

Contacts

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MERLE PARMAK

Education

- 2006 – 2011 PhD in Work and Organisational Psychology, University of Leuven
- 2006 – 2011 PhD in Social and Military Sciences, Royal Military Academy (Belgium)
- 2003 – 2005 MSc in Psychology, University of Tallinn
- 1999 – 2003 BSc in Psychology, University of Tartu
- 1995 – 1998 BA in Business Administration, Estonian Management Institute

Career, interests and activities in psychological sciences

I have been working within psychology for more than 20 years now. My interest in psychology began largely by chance when my life first took me to military service in 1994. This was the time when the Soviet Union collapsed and Estonia began to look for its independent identity. I was not a psychologist at the time. This experience seemed confusing and intriguing simultaneously. I found myself asking: who are these people? What makes them join the armed forces? If times were different, would it be different types of people who would be attracted?

The questions stayed with me and after a brief detour through business sciences, I began my studies in psychology. After ten fruitful years at university, my studies led to a unique joint doctorate in Belgium, in organisational psychology and military and social sciences¹.

For most of my university years, I worked full-time in the Estonian army as a "psychologist in uniform". It was an experience of intense and active learning with the same intense and active practice. The first 4 years, my so-called apprenticeship, took me to practise psychology in a 'boots on the ground' way in different military units. The last 7 years of my military career were more academic, I was teaching military psychology and conducting applied research. During this period my research focused on the role of personal predisposition in adapting to and coping with military missions. I was also actively involved in international collaborations with other researchers internationally. During these years in my career, I have presented at 19 international conferences across the globe, been invited to speak as a keynote speaker 8 times, and have organised 2 international conferences on military psychology in Estonia. My contribution to military research was recognised by the highly acclaimed Harry Greer Award from the Steering Committee of the International Military Testing Association (IMTA).

After satisfying my researcher's curiosity and receiving answers to the most burning questions, I retired from uniformed service and in 2013 switched to private consultancy and

¹ Recognized by the Research Council of the Estonian Ministry of Defence as the best defence related Doctoral Dissertation in 2011

academic teaching. Since then, I have lectured internationally as a member of the academic staff of several universities, and also as a contracted trainer-instructor in the subject areas of security-, health- and organisational psychology.

When I started my research career, I was most interested in the behaviour of people in harsh and/or morally difficult situations. Most of my research projects have focused on issues related to organisational performance, employee selection, and employee well-being. While this is still the case, my research interests have now broadened to include issues related to national resilience and national identity in globalized societies. Being a passionate world traveller myself, the phenomenon of accelerated migration all over the world has made me interested in the experiences of different sub-communities of society in a broader sense. How do these sub-communities respond to social and political change? How does the social and cultural variability of value systems intervene and how is national identity formed in multi-ethnic societies?

Employment history

- 2020 – Foreign Expert (Teaching), Dalian Maritime University, China
- 2020 – 2022 Mental Health Advisor at Police and Border Guard Board, Estonia
- 2019 – 2021 Lecturer in Business School at Loughborough University, UK
- 2018 – 2020 Senior Researcher at Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia
- 2015 – 2017 Researcher at University of Huddersfield, UK
- 2014 – 2017 Senior Lecturer at University of Huddersfield, UK
- 2013 – Privat consultancy and contract research @merleparmak, Estonia
- 2013 – 2014 Researcher at Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia
- 2007 – 2013 Uniformed researcher at Estonian Defence Academy
- 2003 – 2007 Uniformed military psychologist in Estonian Defence Forces

Professional affiliations

- Fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy
- Lifetime Steering Committee Member in International Military Testing Association
- Harry Greer Award by International Military Testing Association, 2013
- Chair of Estonian National Accreditation Committee of EFPA EuroPsy, 2013 – 2017
- EFPA EuroPsy (area of practice: Work & organisation), 2013 – 2020
- National representative in Baltic Military Psychologists Expert Forum, 2007 – 2013
- National representative in International Military Testing association, 2009 – 2013
- Member of APA (Div. 19), 2007 – 2014
- Member of Estonian Psychologists' Association

Main teaching/ training topics

Internal security organisations

- Psychological consequences of working with crime
- Crisis and mental health in policing
- Staff consulting and problem solving
- Selection and classification of personnel in the police force
- Motivation, well-being and commitment in a police career

Health care institutions

- Effective organisational communication
- Stress, burnout and job satisfaction in midwifery and clinical nursing
- Group briefings after critical incidents; death and dying
- Teamwork and problem solving in medical teams
- Patient relations and counselling

Governmental agencies

- Paradoxes of normality
- Power and powerlessness in the classroom
- Burnout and organisational culture
- Self-assertion in professional relationships
- Working with human suffering

Higher education institutions

- Crisis management; change management
- Military psychology; psychological operations
- Work and organisational psychology; organisational behaviour
- Research methods in social sciences
- National resilience and nation-building
- Personnel selection and management in security organisations
- Effective organisational communication; employees' engagement
- HRM, leadership and interpersonal skills
- Social psychology and personality
- Maritime strategy and maritime social work
- Crisis management at sea and maritime psychology

