

OBJECTIFIED CULTURAL CAPITAL AND MILITARY SERVICE READINESS AMONG RESERVISTS OF THE ESTONIAN DEFENCE FORCES

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Abstract. One of the primary objectives of mandatory conscript service is the generation and accumulation of positive cultural and social capital that would foster the service readiness of soldiers assigned to the reserve force. This study draws on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "objectified cultural capital" to highlight the role of military mementos and artefacts in fostering service readiness among reservists. The generation and accumulation of objectified cultural capital that is also positively related to other forms of capital and factors is one way of creating a solid foundation for long-lasting elements that make up a reservist's military habitus. This study focuses on what types of military mementos are most effective for this purpose, and also how this objectified cultural capital is related to other forms of cultural capital (i.e., embodied cultural capital, and institutionalized cultural capital) acquired in the military field. The analysis is based on survey data collected from 1,248 reservists of the Estonian Defence Forces (EDF) during the 2019 military exercise Spring Storm. Based on our findings, the authors put forward a model for measuring the service readiness of reservists that aims to explain the interrelationships and impact of different types of cultural capital, while also factoring in the effect of prior personal experiences from military service. The results of this study indicate that the most influential military mementos that promote service readiness among reservists are personal photos and videos about interesting and exiting events, situations or activities. However, this type of objectified cultural capital seems to derive its positive effect from assemblage and interaction with other forms of cultural as well as social capital. Ultimately, our findings indicate that the strongest motivator affecting the service readiness of reservists is their satisfaction with the most recent military exercise, and that, in turn, depends on positive experiences related to unit cohesion and feelings of professionalism, supported by practical skills acquired in the course of military service.

Keywords: objectified cultural capital, military artefacts, reserve soldiers, military service readiness, Bourdieu

Võtmesõnad: objekteeritud kultuuriline kapital, militaarartefaktid, reservväelased, sõjaväeline teenistusvalmidus, Bourdieu

1. Introduction

The constitution of the Republic of Estonia mandates that all citizens must contribute to national defence as an essential civic duty. Estonia's national defence is rooted in mandatory conscript service in the Estonian Defence Forces (EDF) which prepares personnel for the reserve force. As a result, over the course of their military service, Estonian soldiers are required to uphold various roles and identities. The unique experience of reservists is succinctly captured by the concept of “transmigrants”¹ put forward by Lomsky-Feder, Gazit, and Ben-Ari. This concept provides a useful framework for understanding how reservists are required to vacillate between two different spheres by crossing boundaries² – on the one hand, as civilians, and on the other hand, as soldiers. As regards research on reservists, Griffith has highlighted three valuable aspects of this concept:

*First, there were differences in motivation, political commitment, and cohesion among regulars, conscripts, and reservists. Second, reservists had “plural membership” in social groups. Third, identity was based on the group with which the person had the strongest ties or connections.*³

For reservists, this migratory trajectory is variable, i.e., they move between states of mobilization and demobilization, but also along the developmental courses of their personal lives, and, as a result, they are different each time they re-enter military service.⁴ Laanepere, Truusa and Cooper, who studied reservists who move intermittently in and out of military service over a longer period, argue it is imperative to maintain or elicit a strong identification with their military experiences in order for them to thrive within their reserve units⁵. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of the *field*, *habitus* and *capital*, Laanepere, Truusa and Cooper put forward the Military Legacy Model⁶, which illustrates the movement into military service and away from

¹ **Lomsky-Feder, E.; Gazit, N.; Ben-Ari, E.** 2008. Reserve Soldiers as Transmigrants: Moving between the Civilian and Military Worlds. – *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 34 (4), p. 598. [Lomsky-Feder, Gazit, Ben-Ari 2008]

² *Ibid.*, p. 599.

³ **Griffith, J.** 2009. Being a Reserve Soldier. A Matter of Social Identity. – *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 36 (1), p. 41. [Griffith 2009]

⁴ **Lomsky-Feder, Gazit, Ben-Ari** 2008, p. 599.

⁵ **Laanepere, T.; Truusa, T-T.; Cooper, L.** 2018. Military Legacy: use it or lose it? – *Estonian Journal of Military Studies (Sõjateadlane)*, Vol. 6, p. 38. [Laanepere, Truusa, Cooper 2018]

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

civilian life, demonstrating the interplay between two competing fields. For example, each time reservists return to military service (e.g., to take part in reservist refresher training), they need to renegotiate the military habitus. The Military Legacy Model demonstrates the importance of military legacy as a potential key component that supports conscripts and reservists in their successful transition between civilian and military fields during reservist refresher trainings. What is more, Laanepere, Truusa and Cooper claim that there is a direct connection between the development of military legacy through the accumulation of cultural, social and symbolic capital during conscript service, and the sustained military habitus that influences the service readiness of reservists when they vacillate between the civilian and military fields as transmigrants.⁷

Previous research also suggests that Bourdieu's work has much to offer to the study of identities in organizations. For example, Carter and Spence argue that some identity theorists view *habitus* as synonymous with identity,⁸ although it might prove problematic because identity studies often lack socio-historical positioning. However, Carter and Spence maintain that Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* can be viewed as "historical processes of formation, and links the micro-level of the individual self with the meso-level of the field, and beyond to macro-levels of the economy and society."⁹ Furthermore, although Bourdieu views *habitus* is primarily an attribute of an individual, it is also a product of structures, thus bringing together micro and macro levels.¹⁰ The current study is rooted in Bourdieu's theoretical framework, and therefore our primary focus is on the preservation of the military components that make up a reservist's habitus, and not on their military identity.

In Estonia, mandatory conscript service constitutes the longest time period (i.e., 8 to 11 months depending on the type of service), that a person spends in the military field (in Estonia conscript service is only mandatory for men), and that is the critical time when the military component develops in a person's habitus. After the completion of conscript service, people are assigned to the reserve force and may be called up for military service until

⁷ Laanepere, Truusa, Cooper 2018, p. 39.

