

The Hofstad group: conditions of collective violence

A Case of Homegrown Jihadi Terrorism

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SUMMARY

Empirical research into homegrown Jihadi terrorism by applying pure sociology of terrorism in a single case study on the Hofstad group in the Netherlands.

Crisis and Security Management (MSc)
Public Administration
13 January 2016



**Universiteit
Leiden**
Campus Den Haag

Foreword

This is my master thesis, which, apart from being the final project to obtain a masters degree in crisis and security management, has been a personal expedition in many ways. The expedition started at the beginning of 2015 and has ended almost a year later. I can honestly say that I am proud of the result and what I have learned throughout the process.

The process of performing academic research and the documentation of findings was supervised by Ruth Prins. I cannot proceed before thanking her for her patience, enthusiasm and solid, but fair criticism whenever we discussed the progress of my research project. She knew exactly when to push me ahead, whenever I felt insecure about my ideas or the direction of the project. So Ruth; a thousand times thank you. I would also like to thank Bart Schuurman from the Centre for Terrorism and Counterterrorism of Leiden University, for his willingness to share his thoughts with me and to offer some suggestions for finding workable data. I am also very grateful for the correction of my writing by my roommate and friend Tom Pieke. We had a good laugh and some interesting conversations while improving my work. Finally, I thank my friend since high school, Evan, for his support in the making of the lay out of this document, and my parents and sister Wanita for having unconditional faith in all of my aspirations.

I believe that the results of this research project not only reflect implications for scholars of contemporary terrorism, but also my personal fascination for human migration problems, because that is what Jihadi terrorism in the Netherlands and many other European countries embodies: the development of a new community that is characterized by the largest cultural diversity Western European states have ever known. As a child of a migrant family living in the Netherlands, I personally experienced the struggles of a multicultural society, and I was exactly fourteen years old when I heard about the news that the Dutch Moroccan Mohammed Bouyeri had murdered Theo van Gogh in November 2004. It was an event that had a huge impact on my perception of the contemporary world and it undoubtedly influenced the choices I had to make in my future life.

Abstract

This master thesis is an attempt for theory-driven empirical research into a homegrown case of terrorism. As such, it explores the value of the pure sociology of terrorism theory by Senechal de la Roche (1996), who conceptualizes terrorism as a form of collective violence by applying the theory on the case of the Hofstad group in the Netherlands. The chosen research strategy is a single case study of a typical case of homegrown Jihadi terrorism in Western Europe. Open source data was collected by means of triangulation and arranged in a dataset. The analysis of the open source data was done through qualitative content analysis and guided by a coding scheme. The results of the analysis suggest that sociological variables are relevant in understanding violent behavior of the Hofstad group in the Netherlands. Consequently, the master thesis contains theoretical relevance for the field of terrorism studies, societal relevance for counterterrorism in the Netherlands and some recommendations for future research into cases of homegrown terrorism.

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1. Introduction – the quest for progress

An increasing number of terrorist incidents in the past twenty years in Western Europe have suggested an increased lethal threat coming from the Global Jihadi movement (Jordan, 2012). An example of a former Jihadi terrorist group in the Netherlands is the Hofstad group. The Hofstad group executed some attacks and came to the attention of the wider public when one of its members, Mohammed Bouyeri, assassinated filmmaker Theo van Gogh on 2 November 2004 (Vidino, 2007: 579). The Hofstad group is characterized by the autonomous radicalization of its members and by the fact that it is inspired by the Global Jihadi movement (ibid: 586). This autonomous radicalization of members of the Hofstad group indicates a new form of Islamist terrorist group in Western Europe in contrast with traditional Islamist terrorist cells that have stronger ties with Islamist terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda or the Islamic State.

The Dutch government also acknowledges the threat that emanates from Jihadi terrorism in several issues of the report ‘Threat Assessment Terrorism the Netherlands’ (NCTV, 2015). As a consequence the Dutch cabinet launched the ‘Action plan integral approach to Jihadism’ in 2014, which contains a mixture of new and existing measures, indicating that counterterrorism policy is still in development (Rijksoverheid, 2014). First we need to ask ourselves what knowledge has been produced by scientific research into Jihadi terrorism thus far.

Some scholars elaborated on the threat contemporary terrorism posed to the West and even claimed that the goals, methods and organization of Global Jihadism made it a new form of terrorism (Laqueur, 1999; Hoffman, 1999). According to Laqueur (1999) and Hoffman (1999) new terrorism is characterized by religious motivation, transnational operations and seeking to transform a world order of Western domination. The authors claimed that old terrorism aimed at acquiring short-term political power through national revolution with the goal of separating a state. Examples of such terrorist groups are the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Basque ETA movement who strived for independence. Other scholars like Crenshaw (2000) Duyvestein (2010) suggested that contemporary terrorism, such as Jihadi terrorism, is actually not so dissimilar from other forms of terrorism. This disagreement between different scholars is not really surprising given the fact that attempts to define ‘terrorism’ have been numerous Schmid & Jongman, 1988).

The study of terrorism started in the 1970s. The violence of terrorism was predominantly explained by taking a psychological approach. Explanations for terrorist behavior were focused on endogenous factors such as personality disorders. The assumption underlying these psychological theories is quite simple: individuals commit terrorist acts because they have one or more mental disorders (Silke, 1998). The psychological approach to terrorism showed divergent conclusions. Studies that claimed mental disorders lacked valid methods of research, while proper psychological research falsified hypotheses that involved personality disorders (ibid). Nevertheless, the psychological perspective can be viewed as the first wave of terrorism theories and it yielded certain results which, despite its shortcomings, could be used as a starting point.

Other scholars responded by claiming that sociological approaches such as collective action theory and social movement theories have much to contribute to terrorism studies (Oberschall, 2004; Beck, 2008). The main argument is that terrorism is one out of many modes of confrontation between insurgents and a state and it can therefore be explained by already existing sociological theories. Contributions came from Della Porta (2006) who compared political violence in Italy and Germany and Wiktorowicz (2004), who studied Islamic activism including Hamas in the Arab world.

An example of a purely sociological theory explaining terrorism has been developed by Black (2004), which strongly relies on Senechal de la Roche (1996) who theorizes a model of collective violence. Senechal de la Roche’s theory (1996) involves one of the most developed models within the sociological approach explaining terrorism as a form of collective violence, but there is no known empirical research that tested the assumptions of the collective violence model. Additionally, only 17 articles among 1569 articles as counted by Jeroen Gunning involved social movement theory in research into terrorism (Della Porta, 2009). As such, the sociological perspective can be considered as

the second wave of terrorism theories and its scientific value is unclear.

As a consequence of decades of research from mainly psychological models, Crenshaw (2000: 405) observed a lack of progress in developing an explanatory model that links the individual, group and societal levels in explaining the phenomenon of terrorism. In fact, literature on terrorism studies still lacks theory-driven empirical research into Jihadi terrorism. However, two exceptions must be mentioned after Crenshaw (2000) made her observation: Sageman (2004) and Bakker (2006). Sageman (2004) took a set of biographies of Salafi Jihadists and analyzed these individuals based on three categories of variables: social background, psychological make-up and circumstances for joining Jihad. In conclusion he rejected the claim that terrorists are poor and that they had received little education. Following the example of Sageman (2004), Bakker (2006) also involved social variables such as socioeconomic status, education and employment in his exploratory study of Jihadi terrorism in Europe. He employed a large data set which, although yielding valuable insights into the profile of terrorists in Western Europe, he did not sufficiently relate his research to existing theories on Jihadi terrorism [other than the model created by Sageman (2004)]. As a result, his analysis and conclusions were quite general. Even though important steps were made in the exploration of Jihadi terrorism in Europe, the implications for the debate regarding an explanatory model that links different levels of analysis remained unaddressed and unclear.

It is apparent that European governments like the Dutch government acknowledge the threat that emanates from Jihadi terrorism. At the same time, the literature on terrorism studies is characterized by a lack of progress in understanding how Jihadi terrorism leads to violent behavior from a sociological perspective. Additionally, the assumptions of sociological theories, like the well-developed model of Senechal de la Roche (1996), have not been empirically tested on cases of Jihadi terrorism. This calls into question what exactly the scientific value of the sociological approach is. This master thesis embraces this gap in the literature. The aim is therefore to gather deeper insight into the relevance of a sociological approach in explaining Jihadi terrorism, by performing theory-driven research into the Hofstad group as a case of Islamist terrorist groups that characterizes the terrorist threat Western Europe is confronted with. This leads to the following question:

Central question: To what extent and how could a purely sociological approach to terrorism by Senechal de la Roche (1996), explain the violent behavior of the Hofstad group?

The answer to this question is relevant for two main reasons. Firstly, it will offer insight into the relevance of a sociological approach in the academic quest for developing an explanatory model that enables scholars to better understand the occurrence of violent terrorism. The research I have conducted elaborates on the already existing factors explaining the extent and severity of violence in an attempt to understand why terrorism, as opposed to other forms of violence, occurs. Secondly, insights into sociological aspects of Jihadi terrorism hold implications for the question of whether the Dutch government is working with an action plan that corresponds with sociological problems of (potential) Jihadi terrorists in the Netherlands.

2. Theoretical Framework – The social structure of terrorism

This chapter is concerned with two main questions. The first question regards the concept of terrorism. In paragraph 2.1 the challenges of defining terrorism will be discussed in order to clarify the conception of terrorism for this master thesis. The second question relates to the state of affairs in terrorism studies. Paragraph 2.2 consists of a critique of early attempts by scholars to explain terrorism by means of psychological factors. The remaining paragraphs present a discussion of sociology as a framework, how it seeks to explain terrorism, and the selection and discussion of a sociological theory that guides the empirical research of this master thesis.

2.1. A conceptualization of terrorism

The aim of this paragraph is to explore different conceptualizations of terrorism to arrive at a viable definition for this master thesis. Since the inception of terrorism studies there have been challenges in defining the concept of terrorism. By acknowledging such challenges this research project attempts to avoid using the concept of terrorism in a way that does not fit the purpose of this master thesis. According to Crenshaw (2000), two particular issues with regard to the use of the word terrorism have continued to exist in the literature of terrorism studies (Crenshaw 2000: 406).

The first issue is related to the controversial use of the word 'terrorist'. The famous quote "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" originating from Gerald Seymour's book *Harry's Game* reflects this issue accurately. In practice, the word terrorism has been used to label the behavior of political opponents as illegitimate, while the same behavior will be labeled as legitimate as seen from the opposite perspective. Tilly (2004) has addressed this problem by illustrating how the terms terror, terrorism and terrorist are used to refer to political dissidents who use terror as a political strategy. Naturally, for academic purposes a definition of terrorism must be apolitical.

