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# The ‘Self-enterprising Care Taker’ on ‘Home Deployment’:

Contesting Constructions of Femininity in

Extended Military Family Deployment Support in Sweden

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## Abstract

This study takes a critical feminist anti-militarist perspective on the function and purpose of the support that families of soldiers are provided by militaries during deployment. The context in focus is Swedish deployment support of extended families of soldiers, the material selected is from the website and the forum of the voluntary peer and mentor based support organization *Invidzonen*. Applying a Critical Discourse Analysis informed by feminist theory, the aim of the study was to identify how military power through deployment support attempts to naturalize and sustain hegemonic gender ideologies, roles and identities and unequal power relations between men and women. This study illustrates the changing and more subtle expression of military power in post-modern society and in Sweden. In social practices of deployment support, between women, the military discourse of ‘home deployment’ has been re-contextualized as valuable experience. The study argues that this has created a discourse of ‘self-enterprising home deployment’. It individualizes and conceals the political and militarized nature of women as a group performing free or government subsidized care and emotional labour for the SAF. This discourse situates women in contradictory but subordinated positions, with expectations to simultaneously do care and emotional labour and focus on individual development. This normative but contesting notion of femininity within deployment support is termed as the ‘self-enterprising caretaker’.

**Key words:** Military Family Deployment Support; Gender; Feminism; Sweden; Militarization

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# 1. Introduction

The recent decade has experienced changes in both overall societal family structures, the military organizations and military missions. This has influenced, intensified and complicated the relationship between the military, soldiers and their families. Most military organizations have gone from a mandatory conscript system, to a volunteer professional military, placing the military closer to and in competition with the labour market. Military families are less inclined to unconditionally accept the demands of the military institution as many consider it as just another job. They place higher demands on support from military institution, especially during deployments<sup>1</sup>. The traditional model of the heterosexual male breadwinner military family, with a supporting female wife caring for the home is no longer a given. The military needs the support of the families of soldiers, especially spouses and partners, both for recruitment, soldier performance, overall military efficiency and political support. At the same time the complexity and length of missions has increased the operational tempo, which has put an extra strain on families (Andres, Bowen, Manigart, & Moelker, 2015). The above mentioned changes are predicted to increase this so called ‘military-family conflict’ in the future (De Sangels & Segal, 2015).

Therefore, many militaries provide especially during deployment, various support mechanisms for families to reduce the ‘military-family conflict’. The purpose of this family support is not to reduce the demands and stress from the military institution. Instead the aim is to ensure that families can cope with stress so that the soldier performance and military operational efficiency is not negatively affected. The family is a part of the military mission, creating a situation where the military needs to provide support to ensure family satisfaction, while simultaneously maneuvering the contradictions between keeping the increasingly

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<sup>1</sup> Deployment is a word for when military personnel or soldiers go away on missions. It can be war and/or peace keeping.

demanding families of the professional soldier happy without compromising on political and institutional goals (Andres et al., 2015; Segal, 1986).

Critical feminist scholars have found that in this above mentioned power struggle spouses and partners, often being women, through their relationships with soldiers are caught in the middle. Feminist research from several countries has found that military ideologies and notions about gender roles, in different ways influence the families, spouses and partners of soldiers. The military need and expects them to take care of the home and family life, be strong and cope with increased stress, support the soldiers and the military mission (Tomforde, 2015; Aducci et al., 2011; Weber 2012; Herzog, 2004; Eran-Jona, 2015; Eran-Jona, 2011; Vuga & Juvan, 2013; Heiselberg, 2017).

Military family support systems has been identified as key spaces in which the supportive function is integrated with socializing partners and spouses to identify with these military ideologies and hegemonic gender roles. According to the gender norms within these support systems, especially in the U.S, military spouses and partners, usually women, are expected to contribute free emotional and care labour, take care of the home, coping with huge amounts of stress, be faithful to their partners and politically support the military mission. However, the socialization process is not without contradiction, where different and often contesting notions of femininities created in the social relations within the deployment support environment (Horn, 2010; McKenna, 2010; Sahlstien Parcell & Maguire, 2014; Aronson, 2006; Weber 2012).

Cynthia Enloe (2000; 2007; 2015) has argued that the masculine military institution, through a step by step process of militarization, constructs and maintains specific notions and understandings of respectable femininity. This entails upholding ideas about female skills, duty and sexuality that directly support the military institutional goal of warfare. From this claim Enloe highlights the need to pay attention to how this process unfolds, changes and manifests in different locations and times, often in places perceived to be “far away” from

military power. This is a very useful feminist research focus to learn more about the relationship between gender, militarization and warfare. From this perspective, because the family is a part of the mission, *deployment support* can be understood to be about gender relations and militarized ideas and norms about proper ‘supportive femininities’.

The above mentioned changes and contestations of gender and power relations in the military-family conflict can be understood as expressions of the instability of post-modern society. It is characterized by reflexivity of individuals and hybridity of social life, which leads to contradictions in social relations of power and ultimately effects identity constructions. This increasingly challenges traditional institutions and values (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Gender ideologies, relations and identities are also embedded and affected by this process, where gender oppressions take increasingly more subtle and complex forms (Lazar, 2005; 2007)

The Swedish Armed Forces (SAF) and its deployment support can be considered a prime example that has been forced to face these changes. In 2017, there are around 362 soldiers deployed in different operations around the world, mostly located in the UN peace keeping mission in Mali (Försvarsmakten, 2017a). The SAF abandoned the conscript system in-between 2010-2018 (Försvarsmakten, 2017b), forcing it to adopt market based recruitment approaches building on post-modernist and humanitarian discourses to compete on the labour market (Strand & Berndtsson, 2015). At the same time, international deployments became mandatory for soldiers (SOU, 2010:86). The SAF has worked extensively with liberalizing its values on gender, sexuality, hiring more women, for the purposes of gaining legitimacy as an employer and state institution and effective peace keeping force (Kronsell, 2012; Sundevall & Persson, 2016). In Sweden gender equality has taken a very institutionalized form, been tied to the welfare state, has been increasingly influenced by neoliberalism and has become ingrained in Swedish national and cultural identity (Martinsson, Griffin & Giritli Nygren, 2016).

Olsson (2016) finds that these are important aspects to consider when researching Swedish military families and deployment support, along with their relative autonomy and independence from the military institution. In an interview, Olsson explains how military families in Sweden are very different from those in the U.S and are more separated from the military. Most people don't use the word military family in the description of themselves (Widehed, 2016). The official term used by the SAF reflects this, where the word "anhörig" is used to reflect that it can be anyone that feels they have a relationship with the person going on deployment (Försvarsmakten, 2017c). Therefore, when talking about the Swedish context the term extended family member or extended military family will be used.

After dissatisfaction amongst extended military families in 2008, the SAF improved its support to reduce the military-family conflict during deployments (SOU, 2008:91; SOU, 2014:27). At around the same time a voluntary grass root organization *Invidzonen*<sup>2</sup> was founded, its primary focus was to support extended family members remaining at home during deployments. Presently, it is an integrated part of the deployment support system and is funded by the SAF (Invidzonen, 2017a). The improvements were successful and in 2012 satisfaction had increased amongst the extended families of soldiers (Jerfström, 2012). Today the extended family members of soldiers are an integral part of Swedish veteran support legislation and initiatives (SOU, 2014:27).

## 1.1 Research Problem, Aim and Purpose

The problems identified by feminist scholars and my own experience with deployment in Afghanistan in 2013 made me think about the gender relations and discourses at work in deployment support in Sweden. I was becoming curious, 'feminist curious' (Enloe, 2007) of how the military, through the experience of deployment, asserts its values, norms and ideologies over the families and partners of its soldiers. What is a 'supportive femininity' in Sweden? A study of deployment support in Sweden can help us understand how hegemonic gender

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<sup>2</sup> Invidzonen is can be translated into "Next too you Zone",

relations are sustained, challenged and rearticulated within deployment support in post-modern societies, where gender equality is connected to national and cultural self-image, with modern and seemingly progressive militaries.

By investigating deployment support in the SAF this thesis wants to contribute to the understanding of how gender relations and militarization are interrelated and sustain hegemonic gender ideologies and unequal power relations in post-modern society. This thesis seeks to increase feminist knowledge of how military power is transferred through military family deployment support to families and civilian society. The aim is to investigate how hegemonic gendered ideologies, gender roles and gender identities are expressed, sustained and challenged in the discursive and social practices within deployment support organization of *Invidzonen*. The purpose is to identify how *Invidzonen*, mentors and extended family members in the social practice of deployment support draw upon militarized gender discourses and how the identity of being an extended family member is created in this process.

How are hegemonic gender ideologies sustained and challenged in the construction of ‘*supportive femininity*’ in the social practices of deployment support within *Invidzonen*?

## 2. Military Family Deployment Support: The Family is a part of the Military Mission

This chapter initially provides an overview of previous research on military family support and military families. The purpose is to show the importance of families, spouses and partners of soldiers to the military institution and the effects of military deployments on individuals and relationships. It is followed by a critical feminist theoretical understanding of the function of deployment support as means of regulating the ‘military-family conflict’. This perspective

demonstrates the relationships between gender, military institution and war within deployment support. It draws on a social constructivist and post-structuralist understanding of identity and gender, understanding gender as something that is socially constructed in social relations between people using different semiotic expressions of language. The main theoretical argument is that the ‘military-family conflict’ can be understood as gender relations, relations between femininities and masculinities where deployment support aims to maintain a hierarchical relationship between the two (see Horn, 2010). In the actual social practices of deployment support, contesting notions and understandings of femininity are constructed.

## 2.1 Military-Family Conflict: Military Families, Deployment Support and Stress Reduction

Research on military families and family support have increased in the recent years. The research covers issues such as deployment stress, post-traumatic-stress-disorder (PTSD) and family relations, stressors and coping of spouses and partners, evaluations of deployment support systems and so-called home front groups of family readiness programs. Most of the research is conducted in the U.S and/or Global North.

Repeated and longer deployments increase the stress on spouses and partners of soldiers, which negatively impacts intimate relationship quality and satisfaction (Van Winkle & Lipari, 2015; Anders, 2014; Rosetto, 2009). Studies in the U.S and U.K found that military life, long deployments and PTSD have a negative impact on family relations (De Burgh et al., 2003; Erbs, 2003; Gray, 2016). In Italy and Slovenia partners blamed increased family and child care responsibly for the increased stress (Zamperini, Restuccia & Menegatto, 2016; Vuga & Juvan, 2013). Studies in the U.S concluded that favorable stress reduction and coping strategies for military spouses were optimistic thinking, self-help, self-care, spiritual support, talking with others in similar situations and physical activity (Anders, 2014; McKenna, 2010; Patzel et al., 2013).

Research in both the U.S (Huffman, Culbertson & Castro, 2008; Bowen & Neena, 1990) and Sweden (Officersförbundet & Synovate, 2008; Weibull, 2009; SOU, 2008:91) have found that family happiness during deployment and overall satisfaction with military life is directly related to soldiers going on another deployment and remain in the military. In addition, the performance of soldiers and operational efficiency is negatively affected if families and spouses are not happy and supported. Both Segal (1986) and Andres et al. (2015) conclude that findings like these make the military highly concerned with military families', partners' and spouses well-being during deployment and satisfaction with military life.

There is solid evidence indicating that military families need specifically designed support to handle the stress of deployment (Gewirtz et al., 2011). There is substantial research in the U.S on how methods, support programs and so called "home front" or "family readiness groups" can support military families and reduce stress, especially during deployments. They conclude that broad, varied and inclusive support systems that cover socio-psychological needs of military families are required. Emphasis is placed on understanding that the families are a part of the military missions and their well-being and stress levels will impact the military units overall capacity and readiness (Ross & Devoe, 2014; Doty et al., 2016; Kees et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2013; Bowles et al., 2015 & Carroll et al, 2013). In the UK, army spouses favored informal support groups as a way of handling deployment stress (Dandeker et al., 2015). In some cases, spouses and partners have been found to take action, preferring to start their own informal home front groups, but these groups are often coopted by the military (Moelker & Van der Kloet, 2003).