⁸ Carter, C.; Spence, C. 2020. Bourdieu and Identity: Class, History and Field Structure. – Brown, Andrew D. (ed.) The Oxford Handbook of Identities in Organizations. Oxford University Press, p. 272.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

¹⁰ Pawlak, M. 2018. Tying micro and macro. What fills up the sociological vacuum? – Studies in Social Sciences, Philosophy and History of Ideas, Vol. 18. Peter Lang Publishing, p. 44.

they reach the age of 60¹¹. Officers may be called up for service for up to 12 months in total; non-commissioned officers for up to nine months in total; and soldiers for up to six months in total.¹² In Estonia, reservist refresher training sessions can last up to 3 weeks and, in this relatively short time-frame, the existing foundation or layers of military habitus established during prior military service must be reawakened. Therefore, the conscript service period plays a critical role in laying a sturdy foundation for the development of a sustained military component in an individual's habitus because it is the time when most of the different types of capitals from the military field can be accumulated. For example, the development of sustained unit cohesion as social capital that would endure even after the end of conscript service is one possibility for fostering a positive military legacy that would support military habitus and promote the service readiness of reservists. This is supported by research conducted by Griffith whose findings have shown that perceived unit readiness and commitment to continue military service were associated with strong unit identification. Additionally, it has been shown that mutual trust among soldiers, and also their trust in their leaders, can also be considered as indicators of horizontal and vertical cohesion¹³ as they have been shown to be positively associated with positive social identification and the service readiness of reservists¹⁴. Thus, drawing on previous research, we can deduce that if the soldiers have experienced strong bonding within their unit they are also likely to be more motivated to take part in reservist refresher training¹⁵.

In one of our previous studies we analysed the associations between social, economic and cultural capital, and the service readiness of Estonian reservists. We found that the primary motivating factors were related to social and economic capital: unit cohesion; social support from family, friends and

¹¹ **Military Service Act**, clause 2 (2) 2) – Riigi Teataja (Official State Gazette of the Republic of Estonia). <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/513032017006/consolide> (accessed January 24, 2020).

¹² *Ibid.*, clause 69 (1).

¹³ **Siebold, G. L.** 2007. The Essence of Military Group Cohesion. – *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 33 (2), p. 287. [According to Siebold (2007), unit cohesion comprises primary and secondary cohesion. Primary cohesion is further subdivided along horizontal and vertical dimensions. In the military, horizontal cohesion develops among people at the same hierarchical level (e.g., platoon or squad members), whereas vertical cohesion develops among people at different levels (e.g., soldiers and officers within a unit), pp. 287–290.]

¹⁴ **Griffith** 2009, p. 56.

¹⁵ **Laanepere, Truusa, Cooper** 2018, p. 46.

colleagues; and economic concerns¹⁶. However, in this paper we focus primarily on objectified cultural capital and explore its distinctive effect on the service readiness of reservists. To that end, we will analyse different types of military artefacts and mementos to identify those that have the most influence. We postulate a hypothesis that the objectified cultural capital accumulated from the military field fosters service readiness among reservists. However, we also posit that the effect of objectified cultural capital is not independent of the experiences and relationships established during conscript service, and also in the course of the most recent reservist training exercise. Thus, we propose that objectified cultural capital is one component or indicator of military legacy, and that there is an interplay between various components (e.g., acquired skills, military career) that also enhance or diminish each other's impact.

The next chapter will provide an overview of Bourdieu's concept of objectified cultural capital in the context of his theory of forms of capital. Additionally, we will also summarise the relevant findings of previous studies on this subject. We will round out the chapter with our research hypotheses. The third chapter will outline our research sample and methodology, followed by a discussion and an overview of policy recommendations and suggestions for further research.

2. Theoretical considerations

Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field and habitus can be used to analyse how having different forms of capital, which are valued in particular social spaces or fields, contributes collectively to the development of a person's habitus as the system of dispositions to certain practices that also constructs an objective basis for regular modes of behaviour¹⁷. Bourdieu's theoretical framework outlines three distinct forms of capital – **economic, social and cultural** – and each of these could be considered as symbolic capital insofar as

¹⁶ **Laanepere, T.; Kasearu, K.** 2020. Military and civilian field-related factors in Estonian reservists' military service readiness. – *Armed Forces and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X20944093> (accessed September 13, 2020).

¹⁷ **Bourdieu, P.** 1990. In *Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 77.

it is understood symbolically¹⁸ and acknowledged in that specific field. For example, in the military field the visibility and influence of **economic capital** is often minimised, usually intentionally, by having people wear similar uniforms and share the same living conditions in the field¹⁹. On the other hand, **social capital** warrants special attention in the military field because traditionally there has been a strong emphasis on fostering long-lasting unit cohesion as the foundational element of life-long social capital. Bourdieu views social capital primarily as a sense of belonging to a group that provides each individual member with the backing of the collectively-owned capital²⁰.

The third form of capital in Bourdieu's framework – **cultural capital** – is rooted in a person's family background and their education or training. With regard to cultural capital, Bourdieu identified three distinct types: embodied cultural capital, institutionalized cultural capital, and objectified cultural capital. Bourdieu defines **embodied cultural capital** as the “long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body”²¹ that also constitute the basis for the other two types of cultural capital. In the military field, embodied cultural capital covers skills and knowledge, physical prowess, the use of professional military argot and terminology, as well as appropriate behaviour.²²

Since embodied cultural capital is acquired through socialization and education, Ford and Vignare have remarked that “the nature of military indoctrination, training, and socialization is such that a military learner's habitus may be more reflective of the deeply engrained values and behaviours prized by the military than of his or her upbringing.”²³

In addition, there have also been some difficulties with understanding the relationship between habitus and embodied cultural capital as both entail cognitive and non-cognitive dispositions.²⁴ To that end, Edgerton and

¹⁸ **Bourdieu, P.** 1986. The forms of capital. Originally published in: Richardson, J. (ed.). Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education. New York: Greenwood. pp. 241–258. [Bourdieu 1986] <http://www.socialcapitalgateway.org/sites/socialcapitalgateway.org/files/data/paper/2016/10/18/rbasicsbourdieu1986-theformsofcapital.pdf> (accessed January 29, 2020), p. 27.

¹⁹ **Laanepere, Truusa, Cooper** 2018, p. 41.

²⁰ **Bourdieu** 1986, p. 21.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²² **Laanepere, Truusa, Cooper** 2018, p. 33.

²³ **Ford, K.; Vignare, K.** 2015. The Evolving Military Learner Population: A Review of the Literature. – Journal of Asynchronous Learning Network, Vol. 19 (1), p. 12. <https://olj.online-learningconsortium.org/index.php/olj/article/view/503> (accessed January 30, 2020).