Secondly, previously established definitions of terrorism have been criticized for the reason that they encompass a large variety of phenomena. Take for example the definition of a leading scholar of terrorism studies Laqueur (1987) who defined terrorism as: "*The use of covert violence by a group for political ends*". Can we label a drone strike by a special division of the CIA on political opponents as terrorism? Or the hostage taking of American soldiers by Al-Qaeda? Both acts match the definition, because they involve covert violence performed by a group that serves a political goal. Laqueur's definition is a clear example of a definition that is too broad. A useful definition of terrorism must be specific and describe terrorism as a distinctive phenomenon.

But this research project considers a third issue. There seems to be disagreement in the literature of terrorism studies between those scholars who consider terrorism to be an expression of non-state actors and of those who refute this proposition by arguing that terrorism can also be expressed by states. Blakely (2007) for instance contends that orthodox terrorism scholars consider terrorism within existing institutions and power dynamics (ibid: 229). With this she means that orthodox terrorism scholars only focus on non-state actors against the liberal democratic state, thereby excluding state terrorism. In refuting this approach she argues that state terrorism is defined as threats or acts of violence carried out by representatives of the state against civilians to instill fear for political purposes (Blakely, 2007: 228). Her disapproval is therefore based on the fact that she considers the orthodox terrorism approach as too political, thereby arguing in accordance with the criticism posed by Tilly (2004).

Although it is tenable to favor a definition that is apolitical, I will argue that Blakely's (2007) reasoning is inadequate. Focusing on non-state actors when studying terrorism can be justified not because it serves political and normative ends of the state, but because non-state actors are essential to terrorism or as Black (2004: 19) would put it: "*pure terrorism has an upward direction, against a social superior*". It is social control from below (Baumgartner, 1984). By studying terrorism as violence

exclusively from non-state actors terrorism becomes a distinctive concept. The excessive use of violence by states to exercise social control is called state repression.

The formulation of an accurate and measurable definition is a necessary prerequisite for the identification of cases of terrorism and explanations of the violent behavior of terrorism. What then counts as terrorism in the context of this research project? According to Senechal de la Roche (1996: 101) terrorism is a form of collective violence, which is a way to exercise social control. It implies that terrorism is a violent group activity with the aim of exercising power over others to make them meet the demands of the terrorist. If terrorism is collective violence inflicted by social subordinates, how can it be distinguished from other forms of collective violence from below? Crenshaw (2000: 406) stated that terrorism is meant to hurt, not to destroy, which distinguishes it from genocide. Moreover, terrorist violence pre-eminently serves a political purpose, whereas guerilla warfare is a military activity (ibid). Senechal de la Roche (1996: 103) offers a solution to this semantic confusion by distinguishing terrorism alongside two dimensions: the degree of organization and the breadth of liability. Liability is a condition of accountability for grievance (ibid). While rioting is an unorganized form of collective violence with collective liability, terrorism is an organized form of collective violence with collective liability (Senechal de la Roche, 1996: 103). This means that a group is held accountable for the actions of one of its members. Accordingly, terrorism can be defined as:

"Nongovernmental unilateral violence with a high degree of organization and a logic of collective liability" (Senechal de la Roche, 2004: 2).

This definition is apolitical, because it is a description of group behavior, and formulated in such a way that it is a distinctive form of violence. Nevertheless it still has shortcomings. Firstly, the purpose of violence is not covered in this definition. As we have observed, terrorism is violence inflicted to achieve political ends, mostly by targeting civilians directly and a wider audience indirectly (Schmid, 2005; Weimann, 2008). Secondly, social control can also be exercised by the threat of committing violence (Schmid, 2005: 140). While this conceptualization also has shortcomings, it will be the one used in this master thesis. It is difficult to develop a universal definition that covers terrorism across all times and at all places, because terrorism seems to evolve along with the changes of societies. Nevertheless, it is important that the concept is clarified and understood as a distinctive phenomenon. The conceptualization of Senechal de la Roche (2004) meets the criteria of being apolitical and distinctive, and fits the purposes of this research project. Now that we have defined the concept of terrorism, we will turn to the literature explaining the phenomenon.

2.2 The psychological approach to terrorism

The psychological approach to terrorism was elaborated and tested during the 'first wave' of terrorism studies in the 1970s. At the heart of this approach lies the assumption that terrorism, especially extreme violence, could be explained by personality disorders (Crenshaw, 2000: 53). The appeal to this type of reasoning lies in the observation that only very few individuals of aggrieved communities engage in terrorism, while most of them do not (Silke, 1998). And so, people that do engage in terrorist activities must be abnormal in some way. This is called attribution theory, and it argues that extreme behavior stems from an extreme personality (Silke, 2008).

A number of scholars investigated the personality of individual terrorists to test the assertion of personality disorders. Pearce (1977) for example claimed that terrorists are sociopaths, by analyzing terrorist autobiographies, biographies and media interviews. Cooper (1978) took a comparable

approach by studying the German terrorist Andreas Baader. Lasch (1979) postulated that terrorists are narcissistic and also used biographies for his inferences of narcissistic personality disorder. Corrado (1981: 297) offered methodological criticism on this research, concluding that these studies lacked clinical observations of the individual terrorists. In fact, the findings of the psychological research that involved clinical observations, like Hubbard (1978), only determined that a large majority of the investigated imprisoned terrorists had a dysfunction in the middle ear, which according to him indirectly caused violence. The psychiatrist Professor Rasch (1979) studied 11 suspected terrorists, including Andreas Baader who was also studied by Cooper (1978), concluding that nothing was found that could justify claims of sociopathy.

Hence, the psychological approach to terrorism showed divergent conclusions. Studies claiming that mental disorders cause violent behavior lacked valid methods of research. On the other hand, psychological research that used proper research methods did falsify hypotheses that involved personality disorders. The weakness of the psychological approach can best be described by the Cheshire-cat logic (Silke, 1998). The Cheshire cat logic represents an attribution error – an error which refers to the bias of expecting a certain personality based on what an individual does. The lack of evidence from the psychological approach therefore suggests that alternative perspectives can contribute to terrorism studies. Such a response came from sociologists.

2.3 Sociology as a general framework

The sociological approach to terrorism is embedded in an older academic tradition called sociology. In order to understand the answers provided by the sociological approach regarding the debate surrounding the nature of terrorism, we need a more profound understanding of sociology as an academic discipline and its various perspectives on society.

Sociology is the study of human society, and is characterized by theoretical pluralism. Three schools of thought have developed alongside the development of modern society, guiding the research of sociologists: The Structural-Functional Approach, The Social-Conflict Approach and The Symbolic-Interaction Approach (Macionis, 2014: 10-12).

The Structural-Functional Approach suggests that society is a social system in existence for the survival of its members. Society is divided in functional subsystems that cooperate and contribute to the greater good. Actors' behavior must be understood in relation to their location and position in these functional subsystems. According to this approach, the family is an example of a functional subsystem that functions to contribute to the survival of society (the larger social system). This approach was strongly influenced by Emile Durkheim who is known for his work on social solidarity (Cuff, Sharrock & Francis, 2006: 54).

The Social-Conflict Approach views society as an arena of inequalities that causes conflict and change (Macionis, 2014: 13). The Conflict Approach emerged in the 1960s when there was renewed attention for the ideas of Karl Marx (Cuff, Sharrock & Francis, 2006: 88). Central to Marx's school of thought is class struggle, which follows on from the social structure (Coser, 1959: 200). So, contrary to Structural Functionalism, the Social Conflict Approach views social structure as a source of conflict between people from different class, race, ethnicity, gender and age (Macionis, 2014: 13). This approach teaches us that society is not a system of cooperation, but instead a social system that benefits some more than others.

Finally, the Symbolic-Interaction Approach views society as the outcome of the everyday interaction between individuals (Macionis, 2014: 16). Unlike Structural Functionalism and the Social Conflict Approach, it takes a micro-level perspective by observing and analyzing daily interactions at the individual level. The roots of Symbolic Interactionism lie in the thinking of Max Weber, known for his emphasis on individuality, referring to the distinctiveness of individual cases as the driving force for science (Cuff, Sharrock & Francis, 2006: 32). The underlying assumption of Symbolic Interactionism is that people construct reality through interaction, because people attach meaning to things by interacting

with each other (Macionis, 2006: 16). As such, the third approach of sociology is complementary to the macro-level framework of Structural Functionalism and the Social Conflict Approach.

As shown, sociology comprises of different perspectives on human behavior in society, providing us with a framework that can be applied to terrorism. It is important to determine what exactly we mean by a 'sociological' framework, before proceeding with a discussion of the various terrorism theories produced by sociology. The traditional three schools of thought illustrate that a sociological framework provides for theory which studies the relationship between actors and their environment. Sociology also provides for a macro-level perspective focusing on the overarching social structure, as well as a micro-level perspective focusing on group and individual behavior.

Several scholars have adopted a sociological perspective on terrorism. Borum, for example, argued that decades of terrorism studies yielded the view that terrorism is the result of a dialectical process that gradually pushes individuals to commit violent acts (2011a: 15). Contributions from sociology to better understand the radicalization process came from social movement theory (ibid: 16). Social movements are defined as "*large-scale, collective efforts to bring about or resist changes that bear on the lives of many*" (Oberschall, 1993: 2). The reasoning is simple: just like the labor movement or the women's rights, terrorism is collective action arising from a mass sentiment of discontent. Oberschall (2004: 27) argues that terrorism can be explained by the four dimensions of collective action, namely (1) discontent; (2) ideology-feeding grievances; (3) capacity to organize and (4) political opportunity. Beck (2008) names the framework the tripartite social movement approach, comprising of resource mobilization theories, theories on political opportunity structures and framing theories on justifications and appeals to mobilize support for the terrorist cause.

In practice however, social movement theory and terrorism have remained largely separate (Della Porta, 2012). Exceptions are Wiktorowicz (2004), who studied Islamic activism including Hamas in the Arab world, and Della Porta (2006) who compared political violence in Italy and Germany. These contributions to terrorism studies are apparent by the fact that they illustrated how an established field of study such as social movement theory can explain cases of terrorism. Despite such efforts, just 17 among 1569 articles published on terrorism addressed the social movement perspective (Della Porta, 2009: 6). This observation also applies to empirical studies into Jihadi terrorism.

There is a rather distinctive approach concerning the sociological perspective on terrorism, in the sense that it does not fit into traditional schools of thought and it attracts little attention of terrorism scholars. This approach is called 'pure sociology of terrorism'. The theory of pure sociology of terrorism was developed by Senechal de la Roche (1996) and has its origins in the pure sociology paradigm by Black (1976; 1995; 1998). Roberta Senechal de la Roche (1996) was the first to conceptualize terrorism as a form of collective violence within the pure sociology framework. Pure sociology is best characterized as sociology that: "explains human behavior with its social geometry- its multidimensional location and direction in social space" (Black, 2004: 14). Black contends that pure sociology ignores psychology and teleology. Behavior of people, including terrorism, is not explained by feelings, thoughts or attitudes, nor by human goals or ends (ibid). Social reality according to this paradigm does not exist in the minds of people. A multidimensional social space implies that the size, duration and boundaries are variable, meaning that purely sociological research is not necessarily micro- or macro-level research; it depends on the case in question.

