt uzelf als..	<p>1. Γυναίκα,</p> <p>2. Άνδρα,</p> <p>3. Άλλο, (παράδειγμα και ως άνδρα και ως γυναίκα, ούτε ως άνδρα ούτε ως</p>	<p>1. Vrouw,</p> <p>2. Man,</p> <p>3. Ander, (bijvoorbeeld als allebei vrouw en man, als geen van beide of</p>

γυναίκα, ως transgender).

als transgender)

Table A2*The Sexual Assertiveness Questionnaire (SAQ) in original, Dutch and Greek translation*

Item Number	Original Scale in English	Dutch Translation	Greek Translation
1	I feel uncomfortable telling my partner what feels good. (R)	Ik voel me ongemakkelijk mijn partner te vertellen wat goed voelt m.b.t. seks. (R)	Δεν νιώθω άνετα να λέω στον/στη σύντροφό μου τι μου αρέσει στο σεξ. (R)
2	I feel uncomfortable talking during sex. (R)	Ik vind praten gedurende seks ongemakkelijk. (R)	Δεν νιώθω άνετα να μιλάω κατά τη διάρκεια του σεξ. (R)
3	I am open with my partner about my sexual needs.	Ik ben open tegen mijn partner over mijn seksuele behoeften.	Επικοινωνώ ανοιχτά με τον/τη σύντροφό μου για τις σεξουαλικές μου ανάγκες.
4	I let my partner know if I want to have sex.	Ik laat mijn partner weten als ik zin in seks heb.	Όταν έχω επιθυμία για σεξ, το λέω στο/στη σύντροφό μου.
5	I feel shy when it comes to sex. (R)	Wat betreft seks, voel ik me verlegen. (R)	Όσον αφορά το σεξ, είμαι ντροπαλή. (R)
6	I approach my partner for sex when I desire it.	Als ik zin in seks heb, benader ik mijn partner.	Όταν έχω επιθυμία για σεξ, προσεγγίζω σεξουαλικά τον/τη σύντροφό μου.
7	I begin sex with my partner if I want to.	Ik initieer seks met mijn partner als ik het wil.	Όταν το θέλω, ξεκινάω σεξ με το/τη σύντροφό μου.
8	It is easy for me to discuss sex with my partner.	Het is makkelijk voor mij om met mijn partner over seks te praten.	Μου είναι εύκολο να συζητώ με το/τη σύντροφό μου για το σεξ.
9	I refuse to have sex if I don't want to.	Ik weiger seks te hebben als ik dat niet wil.	Αρνούμαι να κάνω σεξ, όταν δεν το θέλω.
10	I find myself having sex when I do not really want it. (R)	Ik merk dat ik soms seks heb zonder dat ik dat echt wil.	Παρατηρώ ότι κάποιες φορές κάνω σεξ χωρίς πραγματικά να το θέλω.
11	I give in and kiss if my partner pressures me, even if I already said no. (R)	Ik geef toe en kus mijn partner als hij/zij erop staat, zelfs als ik al nee heb gezegd. (R)	Υποκείπτο και φιλάω τον/τη σύντροφό μου αν επιμένει, ακόμα και αν έχω πει ότι δεν το θέλω. (R)
12	I have sex if my partner wants to, even if I	Ik heb seks met mijn partner als hij/zij	Κάνω σεξ με το/τη σύντροφό μου αν

	don't want to. (R)	dat wil, ook als ik dat niet wil. (R)	εκείνος/εκείνη το θέλει, ακόμα κι αν εγώ δεν το θέλω. (R)
13	It is easy for me to say no if I don't want to have sex.	Het is me makkelijk om nee te zeggen als ik geen zin in seks heb.	Μου είναι εύκολο να πω όχι όταν δεν έχω επιθυμία για σεξ.
14	I would ask my partner about his or her risk of HIV.	Ik zou mijn partner vragen naar zijn/haar risico op HIV.	Θα ρωτούσα το/τη συντροφό μου για την πιθανότητα να έχει HIV.
15	I would ask my partner if he or she has had sex with someone who shoots drugs with needles.	Ik zou mijn partner vragen of hij/zij seks heeft gehad met iemand die drugs gebruikt door middel van spuitjes.	Θα ρωτούσα το/τη σύντροφό μου αν έχει κάνει σεξ με κάποιον που κάνει χρήση ναρκωτικών με σύριγγα.
16	I ask my partner if he or she has practiced safe sex with other partners.	Ik vraag mijn partner of hij/zij aan veilige seks heeft gedaan met andere partners.	Ρωτώ το/τη σύντροφό μου αν έχει κάνει ασφαλές σεξ με άλλους συντρόφους.
17	I ask my partners about their sexual history.	Ik vraag mijn partner over zijn/haar seksuele geschiedenis.	Ρωτώ το/τη σύντροφό μου για το σεξουαλικό του/της παρελθόν.
18	I ask my partners whether they have ever had a sexually transmitted infection/disease.	Ik vraag mijn partner of hij/zij ooit een seksueel overdraagbare aandoening heeft gehad.	Ρωτώ το/τη σύντροφό μου αν είχε ποτέ κάποιο σεξουαλικά μεταδιδόμενο νόσημα.