²⁴ **Edgerton, J. D.; Roberts, L. W.** 2014. Cultural capital or habitus? Bourdieu and beyond in the explanation of enduring educational inequality. – Theory and Research in

Roberts (2014) suggest that “embodied cultural capital and habitus must be understood as aspects of the same dispositional structure which interacts with the exigencies of particular social fields to shape practice.”²⁵

The second type of capital, **objectified cultural capital** (i.e., military artefacts such as weapons, personal equipment, books, amulets, photos, and other media objects or mementos from the military field), is dependent on the existence of embodied cultural capital. Specifically, in order to use and value these objects one must first have acquired the relevant embodied cultural capital through either learning or training and experiences in the military field. These skills and knowledge regarding using and appreciating objectified cultural capital are transmitted, formally or informally, through the process of socialization. Furthermore, the longer it takes to acquire them and the rarer they are, the greater the symbolic value attached to them.²⁶ Therefore, it is possible that the longer and more challenging the conscript service is, the more value will be assigned by reservists to military artefacts acquired during that time, with higher appreciation shown to more unique artefacts.

Third, **institutionalized cultural capital** comes in the form of diplomas, certificates and titles which are given by an institution in order to prove that a person has acquired certain skills and attained a certain level of knowledge which are valued within the given field. In the military field, status, position and qualifications are often objectified in the uniform by rank insignias, decorations, medals, badges or pins.

All things considered, cultural capital is arguably the most well-known and recognized among the concepts put forward by Bourdieu²⁷. Edgerton and Roberts point out that “most research on cultural capital has been quantitative and has focused on operationalizing cultural capital in the objectified state, while the bulk of research on habitus has been qualitative in nature.”²⁸

Education. Vol. 12 (2), p. 206 [Edgerton, Roberts 2014] <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1477878514530231> (accessed January 30, 2020).

²⁵ Edgerton, Roberts 2014, p. 214.

²⁶ Edwards, L. 2008. PR practitioners’ cultural capital: An initial study and implications for research and practice. – *Public Relations Review*, Vol. 34 (4), p. 368. [Edwards 2008] <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0363811108000891?via%3Dihub> (accessed January 30, 2020).

²⁷ Reay, D. 2004. “It’s all becoming a habitus”: beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research. – *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 25 (4), Special Issue: Pierre Bourdieu’s Sociology of Education: The Theory of Practice and the Practice of Theory, p. 432. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4128669?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents (accessed February 3, 2020).

²⁸ Edgerton, Roberts 2014, p. 194.

Originally, the concept of cultural capital was analysed in the field of education. As such, it is quite similar to the context of our research, considering that EDF conscript service comprises mainly education and training or drilling for imparting the necessary skills and knowledge for the military field. Later, these conscripts comprise the EDF reserve force, i.e., we can say that each reservist was once a conscript.

However, being an EDF reservist is not a profession. Is it instead a constitutional duty conferred on citizens, although some consider it an honourable patriotic responsibility. In professional contexts, cultural capital also entails investment in objectified and embodied cultural capital (e.g., appropriate dress and behaviour)²⁹. What is more, symbols of organizational culture have also highlighted the importance of issues related to gender. For instance, clothing has been viewed as a significant gendered form of objectified cultural capital³⁰. For example, military personnel are identified by, and they themselves also identify strongly with, their uniforms. Uniforms indicate status (i.e., by way of rank and qualification badges) and provide a sense of belonging to the branch or service arm and unit. However, it may also have the opposite effect. For example, in the South African Navy women were prohibited from wearing “regular” navy uniforms and consequently saw their inferior uniforms as artefacts of oppression.³¹ In the EDF, reservists do not wear uniforms outside a military context and, if called to reservist refresher training, men and women receive the same field uniforms.

Studies on reservists and veterans in countries without mandatory conscription service have often used Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital in the context of transitioning from the military field to the civilian field and back to their regular lives, including adopting culturally acceptable behaviour to suit civilian norms. However, military cultural capital is not easily transferable to civilian professions and there is a need to explore new ways of adopting new cultural competences³². In this regard, each field comes with its own specifications. For example, studies have found that in the field of

²⁹ Edwards 2008, p. 368.

³⁰ Alvesson, M.; Billing, Y. D. 2009. *Understanding Gender and Organizations*. Second Edition. Los Angeles; London; New Delhi; Singapore; Washington, D.C.: Sage Publications, p. 124.

³¹ Van Wijk, C.; Finchilescu, G. 2008. Symbols of Organisational Culture: Describing and Prescribing Gender Integration of Navy Ships. – *Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 17 (3), p. 243.

³² Cooper, L.; Caddick, N.; Godier, L.; Cooper, A.; Fossey, M. 2018. Transition from the Military into Civilian Life: An Exploration of Cultural Competence. – *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 44 (1), pp. 156–177. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0095327X16675965> (accessed February 10, 2020).

agriculture highly valued skills such as hard work and discipline may help veterans integrate into farming communities more easily³³.

However, the opposite is true for EDF reservists upon their return to military service, primarily because they are expected to readapt to the military habitus and reorient to relevant cultural competences relatively quickly. For this reason we argue that artefacts related to the military field might facilitate the preservation of military habitus and service readiness during the time reservists spend in the civilian field. For example, photos can be very influential artefacts because they relate to different facets of personal identities. Indeed, by using the photo-elicitation method to study the identities of people with a military background, Woodward and Jenkins identified the most powerful military identity markers – professional military skills and expertise, strong unit cohesion or “fictive kinship”, and participation in a special military event³⁴ or remembrance of extreme and “peak” experiences from the military³⁵. Thus, it is possible that artefacts related to these three military identity markers have a stronger effect on the preservation of the military habitus.

Drawing on these theoretical considerations and previous research, we propose the following hypotheses:

1. **Military artefacts that are uniquely personal** (i.e., photos, videos, etc.) carry a stronger meaning and elicit a more powerful visceral effect on military service readiness compared to other more common and widespread military artefacts (e.g., emblems and badges).
2. The effect of objectified cultural capital on military service readiness is associated with and shaped by other **perceived gains (e.g., skills) that are transferable** between the civilian and military fields.