Before proceeding to the next paragraph in which I will elaborate further on this framework of pure sociology, it is important to mention that the position of this master thesis is that pure sociology receives too little attention. There are important reasons to empirically test this distinctive approach. Firstly, although the sociological model of collective violence by Senechal de la Roche (1996) cannot be applied to explain the entire process of terrorism, it is a somewhat detailed and developed conceptual model which offers guidelines for empirical research into structural factors. In that capacity, empirical research into the social geometry of terrorist cases of the Global Jihad is complementary to earlier influential empirical research done by, for example, Sageman (2004) and Bakker (2006). These scholars analyzed Jihadi terrorist groups at the individual level and involved psychological variables in their research. The pure sociology framework enables research to investigate beyond the level of individuals and groups and it answers to the call by Crenshaw (2000), who highlighted the need an integrated

theory for the field of terrorism studies. Secondly, even though terrorism has attracted much attention of scholars after 9/11, most research concerning radicalization into violent extremism has been conceptual rather than empirical (Borum, 2011b: 37). Sageman (2004) and Bakker (2006) are an exception in that matter.

Research that applies a purely sociological approach to terrorism has the potential to increase our knowledge on sociological factors explaining terrorism. This is the most important reason that the theory of pure sociology of terrorism will be applied in my research. A detailed and developed model of pure sociology of terrorism enables us to carry out a more in depth research into sociological factors that explain terrorism.

2.4 Pure sociology as framework

As stated earlier, pure sociology of terrorism is rooted in the pure sociology paradigm of Donald Black (1976; 1995; 1998). This section will first discuss what pure sociology means to understand how it differs from other sociological approaches. It is important to grasp how pure sociology understands human behavior within social life and how this can be studied. Thereafter, the theory of collective violence by Senechal de la Roche (1996) will be elaborated on, as the guiding theory for the empirical research of this master thesis.

Sociology is the science of social reality. Social reality according to Black differs from psychological reality in the sense that it is external and beyond subjectivity: it does not exist in the minds of people (Black, 1995: 848). Thus, social reality has a different ontology from the perspective of sociology compared to the perspective of psychology. Black (1995: 848) states that few sociologists have succeeded in developing theory that understands social reality in itself and he argues that even the founding fathers of sociology, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, are in fact social psychologists because they studied social phenomena by means of psychological reasoning.

Pure sociology conceptualizes social life in social space in a multi-dimensional way, consisting of a vertical, horizontal, symbolic, corporate and normative dimension (Black, 1995: 851). The shape of social space is variable, because the size, duration and boundaries are variable. Social space is defined by the characteristics of all individuals involved in a particular case, which he calls social participation (ibid: 853). The vertical dimension refers to economic position, while the horizontal dimension refers to the degree of intimacy and integration (Black, 2004: 15). The symbolic dimension refers to differences in cultural expression while the corporate dimension to involvement of groups (ibid). Finally, the normative dimension is about exercising social control in response to deviant behavior.

All human conduct has a location and direction in social space (see table 1). For instance, when the Kurdish community in the Netherlands protests against an apparent lack of political action on behalf of the Dutch parliament regarding the civil war in Syria, we speak of cultural and relational distance and a corporate structure with an upward direction. The social groups lack a close relationship, speak different languages and the appeals of the Kurdish community are against a socially superior group, namely politicians.

What then is the role of humans in this paradigm? Black (1995: 858) remains somewhat vague in this matter. He states: *“Instead of the action of people as such - persons and groups- human behavior becomes the action of social life: social action. And instead of a characteristic of human beings with their own propensities, human behavior becomes a characteristic of social beings with their own propensities”* (Black, 1996: 859). So, human behavior is human not because it is a product of human thinking, but because it is the result of characteristics of a certain context. In addition, pure sociology is not teleological; what humans do is not explained in terms of pursuit of individual goals and preferences (ibid: 861). Furthermore, Black (1995) disputes that this is even observable.

		Movements	
		I. Locations	II. Directions
Dimensions	1. Vertical	- High - Low	- Upward - Downward - Lateral
	2. Horizontal	- Close - Distant	- Outward - Inward
	3. Symbolic	- Homogeneous - Heterogeneous	- Outward - Inward
	4. Corporate	- Individualistic - Corporate	- Outward - Inward
	5. Normative	- Normal - Deviant	- Outward - Inward

Table 1: Pure sociology characterization of human behavior

2.5 Pure sociology of terrorism: collective violence

Pure sociology explains human behavior with its location and direction in social space, or social geometry as Black (2004) refers to it. In section 2.1 we established that terrorism could be conceptualized as collective violent behavior. The underlying assumption of pure sociology is that no individual or collectivity is inherently violent (ibid: 15). Thus, individuals or collectivities behave violently when the social structure is violent.

Senechal de la Roche (1996) developed a sociological model explaining terrorism based on the pure sociology paradigm of Black (1976; 2005). This theory considers terrorism as collective violence, which is a form of social control (Senechal de la Roche, 1996). Social control is the process by which people define and respond to deviant behavior (ibid: 97). Following Black's (1976; 1995) pure sociology framework, Senechal de la Roche (1996: 102) suggests that collective violence is not limited to motivational and psychological factors. She states: "How people perceive, interpret, intend or experience collective violence is beyond [the] scope [of pure sociology]" (ibid).

Senechal de la Roche (1996) conceptualizes four forms of collective violence: lynching, vigilantism, rioting and terrorism. These types of collective violence are defined alongside two dimensions: the breadth of liability and the degree of organization (ibid: 102).

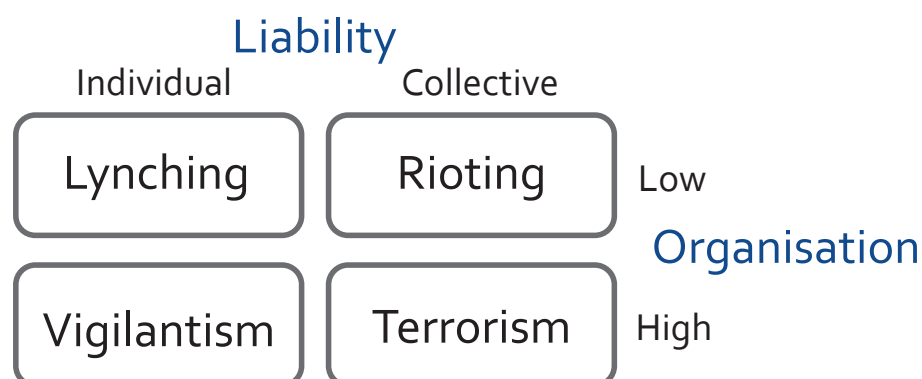


Figure 1: Four Forms of collective violence (Senechal de la Roche, 1996)

Where liability is a condition of accountability for grievance, the degree of organization refers to the capacity for collective action (Senechal de la Roche, 1996: 103). Terrorism is relatively organized and adheres to the logic of collective liability, meaning that a social category, such as 'politician', is held accountable for the actions of an alleged offender (ibid). The question that remains is: when does terrorism occur? Naturally, pure sociology points at a specific social geometry. Social geometry can be defined in terms of the social characteristics of all actors involved (Black, 1995: 853). The level of social control that occurs depends on the relative position of all parties within a certain social space (Senechal de la Roche, 1996: 101). According to Senechal de la Roche (1996: 115) occurrences of terrorism depends on two main variables: (1) the degree of social polarization and (2) the continuity of deviant behavior at which the violence is directed. The next sections discuss these variables in more detail.

2.5.1 Social polarization

The degree of social polarization implies intercollectivity and therefore characterizes a relation between groups. In the case of terrorism, it means that two social groups are divided into contrasting social positions. The greater the social polarization between social groups, the higher the probability for terrorism (ibid: 120). Social polarization can be divided into sub variables; these are (a) relational distance, (b) cultural distance, (c) functional independence and (d) inequality (ibid).

(a) Relational distance

Relational distance is the degree to which people participate in one another's lives (Senechal de la Roche, 1996: 106). Relational distance and terrorism have a positive correlation. Thus, the greater the relational distance between two groups, the higher the probability for collective violence. Senechal de la Roche (1996) states that relational distance is measured by the number of ties between people of different social groups, the frequency and duration of contact as well as the age and nature of their relationship. The model presumes that groups handle unknown offenders more harshly than those with whom they are acquainted (ibid: 106). Literature on homegrown Jihadi terrorism has argued that the members of terrorist groups were alienated from society before committing attacks in the name of Islam (Leiken, 2005; Vidino, 2007). This corresponds with the model of Senechal de la Roche (1996). So the important question in this case is: how alienated were the members of the Hofstad group from those they renounced from and how is that reflected in their actions? The following hypothesis will be tested:

Hypothesis₁: *"The greater the relational distance between the parties in a conflict, the greater the likelihood and severity of collective violence"* (ibid: 106).

(b) Cultural distance

Cultural distance is defined by differences in expressive aspects of social life between two social groups (ibid: 108). According to Senechal de la Roche, cultural distance and terrorism also correlate positively. As cultural differences increase, the probability of terrorism increases. Indicators of cultural distance include differences in language, dress, religion and art (Senechal de la Roche, 1996: 108). Note that the model speaks of expressive aspects of social life as an indication of cultural distance. In other words, if people are culturally distant, they will express themselves differently. Thus, the presumption is that members of the Hofstad group expressed themselves differently from native Dutch citizens, explaining their violent behavior. The following hypothesis will be tested:

Hypothesis₂: *"As differences in cultural expression increase, so does the probability and severity of collective violence"* (ibid: 108-109).

(c) Functional interdependence

Functional interdependence is the degree to which groups cooperate with one another, economically, politically, militarily or otherwise (ibid: 111). Functional interdependence and terrorism have a negative correlation. The assumption is that interdependence decreases the probability of terrorism. Functional interdependence requires more consideration than the other variables concerning social polarization of a certain social structure. In advanced welfare states in Western Europe such as the Netherlands, functional interdependence in different social groups is difficult to measure because the government provides social security for citizens. Social benefits ensure that social groups are less dependent on each other in their pursuit of welfare. The remaining question is whether the members of the Hofstad group participated in Dutch society as other citizens around them did. Differently stated: how integrated were the members of the Hofstad group? To what extent did they profit from functional structures in wider society? Conversely, one could argue that social groups that are poorly integrated in society are functionally independent, according to the theory put forward by Senechal de la Roche (1996) and are therefore more inclined towards collective violence. The following hypothesis based on her research will therefore be tested:

Hypothesis₃: *"Functional interdependence reduces the severity of violence, when collective violence does occur" (ibid: 111).*

(d) Inequality

Inequality and terrorism have a positive correlation (ibid). Thus, the greater the inequality between two social groups, the greater the probability of terrorism. Moreover, terrorism is usually upwardly directed (Senechal de la Roche, 1996). The model argues that modern terrorists target high-status and powerful adversaries such as governments with their attacks (ibid: 114). Inequality of status is defined in terms of differences in wealth, among other variables (Senechal de la Roche, 1996: 112). Even though the theory is indefinite about how inequality of status is measured, it does seem to suggest that inequality is understood according to differences in political and economic status. It suggests that the members of the Hofstad group had fewer financial resources and political power than their adversaries.