Andres et al. (2015) have also identified increasing demands from military families that the military is forced to satisfy. Despite this development they underline that the purpose of the military family support initiatives and programs is to improve family wellbeing through stress reduction and coping strategies to safeguard soldier performance and military efficiency. How support is structured

and its success depends on its adaptations to social, economic and political characteristics of society and the military in each context. Despite these adaptations most military family support systems still have a traditional understanding of family structures and family life usually has to adapt to military demands.

Several critical feminist studies in the U.S confirm the needs of the military institution comes at the expense of families. The support system and family readiness groups seem to be key sites where family members, spouses and partners, who often are women, are being socialized into accepting militaristic ideologies and traditional gender roles (Horn 2010; McKenna, 2010; Sahlstien Parcell & Maguire, 2014; Aronson, 2006; Weber 2012). Further research in the U.S (Tomforde, 2015, Aducci et al, 2011; Weber 2012) Israel (Herzog, 2004; Eran-Jona, 2015), Slovenia (Vuga, & Juvan, 2013) and Denmark (Heiselberg 2017) that has found that militaristic ideologies including discourses about gender, influence the families of soldiers in different ways. There are expectations on military families, mainly spouses and partners, to take on supportive militarized gender roles and femininities. This entails taking care of the home front and family life, being strong and cope with increased stress, emotionally supporting the soldiers and the military mission. Some spouses and partners lack recognition of their efforts, finding that their work is taken for granted, others express discontent finding that they are married to the military through their spouse.

This research is in line with the broader findings by Enloe (2000, 162-164; 2007) on how women are socialized and maneuvered into specific militarized femininities, i.e. into an “ideal military wife”. However, many wives also talk of their experience as a time of personal growth and empowerment and resistance against traditional gender roles (Aducci et al., 2011; Rossetto 2009; Weber 2012). Others emphasized self-determination, individual choice and refusing to be passive victims of their circumstances (Davis, Ward & Storm, 2011).

Research on military families in Sweden is limited. However, studies conducted in 2008 (Officersförbundet & Synovate, 2008; Wiebull, 2009) in conjunction with an official government investigation (SOU, 2008:91) came to the conclusion that spouses and partners of soldiers lacked recognition for the work and labour that they did at home. Deployments influenced their social life, income and careers negatively and questions were raised around whether or not peace keeping deployments were in conflict with broader social efforts towards gender equality. Research in 2012 (Jerfström, 2012) found that satisfaction with deployment support has increased since 2008 due to both practical and psychosocial improvements.

There is current a research project (Olsson, 2016) that is ongoing since 2012. Preliminary results provided in 2016 showed inclinations towards a number of different family and relationship coping strategies during deployments. The strategies identified in the research are divided in to six categories: Partnership, Supporting and Mobilizing, Normalization-ordinary life, Adjusting & negotiating, Emotional Reacting and Sacrificing & Suffering. Families apply different styles and methods for coping, communicating and the need and use of available support varies. Conclusions are that the extended Swedish military families are diverse, have different amounts of resources and ways of handling deployment stress. This requires a flexible, adaptable and varied extended military family support. There is no feminist or critical research on the extended Swedish military family and/or deployment support.

According to previous research military deployments causes increased stress for the families of soldiers who remain at home. To reduce this stress the military provides family deployment support making the “family apart of the mission”, with the purpose of ensuring soldier performance, future recruitment, political support and military missions. Most of the research has been done with the aim of improving support for military families, without actually questioning the root causes of the increased stress on families, spouses and partners. Critical studies identified how support systems are spaces that provide support but also ensure

that families, spouses and partners don't question military missions and maintain specific supportive gender roles. Specific gendered notions of what it means to be a member of a military family, spouse or partner are created in the social relations within these support systems.

## 2.2 Deployment Support from a Feminist Perspective: Managing Gender Relations

### 2.2.1 Post-Structuralist understandings of Ideology, Discourse and Gender

This thesis takes its ontological and epistemological point of departure from a post-structuralist understanding of social reality as constructed and that language is an inescapable aspect in everyday social relations. This entails that social relations and identity constructions acquire meaning from language and a study of language will provide insight into how individuals understand their world (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Social life is understood as practices, meaning specifically created ways of acting in the world, in specific locations and times in which people draw upon material and symbolic resources. This understanding positions individual subjects as active participants in the construction of reality, more so active, reflexive agents in the articulation of discourses in social practices. Discourse is a part of social practices, namely the use of semiotic elements such as text, talk, music, body movement and language, and photographs and films. This entails that practices are partly discursive, meaning that there is a dialectic relationship between discourse and other aspects of social practice (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Meaning that not everything is discourse, and discourse is effected by social structures and practice. Discourse constitutes social practices and is constituted by social practices, hence the dialectic relationship (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 61-62)

The reflexivity of subjects, blurring boundaries between different social practices and increased hybridity of discourse and identity construction are characteristics of discourse post-modern society. However, this does not entail an understanding of the social world as totally free. Social practice and its discursive element are intertwined in webs of power relations. Those relations are sustained by ideologies, which can be understood as constructions of meaning from a particular perspective that influences the production, reproduction and change of power relations and domination in society (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 26-27). When specific ideologies become naturalized ways of organizing social practices, they can be considered hegemonic. To achieve this dominant one-sided ideological position, hegemonic ideologies constantly maneuver and struggle over the power to dominate and shape discursive practices. This struggle is almost constant due to the openness of the social and the reflexivity of subjects, and hegemony in a sense is never fully achieved (Fairclough, 1995, p. 94; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 25).

From a feminist perspective this entails an understanding that “*gender ideology and gender relations of power are (re)produced, negotiated and contested in representations of social practices, in social relationships between people, and in peoples social and personal identities in text and talk.*” (Lazar, 2005, p. 11-12). One should understand the construction of gender within discourse as ‘*gender relationality*’, meaning ways in which specific gender identities are constructed in relation to each other in social practices (Lazar, 2005; 2007, p. 150). In late-modernity, subjects express active, reflexive and critical attitudes towards discourse, practices and power including sexism and gender relations (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Lazar (2005, p. 17-18) and McRobbie (2009, p. 25-28) argue that this aspect has influenced gender relations on both institutional, relational and individual levels. Meaning that subjects are more aware and critical to of gender ideologies expressed in discourse in social life. One consequence has been the development of more subtle forms of gender oppressions, namely of western neo-liberal individualized ‘post-feminist’ discourses. They promote empowerment, self-realization, self-achievement and consumption as valuable characteristics and turn structural gender inequalities

into individual problems. Gill & Schraff (2010, p. 4) adds ideas of self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline, and the body and self as location for constant remaking to this discourse.

Relating this to the changes and challenges to traditional power relations between the military and military families identified by Andres et al. (2015) the argument is that social relations within deployment support are embedded in these characteristics social and discursive practices in late-modernity.

### 2.2.2 Gender, Military and Warfare: War as Gender Relations

Gender is a hegemonic ideological structure that divides society and people into a dichotomous class structure based on sexual difference. Its hegemony comes from the commonsense acceptance in society and its continuous subtle reenactment through discursive means. It subordinates women to men, which is expressed in divisions of labour, valued behaviors and characteristics (Lazar 2005, p. 7). It is often perceived to be a natural and taken for granted aspect of social life and is continuously reenacted and resisted in the social interaction. Gender is about social relations, that in every day actions turn these relations into structures and identities which create unequal power relations (Connell & Pearse, 2015). Connell's (2002, p. 47-50) concept of 'body reflexive practices' maintains the importance of bodies as material, but understands that everyday social practices of masculinity and femininity shape and change the meanings of those bodies.

Feminist scholars find that there is a relationship between the hegemonic ideological structure of gender and warfare. Specific hegemonic roles, relations, meanings, and understandings of gender are sustained by military power and ideologies and because these are required for warfare. In other words the step by step process of militarization and its peak event war, requires and sustains a hierarchical relationship between men and women, masculinities and femininities (Cockburn, 2010; Cohn, 2013; Goldstien, 2001; Sjoberg, 2014 & Via & Sjoberg, 2010). Enloe (2000; 2007) emphasizes this relationship, where war and the

military institution favors masculinity, but is simultaneously dependent on maintaining specific notions of femininity for its success. Consequently the military, through processes of militarization and its ideologies manipulates the meanings and relationships between masculinity and femininity to enable warfare. Conventionally, this has been about ensuring that women, individually and as a group, support the men who go to war.

One fruitful way of specifying this relationship is to understand the military as institution of hegemonic masculinity (Kronsell, 2005:2006). Hegemonic masculinity is the sort of contextually, socially and culturally dominant revered form of masculinity. The military institution, through war, is and has been central to the construction and legitimization of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). At the same time, hegemonic masculinity requires the existence of femininity, it needs femininity as an opposite, to distinguish itself from what it is not. More specifically an 'emphasized femininity' that is constructed around the idea of supporting and pleasing men. (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 848; Connell, 1987, p. 183). This means that from a feminist perspective on the military, militarization and warfare, is about maintaining gender relations and notions about being a man or a woman that in the short and long term enables and legitimizes war.

Then it is not surprising that feminist scholars find that war is symbolically associated with masculine attributes such as heroism, strength, risk, protection, courage, discipline. While femininity is related to domesticity, family, peace, softness, passivity, care and so on (Cohn, 2013; Sjoberg, 2014). Gender is a boundary between war and civilian life, where the masculine soldiers are kept separate from the feminized domesticized civilians in normal life (Goldstien, 2001). This dichotomy is also expressed in gendered divisions of labour, where men are valued as soldiers protecting women (Cockburn, 2010; Enloe, 2007). More so, in nationalistic discourses, women are valued for their biological and cultural reproductive capacities and taking care of the home (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Then looking at the 'military-family conflict' (Segal, 1986), it is embedded in

‘gendered systems of meaning of war’ (Cohn, 2013). Civilian life, home, family and the domestic is coded feminine and the process of militarization requires specific militarized femininities to support the military institution and war.

Enloe’s (2000; 2007) argues that the military goes through great effort and puts vast energy maintaining the support of women and civilian life through the militarization of femininity. Horn (2010) makes a similar argument, claiming that the purpose of military family support it is to maintain a hierarchical relationship between the warfront and the home front, or in other words between hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity. This thesis would contend that deployment support, located in civilian life and at the home front within a gendered ideological framing of the masculine military institution fills this feminized and supportive function. Deployment support is about constructing and maintaining a specific type of femininity during times of war.

### 2.2.3 Language and Gender Relations in Deployment Support: Construction of ‘Supportive femininity’

The use of language in every day gender relations and the “doing” of gender is a central aspect to feminist understandings of identity construction (see Connell, 2002; West & Zimmerman, 2002; Butler, 2007). Language is an essential part in the social process that regulates social relations between men and women, and legitimizes gender ideologies, differences and hierarchies (Cameron, 2014). The use of language is not only related to text or talk but includes the use of various semiotic materials such as visual representations, (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) which are important for understanding the hybridity and power of gender ideologies within discourse and social practices (Lazar, 2005). The relevance of language for military wives was in particularly highlighted by Weber (2012), who adopted specific feminized militarized language in their articulation of the deployment experiences. More importantly, her analysis found that language played an important role in constructing the ‘hegemonic masculinity’ as the military context and ‘emphasized femininity’ as the supportive civilian context

(see Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This is a useful insight connecting language and social relations to structural inequalities generated through deployment.

However, looking at the previous research there seems to be clear elements of diversity, empowerment, and agency of the feminized military families, spouses and partners. Agency both at the support level, by founding grass root support groups. Also because families in individualized societies have relative autonomy from the military have higher demands for support, and are less likely to unconditionally accept the demands from the military institution (Andres et al., 2015; Moelker & Van der Kloet, 2003). On the interpersonal and personal level diversity in femininities is expressed in the ambivalence between “super woman”, “helpless spouse” (Weber, 2012, p. 433) and overall experience of empowerment and personal growth during periods of deployment (Aducci et al., 2011; Rossetto, 2009; Weber, 2012). Others emphasized self-determination, in terms of not being a passive victim, and the fact that it is their own choice to be married to a person in the military (Davis, Ward & Storm, 2011). Here it is important to understand construction of identity and femininity in post-modern society is a ‘life-project’, in which individuals in post-modern society are left to choose and decide and how to design their bodies, identities and lives (Gill & Schraff; 2011; Giddens, 1991). I find that the concept of ‘emphasized femininity’ (Connell, 1987) that Weber (2012) applies does not capture the characteristics of post-modern societies and in relation to discourse, ideology, reflexivity and identify construction.