³³ **Kyle, C. A.** 2017. The Formation of Cultural Capital using Symbolic Military Meanings of Objects and Self in an Adult Agricultural Education Program serving Military Veterans. Dissertation in the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Blacksburg, Virginia, p. 196. <https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/handle/10919/85241> (accessed February 10, 2020).

³⁴ **Woodward, R.; Jenkins, K. N.** 2011. Military Identities in the Situated Accounts of British Military Personnel. – *Sociology*, Vol. 45 (2), p. 263. [Woodward, Jenkins 2011] <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0038038510394016> (accessed January 30, 2020).

³⁵ **Cooper, L.; Caddick, N.; Godier, L.; Cooper, A.; Fossey, M.; Engward, H.** 2017. A model of military to civilian transition: Bourdieu in action. – *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health*, Vol. 3 (2), p. 54. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3138/jmvfh.4301> (accessed February 10, 2020).

3. The effect of objectified cultural capital is positively associated with **positive experiences from conscript service**, which will influence reservists' attitudes towards the most recent military exercise, as well as their military service readiness in the future.

3. Research Sample and Methodology

3.1. Data

The data for this study was gathered during the EDF's annual military exercise Spring Storm 2019 held from 29 April to 17 May 2019. A total of 2,050 reservists took part in this exercise, and of these 1,248 answered the questionnaire (response rate 61%). The questionnaire was completed either on paper during the exercise or electronically on returning home. All data used in this study are self-reported and although the survey was anonymous we have to take into account the possibility of social desirability bias in interpreting our results.

Socio-demographic characteristics. Our analysis relies on data reported by 1,248 reservists. For 59% of them it was their first time taking part in reservist refresher training; 28% were taking part for the second time and 13% for at least the third time. The mean age of the respondents was 28.3 years (SD = 4.9), with the youngest being 20 and the oldest 59 years old. The time spent in reserve (i.e., since the completion of conscript service) varied from one year to 24 years (M = 6.4, SD = 4.5), with 50% of respondents having spent 5 years or less in reserve. Most of the respondents were male; altogether only 12 women (1%) took part in the survey, therefore the data did not allow for gender specificity. Most of the participants were Estonian-speaking (90%) and the rest (except for a dozen who had indicated English) had a Russian background. 14% of reservists surveyed lived alone, while 63% were married or cohabiting with a partner. The educational breakdown was as follows: 16% basic education, 54% secondary education, and 30% tertiary education. Most of the reservists (67%) were soldiers (OR-1 and OR-2; i.e., privates and corporals in Estonian nomenclature), 24% were non-commissioned officers and 9% officers. Half of the respondents had completed their conscript service in 2013 or earlier, and the other half during the period from 2014 to 2018.³⁶

³⁶ EDF Reservist Survey 2019. Research Report 2019. The Socio-demographic Profile, Attitudes, Opinions and Feedback from the EDF Reservists on the Exercise Spring Storm 2019. University of Tartu, Center of Excellence for Strategic Sustainability, pp. 5–7 [EDF Reservist Survey 2019. Research Report 2019]

3.2. Measures

This study is based on data from a questionnaire administered to EDF reservists and comprises elements from several different questionnaires: the core module from the EDF human resource study, a set of questions from previous reservist surveys commissioned by the Estonian Ministry of Defence³⁷, and a specifically prepared set of questions about objectified cultural capital. By type, the questions varied from multiple-choice to open-ended questions.

Our dependent variable (i.e., *readiness* in the model) was behavioural intention towards participating in the next military exercise. The respondents were asked to answer the following question: are you ready to take part in the next military exercise? They were then asked to rate their response on the following scale: 1 = definitely no; 2 = possibly not; 3 = possibly yes; 4 = definitely yes.

Objectified cultural capital was measured by a set of four questions that were related to artefacts and mementos from conscript service. The respondents were asked to answer the following question: what kind of mementos have you kept from the period spent in conscript service? They were given a choice of four different sets of objects: group photos; selfies and personal photos about interesting and exiting events or activities; videos; emblems and badges. The answer options were 1 = no and 2 = yes.

Military song. Respondents were asked about their unit's military song, i.e., those that are sung during marching and drill exercises. The question posed to respondents was simple: do you remember your unit's song? (1 = I do not remember at all; 2 = no, not quite; 3 = yes, somewhat; 4 = yes, and I could sing it on the spot).

Skills acquired during conscription were measured by 7 questions asking respondents to rate the importance of those skills (e.g., was useful for personal development; taught military skills; prepared reserve units for the EDF; 1 = it was not important at all ... 4 = yes, it was important), which were later analysed based on the following index: $M = 2.8$, $SD = 0.6$; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$.

Transferability of knowledge and skills from conscript service to the civilian sphere was measured by the following question: to what extent have you used the knowledge and skills obtained during conscript service in civilian life? (1 = not at all ... 6 = a lot).

³⁷ For more information, see research report commissioned by the Estonian Defence Resources Agency (available only in Estonian) **Turu-uuringute AS / Kivirähk, J.** 2016. Arvamused kaitseväest enne ja pärast ajateenistust. Tallinn: Turu-uuringute AS. <https://www.kra.ee/static/Aruanne-2016.pdf> (accessed March 1, 2020).

Transferability of knowledge and skills from conscript service to the military sphere was measured by the following question: to what extent have you used the knowledge and skills obtained during conscript service in the course of the current military training exercise? (1 = not at all ... 6 = a lot).

Unit cohesion during the current exercise. We applied the measure of primary group cohesion inspired by Salo and Siebold.³⁸ The respondents were asked to rate their peer bonding with 8 items (e.g., I feel appreciated in my squad) and leader bonding with 6 items (e.g., My squad leader has been fair and straightforward in his dealings with me) on a scale 1 = I totally disagree to 4 = I totally agree. To analyse these answers, we constructed the following index: $M = 3.2$, $SD = 0.5$; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.94$.

Overall satisfaction with the current exercise. The reservists' satisfaction with different aspects of the exercise taking place at the time of the survey was measured with 13 items (e.g., How would you rate the equipment provided / the emotional atmosphere?). The respondents were asked to rate these items on a 4-point scale (1 = very bad ... 4 = very good). The index had a mean value of 2.7 ($SD = 0.53$; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$). In addition, respondents' military rank and the number of exercises they had taken part in were used as indicators of their embeddedness in the military field. Military rank ranged from 1 = soldier to 4 = officer. The number of previous exercises was determined by the question: how many times have you taken part in military exercises? (1 – first time ... 10 – ten times, $M = 1.6$, $SD = 1.2$).