Hypothesis₄: *"Unilateral violence, like terrorism, is unlikely to occur when parties in conflict are equal in resources" (ibid: 113).*

2.5.2 The continuity of deviant behavior

The continuity of deviant behavior is a characterization of acts of the social superior. Two elements of the variable need clarification. Firstly, continuity implies a quantification of certain behavior. It is measured by frequency and duration of deviant behavior (Senechal de la Roche, 1996: 115). Secondly, behavior is deviant when it departs from a social norm. Senechal de la Roche (1996: 118) specifically refers to offensive behavior as an indication of deviation. It is a qualification of behavior as seen from the perspective of the offended. Terrorists commonly have a single grievance, which is defined as a condition that they define as unjust or immoral (ibid). Patterns of domination, or in other words, repeated offenses cause the grievance of terrorists (ibid). This theory requires us to study if some sort of pattern of domination helps us understand the violent behavior of the Hofstad group. Thus, and of considerable importance in this sense, is whether or not, and if so, how often and how long members of the Hofstad group reported offenses by social superiors from Dutch society. Accordingly, the following hypothesis will be tested:

Hypothesis₅: *"Terrorism normally arises with intractable offenses of longer standing" (Senechal de la Roche, 1996: 119).*

Let us recall that the theory has considered collective violence as the result of a particular social structure and not of personal motivation. However, it does not mean that pure sociology of terrorism denies that social conditions can be frustrating and that those feelings can cause aggression. Instead, a purely sociological approach is concerned with explaining the likelihood of terrorism by studying its social structure (Senechal de la Roche, 1996: 102). It implies that pure sociology of terrorism accepts endured grievance as a given fact. After discussing key components of the model we can conclude that the theory hypothesizes that terrorism occurs when social polarization is greater and deviant behavior of offenders endures (Senechal de la Roche, 1996: 115). The conceptual framework is reflected in the following figure:

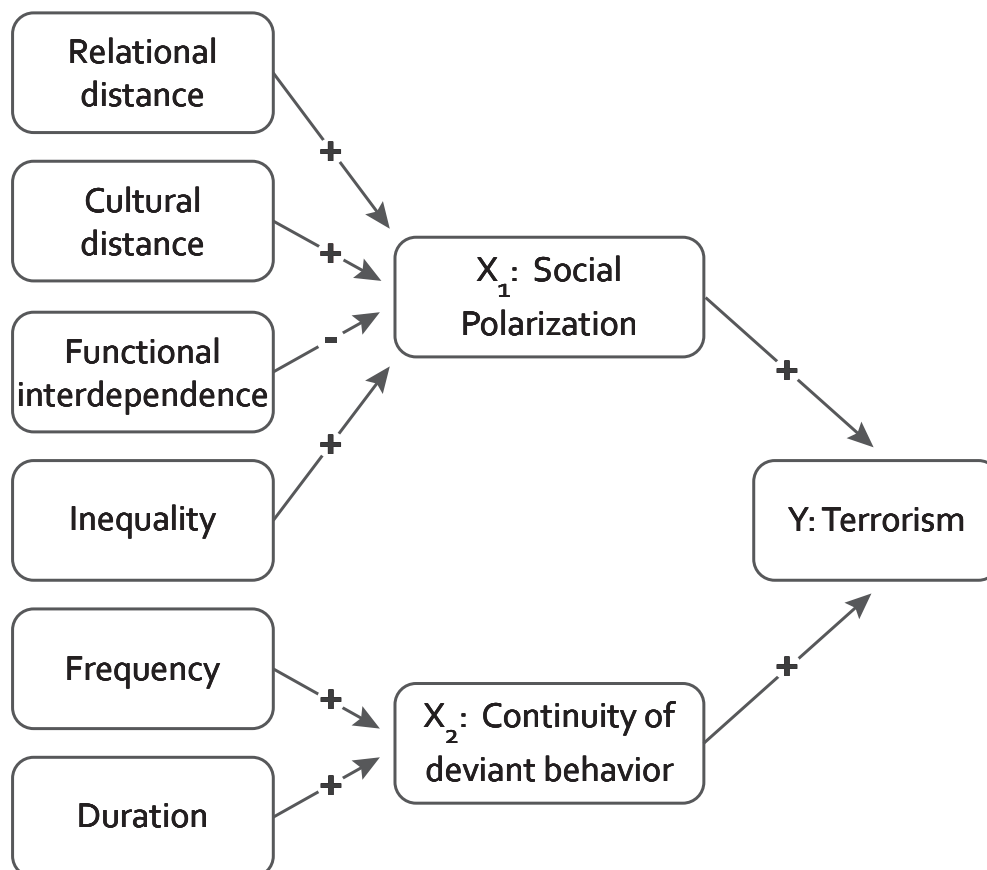


Figure 2: The pure sociology model by Senechal de la Roche (1996)

3. Research Design

The objective of this master thesis is to discover to what extent and how a purely sociological approach can explain the violent behavior of a particular social group: Jihadi terrorists. To achieve this, the research was based on a research design that reflects the practical opportunities, the gathering of related data and the analysis of findings to answer the central question of this master thesis. The research strategy is a single typical case study. Paragraph 3.1 will therefore offer a justification for the choice for the typical case study. Paragraph 3.2 will describe the Hofstad group and explain why it is a typical case, while paragraph 3.3 is concerned with the operationalization of variables. Paragraph 3.4 is concerned with the method for data collection and 3.5 with the used method for analysis. Finally, paragraph 3.6 will reflect on implications for validity and reliability of this research design.

3.1. Research strategy: single case study

The research strategy I chose for this master thesis is a single case study. A case study may be understood as the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is to shed light on a larger class of cases (Gerring, 2007: 20). We are in essence speaking of generalization. Generalization is the extent to which research findings and conclusions apply to people, situations, organizations or cases that are not involved in the concerned research (Smaling, 2009: 5). Accordingly, there are different designs that provide for the capacity to generalize research findings. The applied technique in this master thesis is exemplary generalizability; meaning that the selection of people, a group of people or a situation is typical for other people or cases.

The selection itself is performed by means of a so-called 'analogical reasoning' (ibid: 8). Section 3.2 elaborates on the analogical reasoning of this research project and explains the typicality of the Hofstad group. Also, generalization can only be performed when the case study design is appropriately informed by theory, in order to contribute to an established theory (Rowley, 2002: 20). The single case study research met this requirement by guidance of the theory of Senechal de la Roche (1996). Here, it is argued that the exemplary generalizability is appropriate for research that is a first attempt to test the value of a purely sociological approach to terrorism. Therefore the findings of the empirical research will have implications for further development of the pure sociology theory of Senechal de la Roche (1996) in explaining cases of homegrown terrorism.

3.2. The Hofstad group: a typical case of homegrown terrorism

The case of the Hofstad group in the Netherlands exemplifies a phenomenon that also manifested itself in other Western-European countries (Leiken, 2005). Examples include the Madrid train bombings in Spain in March 2004 as well as the London bombings in the United Kingdom in July 2005, which exemplify other cases of Jihadi terrorism committed by Europeans inspired by the Global Jihadi movement (Jordan, 2012). The Hofstad group is a case of homegrown Jihadi terrorism. The group owes its name to the Dutch intelligence agency AIVD that used the name during their investigation into the group from October 2003 and onwards (Schuurman, Eijkman & Bakker, 2014: 65). The group became publicly known under this name when the media began writing about them after the assassination of Theo van Gogh by Bouyeri. Note however that neither the group itself nor the public prosecutor referred to the group as the Hofstad group.

According to Vidino (2007: 579) homegrown Islamist terrorist groups in Europe can be characterized by a typical structure and composition. The composition of these Islamic terrorist groups in Western Europe is typical in the sense that the group consists of and is characterized by:

- (1) European born-Muslims;
- (2) A small number of converts;
- (3) Marginal ties with structured groups such as Al-Qaeda;
- (4) Spontaneous origin;
- (5) Radical Islam is embraced through lectures of an older charismatic figure.

The Hofstad Group fits the profile of Islamic terrorist groups in Western Europe as conceptualized by Vidino (2007) and can therefore be considered as a typical case. Firstly, the Hofstad group consisted of several European born-Muslims such as Mohammed Bouyeri, Samir Azzouz and Ismail Aknikh (Vermaat, 2006: 10-11). Secondly, the group featured some converts like Jason Walters and Jermaine Walters (ibid). Thirdly, the Dutch Intelligence Service (AIVD) never found any frequent contact between Hofstad group members and international terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda, let alone that Al-Qaeda acted as principal (AIVD, 2004: 19-20). Fourthly, there is no clear evidence that one or more persons are responsible for the establishment of ties between members, nor was there a clear goal initially. Fifthly, the members of the Hofstad group listened to preaching of the Syrian Riduan al-Issar also known as Abu Khatib, who became known as the spiritual leader during the so-called 'living room meetings' at Mohammed Bouyeri's place (Leiken, 2005; Vidino, 2005). Important to note here is that the Hofstad group is considered to be a group, not because the attacks of the members were coordinated collectively, but because criminal proceedings and investigative journalism have revealed that the members inspired each other in their radical interpretation of Islam and came together frequently in 'Huiskamerbijeekomsten' and chatrooms.

The Hofstad group will be studied by means of collecting data on three prominent members of the group: Mohammed Bouyeri, Jason Walters and Samir Azzouz. The reason for this is two-fold. Schuurman, Eijkman & Bakker (2014: 66) claim that the group consisted of approximately 38 people. Of those 38 people, Bouyeri, Walters, Azzouz received a long sentence by the Dutch judiciary for committing and/or plotting terrorist attacks on Dutch targets. Therefore it is proof of their militancy, making it a case of terrorism. Also, consultation with an expert of the Hofstad group and a first exploration of data revealed that primary and secondary resources were only sufficient in the case of Mohammed Bouyeri, Jason Walters and Samir Azzouz to test the guiding theoretical model.