Consequently, Selberg’s (2012) concept of ‘normative femininity’ provides an understanding of femininity and identify construction more useful this study. For Selberg (2012, p. 48) it means “...*the dominant cultural and ideological interpretations of gender and the ways in which women experience, live through, resist and negotiate them in particular time and place*”. Selberg (2012, p. 47) uses it to “...*analyze care workers experiences of occupying a contradictory but structurally subordinated position...*” in the context of care work done in a hospital. The concept is grounded in cultural and ideological connections to motherhood and nation, as well as essentialist notions

of feminine care labour, which is well applicable with militarized gender ideologies. Therefore it can be combined with Enloe's (2000) understanding of militarized femininities into the concept of *supportive femininity*. This maintains the subordination to hegemonic masculinity through the supportive function, without losing the possibility to theorize the practices of diverse femininities, empowerment, agency and reflexivity within the discursive and social practices of deployment support systems in post-modern society. The concept will be operationalized in detail using the more detailed insights from previous critical feminist research in section 3.4.3.

#### 2.2.4 Deployment Support: Managing the Home Front through Gender Relations and Stress Reduction.

This section wants to summarize the theoretical frame work. The military-family conflict from a feminist perspective is understood as a relationship, as gender relations between female and male bodies, and hegemonic masculinity and *supportive femininity*. The latter attributing specific gendered meanings of being an extended family member and remaining on the "home front".

Deployment support is located in the home front and becomes a meeting place between military and family and WarFront/HomeFront (see Horn, 2010). It is also a place where hegemonic masculinity and *supportive femininity* meet, where military power gets access to civilian life and where *supportive femininity* is constructed. The previous research shows that socialization within deployment support contexts on the home front is important for the construction of *supportive femininity*. On the surface it supports military families during times of stress, with the purpose of enabling warfare. Feminist theorizing shows that it also sustains and constructs specific gender and power relations between masculinity and femininity. In this process military power seeks to naturalize its gender ideologies and *supportive femininity* is constructed within the deployment support environment.

The military and war, and soldiers i.e. hegemonic masculinity needs *supportive femininity*. The purpose of deployment support is to maintain this hierarchy of gender relations and maintaining the hegemonic position of the military within this relationship (Horn, 2010). However, based on previous findings the construction of *supportive femininity* is not a clear cut process. There are elements of contestation and struggle where military families in individualistic societies have greater possibilities for agency and opposition towards military power and due to postmodernist aspect of reflexivity and hybridity. The post-structuralist argument presented in section 2.2.1 finds that the contestation and struggle of these gendered meanings and relationships can be identified at the level of discourse expressed in various uses of language within deployment support.

### 3. Research Design: Case, Material and Method

This chapter initially presents an argument as to why Swedish deployment support is interesting context for critical feminist anti-militarist research. Followed by a brief overview of deployment support in the Swedish context, including a justification of why *Invidzonen* has been selected, which is followed by a more detailed explanation of the data collection and the application of a three step sequential qualitative analysis. This is followed by an overview of the two main methodological approaches, multi modal analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The latter is only explained and covered briefly. CDA and Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model for textual analysis is covered more in-depth as it is the main methodological tool, introducing the concepts of order of discourse, modality, interdiscursivity and intertextuality. Finally an operationalization of the theoretical concepts within the frame of CDA, a construction of an order of discourse within deployment support and a detailed operationalization of the concept '*supportive femininity*'.

### 3.1 Case Selection: Gender relations and Deployment Support in Sweden.

The main argument is that deployment support in Sweden is a case where gender equality is a crucial part of the national and cultural self-image, and a seemingly progressive military, where extended families of soldiers experience relative autonomy and distance to the military institution. These contextual factors make militarization and gender relations within Swedish deployment support a location which fits the critical anti-militarist research approach that Cynthia Enloe (2007) proposes.

The public welfare system, gender equality and military families are positioned outside the military system are factors to consider when researching military families in Sweden. (Olsson, 2016). This supports the argument that Sweden is one of those societies where military families have more favorable conditions to resist military institutional power and will not accept military demands unconditionally (Andres et al., 2015). In 2016, Sweden was ranked the 4<sup>th</sup> most gender equal country in the world (World Economic Forum, 2016) and gender equality has been institutionalized on a state level and is connected to national and cultural self-image of Sweden (Martinsson, Griffin & Giritli Nygren, 2016). More so, as mentioned in the introduction, the SAF has gone through a lot of changes, it also uses a broader more inclusive less heteronormative definition of military family.

The SAF has worked with gender equality, “new values”, focusing on foreign peacekeeping missions, and the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security by hiring more women. Feminists have identified how essentialist understandings of gender are persistent in the military, arguing that women are recruited for their capacity as women to improve operational efficiency. (Kronsell, 2012; Persson, 2010) There is a Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations in Stockholm (Försvarsmakten, 2016a) and ‘Hand Book Gender’ was recently released as tool for implementing the gender perspective in

military operations (Försvarsmakten, 2016b). The military has also become increasingly LGBT-friendly during the last decade, but heteronormativity remains the norm (Sundevall & Persson, 2016). There is a solid amount of feminist research on the Swedish military (for ex. see Sundevall, 2011; Kronsell, 2012; Persson, 2010 & Eduards; 2014; 2012), but no feminist research on extended military families or deployment support in Sweden. This despite indications identified in 2008 (Officersförbundet & Synovate, 2008); that international deployments might have negative effects on gender equality.

Drawing from Gerring's (2004, p. 352) seven points of consideration for a case study, this research has mainly descriptive, exploratory ambitions of a case that has not been previously researched. There is an emphasis on depth and with an aim to shed light on the mechanisms between language, discourse, gender ideologies, relations and social inequalities. Extended military families and deployment support has been selected based on theoretical insight that these are spaces where the military power accesses to military families, and their importance for socializing individuals into accepting militaristic gender ideologies. Together with the contextual factors mentioned above, this makes Swedish deployment support what Yin (2006, p. 61-62) would call a 'unique case' with regards to gender relations and militarization within deployment support. Unique in the sense that the above mentioned characteristics of Swedish society and military, are different from those in the U.S, Israel or U.K, hence the expressions of gender ideologies and relations within deployment support should be different.

It is useful to pinpoint the main formal unit of analysis when conducting a case study. In some cases it is clearer and in others a more abstract and less concrete and it's not always possible to sharply separate the unit of analysis from contextual factors (Yin, 2009; Gerring, 2004). In this study, the formal unit of analysis, is gender ideologies, relations and identities embedded in social practices of deployment support and the specific context is Invidzonen, a deployment support organization for extended families of soldiers in Sweden. It is not

completely clear where the line is drawn, but the feminist theoretical and critical perspective is mainly interested in uncovering how gender and power relations within deployment support sustain social inequalities.

A feminist perspective implies that the analysis of gender relations and power is a central aspect, and this research also want to add to feminist knowledge about the intersection of gender and militarization in deployment support. Here I want to clearly state that, coming from a feminist epistemology (Harding, 1991; 1997; Harraway, 1988; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002) understanding, all knowledge production is political and situated. I am not interested in objective generalization in the traditional sense. Instead I argue that by applying a feminist theoretical and epistemological standpoint this study will provide new but partial knowledge about gender relations and militarization. An exploratory qualitative case study researching a unit of analysis in a context that has not been previously studied from that particular perspective. In a sense it is connected to the aspirations of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which refers uncovering social inequalities coming from specific often critical political positions. (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999).

### 3.2 Material & Data Collection: Invidzonen, Website & Forum

The SAF offer support to extended family members when soldiers go on international deployments. Anyone who find themselves to have a relationship with a soldier has the right to receive deployment support from the SAF (Försvarsmakten, 2017c). Extended family members have access to support both formally through the military human resources department, and through a number of affiliate organizations who specialize on this matter. However there is only one that primarily targets extended family members. That is *Invidzonen*, founded in 2007, it is a volunteer grass root organization, where support is focused on extended family member's pre/during/post-deployment. It applies a network approach where extended family members can talk to each other and also mentors

who share their experiences and can relate to their situation. They provide support through meetings, family activities, phone support and on their website one can find chatrooms, forums, and a journal. In 2010 the organization started to receive direct funding from the SAF. *Invidzonen* has no political or religious affiliation and is open to anyone regardless of gender, sexuality, religion, culture or ethnicity (Försvarsmakten, 2017d; 2017e; Invidzonen, 2017a; 2017b).

The main interest of the research is to explore how specific notions of *supportive femininity* are created in social relations articulated in various semiotic materials within the discursive and social practices in deployment support. *Invidzonen* is a location in the Swedish context that shares most similarities with home front or family readiness groups that are key sites for socializing family members into militarized gender roles and identities. It is also a clear example of agency, where it was founded as a grass root organization by individuals formally outside the SAF, which later was incorporated into the formal deployment support.

The material used is taken from *Invidzonen's* open access website. The data analyzed will be a combination of semiotic material from the website and supportive conversations taking place on the open forum found on the website. The purpose is to be able capture how the deployment support structure incorporates military ideologies in its discursive practices and how those ideologies are expressed in supportive interactions between mentors and/or extended military family members. The website and the forum are together understood as a holistic expression of deployment support, individuals will most likely access the forum after visiting the website. This will hopefully lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between language, discourse and social practices in the construction of '*supportive femininity*'. The material from the forum will provide a possibility of understanding how social practice of deployment support relates to wider social practices in the lives of extended families.

The selection of posts were strategic, but also in a way that covered the time span of 2011-2017, until a point of empirical saturation was reached. The selection of the website as material is highly influenced by Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999) understanding of discursive practices as a mixture of semiotic material in general, and Lazar's (2005; 2000; 1999) emphasis on mixed semiotic expression of gender ideology in late-modernity. It also draws on Kress & van Leeuwen (2001; 2006) claims that CDA can be fruitfully combined with multimodal analysis of websites and Pauwels (2012) argument that websites are active sites for cultural expression and social relations. This approach was applied by Nash (2016) in what she called a Feminist Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis. Section 3.4 will elaborate on the benefits of applying a sequential qualitative mixed methodology design with primacy to CDA.

### 3.3 Ethics, Reflexivity, Access and Limitations

I have selected the website, and the forum of *Invdizonen*, as a way of distancing myself from the sensitive nature of the deployment experience. In the communication with the moderators the agreement is to avoid using sensitive or revealing quotes from the forum in the thesis text. This means that for the forum much of the analytical steps cannot be presented directly, but must be re-written as a combination of analysis and presentations of empirical content.

The thesis takes, as its point of departure, a feminist understanding that war and gender relations are interconnected and that the military institution together with warfare perpetuates unequal power relations in society (Cockburn, 2010; Goldstien, 2001; Sjoberg, 2014; Via & Sjoberg, 2010; Enloe, 2000; 2007). This critical standpoint creates a sensitive situation in relation to extended military families and deployment support. From my own experience with deployment, being a veteran from Afghanistan, I know that criticizing veterans and their families' experiences is a sensitive issue. The intention is not to devalue or neglect the hardship, suffering or stress experienced by individuals and extended family members. The intention is instead directly inspired by CDA and feminist

epistemology mentioned previously to make visible structural inequalities and power relations sustained by military discourses and ideologies embedded within deployment support. With the purpose of empowering extended family members, so that they may better understand the implications of someone joining the military and/or going on deployment.

The choice of material is directly related to this ethical issue. I want to avoid using sensitive individual narrative where I, to large extent will apply my theoretically guided and critical interpretations of these experiences. These are actual people with stories and not just research subjects. It is also important to clarify that this is not a complete representation of extended families of soldiers in Sweden. *Invidzonen* represents those wanting to provide support and those who are looking for support. As Olsson (2016) showed there is lots of diversity in terms of needs of and characterises extended military families. This is a slight limitation of the study, but at the same time the focus is on the gender relations within deployment support and not creating a representative image of all extended family members.