Main research topics

PhD themes in (co-)supervision

- Agent-oriented modelling requirements for behaviourally programmed software agents in socially and cognitively complex training scenarios (Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia)
- Dynamics of changes in moral development amongst students and professionals in the UK (University of Huddersfield, United Kingdom)
- Examining societal relations between resilience, community cohesion, religiosity and extreme attitudes in the UK (University of Huddersfield, United Kingdom)

International research collaboration

- Leading researcher on national resilience (Tel Aviv University)
- Invited expert on simulation-based decision support (Tallinn University of Technology)
- Leading researcher on national resilience in the context of international security (University of Huddersfield)
- Leading researcher in test development on military personnel selection and classification (University of Tartu)
- Member of the research team on military suicides (NATO/RTO)

- Invited expert on asymmetric threats in urban operations (EDA)
- Member of the research team on selection of military special operations forces personnel (NATO/RTO)
- Member of the research team on mental health training (NATO/RTO)
- Member of the research team on medical unexplained physical symptoms in military personnel (NATO/RTO)
- Member of the research team on psychological aspects of health behaviours in deployed military operations (NATO/RTO)
- Invited expert on developing and testing protective clothing from specially processed textiles for particular military uses (Tallinn University of Technology)

Research in Estonia

- Nurses' job engagement and burnout, Tartu University Hospital
- Person-Job Fit & mental health in policing, Estonian Police
- Burnout and organisational culture, Rural Municipality Government
- Organisational culture, Estonian Defence Forces
- Job profile and personnel selection, Estonian Criminal Police
- Job competencies of medical nurses, North Estonia Medical Centre
- SOF Personnel selection, Estonian Defence Forces
- Profile screening for military conscription, Estonian Defence Forces

Publications

- Yao, Y., Zheng, R., & Parmak, M. (2024), Why would you choose yachting tourism? Exploring the push-pull motivations and constraints in China, *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-02-2024-0043>
- Yao, Y., Zhou X., & Parmak, M. (2023). Risk assessment for yachting tourism in China using dynamic Bayesian networks. *PLoS ONE* 18(8): e0289607. <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0289607>
- Yao, Y., Li, Z., Zhou X., & Parmak, M. (2023). Yachting Tourism Consumption Potential and Its Influencing Factors: Considering 12 Coastal Cities in China as Examples. *Sustainability*, 15, 12490. <https://colab.ws/articles/10.3390%2Fsu151612490>
- Parmak, M., & Tyfa, D. A. (2022). The link between conscription experience and conscripts' attitude towards national military service at the end of training: An example from Estonia. *Armed Forces & Society*, 49(3), 662–686. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0095327X221078883>
- Yao, Y.; Zheng, R.; Parmak, M. (2022). Factors Influencing the Willingness to Pay in Yachting Tourism in the Context of COVID-19 Regular Prevention and Control: The Case of Dalian, China. *Sustainability*, 14, 13132. <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/14/20/13132>
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https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344191435_Military_Psychology_Response_to_Post_Pandemic_Reconstruction_Volume_1
- Parmak, M. (2018). Soldiering and globalisation. In S. Rawat (Ed.). *Stress and resilience in the military* (pp. 33-47). Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
<https://www.rawatbooks.com/defence-studies/stress-and-resilience-in-the-military>
- Kimhi, S., Parmak, M., Boon, H., Sapountzaki, K., Groh, A., & Ryan, S. (2018). Community and national resilience and quality of life: A preliminary cross-cultural study. *American International Journal of Social Science*, 7(1), 1-11.
<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Community-and-National-Resilience-and-Quality-of-%3A-Kimhi-Parmak/c597c9d9ff6757fbc0ead4d742a4fb22241df35b>
- Parmak, M. (2018). Functional fitness model in military healthcare: From ability to performance. In A. Pesic (Ed.). *Stress in military profession* (pp. 49-63). Belgrad: Strategic Research Institute, Media Centre Odbrana.
- Ryan, S., Ionnaou, M., & Parmak (2018). Understanding the three levels of resilience: implications for countering-extremism. *Journal of Community Psychology* 46(5), 669-682. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31682292/>
- Jermalavičius, T., & Parmak, M. (2017). Societal Resilience as a Basis of Whole-of-Society Approach to National Security and Defence. In R. P. Nalepa (Ed.). *Resistance Views: Tartu Resistance Seminar Essays on Unconventional Warfare and Small State Resistance, 2014* (pp. 10-24). Joint Special Operations University Press.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342946191_Societal_Resilience_A_Basis_for_Whole-of-Society_Approach_to_National_Security
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- Parmak, M. (2014). An Interactionistic Approach to Military Selection. In C. Dobre (Ed.), *Psihologia Militara: Psychology as a Multiplier for the Military Operational Capacity* (pp. 158–162). Bucharest: Editura Universtitatii Nationale de Aparare "Carol I".

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- Shvartsman, I., Taveter, K., Parmak, M., & Meriste, M. (2010), Agent-Oriented Modelling for Simulation of Complex Environments., in 'IMCSIT', 209–216. <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/5679731>
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