3.3. Operationalization of variables

The aim of this master thesis is to discover the scientific value of the theory of Senechal de la Roche (1996) by testing it on a case of Jihadi terrorism. In order to accomplish this, the concepts of the theory had to be translated into observable phenomena. The activity of translating abstract theoretical concepts into observable phenomena is called operationalization (Carlson & Hyde, 2003: 149). Two types of observations can be distinguished: direct and indirect observables (ibid). Direct observables refer to phenomena that are immediately observable by using the senses, like observing whether a person has blue or brown eyes. Indirect observables refer to phenomena that cannot be observed by the senses and that need some logical reasoning through the establishment of indicators in order to observe (Carlson & Hyde, 2003: 149). The variables in this research are all examples of indirect observables that require certain reasoning for measurement, since it is impossible to observe something such as 'functional interdependence' by mere sensory observation.

The following schemes illustrate the operationalization of the variables in this master thesis:

a. Relational Distance

Definition: The degree to which a Hofstad group member is in contact with non-Muslims.

Dimensions: i. Qualitative
ii. Quantitative

Indicators: 1. Is the Hofstad group member friends with a non-Muslim? (i)
2. Is the Hofstad group member in a love relationship with a non-Muslim? (i)
3. Is the Hofstad group member professionally involved with non-Muslim? (i)
4. Does the Hofstad group member speak with non-Muslims on at least a weekly basis? (ii)

These indicators are partially derived from social cohesion research from 2010 in the Netherlands done by Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 2010). Statistics Netherlands measured contact on a weekly base, and underscored contact with friends. Indicators two and three are of my own making, and are also considered in order to assess mutual trust to determine a variety of types of relations.

b. Cultural Distance

Definition: The extent to which a Hofstad group member differs in expressive aspects of social life compared to native Dutch people.

Dimensions: i. Language
ii. Religion
iii. Dress

Indicators: 1. Does the Hofstad group member speak a non Western-European language regularly (excluding Dutch)? (i)
2. Is the Hofstad group member Muslim? (ii)
3. Does the Hofstad group member regularly visit a mosque? (ii)
4. Does the Hofstad group member regularly wear Islamic garb? (iii)

These four indicators are all of my own making. Indicator one is based on the observation that Muslim migrants in the Netherlands originate from different Islamic countries, such as Morocco and Turkey, presuming that Muslims in the Netherlands speak different non-Western European languages. Indicators two, three and four are self-evident in the sense that they reflect common Islamic customs.

c. Functional Interdependence

Definition: The degree to which a Hofstad group member participates in Dutch society

Dimensions: i. Nationality
ii. Education
iii. Occupation

Indicators: 1. Is the Hofstad group member in possession of a Dutch passport? (i)
2. Does the Hofstad group member go to school? (ii)
3. Does the Hofstad group member attend classes weekly? (ii)
4. Does the Hofstad group member have a paid or unpaid job? (ii)

All four indicators are of own making. Indicator one is based on two assumptions, namely that Islamist terrorist groups are composed of mostly migrants of which some hold a passport or residence permit and some do not, and without a Dutch passport possibilities for participation in education or employment are limited. Indicators two and three both concern educational activity and are based on the observation that Jihadists in Western Europe are relatively young, averaging an age of 27 years (Bakker, 2006: 41). It increases the probability that participation of Jihadists in Dutch Society is connected with education. Other activities cannot be logically excluded and that is why indicator four is concerned with employment.

d. Inequality

Definition: The extent to which a Hofstad group member possesses material and immaterial resources that acquires status and power in Dutch society.

Dimensions: i. Economic status
ii. Power position

Indicators: 1. Does the Hofstad group member have a yearly income (in euros) above the Dutch average? (i)
2. Did the Hofstad group member acquire higher education?(i)
3. Is the Hofstad group member in a managerial position in a company? (ii)
4. Is the Hofstad group member in political or administrative office? (ii)

All four indicators are of own making. Indicator one is an example of material resources by assessing the yearly income compared with the Dutch average according to Statistics Netherlands (CBS). Indicator two assesses the education level of Hofstad group members. The Programs HAVO, VWO, HBO and WO within the Dutch educational system are qualified as higher education. Indicator three assessed the relative power position in professional affairs, and all professions in which a Hofstad group member was contractually responsible for other employees qualified as a managerial position. The fourth indicator assumes that political or administrative jobs generate influence and prestige in a democratic system. Therefore, all elected positions such as town councilors, provincial state members and members of parliament, and administrative jobs within authorities such as civil servants, police officers, and soldiers were qualified as political or administrative office.

e. Continuity of deviant behavior

Definition: The degree to which a member of the Hofstad group (publicly) declared an offense against the Dutch elite.

Dimensions: i. Political (elite)
ii. Law enforcement (elite)
iii. Cultural (elite)

Indicators: 1. Did a Hofstad group member report an insult from a Dutch politician? (i)
2. Did a Hofstad group member report an insult from a Dutch police officer? (ii)
3. Did a Hofstad group member report an insult from a Dutch TV show? (iii)
4. Did a Hofstad group member report an insult from a Dutch artist? (iii)

All four indicators are of own making. The indicators were designed to affect a variety of the Dutch elite. Indicator one concerns all politicians that were in office on behalf of a Dutch political party such as councilors, members of parliament, members of cabinet, mayors, alderman. Indicator two assessed whether Hofstad group members felt insulted, not by those who make the law, but by those who enforce it. Indicator three assessed insults from Dutch spoken TV shows, such as news shows, comedy, talk shows or documentaries. Finally, indicator four assessed whether Hofstad group members felt insulted by filmmakers, painters, musicians, comedians, or radio dj's.

3.4. Data collection: data triangulation

Testing pure sociology of terrorism on the case of the Dutch Hofstad group is a challenging task for two related reasons. Firstly, the research concerns a case of terrorism that occurred more than ten years ago. Therefore it leaves us with the task of investigating the case with existing and available (open source) data. The prosecuted terrorists are unavailable for comment, either because they are in jail or it is prohibited for them to speak about their time in the Hofstad group. Secondly, there are no research programs that collect data on the pure sociology variables like relational distance, functional interdependence and so on. Therefore the challenge lies in finding existing data that contains content

that corresponds with the essence of the pure sociology of terrorism theory.

In order to meet the challenges of this research, the study made use of data triangulation. Data triangulation refers to a method where different sources of information are collected in order to increase the internal validity of the research findings (Guion, Diehl & McDonald, 2011). Therefore the research focused on collecting all available open source data on the Hofstad group to assure that a variation of information sources was involved in the analysis process. The following criteria were used to collect sources for empirical research:

- a. Publicly available (open) sources on Mohammed Bouyeri, Jason Walters and Samir Azzouz;
- b. Sources with publication dated 2001 and onwards;
- c. Text documents, videos and audio recordings regarding actions, speeches or personal traits of Mohammed Bouyeri, Jason Walters or Samir Azzouz involving reference to 2001-2004.

In this study, only existing sources were used to create a dataset. The creation of the dataset is an iterative process, where data is linked to the theoretical framework and arranged in such a way that it becomes appropriate for analysis. The methodological literature distinguishes two types of existing sources: raw and edited data (Vennix, 2006: 206). Raw data refers to data that has not been processed by the collector, while edited data is inherently processed or refined by the collector (ibid). The empirical research contains both types of data. Raw data consists of merely text documents, while edited data is a combination of text documents and visual material like interviews with those involved with Hofstad group members. The following sections will discuss the arrangement of data and the related analysis.

3.4. Data analysis: content analysis

My research intended to provide in-depth analysis into sociological factors of homegrown terrorism. As such, data was collected according to the criteria mentioned in section 3.4 and arranged by use of a coding scheme. The used coding scheme is attached in the appendix. Coding refers to assigning keywords to the material (Vennix, 2006: 271). The research used paper sticky notes to encode the content of the dataset. The analysis of the arranged data was performed according to qualitative content analysis. This method can be applied to reconstruct the meaning structure of existing data (Vennix, 2006: 269). It means that the content analysis was intended to assign meaning to the data in such a way that it becomes suitable for interpretation of the pure sociology of terrorism theory. The analysis was performed according to the following steps:

1. Individual exploration of the available open source data according to the data collection criteria described in section 3.4;
2. Consultation with an expert on the Hofstad group from academia regarding the availability and reliability of open source data;
3. First manual encoding according to the coding scheme in appendix II;
4. Aggregation of encoded content in a table;
5. Second manual encoding according to the coding scheme in appendix II to fill up missing parts;
6. Adding and translation of encoded citations in text;
7. Aggregation of encoded content per person per variable in a table;
8. Comparison of results per member with remaining members involved in research;
9. Interpretation of results per member within the context of the group and the larger environment;
10. Connecting research findings into the pure sociology of terrorism theory.

3.6 Reliability and validity

Qualitative content analysis is a problematic form of research, because there are a considerable amount of pitfalls. This paragraph is meant to provide transparency with regards to challenges of reliability and validity.

Validity or validation refers to a measure that accurately reflects the meaning of a concept (Carlson & Hyde, 2003: 158). In paragraph 3.4 we established that an important challenge of internal validity was reduced by means of data triangulation. By collecting a variation of information sources concerning the Hofstad group, the research aimed to assure that no dimensions or aspects were ignored. Furthermore, difficulties interpreting data are illustrated in the following examples. For instance, the score of the income level of Samir Azzouz was done through rough estimation, because the dataset did not contain exact amounts. Therefore, this required some extensive interpretation. Also, more fundamentally, it is impossible to ascertain the veracity of some statements if we take into consideration that the members of the Hofstad group had political purposes. Take for example the autobiography of Samir Azzouz, confiscated by the Dutch police and used in this research; were all those statements a reflection of reality or did he deliberately change certain facts? The research attempted to overcome this challenge by checking that specific type of information with other sources in the dataset.

This research also experienced some difficulties with regard to reliability. Reliability occurs when the same value is obtained each time a measurement is applied to the same phenomenon (ibid: 160). An advantage of the research design is that it only contains open source data, which enables a full repetition of measurements by another researcher. However, the nature of some sources hindered fully reliable measurement. For example: the semi-biography of Arjan Erkel 'Samir' is mixture of reports of real discussion with Samir Azzouz and fiction. It was unclear which parts were based on real conversations, and which parts were fictional. The effects of this deformation were obviated to a certain extent by fact checking with other sources in the dataset. Another aspect that complicated reliable measurement was the fact that some material in the dataset, like Vermaat (2005) and Vermaat (2006) included (court) reports of events with their own comments. It cannot be ruled out that this affected the reliability of measurement.

4. The social structure of the Hofstad group

As the title of this chapter suggests, I will now present an analysis of the social structure of the Hofstad group. This analysis consists of three parts. The first part is mainly informative and contextual. It contains a description of the group and its composition. The second part is a presentation of findings of the three key members of the group by discussing the scores on indicators of the independent variables of the sociological model. The third part elaborates on an accumulation of the scores per individual in order to answer my central question: To what extent could a purely sociological approach to terrorism by Senechal de la Roche (1996) explain the violent behavior of the Hofstad group?