### 3.4 Qualitative Multimethod Approach: 3 Step Analysis of Website and Forum

Leeuwen (2001; 2006) find that CDA can be fruitfully combined with multimodal analysis of websites. I draw inspiration from Nash's (2016) application of multimodal CDA, a mixed methods approach with both integrated and separated steps of analysis. Creswell (2015) highlights the value of mixed methods approaches as a way of gaining access to various types of data, thus gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Creswell (2015) focuses on the combination of qualitative and quantitative data. Some of his ideas are applicable to this study, but not all since this is an interpretative qualitative study using CDA.

Morse (2010) argues for a possibility to create a mixed methods model using only qualitative methods, including discourse analysis, with either simultaneous or

sequential analysis. Morse (2010, p. 484-487) differentiates between core components and supplementary component in qualitative mixed methods; the former should be selected based on which method and data best suited for answering the research question. For this research design, the core component is the analysis of text and visual material using CDA, and the supplementary component is the multi modal analysis of the website. The analysis of each competent is conducted sequentially; this is explained more in detail in the coming sections.

The supplementary ‘multimodal analysis’ (Pauwels, 2012; Margolis & Pauwels, 2011) is used as what Creswell (2015, p. 6) would call an ‘exploratory method’, to systematically approach the website and gain a better understanding by mapping the different categories and content. The main purpose of this method is to establish the authors, the intended audience and the purpose of the website, thus providing better knowledge to strategically select the texts and visual material to be analysed with the tools provided by CDA. It is also to gain a better holistic overview of the interaction between visual and textual semiotic material on the website.

The core component of the study is the application of CDA to analyse the construction of *supportive femininity* within social practices of deployment support. The CDA uses data from the website and the forum, informed by the supplementary multimodal analysis. Even though the CDA of this material is the core component, for the sake of analytical clarity it is divided into two parts, initially analysing the selected texts from the website and then the forum, and then a final concluding analysis of all the data. This approach be able to determine how *Invidzonen* as an organisation constructs supportive femininity and how it relates to supportive interactions on the forum. I understand the deployment support, website and forum, as a social practice of deployment support in the holistic sense, this division is purely for analytical and structural clarity.

1. Multimodal Analysis (Supplementary)
2. CDA of strategically selected semiotic material from the website (Core component)
3. CDA of strategically selected texts from the support forum (Core component)
4. Analysis of discursive and social practices

### 3.4.1 Multimodal Analysis: Exploring the Website of Invidzon

Pauwels (2011; 2012) presents a six step framework for analysing websites as sites of cultural and social expressions. The approach offers possibilities for gaining an overview and analysing specific segments, parts, visuals and texts on a website.

Pauwels (2011) states clearly that this model has to be adapted to the specific intentions of the research. For this research this method of multi modal analysis has a dual purpose presented previously. One concept that both Pauwels (2011) and Fairclough (1995) refers to is *Intertextuality*. For Pauwels it relates links, logos, symbols and other aspect that connects the website to previous texts or other websites. The analytical questions, created in interaction between this method and the theoretical framework are:

- What is the purpose of the website? Thematic ordering of content?
- Who is the website for? Primary/ Latent Secondary Audience?
- Who are the authors of the website?
- What is the audience expected to do and how do audience and authors interact?
- How the support is intertextually linked to the Swedish armed Forces? Logos? Symbols? Links?

### 3.4.2 Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Lazar (2005) provides a theoretical and methodological connection between Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and feminist understanding of the relationship between gender, power, discourse and ideology. More importantly it incorporates and captures the reflexivity, of individuals and institutions, as well as the increased interdiscursivity and varied semiotic expressions of gendered ideologies in discourse in late modernity.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has various methodological approaches and one of those is the Three-dimensional model of discourse and discourse analysis presented by Fairclough (1995). It has been developed and changed by Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999) using the concept of articulation. Jorgensen & Phillips (2002) do not find any major differences between the three-step model and articulation. I agree with them that the former is a clearer analytical tool, especially when it comes to operationalizing theoretical concepts into the different steps of the model.

For Fairclough (1995, p. 97,133) the analysis of discourse involves, a) linguistic analysis of *text*, b) *discursive practice*: analysis of how the text is produced and consumed, and c) *social practice*: how this relates to wider social process. These three steps are each a specific way of reading the same text, that complement each other and together they can identify the connections between them and underlying power relations. The discursive practices, production and consumption of text is analyzed to understand the relationship between text and wider social practice, in a way discursive practices acts as a mediator between the two. Social practice in this context is deployment support, but also social practices as the way in which deployment support relates to wider social practices in the lives of extended families and society

With regards to the analysis of actual text, Fairclough (1995, p. 133) finds text to contain ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings. For this thesis, the main

point of interest is the interpersonal aspect of textual analysis, which in turn is broken down into identity function meaning personal and social identities and the relational function, meaning how texts express relationships between different identities. Relating this back to Lazar's (2005) concept of '*gender relationality*' as well as the understanding of gender presented in the theoretical section, this highlights the relevance for this aspect of analysis. I find the concept of *modality* in its different forms particularly useful. For example what level of *truth* is presented in a statement and how *permission* is given from one speaker to another in conversation or text are expression of power relations. *Transitivity* will also be used how subject or objects are connected to process or events (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 83-84). Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999) specifies that this analysis of text is on the interactional level, between subjects and how the conversation itself contains different linguistic attributes that in specific social contexts draws on particular discourses and genres thus structuring power relations. In this context, it would be feminist theories and specific words of being a military spouse on the home front are present in the textual representations of the social practice of deployment support.

The dimension of discursive practices is highly influenced by the order(s) of discourse. Fairclough (1995, p. 132) uses this concept to delineate what kind of discourses are at play within a specific institution or social context/field (also see Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) and that can be drawn upon when constructing a text. There are always different discourses at play within a specific social field and order(s) of discourse from different social fields are in constant struggle and contestation with each other which can be expressed and identified on the level of text. In establishing the order of discourse Fairclough (1995, p. 132) differentiates between *discourses* and *genres*. The former being ways of signifying or understanding an experience from a particular perspective, military discourse, and the latter being the use of language associated with a specific activity, i.e. exercise. By establishing an order(s) of discourse one can then analyze how specific texts draw upon available discourses and genres and how a

specific the use of talk, text or other semiotics cements or challenges the established order of discourse within that social context.

The concept of *interdiscursivity* is used to explain the constant but varying level of creative combinations of discourses and genres within a specific social context that change the boundaries between discourses and between order (s) of discourse. *Intertextuality* is in a way an aspect of interdiscursivity. It is used to highlight that all communicative events (semiotics and texts) are connected to previous texts that have been used before. The former highlights the creativity, mix and boundary shifting while the latter focuses on an historical aspect of text construction but they are used together when analyzing the production and consumption of texts. (Fairclough, 1995; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002) The possibilities and implications of the levels of *interdiscursivity* and *intertextuality* in discursive practices are directly related to Fairclough's (1995, p. 94-95) understanding of power, ideology and application concept of hegemony that were described in section 2.2.1.

The struggle over hegemony and the naturalization of ideology is a power struggle at the level of discourse and this draws from and reshapes the order (s) of discourse. Fairclough (1995, p. 95) explains this aspect of production, reproduction, challenge and transformation of hegemonic orders of discourse as: *"Any instance of discursive practice can thus be interpreted in terms of its relationship to existing orders of discourse and discursive practices (is it broadly normative, reproducing them, or creative, contributing to their transformation?), as well as its relationship to existing social structures, ideologies and power relations (e.g., in the case of consultations between male doctors and women patients, do they reproduce or challenge dominant gender relations and ideologies?)."* Fairclough (1995) finds that the hegemonic struggle is directly related to the degree of interdiscursivity. Creativity, contestation and change are expressions of hegemonic struggle and hegemonic instability and a lack of these aspects is understood as a sign of strong hegemonic ideologies influencing power relations and social structures.

To explain how text and discursive practice relates to wider social practices explanatory assistance from other social theories are required. Meaning that broader social theory is needed to explain specific social and ideological consequences of the discursive practice, how it challenges or cements ideologies, social relations and identities in that specific social context (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). In this particular case, this means relating this process to the feminist theoretical understanding of deployment support as a part of warfare.

### 3.4.3 Operationalization of ‘Supportive femininity’

In this section I will take Jorgensen & Phillips (2002, p. 140-145) understanding of discourses in this sense as analytical concepts that I create with the purpose to use a tool which allows me to distance myself from the material. Basically, this section applies the feminist theoretical framework and operationalizes it into specific orders of discourse within military family deployment support. Therefore, it is important to clearly emphasize that the theoretically informed discourses are created as ways to help read the text. They will need to be translated and related to existing actual discourses during the final analysis of discursive and social practices. Based on previous research and feminist theorizing the order of discourse established here contains three main discourses and one genre that discursive practice within deployment support will draw upon in the construction of *supportive femininity*. These discourses are operationalized into words, topics and/or terminology that have been identified in previous research and theoretical frame work.

- Gender Discourse: Home, caring, caring for home, supportive, emotional, passive, helpless and concerned.
- Military discourse: Deployment, brave, part of the mission, duty, lack of recognition, nationalism, political support and military terminology.
- Empowerment Discourse: Strong, capable, coping, resistance, agency, active, and independence, motivating.
- Stress Genre: Reduce stress or concerns, increase well-being, and exercise.

The selection of texts will emphasize the aspects '*gender relationality*' (Lazar, 2005) connected to supportive femininity. Meaning texts that include supportive interaction between a mentor and/or extended family member on deployment will be favored. For example, were a text on the website takes the tone of speaking to an extended family member surfing looking for ways of understanding their current situation. It is here when *modality* is operationalized as a tool for identifying power relations at the level of text.

Also the interaction, reinforcement or contradiction, between visual and textual semiotics is important (Pauwel, 2011), how pictures, symbols and text draw from order of discourse in different combinations of discourses and genres is analyzed using *interdiscursivity*. *Intertextuality* is applied when text in a clear way uses specific words, phrases, symbols or links to other texts, partially informed by the findings from the multimodal analysis. Intertextuality is also applied to make links between the website support and the conversations in the forum. All the quotes and phrases from the website and forum are translated by the researcher from the original language of Swedish to English.

## 4. Deployment Support in Sweden: Contesting Constructions of Femininity during 'Home Deployment'

The purpose is to identify how *Invidzonen*, mentors and extended family members in the social practice of deployment support draw upon militarized gender discourses and how the identity of being an extended family member in Sweden is created in this process. The research questions is:

How are hegemonic gender ideologies sustained and challenged in the construction of '*supportive femininity*' in the social practices of deployment support within *Invidzonen*?

## 4.1 Invidzonen: A warm, positive and supportive environment far away from the military

The initial reaction when accessing *Invidzonen's* website<sup>3</sup> is that it is very colourful, with many happy and bright colours. It does not give impression of being something associated with the military or warfare, instead it seems more normal and civilian far away from military life. It looks more like a website for a playground and the pictures on the front page represent diversity of people. It feels alive, active and energizing. The red and pink hearts and the red heart shaped coffee cup also give a warm and friendly feeling.

First of all the purpose of the website is clear, it is to provide support for extended family members of soldiers on deployment. This support is multifaceted but when inspecting it more closely it seems that it used a lot of digital approaches, forum, chat, phone, Apps, blogs, online magazine and social media. The support seems to be heavy on the digital interaction and this is even highlighted as a strength for support coverage. The support is provided by those who also are extended family members, through experience exchange and mentorship. Specific activities and methods are expressed as talking to those that understand based on experience, but also activities for families, doing sports and self-coaching and personal development. The organisation does not take sides or stand on the political nature of SAF deployments, instead the focus is on the extended family members and their needs and experiences.