Note. Original Scale taken from “*The development of the Sexual Assertiveness Questionnaire (SAQ): A comprehensive measure of sexual assertiveness for women,*” by Loshek, E. and Terrell, H. K., 2015. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 52(9), p. 1027. R= Item was reversed-coded. Question 1 to 10 pertain to the subscale on initiation of desired sexual activity, question 9 to 13 to the subscale on refusal of unwanted sex and question 14-18 to the subscale on asking about sexual history.

Table A3*The Self-Construal Scale (SCS) in original, Dutch and Greek translation*

Item Number	Original Scale in English	Dutch Translation	Greek Translation
1	I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.	Ik vind het leuk om in veel opzichten uniek en anders te zijn dan anderen.	Μου αρέσει να ξεχωρίζω και να είμαι διαφορετική από τους άλλους.
2	I can talk openly with a person who I meet for the first time, even when this person is much older than I am.	Ik kan open praten met iemand die ik voor het eerst ontmoet, zelfs als deze persoon veel ouder is dan ik.	Μπορώ να μιλήσω ανοιχτά με κάποιον που συναντώ για πρώτη φορά, ακόμη και αν αυτός/αυτή είναι μεγαλύτερος/μεγαλύτερη σε ηλικία.
3	Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument.	Zelfs als ik het sterk oneens ben met groepsleden (familie, schoolklas, groep van collega's, groep van vrienden en zo voort), vermijd ik discussie.	Ακόμα και εάν διαφωνώ έντονα με τα μέλη της ομάδας μου (οικογένεια, σχολική τάξη, ομάδα συνεργατών, παρέα κ.α.) αποφεύγω να τσακωθώ μαζί τους.
4	I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.	Ik respecteer mensen met autoriteit (mijn baas, een politieagent) met wie ik in contact kom.	Σέβομαι άτομα με μεγαλύτερο κύρος από εμένα (αφεντικό στην δουλειά, αστυνομία- υπηρεσίες) με τα οποία έρχομαι σε επαφή.
5	I do my own thing, regardless of what others think.	Ik doe mijn eigen ding, ongeacht wat anderen denken.	Κάνω αυτό που θέλω εγώ ανεξάρτητα από το τι σκέφτονται οι άλλοι.
6	I respect people who are modest about themselves.	Ik respecteer mensen die bescheiden zijn over zichzelf.	Εκτιμώ τους μετριοφρονες ανθρώπους.
7	I feel it is important for me to act as an independent person.	Ik vind het belangrijk dat ik me als onafhankelijk persoon kan gedragen.	Είναι σημαντικό για μένα να ενεργώ σαν ανεξάρτητο άτομο.
8	I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in.	Ik zal mijn eigen belang opofferen ten behoeve van mijn groep.	Μπορώ να θυσιάσω το προσωπικό μου συμφέρον για το καλό της ομάδας στην οποία ανήκω.
9	I'd rather say "No" directly, than risk being misunderstood.	Ik zeg liever direct "Nee" (als ik iets niet leuk vind), dan het risico te lopen verkeerd begrepen te worden.	Προτιμώ να πω 'όχι' κατευθείαν (όταν δεν μου αρέσει κάτι), παρά μισόλογα και να μην με καταλάβουν.