3.3. Statistical Analysis

To test our model, we applied structural equation modelling³⁹ to analyse the effects of objectified cultural capital, effects originating from conscription, satisfaction with the training exercise, and also individual military background characteristics (i.e., the effect of military rank and prior participation in exercises on the intention to take part in subsequent military exercises, i.e., *military service readiness*). Figure 1 represents the conceptual model of the estimated interlinkages between these variables.

³⁸ See Salo, M.; Siebold, G. L. 2008. Variables impacting peer group cohesion in the Finnish conscript service. – Journal of Political and Military Sociology, Vol. 36 (1), pp. 1–18.

³⁹ See Blunch, N. J. 2013. Introduction to Structural Equation Modeling using IBM SPSS Statistics and AMOS (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd; and Byrne, B. M. 2016. Structural Equation Modelling with AMOS: Basic Concepts, Applications, and Programming (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge. [Byrne 2016]

Drawing on the theoretical assumptions outlined in the previous chapter, we anticipate the following interlinkages to emerge between objectified cultural capital and behavioural intention to take part in future training exercises. On the one hand, we anticipate that the association between objectified cultural capital and intention to participate is mediated by perceived usefulness of conscription (i.e., latent variable based on three items measuring skills obtained during conscript service, their transferability to the civilian sphere, and their usefulness during training exercises). On the other hand, we test whether objectified cultural capital has a direct effect on intention to take part in training exercises. Thus, we have a partial mediating model.

Similarly, we estimated associations with the recollection of military songs as an indicator of the military component in one's habitus. The intention to take part in upcoming training exercises is supposed to be influenced by the experiences acquired during the most recent trainings exercise, as well as military rank and previous experiences with training exercises (i.e., the number of times a person has participated in such exercises).

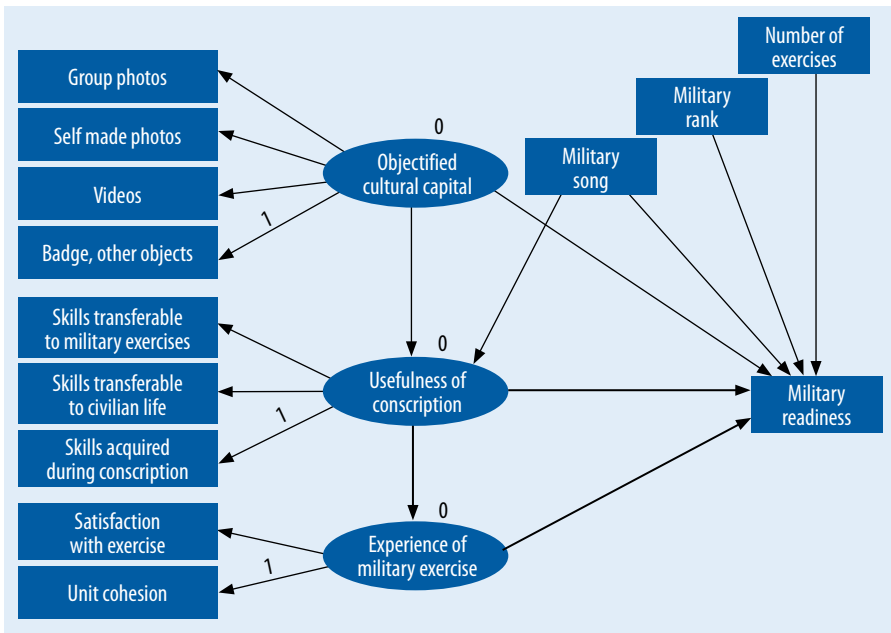


Figure 1. Conceptual model of military service readiness

Please note that the covariance of exogenous variables or errors in endogenous variables are included in the statistical models but are not shown in the figure. Moreover, we suggest that objectified cultural capital is associated with remembering the unit's military song, as well as the reservist's military rank and the number of prior training exercises. As a result, covariance is assumed. Additionally, covariance is also assumed between remembering the military song, military rank and number of military exercises. The data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26 and Amos 26.

4. Results

In the studied sample, the most common and widespread types of objectified cultural capital were badges and emblems, with 86% of reservists having saved theirs as keepsakes. With regard to other mementos, 56% preserved group photos or personal photos about interesting and exiting events or activities, and 36% still have the videos made during conscript service. Looking at the associations between military rank and various items of objectified cultural capital, we can see that among higher-ranking reservists the share of those who have saved their badges and emblems is higher compared to regular soldiers ($\chi^2 = 37.8, p \leq 0.001$).

However, the results also indicate that, apart from badges and emblems, other items of cultural capital are not associated with rank but seem to be influenced by the length of time that has passed since the completion of conscript service (i.e., shorter time periods between conscription and taking part in refresher training are associated with a higher level of objectified cultural capital). For instance, among those reservists who have been in reserve for less than four years, 93% have preserved their emblems and badges, 68% personal photos and 49% videos; whereas for reservists who have been in reserve for more than four years the percentages are much lower (e.g., 84% have kept emblems and badges, 50% self-made photos, and 31% videos). At the same time, the ability to remember their unit's military marching song was not associated with time passed since conscription.

Next, we will come to the main focal point of our analysis, i.e., whether and to what extent objectified cultural capital is associated with military service readiness. The associations between objectified cultural capital and military service readiness are presented in Figure 2. The results indicate that among reservists who have the corresponding objectified cultural capital the share of those who intend to take part in the next training exercise is higher

compared to those who have no capital. In particular, military service readiness seems to be most strongly associated with holding onto emblems and badges; for example, only 27% of reservists who have not kept their emblems and badges plan to take part in the next training exercise.