A number of 'identities' surfaced in the analysis of the website according to the author/audience questions. The commonly shared identity of being an extended military member, the identity of being a mentor and the identity of being an extended military family member looking for support. The authors of the website, *Invidzonen* are closely connected to the idea and the function of the mentor as a way of providing support. The mentors and the website want to and will help. Either by listening or providing ways to find the positive force and individual

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<sup>3</sup> The website was accessed at 20170403

capabilities. The mentors understanding, experience and knowledge of being and extended family member is repeatedly highlighted. The expected authors/audience interaction is shaped by the mentor/supporter and extended military family member/supported relationship. There is an emphasis on shared experience, identification and collective support, but also support through mentors, whom have experience with deployment and training. When reviewing the pictures on the website there are a clear majority portraying white women, sometimes alone, sometimes in conversation with each other. Many times in connections to the words; mentors or extended family member. The latent audience are women. There a few pictures of men, but they are a minority.

The intertextual links identified are in the shape of Swedish Armed Forces, mentioning of direct funding from the SAF, presenting a lot of research funded by the SAF and cooperation with many military veteran organisations in Sweden. There are also international links to military family sites in Canada and the US. One interesting intertextual connection to the military was the medal appearing on the front page. It can be purchased as a gift to an extended military family member, thanking them for their service at home.

How can this initial exploratory analysis guide the CDA? It supports the theoretical and methodological contention to focus on the relational aspect of identity construction in discursive practices. Translating these findings into the language of CDA the type of social practise, i.e. the purpose of the website can be understood as peer support between extended family members. This social practise requires the use of text and talk, i.e. discursive practise drawing upon discourses in that process. This analysis manages to identify the purpose, authors and audience and the expected relationship of interaction on the website. This is highly valuable for the CDA and it is then possible to structure the selection of texts around the social practice of peer deployment support. CDA of selected semiotic material will attempt to identify how these, superficially identified relationships, are constructed at the level of discourse and expressed in social practise of deployment support.

## 4.2 Invidzonen Website: Deployment Support through identification and empowerment

### 4.2.1 Invidzonen & Mentors: Experience, identification, compassion and strength

*Invidzonen* is presented as a creative organization, for extended family members by extended family members of soldiers on deployment.

*“All active volunteers or mentors have experience with at least one home deployment and are extended military family members themselves. We know that recognition, compassion and humanity provide support and relief when a close one is on deployment abroad.”*(Invidzonen, 2017b).

*“They are experienced extended military family members who are mentors for other extended military family members. All our mentors have themselves gone through a deployment at home.”* (Invidzonen, 2017b).

Here the reference to ‘deployment at home’ is understood as a valuable experience. There is a modality of truth in the wording that all mentors “are experienced”, and the choice of the wording “at least one” indicate that there are levels of experience by the numbers of home deployments. Experience connected to the mentor and extended family member. The concept of transitivity can thus explain that the mentor is connected to the process of gaining experience. This processual aspect of mentorship and experience are affirmed with the word “are” which indicates that it is something one can be or become. More so deployment at home is something that one “goes through”, again it refers to process. ‘Home deployment’ is an interesting interdiscursive reference. It indicates that this is done together with the person on deployment. It draws on gender discourses of home, together with military discourse of deployment. Thus connecting, but still separating the two spheres. The word experience indicates that this is something

of value, which mentors know about ‘deployments at home’ and therefore can be trusted to provide support. “We know...” (Invidzonen, 2017b) can be understood from Fairclough’s (1992) concept of modality in relation to truth. It strengthens the authority of *Invidzonen* and the mentors, as an organization and people that from experience know what is needed and what to do during ‘deployments at home’. At the same time it draws on gender discourses of compassion, recognition and humanity as something that will provide support.

*“Our purpose and aim is to actively and creatively support extended family members. We can strengthen their self-esteem, confidence and belief in themselves. To give extended military family members a possibility to utilize their own creativity for personal development and to make them feel that they are important, are needed and counteract the feelings of loneliness”*( Invidzonen, 2017b).

Here the modality of truth returns, but in a more action oriented form of “We can...”. At the same time there is a permission modality the use of the word “give” and “possibility”. They are sure they can help and in doing so they clearly draw on empowerment discourses, where individual capabilities of each extended military family member is highlighted as something that can be awoken by the support provided by *Invidzonen*. Every person has these aspects inside themselves but *Invidzonen* and the mentors will help them find and use them. The texts continue to draw on empowerment discourse in the specification of which methods are used. *“Invidzonen focuses on the positive power of each extended family member...”* (Invidzonen (2017b), *“The goal is to make it easier to remain at home, provide information, reduce feelings of loneliness and prevent psychological problems amongst extended family members”* (Invidzonen, 2017b). -Again empowerment, -both naturally occurring in each individual, but needed to be facilitated and enabled by the support- is articulated as solutions to the negative effects of deployment.

In the sentence *“The organizations activity is based on the belief that the compassionate meeting between fellow human beings in itself has a changing, supporting and strengthening power”* (Invidzonen, 2017b), words like strengthening and power drawing from empowerment discourse is connected with softer words like humanity and

compassion drawing from gender discourse. *Invidzonen* as an organization and its support is heavily based on the mentors, but also the idea of collective support through recognition, identification and experience exchange between extended family members. In the section “Become a mentor” the phrase “*Our mentors are also extended family members*” is presented above a tree with pictures of all the mentors, all but one women. “*Thanks to extended family members who are willing to set aside their valuable time to share their experiences, we have a large mentor force...*” (Invidzonen, 2017c). Here the experience aspect returns, in combination with the idea that mentors are busy, presented as a modality of truth. This could be understood as a reinforcement of the mentors as busy, experienced and competent, further cementing them as some sort of authority in what it means to be on deployment at home. But at the same time they are compassionate and “willing” to meet you as a fellow human being, sharing their experiences.

The section “Assignment/mission mentor” presents the mentors more in-depth. The section has two pictures, one of a man and of a woman, and several women walking and talking.

*“Through our mentor network you get the opportunity to talk to someone who have been in a similar situation. Our mentors are experienced extended family members and done at least one deployment at home. The mentors are fellow human beings who volunteer to share their lessons and give their own experiences an additional meaning” (Invidzonen, 2017d).*

Here the yet again draw on military discourse asserting experience with home deployment as something valuable, and the truth that the mentors are experienced. A “similar situation” is used in the same manner as experience with ‘home deployment’, portraying the mentors as compassionate fellow human beings who can identify with the extended family members but also share their knowledge and experience. The use of opportunity can be understood as modality of permission, where the extended family member is provided support if they want. The voice of the text is speaking to the “you”, an extended family member looking for support on the website. To give their “own experience additional meaning,” indicates that

there is something in it for the mentors.

The section “Our mentors” there are some individual presentations of mentors, some have families with children others do not. Most are written in a form where the mentor is speaking to an extended family member, all presentations stress the aspect of experience. One presentation mixes words like happy, forward person who wants to share her “...*experiences of home life with small children during deployments. I hope to contribute with my experiences and my positive view on life*”. Another presentation explains “*She knows how hard it can be to make everything work at home, everything from domestic work, children, home work and other things when your partner is on deployment*”. Another presentation explains that “*We have done 11 deployments together and our four children have grown up with a father on deployments. I can share my experiences with handling work and domestic life, children and all the other things one has to deal with on the home front.*” (Invidzonen, 2017e).

These presentations draw heavily on gender discourses, in the form taking care of the home, domestic labour and children during deployments, the home front draws from military discourse. They also use the notion of experienced mentors who can share and know how this is done in the best way. This suggests that learning how to deal with the effects of deployment on domestic labour is some sort of skill that one gains through experience. Hence, the feminine skills drawing from gender discourses are connected to deployments through the use of experience. Thus the mentors can help with tips on how to handle this stressful time with increased burdens at home.

Two presentations, without references to children and domestic labour, express how they have done three deployments together with their husbands and through these have gained experience that they want to share with others. One interesting expression that is worth mentioning is that two presentations mention that it was a joint decision to go on deployment and that *Invidzonen* was a place where this choice wasn't judged or questioned (Invidzonen, 2017e). These presentations don't mention domestic labour, but mention ‘home deployment’ as an experience

in general.

#### 4.2.2 Support Activities: Emotional support and individualized empowerment

The section “Mentor support” is headed by the sentence “*Our mentors are here for you*”, next to a picture of a two women talking, positioned close to each other, laughing together. There are four more pictures in the section, all with pictures of women in conversation with each other, one using a phone. The use of phrases like “fellow human beings” and “experience with a deployment at home” reoccur here. There is a references to the practical training and education of the mentor. It strengthens the modality of truth regarding the experience and competence of mentors, but the sentences and pictures in combination refer compassionate and sharing side of mentors (Invidzonen, 2017f).

In the overview section of different support activities “Our active support” (Invidzonen, 2017g), there an image of a Swiss army knife representing the varied toolbox. The sentence analyzed previously regarding the positive power of each extended family member reoccurs as a start to this page, with the additional use of “*...making the home deployment easier...*”. Most of the support functions available includes a contact with a mentor and the sentences are communicating with a “you”, thus speaking to extended family members. The mentors are mentioned as both fellow human beings, experienced extended family members and they can support if you are feeling anxiety or just want to talk to someone who understands. Some specific sentences stand out in their way of drawing on empowerment discourses. “*.. We also want to encourage you to make use of the time during deployment at home and make something of this time period to feel better*”, “*Just like the homepage the purpose of our magazine is to be source for inspiration for self-help and want to express a positive mentality.*”(Invidzonen, 2017g). Finally there is an encouragement to coach yourself:

“*...to develop yourself during a period when someone close to you is away on*

*international deployment can sound like an overpowering task. But maybe it is at this time that you need to take care of yourself a bit extra. The more you invest in your own time, the better you will be able to handle the deployment". (Invidzonen, 2017g)*

All these sentences draw heavily on empowerment discourses as solutions to the stress issues and problems during 'home deployment', but the words of encourage, inspiration and maybe take a more suggestive modality than previous truth claims. More importantly this rough and hard time is portrayed as something that is actually an opportunity for individual development and growth. Focusing on yourself will actually help you handle the 'home deployment' better. There are both short term and long term goals of this individualized focus. Here the genre of stress reduction is clearly interdiscursively connected empowerment discourses, self-help, positive thinking but also treating yourself and the modality mixes of truth claims and suggestive claims.

The section "About our support" the mentors are stressed as the main asset of the organization and the support. The visual material is made up of pink hearts, two women hugging, two hands holding and a woman looking melancholically out a window. The sentence about the positive power of each extended family member occurs again. The mentors are presented as both fellow human beings that can listen, experienced extended family members who have been through a deployment at home. Claims like " -We know that identification heals and that exchange of experiences between extended family members is an important part in creating comfort and strength for extended family members at home"(Invidzonen, 2017h), assert a modality of truth to the importance of the mentor and experience based support approach. However, the word "exchange" asserts a less strong modality, expressing that the relationship is on equal terms.

The section called "SportZone" displays a happy running woman next to the sentence "*The usefulness of having a goal*". The purpose and idea with SportZone is to create a healthy online and real life meeting place" – *for you who is remaining at home and who wants to make use of your own resources as means for increasing well-being, your health*

*and conditioning*”.. Some examples of activities are presented, “Girl mile 2016”, Boot Camp and BRAK (which is the name for an overall body exercise used in the SAF) (Invidzonen, 2017i). Here the genre of exercise interdiscursively mixed with empowerment discourse as a practical stress reducing method and a way of setting goals to keep the motivation up. The mentioning of the girl mile strengthens the argument that there is a latent understanding of extended family members as women.

The section “Coach yourself” (Invidzonen, 2017j) has five different subsections and there is too much text to analyze in depth. But there is a clear emphasis on personal development, goals, future, dreams motivating yourself, staying active and practical tools for reducing anxiety and concerns. Several contain pictures of active white women. These all draw on empowerment discourses and the genre of stress reduction as a part of the practical support.

#### 4.2.3 Summary of Website: Compassion, Understanding and Empowering support by experienced fellow human beings

According to the website an extended military family member is a woman and most mentors are women, women supporting women, either with domestic life and labour if they have children or with feelings of loneliness and passivity created by being left at home “alone”.