4.1. The Hofstad group: a profile

In mid 2002, the Centre for Islamic Terrorism of the Dutch Intelligence Agency (AIVD), tracked down a group of youngsters in Amsterdam who were considered to be behaving in an extreme manner (CTIVD, 2008: 8). The members of the Hofstad group listened to preaching of the Syrian Riduan al-Issar also known as Abu Khatib, who became known as the spiritual leader during the so-called 'living-room meetings' in Amsterdam (Leiken, 2005; Vidino, 2005). Audiotapes about Jihad and Al Qaeda manuals for bomb making circulated within the group (Groen & Kranenberg, 2010: 43). By October 2003, the group was named the Hofstad group, and the Public prosecution office ordered to arrest five members of the group (CTIVD, 2008: 8). The number of members of the Hofstad group is still debated. Experts in academia with insight into official police reports estimate a number of 38 members (Schoorman, Eijkman & Bakker, 2014: 66). The Public Prosecution office speaks of 13 members that participated in the Hofstad group (Bessems & Butlijn, 2006). Five of those, Mohammed Bouyeri, Samir Azzouz, Jason Walters, Ismail Aknikh and Nourridin El Fahtni were considered as the key members of the group (ibid). On 2 November 2004 Mohammed Bouyeri murdered Filmmaker Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam (Vidino, 2007: 583). A week later, on 10 November 2004 the police moved to arrest Jason Walters and Ismail Aknikh. Three policemen were hit by a Grenade thrown by Jason Walters during a siege of fourteen-hours on their apartment in The Hague (ibid: 584). Radical ideas had turned into violent behavior. The social structure of three key members of the Hofstad group are analyzed in the following paragraphs.

4.2 The social structure of the key members

This section discusses the findings from the empirical research concerning the social structure of the key members per variable of the model of Senechal de la Roche (1996). A summary of these findings is presented in table 2: Analysis scheme. All findings concerning the research objects cover the period of 2001-2004 and are based on open source data. The citations in text are translated into English from the original Dutch. In many instances this was done with own discretion, since the data contained phrases with faulty grammar, uncommon use of words or typical Dutch expressions.

Variable	Indicator	Mohammed Bouyeri	Jason Walters	Samir Azzouzz
a. Relational Distance	1. Friends with a non-Muslim?	0	0	0
	2. Love relationship with a non-Muslim?	x	0	0
	3. Professionally involved with non-Muslims?	1	x	1
	4. Speaks with non-Muslims weekly	1	1	1
b. Cultural Distance	1. Speaks a non Western-European language regularly?	1	1	1
	2. Born Muslim or converted to Islam?	1	1	1
	3. Visits a mosque regularly?	x	1	1
	4. Wears Islamic garb regularly?	1	1	x
c. Functional	1. In possession of a Dutch passport?	1	1	1
	2. Goes to school?	0	1	1
	3. Attends classes weekly?	0	1	1
	4. Has a paid or unpaid job?	1	x	1
d. Inequality	1. Has a yearly income above Dutch average?	0	x	0
	2. Pursued or acquired higher education?	1	1	1
	3. In a managerial position in a company?	0	x	0
	4. In political or administrative office?	1	x	0
e. Continuity of deviant behavior	1. Reported an insult from a Dutch politician?	1	1	x
	2. Reported an insult from a Dutch police officer?	1	1	1
	3. Reported an insult from a Dutch TV show?	x	x	x
	4. Reported an insult from a Dutch artist	1	1	1

Table 2: Analysis scheme (0 = Not found, 1 = Found, x = Information unreliable)

4.2.1 Relational distance

Relational distance indicates the extent to which parties in a social conflict participate in another's life. In order to measure the relational distance between members of the Hofstad group and their adversaries, the research focused on their ties with non-Muslims.

Mohammed Bouyeri

Mohammed Bouyeri's mother died in December 2001. During the spring that year he became involved with Stichting Eigenwijks, a foundation which arranged social activities for the neighborhood near his residency in the Marianne Philipsstraat in West-Amsterdam. Wim Knol, former chairman of the foundation explained how Bouyeri had written a subsidy proposal for a second youth center that was rejected by a civil servant of the Ministry:

"He (Mohammed B.) had been working on the plan for months. It was done properly and rejected by a single stroke of the pen by a civil servant of the ministry" (Vermaat, 2005: 28).

This posits a situation in which Mohammed was professionally involved with non-Muslims. Furthermore, Bouyeri was appointed as a room manager for neighborhood activities, where he led political debates, indicating that he spoke with non-Muslims, such as councilors, on a frequent basis. (Chorus & Olgun, 2005: 55). In the late 1990s, Bouyeri's lifestyle frequently involved alcohol consumption and substance abuse, according to his old friend Mohammed Belkadi (ibid: 47). However, in the summer of 2003, his friends (all Muslim) explain how he changed and dismissed smoking and drinking alcohol:

"Mohammed does not smoke Marlboro-cigarettes anymore, he does not drink and stresses the harmful substances in cigarettes and alcohol" (Chorus & Olgun, 2005: 61).

Unfortunately, no information was found regarding the love life of Mohammed B in the period 2001-2004. The only information concerning his love life came from 1999 and from his old friend Mohammed Belkadi, who stated:

"I like chubby, he liked Dutch" (Chorus & Olgun, 2005: 49).

Overall, Mohammed Bouyeri scores 2/4 on relational distance.

Jason Walters

Little is known and written about Jason's relations with non-Muslims during the period of 2001-2004. No sources were found that provided information about his professional activities let alone his professional involvement with non-Muslims. Most likely he became radicalized through the Internet during high school around the same time as 9/11 (Vermaat, 2005: 85). After that his circle of friends consisted exclusively of Muslims:

"Jason lays down mattresses on the floor for who those that want to stay overnight: Yousef, Ismail, Jermaine, Zakaria, Fahmi" (Chorus & Olgun, 2005: 189).

He tried to convince his (Dutch) mother and sisters to convert to Islam at a certain point:

"Jason had tried to convert his mother and both sisters to Islam and they declined" (Vermaat, 2005: 86).

This incident led to a separation of the family in June 2004, when Jason moved to his apartment in the Atheunisstraat, The Hague (ibid). This indicates that he spoke with non-Muslims weekly until his relocation to The Hague. His verbal contact with non-Muslims after June 2004 is unknown. Jason was also unwilling to speak about his love life and the week he was married (religiously) with the Latifa. He divorced her shortly afterwards. In court, when asked by the public prosecutor, he simply stated:

"None of your business" (Vermaat, 2006: 59).

From confiscated chat conversations it is known that he stated:

"Hey listen, I will NEVER abandon my brothers for a woman as I say I hold very high demands for a woman and they are not found here. I will only marry a woman who will join me or else it will not proceed anyway" (NOVA, 2005).

This indicates that Jason did not have a love relationship with a non-Muslim, probably no love relationship at all. Overall Jason Walters scores 1/4 on relational distance.

Samir Azzouz

At the age of sixteen, before going to Chechnya, Samir married Abida van Domburg, who was six years older:

"Samir wanted to see on sight what he could do for Muslims. Abida wanted to join him. Samir refuted this; a man and a woman cannot travel together unmarried according to Islam. "I'll marry you then", is what Abida proposed. We wanted to help Muslims." (Olgun, 2006).

The semi-biographic work of Arjan Erkel indicated that Samir Azzouz's circle of friends was exclusively limited to Muslims (Erkel, 2007: 211). An interview regarding his radicalization indicates that he had contact with non-Muslims:

"I am not angry at Dutch people, I can cope well with Dutch people" (Van San, Sieckelinck & Winter, 2010: 49).

He frequently spoke with his Dutch mother in law Maria van Domburg (Erkel, 2007: 78). Finally, his jobs at the hospital in Amsterdam and Edah supermarket indicated that he was professionally involved with non-Muslims as well:

"Samir A. was working in the supermarket as a shelf stocker and he was present when the robbery took place" (Vermaat, 2005, 108).

Overall Samir Azzouz scores 2/4 on relational distance.

4.2.2 Cultural distance

Cultural distance refers to differences in expressive aspects of social life. The underlying supposition is that people will express themselves differently if they feel different from their adversary. That is why the research on cultural distance focused on simple observables such as language, dress and religious activities.

Mohammed Bouyeri

Bouyeri's cultural expression changed gradually according to friends and acquaintances. Mohammed was a born Muslim, but religion did not seem to play a prominent role in his life in the '90s according to Belkadi:

"He wasn't practicing, he didn't pray" (Chorus & Olgun, 2005: 47).

Being a child of Moroccan Berbers he was raised with them, but he never really mastered Arabic, which is considered to be the language of Islam:

"The classes were in Arabic; an unknown language for Mohammed, who spoke Dutch at school and a Berber language, Tamazight, at home" (Chorus & Olgun, 2005: 43).

It indicates that Mohammed spoke a non-western language. Later, from 2002 and onwards, when he became more religious, different people saw him wearing a Djelleba:

"She saw him in front of the door wearing a Djelleba and a prayers coif" (Chorus & Olgun, 2005: 59)

"In April 2004, dressed in traditional Moroccan garment, he physically assaulted a security officer at the social service" (Vermaat, 2005: 27).

The data was inconclusive regarding Bouyeri's visits to Mosques. It is unclear how often he visited the disputed El Tawheed-Mosque in Amsterdam.

"One of them would have been Mohammed B., although the spokesman of the Mosque declared that he did not belong to the fixed group that came to pray at the Mosque" (Vermaat, 2005: 68).

"In the autumn of 2001 he met Mohammed in the Al Tawheed-Mosque and he offered him to tile the bathroom and kitchen in the Marianne Philipsstraat" (Chorus & Olgun: 67).

The data indicates that Mohammed was seen at the Mosque, but it is unsure whether he visited the Mosque frequently. The data is therefore considered to be unreliable in this matter. Overall Mohammed Bouyeri scores 3/4 on cultural distance.

Jason Walters

As explained in paragraph 4.2.1 he converted to Islam in high school through the Internet. Before that he was pro-American in discussions according to his classmates:

"At school he initially stood out for America, but later he would indulge in more radical forms of Islam" (Vermaat, 2005: 85).

At a certain point he started to visit the Mosque frequently with his younger brother Jermaine Walters (ibid: 86). After high school he moved to The Hague to study Arabic and Islamology at Leiden University (Chorus & Olgun, 2005: 188). Naturally, he had to learn a non-western language. Reports of his arrest on 10 November 2004 point at the fact that he wore Islamic garb:

"In the hall Jason W. and Ismail A. were dressed in long garbs. They called phrases like Allahu Akbar!" (Vermaat, 2005: 96).

Overall Jason Walters scores 4/4 on cultural distance.

Samir Azzouz

Samir went to an Islamic school until the age of fourteen where he learned Arabic:

"I always participated in Ramadan, ever since I was little, I liked it, went to an Islamic school until the age of fourteen for Arabic/Islamic classes" (KLPD, 2015: 3).

