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**“Monkey Troops and Agony Aunts”:**

**Towards Mixed Accommodation of Male and Female Conscripts in Finland**

In addition to the compulsory conscript service of men in Finland, since 1995 doing military service has been possible for women on a voluntary basis. The female minority of conscripts has mainly been accommodated in barracks separate from the male majority. This has resulted in problems and gendered divisions in terms of interaction, communication and cohesion. To tackle these problems an ongoing trial on mixed lodging has been organised within the Finnish Defence Forces since the summer of 2020.

This paper focuses on how the institutional aspects of compulsory male conscription and the spatial arrangements of military training direct and are intermingled with gendered practices and interaction among conscripts in their everyday service. The study is based on interviews (n=23) and a survey (n=1627) conducted 2020-2021 in the two brigades where the trial was organized at the time.

For the majority of conscripts, mixed lodging seems to be a preferred or satisfactory way of organising, but the trial brings up also more hidden undertones of gender and sexuality. The intersections of gender and different military categorizations produce a social landscape, where bullying and harassment, becoming a soldier, building of friendships and managing conflicts take place. The research data was gathered during and on experiences of COVID-19 pandemic, which gives the analysis and results a unique flavour.

**Keywords:** Conscription, COVID-19, gender, mixed lodging, sexuality, social relations