There is a dialectic relationship between supportive help through compassion, listening and identification of a fellow human and a person who is experienced with home deployment. There is an emphasis on the need of compassionate and understanding support of fellow human beings. This support is best given by those who have experience with deployments at home, mentors or other experienced individuals who both understand and who know what to do.

There is a duality in the support mechanisms that uses understanding, compassion and identification, recognition and experience with the stress reducing approaches

like staying active, using varied toolboxes and exercising that draw on empowerment discourse. The individual power is within each extended family member, *Invidzonen* and the mentors through their experience can help them access this power, during deployments. More importantly there appears to be an understanding that deployment is something that is an opportunity to use for individual growth, self-achievement and development. Empowerment discourses are used both as short term solutions during the actual deployment, but also long term as you will become stronger and develop as a person.

There is a clear relation of power created here, where the mentors and/or those with experience are the ones with the knowledge about deployments at home. So experience is expressed in something valuable and as a modality of truth, which in turn influences the interactional control (Fairclough, 1992) between extended family members reading the website.

### 4.3 Invidzonen Forum: Peer Deployment Support in practice

The forum is described as a positive place where extended family members can meet, exchange experiences, air thoughts and emotions, and the idea that recognition, identification and common experience are good ways to deal with deployment (Invidzonen, 2015, p. 17). The forum is mainly a place where the extended family members support each other but mentors also participate and post. The forum has complete anonymity with any contacts or details removed by moderators. There are posts between 2011-2017 in the forum.

The first thing that is directly noticeable are the names of the individuals posting, starting and responding to threads. Many are feminine screen names, many also uses the words wife, mother, sad mother, tired mother, alone, soldiers wife, and little me to name a few. In general the majority of the individuals posting on the forum seem to be women, female partners of soldiers on deployment, with or without children. Although in one of the selected threads there were extended

family members identifying themselves as men.

The mentors are present on the forum but the majority of the posts are actually by non-mentor extended family members. The collective peer support between extended family members is favored on the forum. The mentors have specific roles on the forum, post or references to the mentors are used in a number of different ways. First many extended family members express clearly that the compassionate and experienced support provided by mentors and/or the forum have been invaluable for them. Some extended family members clearly state that without the support of a mentor they would not have been able to make it through deployment at home. Secondly, the mentors appear in the forum when an extended family member is feeling very bad, stressed or experiencing complex problems. They offer their more personal support, proposing to talk to someone who understands and has experience with this. Thirdly, the function as moderators, intervening when a thread has lost its supportive purpose. The discursive practice, production and consumption of text (Fairclough, 1995) is structured around this social practice of support between extended family members.

#### 4.3.1 'Home deployment', Experience and Identification: 'Power Hug' Support

The first thing that stands out as a common thread across a clear majority of the threads analyzed on the forum is the notion that deployment is done together with the soldier. It is phrased as a 'home deployment', 'deployment at home' or also expressed in the terms of 'we' in relation to the deployment. Other words used are soldier wives or deployment colleagues, several posters talk about my soldier, some about being home heroes, this draws heavily on military discourses. Clear examples of this are phrases like "*without us here at home no deployments would work*" (Forum, 1) expressed in a thread with the purpose of "boosting", getting energy and reaffirming that the extended family members are doing an amazing job, are needed and strong. This feeling of a collective of extended family members doing

their part of the deployment at home is a strong discourse within the forum.

Directly related to this is use of experience and identification/recognition in combination with this understanding of 'home deployment'. Experience is used in a positive way, as something of value, often stated early and at the beginning of posts. The power dimension of being experienced with deployments that was identified on the website remains and is rearticulated in the social relations on the forum. In many cases this influences the interactional control (Fairclough, 1992) of the conversations, where experience and/or mentorships is valued. Many posters respond by sharing their own experience of being on home deployment, with many mixed stories of how deployments affected them and/or their families. Some of the posts are aimed at creating identification, in the form of acknowledgement, recognition, caring and emotional support. Others take a more encouraging, motivating and strengthening tone, however most posts use a combination of the two. The former draws heavily on gender discourses and the latter on empowerment discourses. This dialectic mix of caring, emotional and compassionate support and motivating and encouraging experiences based support, that was identified on the website, is expressed in the reoccurring and frequent use of the phrase "Power hug" across the forum. It is used as way of giving energy and power, but also showing caring and compassion. This can also be identified in the interactive button features on the forum, where one can choose from "hug", "psyche up/encourage" and "like".

#### 4.3.2 'Home Deployment': An experience facilitating individual development and growth

There appears to be an overarching understanding on the forum that a deployment is something one can power through, be strong and survive. There is an individual and collective expectation on extended family members to be strong and endure a lot during deployment. There is an acceptance that it is a struggle, it is tough, and it can be horrible but all those who "made it" and now are experienced extended family members, are themselves living evidence that it can be done. This is often

expressed with the modality of truth, for example 'I did it' or 'We (me and the soldier) did it' and therefore 'you can do it too' and 'we (extended family members) are strong and can do it'. They have shown the strength and capacity as individuals, but also the extended family members as a group. This gives value to the experience and the identity of extended family members.

Some take great pride in this capacity as strong extended family members, others feel insufficient when they feel that they are not strong enough to maneuver domestic and payed labour, children and/or loneliness and other question the idea about home deployment as a whole.

One example relates to the decision for the soldier to go was taken jointly to push his carrier, but now the poster feels completely tired after the double burden of payed and domestic labour. The poster expressed a need to be strong when they talk to each other, but feels insufficient and bad for not being strong and supportive enough. The supportive responses include phrases like "*you are amazing*", "*imagine how strong you are*", "*What a woman you are*", "*you are doing a great job*" (Forum, 2) and most of them use the power hug phrase in their posts. The responses draw heavily on empowerment discourses as an encouraging tool, and also gender discourse of being a strong woman doing her job.

In addition, there are examples of how extended family members, drawing from empowerment discourse, express that 'home deployment' can be an experience facilitating growth and development on a number of levels. This is expressed in reference to happy relationships between extended family members and their soldiers. Experienced extended family members tell stories of how the deployment period was very tough, but provided time for individual growth and development. More so many expressed that themselves and their relationship became stronger as a result of the rough times.

This is an example of how empowerment discourses as an opportunity is connected with the aspect of 'home deployment' and experience. Some then feel

better hearing from other experienced extended family members that it actually can be an individually and jointly empowering experience. The same thing is expressed in another place where one poster explains the deployment experience as “... *I have found myself*”, “*I have realized I can do it on my own, I am strong on my own and the only one who is responsible for my wellbeing is my-self*” (Forum, 3). This is affirmed by another poster sharing the experience of deployment as strengthening both individually and relationally. Another example expressed this a conviction that “we” will come out as a stronger couple after deployment as a motivator.

In a similar way empowerment discourses are used in threads discussing the nature of the decision of the soldier to go on deployment, if it was an individual or joint decision. Often the reasons given are those of not wanting to stand in the way of individual dreams, self-realization, and love for the job or career development of their partners. One thread in particular that focuses on this discussion and the idea that a relationship is built on the individual's possibility of self-development and fulfillment is a reoccurring theme. Another example is a poster expressing that one should not wait around while the soldier is away on a journey of self-realization, and instead do things that develop oneself during the deployment period. In some cases it was a clearly joint decision, while in others this opportunity was cherished by the soldier to the extent that the partners were in varying degree forced to accept deployment as a reality. The common thread is the emphasis on the value of deployment experience on an individual or relational level.

In combination with the empowerment discourses and when the power hug does not seem to be enough, more practical tips are offered on the forum. In relation to those without children the empowerment discourse is mixed with suggestions of stress reduction activities like exercise, mindfulness, treating yourself, staying active and meeting friends. Basically being an active person not staying at home feeling sad, anxious and lonely. More specifically this is expressed as investing in yourself and making the most of the time during deployments at home.

For those who have domestic labour, child care and employments to maneuver during home deployment seem to be particularly stressful and taxing. Many threads express the exhaustion of partners and spouses who find themselves to be overwhelmed with the increased responsibilities during 'home deployment'. Some explain how the burden of domestic labour remains high even after the partner has returned. One reoccurring practical tip from other posters as a stress reducing tool, is to pay for domestic services in the form of babysitting, cleaning, homework assistance for kids and even delivery of groceries. Another recommendation is to ask family members or grand mothers of children for help.

#### 4.3.3 Summary of Forum: 'Power hugs' and 'Home deployment'

Those active on the forum seem to be mainly women and uses phrases related to 'home deployment' idea, as well as the value of having experience with deployment. On the forum the mentors have a rather minimal presence and it is extended family members as a group who are doing the sharing and supporting. The support provided in the forum is characterized by use of the 'Power hug' phrase. Meaning that there is identification, listening and compassion of fellow human beings sharing the same experience, but at the same time the forum offers boosting, strengthening and empowerment support, both short term and long term

The empowerment discourse is divided into two discourses, that fill separate functions, explanations for this will be provided in the coming chapter. First, in the short term through the affirmation of the strength and capabilities of extended family members, individually and collectively as a way of handling the stressors of deployment in the present. There is an idea that "you/we" are strong and capable. Secondly, the long term is framed within the idea that deployment is an opportunity for growth and development, both individually and relationally.

Finally, on a more empirical note, the forum shows that for many women, especially those who care for children, the deployments of the SAF can have very

negative impacts. Those with families seem to suffer from a dual-burden of domestic and payed labour. Others find that they need to put their own carriers and lives on hold to manage the period, and that the financial compensation offered by the SAF is not enough. There is acceptance and understanding for this within the forum and by *Invidzonen*, but many posters express the opinion that these impact on gender equality are not the fault of the SAF, but are issues on individual and relational levels.

For those without children, their home deployment is more understood as a time of waiting, longing, loneliness, that is counteracted by investing in yourself and staying active and seeing it through a positive lenses of an opportunity for individual and relational growth.

## 5. Discursive and Social Practices in Swedish Deployment Support: Contesting and Changing Expressions Military Power

The discourses referred to during the analysis were theoretically informed tools constructed to help code and read the texts in a structured way. The final steps of the analysis will make use of the methodological concepts of intertextuality and interdiscursivity (see section 3.4.2) to connect the initial findings to existing discourses as means of relating this to broader social practices. These discourses are related to the feminist theoretical frame work to reach its final conclusions regarding how the discourses challenge or reproduce existing power relations within deployment support and wider social practices.

This chapter focuses on the intertextuality of ‘home deployment’ and its relationships to experience, interdiscursive nature of a compassionate but empowering support by those with experience and finally the discursive hybridity of ‘home deployment’ as a valuable experience. A final concluding analysis and

reflection on the findings in relation to militarization and gender relations within feminist theory, and some practical considerations regarding limitations of the current deployment support format.

## 5.1 ‘Home Deployment’ and ‘Home heroes’: Being a part of SAF peace keeping operations

The use of the phrases ‘home deployment’, ‘deployment at home’, ‘home heroes’ was reoccurring discursive practice both on the website and within the forum. On the forum it was also expressed in terms of “we” are doing a deployment, reinforced by references to soldiers and use of specific screen names. There is a discourse of home deployment within *Invidzonen*, created by a combination of gender discourses of home and military discourse of deployment. This is a way of connecting the extended family members to military deployment, but to truly understand its implications there is a need to understand meaning and previous consumption and production of this discourse. For this the analytical tool of intertextuality (Fairclough, 1995; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002) will be applied as way of tracing the discourse of ‘home deployment’ outside *Invidzonen*.

Before analyzing the intertextual nature of this discourse it is necessary to clarify that the meaning of deployment in the Swedish context is primarily about peace keeping missions. Kronsell (2012) explains how the Swedish armed forces developed into a post-national defense organization focusing on performing Swedish international security policies by conducting peace keeping missions abroad. These humanitarian and cosmopolitan values of gender aware Swedish soldiers helping and protecting a distant other in conflict zones, has become part of the national and military identity. Humanitarian reasons, instead of patriotic ones, play a significant part in the reasons why Swedish soldiers go on deployment (Hedlund, 2011). The same reasons are directly highlighted and pushed within a ‘peace keeper identity’ of Swedish soldiers as paths to self-fulfillment and achievement in the recruitment campaigns of the SAF (Strand & Berndtsson, 2015, p. 245). Therefore, this discourse of home deployment must be

understood within the context of Swedish military participation in and increased focus on peace keeping missions.