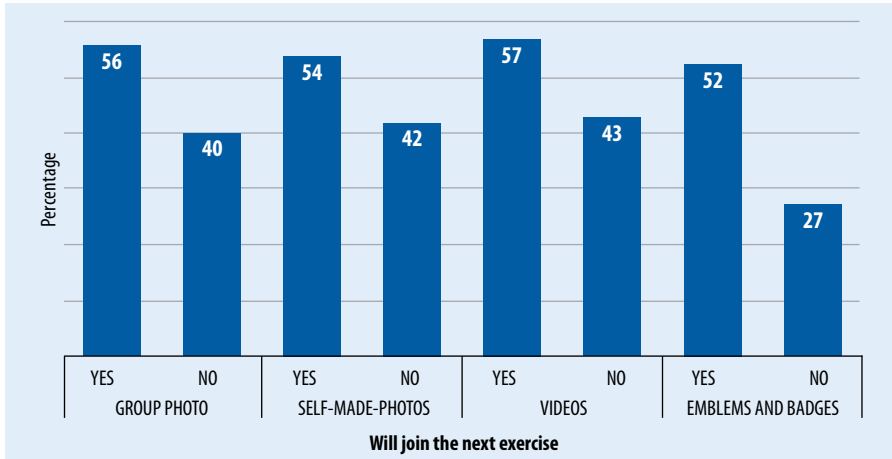


Figure 2. Military service readiness by different items of objectified cultural capital [%]

Based on the conceptual model presented in Figure 1, we constructed a model of intent to take part in the next training exercise. We estimated the path coefficients, their statistical significance, and model fit. In addition, we evaluated the measurement model by normed chi-square (χ^2/df), the comparative fit index (CFI), the goodness of fit index (GFI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and applied the following threshold values CFI > 0.92; RMSEA < 0.07 and < 5 for χ^2/df ⁴⁰. By comparing the threshold values with the values of our measurement model we can conclude that the model fits our data quite adequately (RMSEA = 0.054, CFI = 0.93 with $\chi^2 = 247.9$; $df = 54$, $p < 0.0001$; $\chi^2/df = 4.59$). In the next step we assessed the path coefficients for statistical (p values) and practical significance (standardized regression weights, β). Figure 3 shows the standardized regression weights of each independent variable on the dependent variable, while also allowing the direct comparison of relative effects⁴¹. The regression weights, correlations and their levels of significance are reported in the Appendix.

⁴⁰ See Hair, J. F.; Black W. C.; Babin, B.; Anderson, R. E.; Tatham, R. L. 2005. *Multivariate Data Analysis*. 6th ed. Pearson, p. 584. [Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, Tatham 2005]

⁴¹ See Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, Tatham 2005, p. 564.

On comparing the importance of different artefacts, the results indicate that self-made photos and videos contribute most strongly to objectified cultural capital. Although Figure 2 demonstrated that military service readiness is lowest among those reservists who have not kept any emblems or badges as mementos from their time in conscript service, we should point out that the total share of reservists who did not preserve any emblems or badges was 7%. This number indicates that preserving these keepsakes is very common among EDF conscripts, and therefore it has a weak direct differentiating effect on military service readiness ($\beta = 0.08$, $p < 0.05$), having the equivalent direct effect on military service readiness as remembering the unit's military song ($\beta = 0.08$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, we deduce that reservists who have preserved more artefacts and remember their unit's military song may exhibit a higher probability for positive behavioural intention towards the next training exercise. Overall, this confirms our first hypothesis that uniquely personal military artefacts (i.e., photos, videos, etc.) carry a stronger meaning and elicit a more powerful visceral effect on military service readiness compared to other more common and widespread military artefacts (e.g., emblems and badges). However, as expected, the general perceived usefulness of conscription mediates the effect of objectified cultural capital and remembering the unit's military song.

We also found that objectified cultural capital is positively and statistically significantly associated with the perceived usefulness of conscript service, i.e., the direct effect is $\beta = 0.33$ ($p < 0.001$), while the indirect effect of objectified capital, mediated by perceived usefulness of conscription, on military service readiness is 0.03. While the usefulness of conscription is primarily associated with experiences related to the most recent exercise, some of the effect of objectified cultural capital is mediated by the overall experience related to taking part in training exercises. Thus, the indirect effect of objectified cultural capital mediated by the perceived usefulness of conscription service and satisfaction with the most recent exercise on overall military service readiness is $\beta = 0.15$, and its relative impact is stronger compared to the direct effect ($\beta = 0.08$). The total effect of objectified cultural capital on military service readiness is 0.23 and, thus, we can confirm our second hypothesis that the effect of objectified cultural capital is associated with perceived gains (i.e., transferable skills and knowledge) from conscript service, as well as experiences related to the most recent training exercise.

Looking at the effect of remembering the unit's military song, we can see that the indirect effect on military service readiness is 0.13, while the total effect is 0.21. This indicates that the effects of mementos and remembering

the military song are practically equivalent, but the correlation between the two remains positive, although quite weak ($r = 0.21$).

Readiness to take part in future training exercises is most strongly affected by experiences related to the most recent training exercise ($\beta = 0.53$, $p < 0.001$). The quality of experience is formed on the basis of satisfaction with different elements of the exercise, and also unit cohesion. A higher level of satisfaction, as well as good relations with other members of the unit (horizontal cohesion) and unit leaders (vertical cohesion), contributes to the formation of a positive experience which, in turn, has a positive effect on military service readiness.

