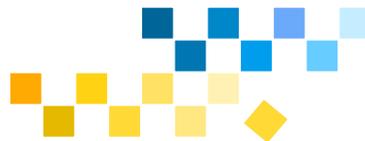


# Annual DoD/VA Suicide Prevention Conference

## June 20-22, 2012



Ph.D. Lilian Zoellner, Centre for Suicide Research, Denmark

# DENMARK

## NATIONAL SUICIDE RATE

**2009: 11,29 per. 100.000**

**2009:**

- 1) Ischemic heart disease**
- 2) Malignant tumour in other localization**
- 3) Vascular disease in the brain**

**13) Suicide**



# DENMARK

## MILITARY SUICIDE DATA

- **MILITARY STRUCTURE:**

A combination of a professional military, with a conscript element and a volunteer home guard

- **DEFINITION OF VETRANS**

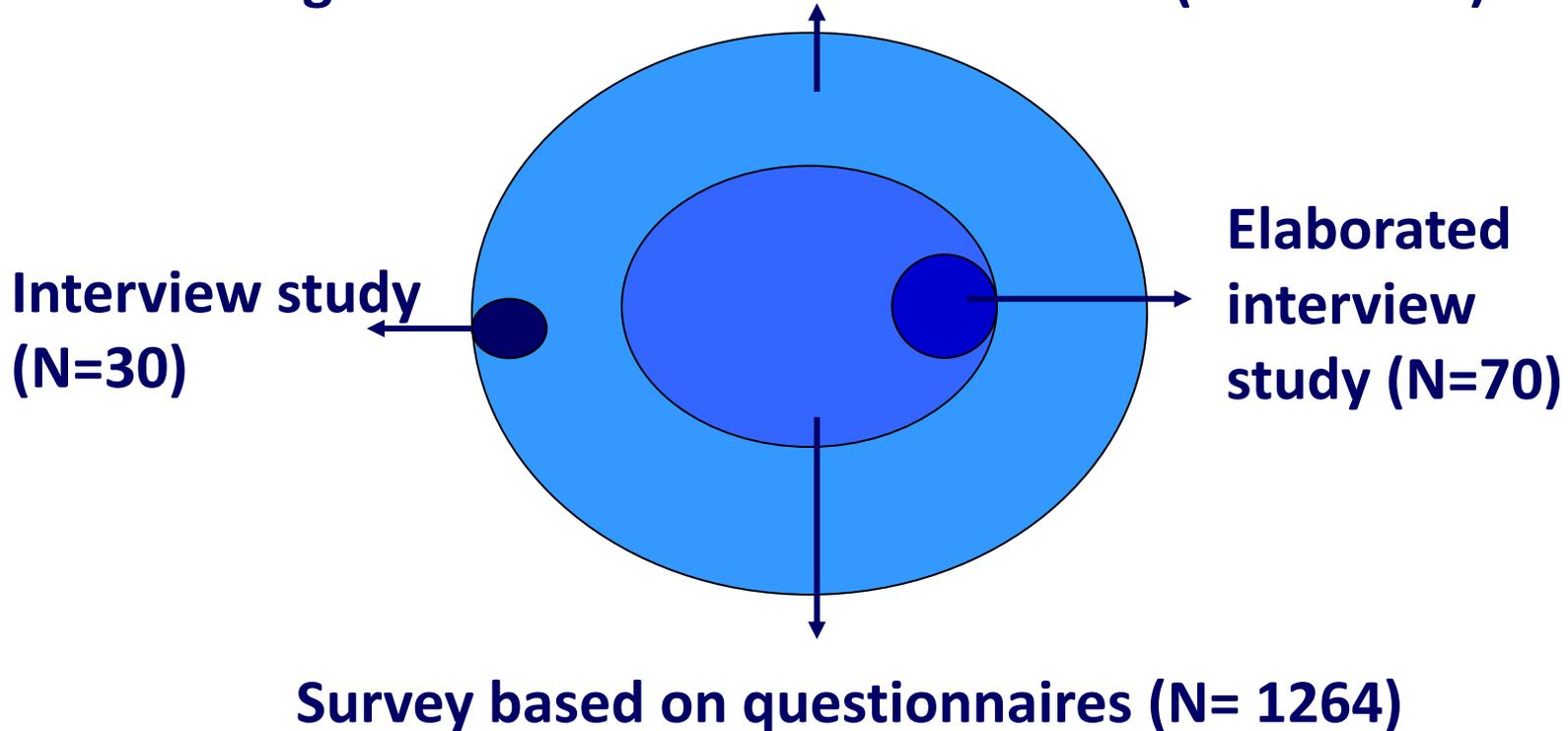
The term veteran describes a person who – as an individual or in a unit – has been deployed to at least one international operation. The person may still be employed in the Defence or another authority, but may also have transferred to the civilian educational system, labour market or elsewhere. (The Danish Government, October 2010).