In the most recent SAF pamphlet for extended family members the foreword heading reads “Thank you for your contribution at home”. The Swedish word used for deployment, “Insats” is directly translated to contribution, but in SAF contexts it is used as a word for deployment abroad. It is followed by a text explaining how soldiers on deployment abroad are happier and perform better when life and relationships at home are working. It also explains that SAF is well aware that it effects of deployment and wants to make this period as smooth as possible for extended family members. There are also explanations as to the reasons for going, mentioning individual development, adventure, carrier and also peace keeping humanitarian reasons. A decision to go on deployment should be taken jointly with extended family members (Försvarsmakten, 2017c, p. 3, 11) -In the most recent official veteran policy of the Swedish government repeatedly stated, referring to research, that deployments also affect the extended families of the soldiers, especially for those with domestic responsibilities (SOU, 2014:27).

The strongest intertextual references can be found in the government report from 2008 mentioned in section 2.1. It clearly states that within veteran support policy it should be understood that the “*whole family is on deployment*” [My Translation]. There is a continuous reference to research. (SOU, 2008:91) The research in the Swedish context done Officersförbundet & Synovate (2008), “*The whole family goes on deployment*” [My translation], and Weibull (2009) “*We should also get a medal*” [My translation]. The former was done in collaboration with the government report. It concluded that due to the effects of deployment the families of soldiers and Sweden should adopt the international established perspective that families are understood as a part of the deployment and develop support systems accordingly. As shown in the previous research the idea that the family is a part of the mission is well established within the militaries around the global north. The reports then also makes intertextual reference to other militaries. There are examples of how both the Swedish defense minister and high ranking

military officers draw on this discourse, when in social practices directly stressing the contributions of and thanking extended family members for their part in Swedish peace keeping operations in Mali.. Many extended family members are also awarded medals, in some cases by the Swedish defense minister, and referred to as home heroes (Malm, 2016; Regeringskansliet, 2015; Gustavsson, 2016). This medal can also be purchased on *Invidzonen's* website, and there is a rolling advertisement on the front page (Invidzonen, 2017k)

This intertextual chain (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 120) between the words and phrases used in supportive social practices by individuals in the forum and *Invidzonen*, the SAF, government policies on veteran support and to other militaries and research on military families and deployment. It is expressed in social practices of handing out medals, selling and receiving medals. The strong intertextual feature of this phrase and idea makes a solid argument for 'home deployment' discourse being an expression of military ideology and power. Many extended family members have accepted that they are on deployment, hence that their lives at home are a direct part of the peace keeping mission. More importantly this discourse is an integrated part of social practices of deployment support in Sweden. In that sense, the use of 'home deployment' discourse does not challenge Swedish military ideology of cosmopolitan peace keeping, instead it reproduces and supports it, it connects individual lives and relationships of civilians to the experience of military operations.

Horn (2010) would call this an expression of how the families of soldiers have become an integral part of foreign policy and national security. Horn (2010) and Via & Sjoberg (2010) would understand this discursive intertextual link as a process of militarization, where the lines between military and civilian lives are blurred, but separated according to military logic, and military values and ideologies are accepted at the 'Homefront'. Enloe (2000) would argue that this is an expression of the extended family members doing their patriotic duty. In the Swedish context this is understood as a contribution to the humanitarian peace keeping of the Swedish military and national and cultural identity. This is an

example of how feminist theories repeatedly show that the personal is international and global (Enloe, 2007). The most important function is that this creates a stronger common identity and experience as extended family members, forged by the adversities of home deployment. Tomforde (2015, p. 103) finds that family members being a part of the mission are forced to accept a military ‘culture of sacrifice’. Therefore, I argue that the acceptance of ‘home deployment’ makes women endure more hardship, because they understand themselves to be facing different but similar challenges as the soldiers, especially if told that their well-being affects the soldier’s performance in a dangerous place. However, the meaning of ‘home deployment’ has changed as it is articulated within the social practices of *Invidzonen*.

Individual subjects are actively participating in the consumption and (re) production of texts, and in these discursive practices interpretations or additional, new and unexpected meanings can be ascribed to words, phrases or discourses (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). The reoccurring use of experience, in relation to home deployment as something valuable identified on the website and practiced on the forum, is an expression of this effect. In a way this is an unexpected discursive consequence of basing the support on mentorship approaches. *Invidzonen* and many extended family members on the forum uses and understands experience of ‘home deployment’ as something valuable, as knowledge and a skill integral to the peer support. It is also expressed as a possibility for more long individual development, achievement and growth. Experience with ‘home deployment’ is a favored characteristic, strengthening both identification between ‘fellow human beings’ and legitimacy in the supportive interactions. The application and the positive meaning of ‘experience’ in relation to ‘home deployment’, strengthens the ideological impact of military home deployment discourse, because it promises that the individual will gain something from it.

In the U.S, official military hierarchy of rank was transferred to deployment support and home front groups, where senior wives taught younger wives how

deployment is done ( See for example Horn, 2010; Weber, 2012 & Mckenna, 2010) I would argue that the value attributed to home deployment experience acts as a similar, more informal, power dimension in the Swedish context. Experience with deployment creates internal hierarchies of experienced/inexperienced amongst the women within the support network *Invidzonen*. Being an experienced extended family member is an also evidence that one is strong, has skills, understands and has been able to power through one or several home deployments.

## 5.2 ‘Power Hug’: Deployment support as a feminized skill

In social practices of supporting each other, there is an interesting interdiscursive mix drawing from empowerment discourses of strength and encouragement and gender discourses of compassion, identification and emotional support. This was most clearly identified on the website, but was intertextually connected to the forum through the reoccurring phrase ‘Power Hug’, which symbolizes this kind of support. Those with experience with deployments, in particularly mentors, knows best how to both give support and do ‘home deployments’.

The need for identification, compassion and emotional support from fellow human beings, i.e. the hug aspect, draws from gender discourses. More specifically they draw on feminized characteristics of altruism, caring and emotional labour (Enloe, 2007, p. 67; Skeggs, 1997), which is often provided for free by volunteer mentors or other women on the forum. The visual semiotics of hearts, women talking to each other and the warm feeling of *Invidzonen* supports relevance of this discourse. Mckenna (2010), Salhstien Parcell & Magurie (2014) and Weber (2012) identified similar aspects within family readiness groups in the U.S and Enloe (2000) finds volunteerism to be a favored characteristic amongst military wives. Adccui et al. (2011) find that emotional caregiving, towards soldiers and other women at home, to be a favored characteristic of the military wife.

The 'power' part draws on the idea of the capacities, strength and power of extended family members, i.e. women, both individually and collectively. By encouragement and affirming these characteristics that were highlighted on the website as naturally occurring within each woman. The social practices of support draws on what Weber (2012, 433) refers to as the super woman discourse; '*that women can do anything when they need to*'. Adccui et al. (2011) explains how the strength of women is reaffirmed by their capacities to endure and get through deployments. I would argue that the these empowerment discourses and the practical methods of exercise, self-coaching, self-help, setting goals, in combination with the overall visual representation of the website draws heavily on individualized post-feminist discourses. There is a collective element to the support, but its purpose is to find the individualized power of each woman. The practical methods resemble what Gill & Schraff (2011) mentioned about self-regulation and disciplining.

When this individual and collective feminized characteristics of care and power are not enough, often due to dual burden of unpaid and payed labour, there was a recommendation on the forum about asking other women for help or purchasing care labour. It was nothing promoted on the website, but individual women in the social practices of peer support in the forum draw on available material resources within the 'neo-liberal welfare state economy' (see Frasier, 2013) in handling deployment at home. During my time in Afghanistan it was a common that soldiers talked about how their families used this possibility, due to the financial support from the SAF and the government.

I would argue that this 'power hug' discourse of deployment support be understood in relation to 'care chains', where responsibility for domestic, care and emotional labour during deployment is hierarchically transferred between women within the neo-liberal global economy. More marginalized women in a less favorable social position often end up doing cheap care and emotional labour so that women in the global north can reduce the pressures arising from the double burden of wage and domestic labour (see Ehrenreich & Hochchild, 2003;

Hochschild, 2000). The SAF offers 400 euros in financial support for families with children (SOU, 2008:91) and the commercial domestic service market in Sweden has expanded due to the government having provided favorable subsidies for domestic labour (Gavanas, 2010). Olsson (2016) found that some military families in Sweden, favoring gender equality, purchased domestic services during deployments to minimize the negative impact on the extended family member at home. Women on home deployment both need and provide this emotional labour for different people, soldiers, other women and their own families. In the context of Swedish deployment support, it's about women supporting women during 'home deployment'.

The social practices of doing care and emotional labour during 'home deployment', both within deployment support and in the domestic context, reproduce the hegemonic gender ideologies and roles that puts the responsibility for this kind of labour on women as a group. Individual women use resources available to reduce the stress on them, but on a structural level women do provide free or cheap labour for the SAF. This constructs a supportive femininity, accepting care and emotional labour, especially in relation to those who have children. In one way SAF deployments produce a sort of government subsidized militarization of 'care chains', where women in different locations and social positions provide and/or pay for different kinds of care and emotional labour.

Most importantly, doing this kind of labour, and providing support for other women, has been connected to the use of the word experience. The 'fellow human beings' with experience are those who are best suited to do this and teach other women how it's done. This means that this is something that women can learn how to do, care and emotional labour in during 'home deployments' and access their individual power, confidence and self-esteem is a sort of feminized skill. Those with experience and the deployment itself will facilitate this.

### 5.3 'Self-enterprising Home Deployment'?

While simultaneously highlighting the power from within using individual resources and collective support, it also expressed the importance of focusing on yourself through individual development and growth, a positive mentality, treating yourself and goal setting as direct methods for making the deployment experience better. More importantly this aspect was interdiscursively articulated together with 'home deployment' as an experience that would facilitate all these things. In the end a stronger, more confident and independent individual, would come out. These aspects of deployment as empowering and a resistance to traditional gender roles has been identified previously as individual experiences of military spouses (Aducci et al, 2011; Rossetto 2009; Weber 2012). Although on *Invidzonen* especially on the website, but also on the forum it takes a form of a reoccurring discursive practice, which has been integrated as a social practice of deployment support. This can be understood as expressions of neo-liberal discourses of individualism, self-realization, and active participation in continuous project of identity creation that are a characteristic of post-modern societies (Giddens 1991; Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999).

In this process of self-fulfillment during 'home deployment', its audience being women, draws heavily on post-feminist discourses. According to Lazar (2005;2007) these discourses construct an idea that women can "do it all" if they put enough effort, hence similar to the super woman discourse but with a difference. Instead of coming from essentialist gender ideology of feminine strength or duty, it is wrapped within idea of individual agency, empowerment, choice and capabilities. Emphasizing that modern women have total power over their own self-determination. In the words of *Invidzonen* the empowered strong woman who makes use of individual resources, sets goals and powers through tough periods in life and embraces them as opportunities. In a sense it is also an expression of gender equality, where the decision should be taken jointly and/or that women should not wait for the soldier, but instead make the most of the time for herself. There is an important aspect of reflexivity here, where the women of *Invidzonen* and on the forum will not accept the essentialist gender roles of

feminine duty embedded with military ideology.

The references to individual resources, positive thinking, coaching and self-help all relate to this discourse, telling women that it is up to them to find solutions to their problems and find themselves (Koeining, Schindler Zimmerman, Haddock & Banning 2010) Individuality, consumption and self-care are according to McRobbie (2009) integral parts of the post-feminist discourse, connecting McKenna's (2010) findings in the U.S to these discourses. Nash (2016) connects exercise directed at women to post-feminist discourses, and McSorley (2015) finds that fitness trends of Boot camps and military training methods as expressions of militarization. Hence, the empowerment discourses identified on the Sportzone, supports the argument that post-feminist discourses are being connected to military discourse.

Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999) provides explanatory assistance for this interdiscursive blend of home deployment and neoliberal post-feminist discourses, legitimized by the internal power relation of experience as example of how reflexivity and instability of language use in post-modern society generates discursive hybridity. Discourses from different social fields/orders of discourse are used as resources by individual subjects in increasingly complex ways leading to unexpected and contesting meanings. The military discourse of 'home deployment' together with neo-liberal post-feminist discourses has created a hybrid discourse within deployment support. The question then is how this discursive hybridity relates to ideology and military power? First, depending on the position of social agents within social practices and relations of power, they have access to and are subjected to different discourses. Secondly, the ideological nature of the discursive hybridity identified can be explained by the concepts of colonialization/appropriation and re-contextualization (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999, p. 45-46).

Subjects, in this case women, can find themselves in contradictory ideological positions, resulting in reflexivity, awareness and change of these discourses.

(Fairclough 1995). The interdiscursivity and discursive hybridity identified, positions women within deployment support in these contradictory positions. In positions where discourses with different ideological investments provides them with new agency but also new features of domination. 'Home deployment' requires the use of feminized skills but simultaneously promotes it as a time for individuality, development and growth. In this case, it is difficult to claim that post-feminist discourses have been directly appropriated by the military. However, it is clear that post-feminist discourses work in favor of the military institution, in a non-direct manner.

McSorley (2015) highlights that contemporary commercialized process of militarization through post-modern promises of self-achievement cannot be explained by traditional linear and totalizing theorizing of military institutional power. With this in mind, this discursive hybridity should be understood as a dialectic relationship of appropriation/colonialization between military 'home deployment' discourse and post-feminist discourse through the re-contextualization of both as home deployment experience within the social practice of deployment support. The important point is that this has generated a hybrid discourse of the 'self-enterprising home deployment' as a path to self-fulfillment, growth and strengthening directed towards women.

Here gender relationality (Lazar, 2005) as 'discursive co-construction', and the idea of relationship between masculinity and femininity in militarization process (Enloe, 2000:2007) become relevant explanatory theories. In Sweden Strand & Berndtsson (2015) find that the discourses of the 'self-enterprising peace keeper' looking for challenges and to develop new skills for the future distorts the political nature of enlisting in the military, making it seem like an individual and de-politicized choice. Similarly, Hedlund (2011) finds that Swedish soldiers go on deployment for the same reasons. In other words, the political and nationalistic aspects of military service are concealed by neoliberal post-modern discourse. Cohler (2016) and Hasian (2013) argue similarly, that post-feminist discourses and women's empowerment inscribed on white women's bodies can function as

mediators, concealing and even reinforcing militaristic and nationalistic gender ideologies. Martinsson, Griffin & Giritli Nygren (2016) find that gender equality in Sweden has been constructed along neoliberal lines acting in a de-politicizing manner.

I argue that this hybrid discourse functions in the similar manner, concealing military ideology and the feminized care and emotional labour done through post-feminist discourses. More importantly, ‘home deployment’ and the ‘the military culture of sacrifice’ (Tomforde, 2015, p. 103) has been constructed as something that is valuable for women, both as ‘women’ and as post-modern self-achieving subjects. This means this discursive hybridity of home deployment as a valuable experience is an expression of how a militarized experience has been re-contextualized as valuable outside of the military. It is an expression of how deployment support functions facilitator for the insertion of military power and ideology into the relationships, lives and identities of women. This is process of militarization.

The *supportive femininity* constructed in deployment support can be understood as reflecting the masculinity of the self-enterprising peace keeping soldier. Instead drawing from post-feminist discourses promising a similar kind of self-fulfillment through home deployment, thus distorting the political nature of supporting Swedish peace keeping operations with emotional and care labour. Subsequent the gendered division of labour during war time is maintained by women performing care and emotional labour framed within individual choice and ‘self-enterprising home deployment’ discourse.

Examples of these gender relations as a social practices were identified on the forum, where some women don’ not want to stand in the way of their partner’s self-fulfillment of going on deployment, they might as well take the opportunity to do the same during on ‘home deployment’. It was also expressed in terms of strengthening the relationship. Even the mentors wanted to ‘give their experience additional meaning’. The individualism and the idea of free choice was also

articulated on the forum, where some women argued that gender inequalities should be solved on individual/relational levels, disregarding the impacts of structural power from the SAF. Being on ‘home deployment’ as an extended family member is about individual de-politicized choice, it is about being a ‘self-enterprising care taker’.

## 6. Concluding Analysis and Reflection: ‘The self-enterprising caretaker’?

One significant finding of this study is the establishment of use of ‘home deployment’ as discourse with strong military ideological investment, articulated from government policy to individual supportive social practices on the forum. It places the extended families as direct and active participants of Swedish foreign policy and SAF operations. They become nationalist symbols by being rewarded medals for ‘home deployments’ and thereby their experience an integral part of militarization processes. Because as Sjoberg (2014) notes, the actual war or military operations, is just the peak event of militarization, the time before and after are equally if not more important for the legitimatization of warfare and existence of the military. Many of the extended family members being women, military officials and the heads of state are basically thanking them for their contribution with care and emotional labor. Through their contributions they have become experienced extended family members.

Another important finding is that the meaning of ‘home deployment’ has been re-contextualized within social practices of deployment support as a valuable experience for extended family members. More specifically it’s an experience and time where women will teach other women feminized skills of care and emotional labor, self-help and exercise as stress reduction, but primarily portrayed as a time for empowerment, individual development and growth. This is created a hybrid discourse of ‘self-enterprising home deployment’ that draws heavily on post-feminist individualistic discourses and notions of an empowered femininity that

de-politicizes the work and contribution of doing a 'deployment at home'. Within this discourse I argue that there is an identity of 'self-enterprising care taker', my analysis shows the contesting constructions of femininity that this discourse and identity produces.

Another finding is that responsibility for care and domestic labour during home deployment rests on women as a group. The burden of 'home deployment' changes hands between different women, depending on their social positions and resources, but collectively the responsibility remains with women as a group. The final example being the government subsidized and militarized 'care chains'. I would argue that this shows that, despite deployment support, SAF military operations contribute to sustaining hegemonic gender ideologies, relations and identities. In other words, the concerns regarding impacts on gender equality identified by research almost 10 years ago (Officersförbundet & Synovate, 2008) are substantiated by this study.

The femininity constructed within the deployment support of *Invidzonen* reflects the masculinity of the Swedish 'self-enterprising peace keeper identity' (Strand & Berndtsson, 2015). They are both individualized post-modern subjects (Giddens, 1991) that cannot be allured by only traditional discourses and identities; instead their respective participation in military deployments have to provide them with individual gains, merits and possibilities for development. In other words, the medal and thanking is not enough. It is way more appealing with the promise of both individual and relational development as a reward to a tough time on 'home deployment', than an idea of duty in service of the military and nation. I would argue that 'home deployment' has been constructed as a valuable experience that simultaneously ensures the support of women in the present, but also shapes and constructs future notions of femininity. Military power and ideology, through the experience of 'home deployment', thus contributes and takes part in the construction of femininity. The identities of women and notions about femininity within deployment support are shaped during and from their experience with 'home deployment'.

The 'self-enterprising care taker' is according to my analysis a compassionate fellow human being supporting others with whom she shares the experience of deployment. She is an experienced extended family member, accepting that she is on 'home deployment', that knows how to make use of her own individual resources to perform care and emotional labour, and when those are not enough ask other women for support. She makes use of more material resources like exercise, self-help and paying for domestic services. Finally, she sees this as an opportunity for self-development and growth, an experience that she and/or her partner will grow from, individually and relationally.

The discursive hybridity and contradictory constructions of femininity identified within the 'self-enterprising care taker' identity is an expression of the hegemonic power struggle of femininity that is taking place within deployment support, and I would argue in society as a whole. It can be related to the contradictory but structurally subordinated positions that women find themselves in when trying to construct political and economic identities outside the domestic sphere (Fraiser, 2013). Research in Sweden has identified how gender equality and in modern society generates conflicting notions about femininities resonating both from new and old gender orders. Women are simultaneously expected to be empowered, flexible and free individuals and responsible, emotional care takers, tied to more traditional notions of femininity (Wiklund et al., 2010; Strömbäck et al., 2014). This can explain how the experience of home deployment simultaneously expects women to take on the caring and emotional labour and the role of the post-modern independent self-enterprising woman. This means that these wider social practices of conflicting notions of femininities are being tied to the process of militarization.

As Enloe (2000, p. 161) states, women have to support military operations, and she predicts that the ways in which femininity is constructed to achieve this will take more complex and subtle forms. On a discursive level this can be directly related to Lazars (2005) understanding of discourse and gender ideologies in post-modern society. For critical research on military power it's about revealing the

multiple and complex manifestations of military power, in unexpected locations (Basham, Belkin & Gifkins, 2015). I would contend that the findings of this study are examples of this. It's not just about looking at "locations" seemingly far away from military power, but also try to delineate and isolate how militarization functions at the level of discourse, and is expressed in discursive hybridity and change over longer periods of time. One must be watchful of militarization processes on a discursive level, of how military discourse interact and function together with other non-military discourses. More importantly how the creation of new discourses like 'self-enterprising home deployment', 'appropriates/colonizes' (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) other seemingly non-military discourses and practices, creating new means of exerting military power and thus sustaining military ideologies in society in more subtle ways. It is thus important to further investigate this discourse, trying to understand how it legitimizes military ideology in the rest of society and in particular amongst women as a group.

From a feminist anti-militarist perspective it is highly interesting and relevant to ask further questions about how the interrelations between post-feminist discourses and militarization reconstitute hegemonic gender ideologies and structural oppressions in the context of post-modern identity construction. In the Swedish context it is vital to theoretically and empirically study the ways in which post-feminist discourses and the normative constructions of gender equality are being used as discursive resources by individuals and institutions in militarization processes. For feminist scholars, as stressed by Kronsell & Svedberg (2012) and Eduards (2014), it is relevant to be aware of how feminist ideas and gender equality are being entangled with and used in militarization process. In the Swedish contexts, I find this to be particularly relevant because gender equality is a crucial part of the national and cultural identity (Martinsson, Griffin & Giritli Nygren, 2016). Frankly, I would ask the question if 'self-enterprising care taker' on 'home deployment' is an expression of how the contesting notions of femininity facing women in Sweden is becoming a resource in overall militarization process?

Finally, the image of the femininity expressed in the social practices in *Invidzonen*, especially in the various semiotic material on the website, can be problematic and exclusionary. It creates an image impossible to live up to. The website shows active, resourceful, experienced and strong white women, who support each other, embraces the challenges and hardships of ‘home deployment’ as opportunities for development. In several instances this constructed image is sustained and reenacted in the social relations on the forum.

I find that this image resembles the one that feminist scholars have criticized for lacking an intersectional perspective (see Mohanty, 2013; Crenshaw, 1991; Lutz et al, 2011). Meaning that it understands women, often white and heterosexual, as a single group that experience gender oppression in the same way, disregarding diversity and complexity of power relations based on political, social and economic positioning. In the Swedish context Martinsson, Griffin & Giritli Nygren (2016) argue this lack of intersectionality has created a normative and neo-liberal understanding of gender equality, which is also connected to Swedish national and cultural identity. Yuval Davis (1997) and Eduards (2007) have shown, women and ideas of proper femininities are often symbolically connected to the national and cultural identity. It is then important to think about if deployment support, constructing women as white and empowered ‘self-enterprising caretaker’, contributes to simultaneously militarizing and reproducing a specific type of national and cultural image of Swedish femininity?

The forum illustrates the diversity of extended family members and women. Olsson (2016) has also show the diversity of resources and needs of extended military families in Sweden. There is a risk that the current structure of the support acts exclusionary, both to diverse groups of women, but people not identifying with the ‘self-enterprising care taker’ ideal that this study has identified. For example, I know that during my own deployment my mother found the website and magazine strange, in her words resembling a ‘women’s magazine’. If she would have needed support, she would have been very reluctant to turn to *Invidzonen*. To conclude I find that this study warrants further feminist

research on this topic, both on a discursive and theoretical level but also more intersectional research is needed on how SAF military operations influences gender relations in Sweden.

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