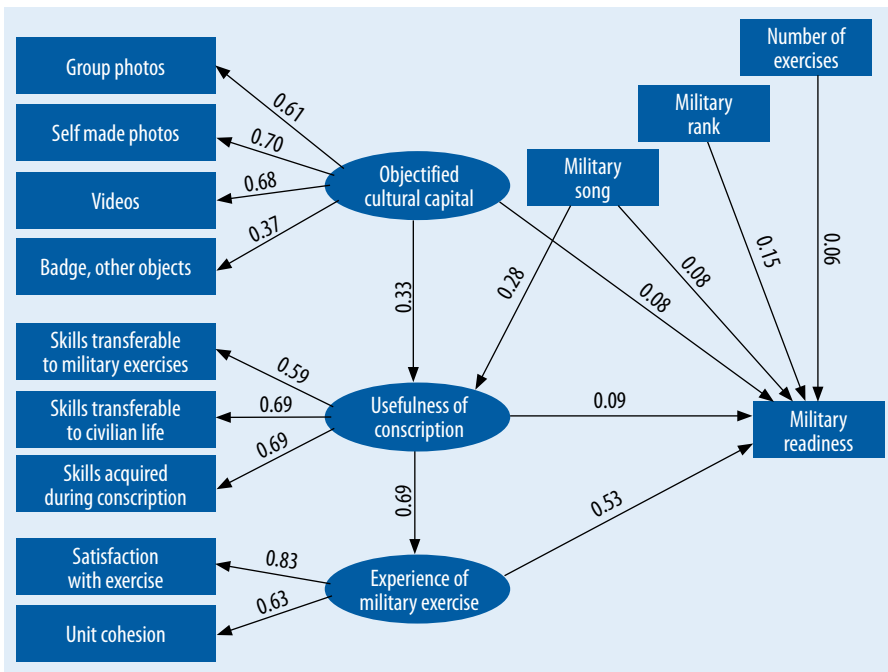


Figure 3. Military service readiness model with standardized estimates

At the same time, our model indicates that satisfaction with the most recent training exercise is influenced by the perceived usefulness of conscription ($\beta = 0.69$, $p < 0.001$), i.e., those reservists who indicated that conscript service gave them transferable skills that they have been able to use both in civilian life as well as during the most recent training exercise were more satisfied with the training exercise, and also demonstrated higher levels of unit cohesion. The model shows that perceived usefulness of conscript service

has no statistically significant direct effect on their military service readiness ($\beta = 0.09$, $p = 0.13$), but the influence is mediated by experiences related to the most recent training exercise ($\beta = 0.36$). Overall, we can confirm the associations posited by our third hypothesis, i.e., the effect of objectified cultural capital is positively associated with positive experiences from conscript service, which will influence the overall attitude towards the most recent military exercise as well as military service readiness in the future.

We also analysed the effects of military rank and the number of previous exercises on military service readiness. The results indicate that higher military rank ($\beta = 0.15$, $p < 0.001$) and prior participation in reservist refresher training ($\beta = 0.06$, $p < 0.05$) are associated with higher military service readiness.

5. Discussion

Our research findings indicate that there is a positive association between objectified cultural capital and willingness to take part in future reservist refresher training exercises, which was chosen as our primary indicator of the military service readiness of reservists. In this regard, the most influential military artefacts of objectified cultural capital were self-made photos and videos about interesting and exiting events, situations or activities that were related to the respondents' personal interests and preferences. As regards unit cohesion, group photos were just a little less influential. However, it must be borne in mind that in the EDF the use of personal electronic devices with photo and video functionality is subject to various regulatory restrictions.⁴² In order to prevent violations of those rules, and to offer regulated alternatives for the accumulation of such objectified cultural capital that would support reservists' military service readiness in the future, further research is warranted on photos and videos that contribute to positive associations with military service in the habitus of reservists. For example, the photo-elicitation method could be used for identifying the most powerful markers for long-lasting military habitus. Furthermore, with regard to photos and videos, it would be interesting to explore the popularity of such themes as, for example, military skills and expertise, unit cohesion, and

⁴² See for example **Estonian Defence Forces, 1st Infantry Brigade, Rules of Procedure** (1. jalaväebrigaadi sisekorraeeskiri) 2019, p. 13, specifically clause 16.02. (available only in Estonian). <https://kra.ee/static/1JVB-sisekorraeeskiri.pdf> (accessed September 25, 2020).

participation in special military events⁴³ during conscript service and in the course of reservist refresher training, and if there are also other topics that reservists are connected to. To that end, enabling regulated periods for taking such photos and videos might contribute to the positive effect of objectified cultural capital.

Furthermore, remembering the unit's military song could also serve to promote stronger identification with the group and foster unit cohesion. Our analysis indicates that military songs could be viewed as military mementos; however, their effect on military service readiness depends on the perceived usefulness of conscription service. Overall, various items of objectified cultural capital, and also military songs, serve as powerful military mementos and play a significant role in the development of the military component in the habitus of reservists.

However, we are not suggesting that the service readiness of reservists could be boosted, as if by a magic wand, simply by increasing their objectified cultural capital. In reality there is a wide range of factors that motivate reservists to take part in refresher training exercises. For example, reservists who are motivated by their sense of camaraderie or patriotism are probably also more enthusiastic about activating the dormant components of their military habitus, and they also seem to value and collect military mementos and artefacts, indicating that maintaining their military identity is important to them.

Overall, we cannot claim that there is a direct causal relationship between objectified cultural capital from the military field and military service readiness among reservists. Bourdieu and Passeron concluded that habitus, field and capital are relational⁴⁴ and, as can be seen from our military service readiness model, the different forms of capital are themselves also quite relational. There is some logic in the idea that the value of objectified cultural capital depends on the quality of corresponding embodied cultural capital which provides the competence for using, and also satisfaction from using, the objectified cultural capital.⁴⁵ If reservists value the embodied cultural capital (e.g., military skills) gained from conscript service they might also feel a closer connection to military artefacts. In addition, our findings indicate that reservists with higher military rank, representing institutionalized

⁴³ See **Woodward, Jenkins** 2011, p. 263.

⁴⁴ **Bourdieu, P.; Passeron, J-C.** 1977. *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London: Sage Publications, p. 59.

⁴⁵ **Edwards** 2008, p. 368.

cultural capital, are more motivated to take part in refresher training exercises and to preserve their military emblems and badges. Moreover, the influence of military rank depends on time spent in the military field (i.e., generally, higher rank indicates longer military service both in conscription and reserve).

Thus, the associations between different categories of cultural capital are reciprocal and, with a view to increasing service readiness among reservists, we must keep in mind the whole spectrum of different forms of cultural capital. For example, reservists who remember their unit's military song and preserve other military keepsakes give a higher rating to their perceived gains (i.e., transferable skills) from conscript service. However, it could also be argued that positive experiences from conscript service will motivate them to collect and preserve military mementos, and later those mementos will, in turn, help preserve positive memories from military service. Similarly, it is also possible to detect an interplay between cultural capital and social capital. Additionally, strong horizontal and vertical unit cohesion should also promote the preservation of military mementos and the value of maintaining military skills, thereby imbuing that type of cultural capital with powerful symbolic value in the civilian field. The symbolic capital that has transformed into cultural capital can, in turn, sustain a strong feeling of camaraderie within a reserve unit.