He also went to the El Tawheed mosque during his childhood, where he also followed Arabic classes (ibid). This information indicates that Samir learned to speak a Non-western language and visited the Mosque regularly. In that same autobiography confiscated by the criminal investigation unit of the police he states:

"I was never really concerned with my faith, I always did my prayers though, I always participated in Ramadan" (KLPD, 2015: 3).

This indicates that he was a born and practicing Muslim. Unfortunately, sources did not report on his way of dressing. Pictures of him that circulate on the Internet indicate that he wore both Islamic garb and contemporary fashion. That information is therefore considered to be too indefinite to conclude anything. Overall Samir Azzouz scores 3/4 on cultural distance.

4.2.3 Functional interdependence

Functional interdependence refers to the degree of cooperation of two opposing groups. Therefore, the research focused on the extent to which radical Muslims are tied to the secular Dutch society by means of nationality, education, occupation and the participation in these domains.

Mohammed Bouyeri

Bouyeri was born in the Netherlands on 8 March 1978 and received both a Dutch and Moroccan nationality (Chorus & Olgun, 2005: 42). From 2000-2001 Mohammed studied accountancy. However, he was hardly seen at school and failed to attain enough credits. He also received a twelve weeks jail sentence for threat and acts of violence for stabbing a police officer; he therefore quit accountancy (ibid: 52-53). After those twelve weeks in jail he enrolled in the study of business informatics and even met the requirements for the first year (ibid). But then his mother fell ill and died in December 2001. This event had a profound impact on his life, causing him to quit school again:

"He quit studying. Habiba was buried in Oujda, the city were the second house of the Family stood. Mohammed was there with his father and older sister Saïda" (Chorus & Olgun, 2005: 54).

This indicates that he did not go to school or attended classes in the period that is being examined. Although he had left his job in 2001, he remained professionally involved in the foundation close to his neighborhood; Stichting Eigenwijken, indicating that he had an unpaid job:

"In the beginning of 2001 he got involved in foundation Eigenwijken that issued a neighborhood newspaper and that employed several social activities in the neighborhood" (Vermaat, 2005: 27).

Overall Mohammed Bouyeri scores 2/4 on functional interdependence.

Jason Walters

Walters was born in Amersfoort, the Netherlands in 1985, indicating that he was born as a Dutch citizen (Vermaat, 2005: 85). As stated in paragraph 4.2.1 Jason went to high school at 't Hooghe Landt College in Amersfoort where he also actively participated in debates:

"At school Jason was known as Pro-American, he was proud of his American father. According to some he would have been victim of bullying, but others stated that he always carried out most of the talking" (Vermaat, 2005: 85).

He finished secondary school and enrolled in the study of Arabic and Islamology at Leiden University in September 2004 (Chorus & Olgun, 2005: 188). This indicates that he went to school and went to classes weekly. Did he work for a company or an organization during those years? The empirical research showed no results with regards to the occupational activities of Walters. Overall, Jason Walters scores 3/4 on functional independence.

Samir Azzouz

Samir was born in Amsterdam in 1986, a couple of years after his parents migrated to the Netherlands (Vermaat, 2005: 101). This indicates that he holds a Dutch nationality. According to his autobiography (that was still in the making) he received his Dutch nationality on at the age of fifteen:

"...I was fifteen. I received my Dutch passport just two weeks" (KLPD, 2005: 5).

He went to secondary school in West Amsterdam and appeared to be a diligent pupil until the moment he decided to travel to Chechnya:

"He always was a keen student, let me put it like that. At a certain point that changed; he was less interested in school" (Nijpels & Slats, 2006: 10:15).

Naturally, this indicates that he went to school and attended classes weekly. His travel to Chechnya with Khalid appeared to be a reason to get a job and save money:

"I took a job at the Onze Lieve Vrouwe Gasthuis in East-Amsterdam in the Summer of 2002, I worked there for a month and saved more than 300 euros" (KLPD, 2005: 11).

In 2003 he worked at supermarket Edah in Rotterdam as a shelf stocker:

"In April 2003, shortly after closing time, there was an armed robbery on a store of Edah-supermarket in Rotterdam. Samir A. worked there as a shelf stocker" (Vermaat, 2006: 61).

Overall Samir Azzouz scores 4/4 on functional interdependence.

4.2.4 Inequality

Inequality refers to the extent to which a Hofstad group member possesses material and immaterial resources that acquires status and power in Dutch society. That is why the research focused on income level, level of education and power position in a company or government. However it is important to note that while inequality does relate to functional interdependence, it is considered to be conceptually distinct. While functional interdependence characterizes the degree of cooperation between two conflicting groups, inequality indicates the power position of the subordinated group. In this case, functional interdependence measures whether or not Hofstad members participate in society, while inequality attempts to indicate the material and immaterial results of that participation.

Mohammed Bouyeri

From December 2001 and onwards Bouyeri received a monthly social welfare payment of 789.40 euros (Chorus & Olgun, 2005: 72). This payment was even reduced when Mohammed did not apply for enough new jobs (ibid). But even at its maximum, this amount indicates that he earned about half of the average annual income per person between 2001-2004 (CBS, 2015). Regarding his level of education it is known that Mohammed completed HAVO, indicating that he pursued and acquired higher education:

"He was a real HAVO-student. He acquired his final exams all at once, with a 5. VWO was not an option" (Chorus & Olgun, 2005: 44).

"Without any trouble he acquired his HAVO-diploma at the Mondriaanlyceum" (Vermaat, 2005: 25).

The remaining parts of his education were already discussed in paragraph 4.2.1. From what is discussed in paragraph 4.2.3 and from the fact that Bouyeri received social welfare payments, we can conclude that he was neither in a managerial position in a company, nor was he in a political or administrative office. Overall, Mohammed Bouyeri scores 1/4 on inequality.

Jason Walters

Walters pursued and acquired higher education through VWO:

"Jason acquired his VWO-diploma, Jermaine his vmbo-diploma" (Vermaat, 2005: 86).

His friends considered him intelligent while his classmates saw him as quiet (Chorus & Olgun, 2005: 188). Unfortunately, the research lacks any information regarding Jason's level of income or his occupational activities. It must be mentioned that is highly unlikely that Jason performed a political/administrative function, since he obtained passive voting rights just one year before his attack on police officers on 10 November 2004. Overall, Jason Walters scores 1/4 on inequality.

Samir Azzouz

Samir pursued higher education through HAVO, as becomes clear in an interview with a high school classmate and friend Fadoua:

"That was in the fourth Class, when we were in 4 HAVO" (Nijpels & Slats, 2006: 10:34).

As reported in his autobiography and indicated in his scores in functional interdependency, Azzouz being underage, had worked at a hospital in East-Amsterdam in the summer of 2002 (KLPD, 2005: 11).

He also worked regularly at the supermarket Edah in 2004 as a shelf stocker, indicating that he was not in a managerial position (Vermaat, 2005, 108). This is not surprising given the fact that he was only 17. His age also exempted him from performing a political or administrative function. The amount he earned with these jobs was nowhere near the Dutch average income per person a year of 18,100 euros (CBS, 2015). This is what he stated in his autobiography:

"I worked there for a month and saved more than 300 euros, My father gave me money to buy a bus subscription every month, I saved that money and walked to school, Khalid and I came together frequently to discuss matters, we decided to leave when we had saved 1,500 euros" (KLPD, 2005: 11).

Overall Samir Azzouz scores 1/4 on inequality.

4.2.5 Continuity of deviant behavior

The continuity of deviant behavior is a characterization of acts of the social superior. The theory assumes that terrorism acts against a social superior. This part of the empirical research therefore focused on statements of the Hofstad group members regarding politicians, police officers and prominent cultural actors such as TV shows and artists.

Mohammed Bouyeri

The letter that Bouyeri pinned on Theo van Gogh's dead body includes a personal threat, because Hirsi Ali had insulted the prophet (Peters, 2005: 16). This indicates that Mohammed felt insulted by a politician. When public prosecutor Plooy asked if an insult of the prophet was part of his motive to murder Theo van Gogh, Bouyeri replied:

"That is the only reason!" (Vermaat, 2006: 27).

This indicates that Mohammed felt insulted by the artist Theo van Gogh. The police arrested five members of the Hofstad group in October 2003 on suspicion of planning an attack (Chorus & Olgun, 2005: 75). Mohammed was furious when he arrived at the police station to bring some food for his friends; he hated the police and rejected their authority (ibid: 76-77). This indicates that Mohammed felt offended by the police. Unfortunately, nothing was found with regards to offenses in TV shows. Overall, Mohammed Bouyeri scores 3/4 on continuity of deviant behavior.

Jason Walters

During the criminal proceedings of the Hofstad group in December 2005 and onwards, Jason Walters clarified what he felt about the attacks. He stated that he was happy that Bouyeri had killed Theo van Gogh, because van Gogh had insulted the Islam:

"It was in the Telegraaf, it was in the news. I was very happy at the moment, he had insulted Islam. Everybody was happy, I visited a couple of Mosques, everybody was happy" (Vermaat, 2006: 40)

A few moments later in the same hearing, Walters explained that Ahmed Aboutaleb insulted him, because of certain things Aboutaleb had said:

"I was angry because of the things he had said, insulted...That letter existed a long time before the murder of Theo van Gogh. I read it too. I thought it was addressed to (mayor) Cohen. I did not know Aboutaleb. He existed in the media. Had clear opinions and hid behind Theo van Gogh" (ibid).

From chat conversations from his computer intercepted by the TV show NOVA, it appears that Jason wanted to kill members of public authorities including the police, military and general officers, because according to Abdul Jabbar (a Dutch Islam preacher) they had declared war on Islam:

"?: *He said, look, the government, ministries, the police and so forth their blood and possession are Halal, because they publically declare war on Islam but before you do something you must consider the consequences for the Ummah.*

Jason: *Alright Djazaak that is the Fatwa that I needed Now I can slaughter every police officer, minister, soldier or officer" (NOVA, 2005).*

This indicates that Jason felt insulted by police officers and was looking for a Fatwa (an order from an Islamic religious leader). The search for offenses coming from TV shows did not yield any results. Overall Jason Walters scores 3/4 on continuity of deviant behavior.

Samir Azzouz

Samir was in jail when Bouyeri killed Van Gogh and was only released in April 2005 (Schuurman, Eijkman & Bakker, 2014: 72). From the semi-biographic work of Arjan Erkel we know that Samir Azzouz was happy when he heard the news that Van Gogh died, and he considered it to be righteous, indicating that he also felt offended (Erkel, 2007: 224). A couple of pages later Samir's actions indicate that he felt offended by the police (ibid: 231). Unfortunately, no information regarding offenses by politicians or TV shows was found. Overall, Samir Azzouz scores 2/4 on continuity of deviant behavior.

