

Contacts

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MERLE PARMAK

Education

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

Career, interests and activities in psychological sciences

I have been working within psychology for approximately 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

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

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 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. I have also continued to consult on personnel selection and mental health projects in Estonian security and health care institutions.

When I started my research career, I was most interested in people's behaviour in harsh and/or morally difficult situations. Most of my research projects focused on organisational performance, staff selection, and staff welfare issues. From the knowledge accumulated during this period, an innovative online human resource management tool is being now developed to support the recruitment and selection of staff and the management of staff wellbeing. Over time, my interest in research has shifted to national resilience and national identity in globalised societies. Being a passionate world traveller myself, the phenomenon of accelerated migration around the world has made me interested in the experiences of different sub-communities in society at large. How do these sub-communities respond to social and political change? How does social and cultural variation in value systems intervene, and how does national identity develop in multinational societies?

Professional employment

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

Professional affiliation and membership

- 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 and training topics in applied and academic settings

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

Main research topics in applied and academic settings

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

- 2021 - Leading researcher on national resilience (Tel Aviv University)
- 2018 - 2020 Invited expert on simulation-based decision support (Tallinn University of Technology)
- 2017 - 2019 Leading researcher on national resilience in the context of international security (University of Huddersfield)
- 2011 - 2015 Leading researcher in test development on military personnel selection and classification (University of Tartu)
- 2011 - 2014 Member of the research team on military suicides (NATO/RTO)
- 2010 - 2012 Invited expert on asymmetric threats in urban operations (EDA)
- 2009 - 2012 Member of the research team on selection of military special operations forces personnel (NATO/RTO)
- 2009 - 2012 Member of the research team on mental health training (NATO/RTO)
- 2008 - 2011 Member of the research team on medical unexplained physical symptoms in military personnel (NATO/RTO)
- 2007 - 2010 Member of the research team on psychological aspects of health behaviours in deployed military operations (NATO/RTO)
- 2007 - 2013 Invited expert on developing and testing protective clothing from specially processed textiles for particular military uses (Tallinn University of Technology)

Research in Estonia

- 2021 Nurses' job engagement and burnout, Tartu University Hospital
- 2020 - 2022 Person-Job Fit & mental health in policing, Estonian Police
- 2018 Burnout and organisational culture, Rural Municipality Government
- 2012 Organisational culture, Estonian Defence Forces
- 2013 - 2019 Job profile and personnel selection, Estonian Criminal Police

- 2012 – 2013 Job competencies of medical nurses, North Estonia Medical Centre
- 2009 – 2013 SOF Personnel selection, Estonian Defence Forces
- 2009 Profile screening for military conscription, Estonian Defence Forces

Publications

- 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* (accepted for publication).
- Yao, Y.; Zheng, R.; Parmak, M. (2021). Examining the Constraints on Yachting Tourism Development in China: A Qualitative Study of Stakeholder Perceptions. *Sustainability*, 13, 13178.
- Parmak, M. (2020). Focus on resilience in cognitively diverse multidisciplinary teams. In S. Rawat, O. Boe and A. Piotrowski (Eds.). *Military Psychology Response to Post Pandemic Reconstruction* (pp. 143-152). Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
- Parmak, M. (2018). Soldiering and globalisation. In S. Rawat (Ed.). *Stress and resilience in the military* (pp. 33-47). Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Parmak, M. (2017). National resilience as a security concept. In S. Rawat (Ed.). *Military psychology and leadership development* (pp. 77-94). Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
- Parmak, M. (2016). Health beyond symptoms: Multidimensional approach to functional fitness in military organisations. In S. Rawat (Ed.). *Military psychology: International perspective* (pp. 147-160). Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
- Parmak, M. (2015). National resilience in multinational societies. In D. Ajdukovic, S. Kimhi, & M. Lahad. (Eds.). *Resiliency: Enhancing coping*

- with crisis and terrorism* (pp. 66-70). Netherlands: IOS Press, The NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme.
- 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".
- Parmak, M., Mylle, J. J. C., & Euwema, M. C. (2014). Sensation seeking and perceived need for structure moderate soldiers' well-being before and after operational deployment. *Military Behavioural Health, 2(1)*, 75-81.
- Parmak, M., Mylle, J. J. C., & Euwema, M. C. (2013). Personality and the Perception of Situation Structure in a Military Environment: Seeking Sensation versus Structure as a Soldier. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 43(5)*, 1040-1049.
- Adler, A. B., Delahaij, R., Bailey, S. M., Van den Berge, C., Parmak, M., van Tussenbroek, B., Puente, J. M., Landratova, S., Kral, P., Kreim, G., Rietdijk, D., McGurk, D., & Castro, C. A. (2013). NATO Survey of Mental Health Training in Army Recruits. *Military Medicine, 178*, 760-766.
- Parmak, M., Euwema, M. C., & Mylle, J. J. C. (2012). Changes in Sensation Seeking and Need for Structure Before and After a Combat Deployment. *Military Psychology, 24 (6)*, 551-564.
- Jermalavičius, T., & Parmak, M. (2012). Towards a resilient society, or why Estonia does not need "psychological defence". *Occasional Paper of International Centre of Defence Studies*, <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/21718/>
- Parmak, M., Mylle, J. J. C., & Euwema, M. C. (2011). An interactionistic approach to soldiers' mental persistence in the context of operational deployments., in NATO HFM-205/RSY, 11-13 Apr 2011 in Bergen, Norway.
- Parmak, M. (2010). Morale and ethnicity in the military: Psychological coping with conscription in the Estonian Defence Forces. *Occasional Paper of International Centre of Defence Studies*, <http://www.icds.ee/fileadmin/media/icds.ee/failid/ICDS%20Occasional%20Paper-Merle%20Parmak-Morale%20and%20ethnicity%20in%20the%20military.pdf>
- Shvartsman, I., Taveter, K., Parmak, M., & Meriste, M. (2010), Agent-Oriented Modelling for Simulation of Complex Environments., in 'IMCSIT', 209-216.
- Konstabel, K., Parmak, M., & Allik, J. (2009). "Thomas meetodi" sobivusest Eesti Vabariigi kutsealuste psühholoogilise sobivuse hindamisel. Uuringuraport. [Validity of "Thomas Method" assessing conscripts' psychological suitability to military service in Estonian Defence Forces. *The Research Report*].