Altogether, our findings indicate that satisfaction with the most recent reservist training exercise had the strongest influence on the service readiness of reservists. Our model incorporates several factors that have a strong impact on this positive experience. For example, professionalism and unit cohesion are both excellent stimuli for strong motivation to take part in refresher training. Well-trained soldiers exhibit higher levels of mutual trust, and that applies to their commanders as well. Competent soldiers are also better at managing different tasks during training, and that seems to be one of the key reasons for their satisfaction with the most recent training exercise. In this regard, it is important to bear in mind that everything starts with professional leadership, the training of conscripts, and the cultivation of strong unit cohesion. Our research indicates that all of the factors that serve as the strongest motivators for reservists to return to service are rooted in their experiences in conscript service. Furthermore, certain military artefacts serve as highly valued objectified cultural capital and also constitute a part of a larger symbolic capital that can be, in turn, related to other forms of cultural capital. Thus, social capital can also support reservists' readiness to take part in future training exercises.

However, our findings also demonstrate that the effect of experiences from reservist training exercises may influence the effect of military mementos. Namely, positive experiences may bolster the effect of military mementos and that may, in turn, lead to higher military service readiness. However, negative experiences may have the opposite effect, especially for those who emerged from conscript service with very positive experiences, and have preserved military mementos. Those people tend to have high expectations for subsequent reservist training exercises and, if disappointed, the effect on overall military service readiness is negative.

The military service readiness model put forward by the authors of this study incorporated various factors from the questionnaire devised for the EDF reservist survey. However, questions and topics covered in that survey were not sufficiently comprehensive and therefore additional research regarding other possible factors impacting the service readiness of reservists is warranted for the purposes of the further development of our model. For example, such factors as the differences among different civilian fields, as well as corresponding identities, might provide a better understanding of various motivators for reservists with multiple identities and insights into different layers of their habitus. To that end, further research into the effect of different life milestones could be helpful in gaining a better understanding of the needs that carry over to the military field from the reservists' civilian life. Moreover, any future studies would also benefit from a longitudinal design.

Our research was based on cross-sectional data and the questionnaire was designed to capture experiences and capital acquired during conscript service in the past, experiences and satisfaction with the military exercise at the time of the survey, and willingness to take part in future training exercises. Thus, our model follows the natural sequence of events and causality, but the data were gathered at a specific point in time; although, ideally, the conceptual model would need to be validated via a longitudinal approach. For example, data should be collected (i.e., questionnaires administered) at least at two different moments, i.e., during conscript service, and also during reservist refresher training exercises.

The civilian field is the dominant factor in the daily lives of reservists, and thus there are limited options for preserving their military habitus. Considering that objectified cultural capital (i.e., that which is positively related to other factors and forms of capital) has a positive effect on the service readiness of reservists, it might be beneficial to increase the role of military artefacts and mementos in their civilian fields. For example, one option would be to allow them to keep their uniforms and some personal equipment after they

complete conscription service. According to the latest EDF reservist survey, 46% of reservists who took part in the 2019 training exercise Spring Storm would be prepared to keep their uniforms and personal equipment at home⁴⁶. In conjunction with a possible positive effect on their service readiness, it could also help save time spent in the unit formation phase at the start of reservist refresher training, and shorten the time spent on getting used to the uniform and equipment when transferring back into the military field.

6. Conclusion

This study focused on exploring the influence of objectified cultural capital from the military field on the service readiness of reservists of the Estonian Defence Forces. We proposed a military service readiness model for reservists that outlines the interrelationships and impact among objectified cultural capital (i.e., military mementos and artefacts), embodied cultural capital (i.e., military skills acquired in conscript service), and social capital (i.e., unit cohesion), and satisfaction with the most recent training exercise. According to our model, military artefacts and mementos have a positive effect on the service readiness of reservists and thus can support their motivation in conjunction with other forms of both cultural capital and social capital. Of the military artefacts and mementos studied, the strongest effect was elicited by self-made photos and videos from the military field. To further support the acquisition of such mementos we suggest reviewing the organisational regulations and practices related to the accumulation of this capital as it seems to have a significant long-term effect by supporting the continued service readiness of reservists. Furthermore, we also discovered that the strongest factor affecting the service readiness of reservists (i.e., indicated by their willingness to take part in future training exercises) is their satisfaction with the most recent training exercise which, in turn, depends on horizontal and vertical cohesion within the unit. Additionally, satisfaction with the most recent training exercise is also dependent on previous positive experience of military service (i.e., primarily conscript service) which, in turn, is dependent on positive associations related to the acquisition and application of military skills. That is to say, positive performance or outcomes in reservist training exercises add to existing positive experiences of military service, leading to increased readiness to take part in military exercises in the future as well.

⁴⁶ EDF Reservist Survey 2019. Research Report 2019, p. 20.

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Appendix

Table 1. Estimates of the proposed model of military service readiness [standardized coefficients]

		Estimate	P
Objectified cultural capital	→ Usefulness of conscription	0.33	***
Usefulness of conscription	→ Experience of military exercise	0.69	***
Military song	→ Usefulness of conscription	0.28	***
Objectified cultural capital	→ Emblems and badges	0.37	***
Objectified cultural capital	→ Videos	0.68	***
Objectified cultural capital	→ Self-made photos	0.70	***
Objectified cultural capital	→ Group photos	0.61	***
Usefulness of conscription	→ Skills transferable to civilian field	0.69	***
Usefulness of conscription	→ Skills transferable to military exercise	0.59	***
Usefulness of conscription	→ Skills acquired during conscription	0.69	***
Experience of military exercise	→ Satisfaction with exercise	0.83	***
Experience of military exercise	→ Unit cohesion	0.63	***
Number of exercises	→ Military service readiness	0.06	0.02
Military rank	→ Military service readiness	0.15	***
Experience of military exercise	→ Military service readiness	0.53	***
Usefulness of conscription	→ Military service readiness	0.09	0.13
Military song	→ Military service readiness	0.08	0.01
Objectified cultural capital	→ Military service readiness	0.08	0.03
<i>Correlations</i>			
Military song	→ Objectified cultural capital	0.21	***
Military rank	→ Military song	0.13	***
Number of exercises	→ Military song	0.04	0.13
Military rank	→ Number of exercises	0.19	***
Military rank	→ Objectified cultural capital	0.10	0.05
Number of exercises	→ Objectified cultural capital	-0.07	0.01

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