10	Having a lively imagination is important to me.	Een levendige fantasie hebben is belangrijk voor mij.	Είναι σημαντικό για μένα να έχω ζωηρή φαντασία.
11	I should take into consideration my parents' advice when making education/career plans.	Bij het maken van onderwijs-/carrièreplannen moet ik rekening houden met het advies van mijn ouders.	Όσον αφορά στις σπουδές μου και τα επαγγελματικά μου σχέδια, οφείλω να λαμβάνω υπόψη μου τη συμβουλή των γονέων μου.
12	I feel my fate is intertwined with the fate of those around me.	Ik heb het gevoel dat mijn lot verweven is met het lot van de mensen om me heen.	Νιώθω ότι η μοίρα μου είναι συνυφασμένη με αυτή των ανθρώπων γύρω μου.
13	I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I've just met. ^{IND}	Ik ben liever direct en oprecht als ik met mensen omga die ik net heb ontmoet.	Όταν γνωρίζω για πρώτη φορά κάποιον άνθρωπο προτιμώ να είμαι ευθύς και ειλικρινής.
14	I feel good when I cooperate with others.	Ik voel me goed als ik samenwerk met anderen.	Νιώθω καλά όταν συνεργάζομαι με άλλους.
15	I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards.	Ik vind het prettig om uitgekozen te worden voor lof of beloningen.	Νιώθω άνετα (όχι αμήχανα) όταν με επαινούν ή με επιβραβεύουν.
16	If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible.	Ik voel me verantwoordelijk voor het falen van mijn broer of zus.	Θα αισθανθώ συνυπεύθυνος αν κάποιο από τα αδέρφια μου αποτύχει σε κάτι.
17	I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments.	Ik heb vaak het gevoel dat mijn relaties met anderen belangrijker zijn dan mijn eigen prestaties.	Συχνά αισθάνομαι ότι οι σχέσεις μου με τους άλλους είναι σημαντικότερες από τις προσωπικές μου επιτυχίες.
18	Speaking up during a class (or a meeting) is not a problem.	Uitspreken tijdens een les (of een vergadering) is voor mij geen probleem.	Δεν δυσκολεύομαι να παίρνω το λόγο μέσα στην τάξη ή σε μία συνεδρίαση.
19	I would offer my seat in a bus to my professor (or my boss).	Ik zou mijn zitplaats in een bus aanbieden aan mijn professor (of mijn baas).	Θα έδινα την θέση μου στο λεωφορείο στον καθηγητή μου ή το αφεντικό μου.
20	I act the same way no matter who I am with.	Ik gedraag me op dezelfde manier, ongeacht met wie ik ben.	Συμπεριφέρομαι πάντα με τον ίδιο τρόπο, ανεξάρτητα με ποιόν είμαι μαζί.
21	My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me.	Mijn geluk hangt af van het geluk van de mensen om me heen.	Η ευτυχία μου εξαρτάται από την ευτυχία των ανθρώπων που με περιβάλλουν.
22	I value being in good health above	In goede gezondheid te zijn is voor mij	Η υγεία μου είναι το σημαντικότερο

23	everything. I will stay in a group if they need me, even when I am not happy with the group.	belangrijker dan alles. Ik blijf in een groep als ze me nodig hebben, zelfs als ik niet blij ben met de groep.	πράγμα για μένα. Θα παραμείνω στην ομάδα μου εάν με χρειάζεται ακόμα και εάν είμαι δυσαρεστημένος μαζί της.
24	I try to do what is best for me, regardless of how that might affect others.	Ik probeer te doen wat het beste voor mij is, ongeacht hoe dat anderen kan beïnvloeden.	Προσπαθώ να κάνω το καλύτερο για μένα ανεξάρτητα από τις επιπτώσεις που θα έχει στους άλλους.
25	Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me.	Voor mezelf kunnen zorgen is een eerste zorg voor mij.	Το να είμαι ικανός να φροντίζω τον εαυτό μου είναι πρωταρχικής σημασίας για μένα.
26	It is important for me to respect decisions made by the group.	Het is belangrijk voor mij om de beslissingen van de groep te respecteren.	Είναι σημαντικό για μένα να σέβομαι τις αποφάσεις της ομάδας μου.
27	My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.	Mijn persoonlijke identiteit, onafhankelijk van anderen, is erg belangrijk voor mij.	Η ταυτότητά μου ως πρόσωπο, η ανεξαρτησία μου από τους άλλους, είναι πολύ σημαντικό πράγμα για μένα.
28	It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group.	Het is belangrijk voor mij om de harmonie binnen mijn groep te bewaren.	Είναι σημαντικό για μένα να διατηρούνται οι ισορροπίες μέσα στην ομάδα μου.
29	I act the same way at home that I do at school (or work).	Ik gedraag me thuis hetzelfde als op school/werk.	Συμπεριφέρομαι στο σπίτι και στο σχολείο/σχολή/δουλειά με τον ίδιο τρόπο.
30	I usually go along with what others want to do, even when I would rather do something different.	Ik ga meestal mee in wat anderen willen doen, ook als ik liever iets anders zou doen.	Συνήθως κάνω αυτό που θέλουν οι άλλοι να κάνω, ακόμα και εάν θα ήθελα να κάνω κάτι διαφορετικό.