4.3 The pure sociology of the Hofstad group

The previous section discussed the results of the empirical research into the Hofstad group. This section will translate those results into theory related conclusions.

	Mohammed Bouyeri	Jason Walters	Samir Azzouz
a. Relational Distance	2/4	1/4	2/4
b. Cultural Distance	3/4	4/4	3/4
c. Functional Interdependence	2/4	3/4	4/4
d. Inequality	1/4	1/4	1/4
e. Continuity of deviant behavior	3/4	3/4	2/4

Table 3: Composed scores per Hofstad group member

Table 3 offers an overview of the composed scores per key member of the Hofstad group regarding the pure sociology of terrorism theory. A quick scan of the table reveals a diverging image between the group members on some variables. To find out to what extent the pure sociology model by Senechal de la Roche (1996) explains the violent behavior of the Hofstad group, we will now confront all hypotheses with the empirical results.

Relational distance: Hypothesis₁

Senechal de la Roche hypothesized that; the greater the relational distance between the parties in a conflict, the greater the likelihood and severity of collective violence (ibid: 106). It is important to note that scores concerning relational distance are reversed in comparison to the other variables, meaning that 0/4 implies relational distance between the conflicting groups, and 4/4 means that there is no relational distance. Mohammed Bouyeri and Samir Azzouz both scored 2/4, and were somewhat relationally distant towards non-Muslims between 2001-2004. Jason Walters, the convert, shows a surprisingly high level of relational distance. Mohammed Bouyeri demonstrated the most extreme violence, while Samir Azzouz with the same score did not commit violence. Neither the probability nor the severity of violence came out as expected in the empirical research. This hypothesis is therefore falsified.

Cultural distance: Hypothesis₂

Senechal de la Roche hypothesized; as differences in cultural expression increase, so do the probability and severity of collective violence (ibid: 108-109). The scores on cultural distance of the three key members of the Hofstad group indicate that they are were similarly culturally distant: Mohammed Bouyeri scored 3/4, Jason Walters 4/4 and Samir Azzouz 3/4. Again, Jason Walters showed the highest level of cultural distance towards non-Muslims. All three members' cultural distance scores range from high to very high, suggesting that cultural expression is a very relevant factor. Now, Mohammed Bouyeri and Jason Walters both committed violence by using firearms, with Bouyeri's actions having severe consequences. Samir Azzouz also scored 3/4, but did not commit any acts of violence. The expectation regarding severity of violence stands to some extent, but the probability of violence did not come out as expected in the empirical results. Hypothesis₂ is therefore falsified.

Functional interdependence: Hypothesis₃

With regards to functional interdependence, the theory of Senechal de la Roche (1996: 111) states that people are comparatively unlikely to attack those who are indispensable to their well-being. The theory hypothesizes that functional interdependence reduces the severity of violence, when collective violence does occur (ibid). The results of the content analysis is remarkable because the variation in scores per key member is the highest. The scores range from 2/4 with Mohammed Bouyeri, 3/4 for Jason Walters and 4/4 for Samir Azzouz. The scores on functional interdependence illustrate a pattern of proportionality towards militancy. Mohammed Bouyeri was the first member of the group to commit an act of violence; he also committed the most intense form of violence in terms of physical impact. Accordingly, he also scored the lowest on functional interdependency, implying that he was also the least connected to Dutch society. Samir Azzouz scored highest on this variable, meaning that he was the most connected to Dutch society, and, accordingly, he neither committed violence nor was he tried for an act of violence. This implies that Mohammed Bouyeri was the most independent from Dutch society of the three. In this case, the theory has a legitimate claim and Hypothesis₃ is confirmed.

Inequality: Hypothesis₄

Inequality also increases the likelihood of collective violence (ibid: 113). The pure sociology hypothesizes that unilateral violence, like terrorism, is unlikely to occur when parties in conflict are equal in resources. The results of the empirical research on inequality are also striking, not because the variation among Mohammed, Jason and Samir is high, but because the results also support the theory of pure sociology. All three members illustrate inequality in comparison to the socioeconomic resources of the average Dutch citizen. Although the members of the Hofstad group in this study all acquired higher education in secondary school, it did not lead to a relatively good socio-economic position after. Again, the pure sociology theory seems to have a legitimate claim. Hypothesis₄ regarding inequality is therefore confirmed.

Continuity of deviant behavior: Hypothesis₅

Finally, pure sociology hypothesizes that terrorism normally arises with intractable offenses of longer standing. The results of the content analysis show a converging image. Mohammed Bouyeri and Jason Walters score 3/4 on continuity of deviant behavior, while Samir Azzouz scores 2/4. It implies that they at least felt continuously offended by the Dutch police and by a Dutch artist – in this case, Theo van Gogh. This holds especially for Mohamed and Jason, who scored highest with a score of 3/4. They declared that their acts of violence should be seen as a means of holding the deceased Theo van Gogh – and police officers – collectively accountable for their actions. Hypothesis₅ regarding continuity of deviant behavior is therefore confirmed.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

This master thesis attempted to gain insight into the relevance of pure sociology of terrorism in explaining cases of Jihadi terrorism. I will therefore reflect on the findings of the analysis, by answering the central question. I will then discuss the consequences of this answer for the debate within terrorism studies regarding the quest for an integrative theory that can explain terrorism. There are also two points of recommendation for further research resulting from the chosen research strategy. Finally, the practical relevance of this research project in terms of implications for policymaking will be discussed.

This brings us to answering my central question: *To what extent could a purely sociological approach to terrorism by Senechal de la Roche (1996) explain the violent behavior of the Hofstad group?* Based on the findings of my empirical research, the hypothesis concerning relational distance was falsified. Two out of three key members of the Hofstad group, namely Mohammed Bouyeri and Samir Azzouz, were not relationally distant from Non-Muslims. It was a social group they were familiar with, stemming from a society they grew up in. **Relational distance does not seem to explain the extent and manner of violence by key members of the Hofstad group.** This is problematic for the theory, because it leads to the conclusion that homegrown Jihadi terrorism is not necessarily characterized by relational distance from non-Muslims and that this variable should lead to reconsideration of terrorism scholars when studying cases of homegrown terrorism. The findings of this research also rejected hypothesis₂ regarding cultural distance. It appeared that Samir Azzouz and Mohammed Bouyeri were equally culturally distant from non-Muslims, yet the extent to and manner in which Mohammed Bouyeri used violence differed greatly from Samir Azzouz. Therefore, **cultural distance could not explain why key members of the Hofstad group committed violence.**

However, the findings supported hypothesis₃ regarding functional interdependence of terrorists. Mohammed Bouyeri was least connected to Dutch society and committed extreme violence, while Samir Azzouz was most connected to Dutch society and never carried out acts of violence. **This means that functional interdependence could explain why key members of the Hofstad group behaved violently.** Also, hypothesis₄ was verified by the empirical results. All three key members coped with inequality of resources in comparison with the average Dutch citizen, by only pursuing higher education. However, this degree did not lead to a higher position of power in their professional lives. **Therefore inequality of resources could explain the probability of collective violence by key members of the Hofstad group as hypothesized by Senechal de la Roche.** Finally, hypothesis₅ was also confirmed by the empirical research. Mohammed Bouyeri and Jason Walters both committed violence and declared that they felt offended by representatives of the political system they rejected. Their actions served as a way to hold the people affected by their violence collectively accountable for their actions. **Continuity of deviant behavior also explains why terrorism as a form of collective violence by key members of the Hofstad group occurred.**

Theoretical Relevance

Only three out of five hypotheses were verified by the empirical research. Relational and cultural distance could not explain the extent and severity of violence by key members of the Hofstad group. However, functional interdependence, inequality and continuity of deviant behavior could explain why terrorism occurred and why violence was used by key members of the Hofstad group.

In retrospect, we can therefore conclude that Senechal de la Roche's (1996) pure sociology of terrorism is useful in guiding empirical research into Jihadi terrorism. Whether relational distance and cultural distance have less explanatory value than functional interdependence, inequality and continuity of deviant behavior can only be confirmed by studying a larger sample of Jihadi terrorist cases in Western Europe.

Previous empirical research into Jihadi terrorism, and in particular the research of Sageman (2004), concluded that social explanations were not useful in explaining the phenomenon. Based on his sample he argues that it is a myth that terrorists are poor and uneducated. Even though some or even most terrorists acquire higher education, the empirical research illustrated that it is still no

guarantee that higher education will lead to interdependence within their community or a relative power position in their professional lives. Therefore I suggest caution regarding claims that socio-economic factors cannot explain cases of terrorism. It is argued that sociological variables must remain a part of integrative models that study homegrown Jihadi terrorism.

Recommendations for future research

Two shortcomings of this master thesis must be mentioned, both of which result in recommendations for future scholarly research. First, the number of investigated terrorists is very low, affecting the external validity of the results. That said, it has turned out that in-depth research has added value for theory development. It is recommended that a larger sample of Jihadi terrorists in Western Europe be studied, and in greater depth than was explored here. The descriptive analyses of Nesser (2008) and Jordan (2012) are useful for selecting cases. Finally, the reliability of some of the measurements and related findings in this master thesis are arguable due to deficiencies in the dataset. It is recommended that future researchers generate their own data if possible, based, for example, on interviews with convicted terrorists in order to increase the reliability of data measurement. Note however, that even Sageman (2014: 570) considers this to be a huge challenge for terrorism studies. Journalistic investigations appear to remain the most available sources of data for academia, as long as the intelligence community is unwilling to disclose intelligence investigations.

Societal Relevance

Jihadi terrorism is still considered to be a threat to the national security in the Netherlands. This is evident from the ‘action plan integral approach Jihadism’ launched by the Dutch cabinet in November 2014 (Rijksoverheid, 2014). This action plan contains a measure that focuses on supporting educational institutions by means of a trust advisor in the identification of students that might be susceptible to radicalization (ibid: 18). Further measures are also taken with regards to youngsters in high risk areas to provide them with an occupation (Rijksoverheid, 2014: 19). **The findings of this research suggest that these particular measures are a step in the right direction to prevent violent behavior of Jihadi terrorists.** The continuance of such measures is therefore strongly encouraged.

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Appendix I - List of used sources (dataset)

Primary

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Appendix II – Coding scheme

1. **Person**

- Mohammed Bouyeri (code: MB)
- Jason Walters (code: JW)
- Samir Azzouz (code: SA)

2. **Variable**

- Relational Distance (code: RD): Pink label
- Cultural Distance (code: CD): Orange label
- Functional Interdependency (code: FI): Yellow label
- Inequality (code: IN): Green label
- Continuity of Deviant Behavior (Code: CB): Blue label

3. **Indicator**

1, 2, 3 or 4 were written on the sticky note, or a combination of these numbers, depending on how and if the content related to indicators.

4. **Score**

- (0): Not found
- (1): Found
- (X): Information unreliable