Note. Original Scale taken from “The measurement of independent and interdependent self-construals,” by Singelis, 1994, *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, 20(5), p. 585. Items 1,2,5,7,9,10,13,15,18,20,22,24,25,27,29 belong to the IndSC subscale. Items 3,4,6,8,11,12,14,16,17,19,21,23,26,28,30 belong to the InterSC subscale.

Appendix B

Invariance Testing

Following the recommendations of Fischer and Karl (2019), the present study used MCFA to check the measurement properties of SAQ and SCS in the Greek and Dutch sample. The following steps were followed, as defined by Fischer and Karl; first, the factor structure of each scale in each group was evaluated. Following, configural invariance was examined, meaning whether the factor structure of each scale was identical across the groups. Once configural invariance was confirmed, the next step was to pose more restrictions and test for metric invariance, which presupposes the same loading pattern and at least one equal loading in each group. Once metric invariance is confirmed, intercept invariance should be tested in which equality of intercepts is imposed. Lack of metric invariance renders comparison of the group means meaningless and invalid (Fischer & Karl, 2019).

Model fit was assessed by looking at the chi-square value, the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and the Root Mean Square of Error Approximation (RMSEA). A non-significant chi-square value, TLI values higher than 0.95 and RMSEA values between 0.06 and 0.08 indicated a good model fit (Fischer & Karl, 2019). A non-significant chi-square difference value indicated a significantly better fit of the more restrained model, the same as a difference in TLI and RMSEA equal or less to 0.01 (Fischer & Karl, 2019).

The theoretical structure of the Self-Construal Scale as described by Singelis (1994) was not confirmed, in neither of the samples, $\chi^2(404) = 588.6, p < .000$ and $\chi^2(387) = 660.2, p = .000$, $TLI = 0.47$ and $TLI = 0.26$, $RMSEA = 0.08$ and $RMSEA = 0.11$ for the Dutch and Greek sample respectively. Neither was configural invariance, with $\chi^2 \text{ Change } (28) = 49.82, p < .000$ and changes in TLI and RMSEA higher than 0.01. Inspection of the regression weights in both samples showed that none of the items of the independent subscale loaded significantly on the independence factor, and approximately half of those of the interdependent subscale loaded on the interdependence factor. In an attempt to achieve an acceptable model fit, the modification indices were inspected. Imposing correlations between errors and deleting the recommended items (items 9 and 24) led to a slight improvement in model fit, but as stated by Fischer and Karl (2019), model fit cannot be accepted when most of the items do not load on their factor.

EFA was conducted to investigate the reasons of the misfit further and detect possible solutions. Consistent with the method used by Singelis (1994) when testing the validity of a

two-factor structure of SCS, varimax rotation was applied, and a two-factor solution was imposed. The recommendations of Pallant (2016, p.101) were used in interpreting the results. Correlations lower than .03 between many items of the same subscale were observed. Almost half of the items were either loading on both factors or of none. A one- or three-factor solution appeared to fit better than a two-factor one. As a one- or three-factor solution of SCS would not be supported by the theoretical propositions of Singelis (1994), alternative models were not further explored.

The three-factor structure of SAQ did also not meet the acceptable standards for fit in either sample, even when the recommendations of the modification indices were followed, $\chi^2(106) = 143, p = .010$ and $\chi^2(106) = 149, p = .004, TLI = 0.9$ and $TLI = 0.88, RMSEA = 0.07$ and $RMSEA = 0.09$ for the Dutch and Greek sample respectively. However, an inspection of the regression weights showed that all items loaded significantly to their factor. A χ^2 Change (12) = 20.55, $p = .057$ indicated configural invariance. However, the change in TLI and RMSEA was higher than 0.01. Metric invariance was not achieved, with χ^2 Change (15) = 62.26, $p < .000$ and changes in TLI and RMSEA higher than 0.01. EFA did not point to changes that could improve cross-cultural fit.

Cultural differences in response style and in social desirability tendencies might have played a role in the lack of measurement invariance (Eskin, 2003; Singelis, 1994). Regarding SCS, in particular, the large number of indicators per factor might also have contributed to the lack of model fit and measurement invariance (Singelis, 1994).