# DENMARK

## RESEARCH ON RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Register-based research N= 25.645 (1990-2009)



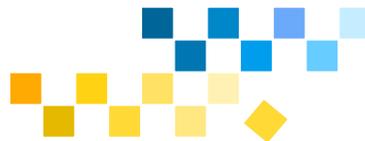
# DENMARK

## RISK FACTORS FOR SUICIDE (N= 25.645)

**In general, deployed soldiers do not have a higher suicide risk than the general population.**

**However, this risk appears to depend upon which missions the soldiers have been deployed, especially in relation to suicides.**

**Soldiers on some of the UN-mission to Croatia in the 1990s have experienced a higher suicide risk than the general population.**



# DENMARK

## SELECTED MISSIONS

### SUICIDES

<b>UNPROFOR 4/CROATIA</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>(986 deployed)</b>
<b>UNPROFOR 3/CROATIA</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>(818 deployed)</b>
<b>UNCRO 8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>(1002 deployed)</b>

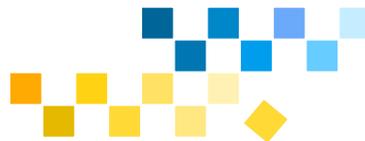


# DENMARK

## CRITERIA OF SELECTION (N=30)

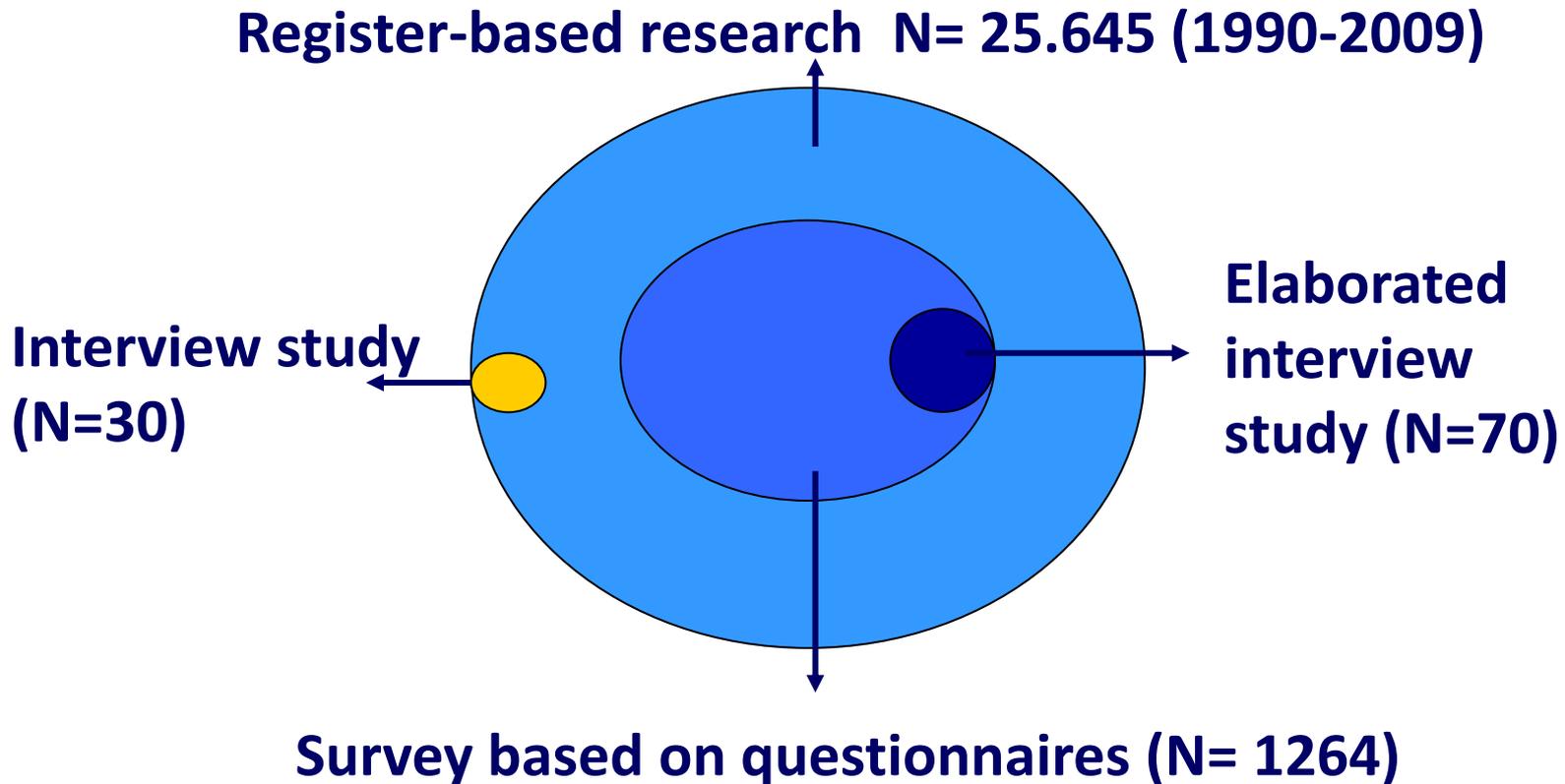
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- **SUICIDAL IDEATION**
- **ATTEMPTED SUICIDE**



# DENMARK

## RESEARCH ON RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS (N=30)



# DENMARK

## RISK FACTORS FOR ATTEMPTED SUICIDE (N=30)

**POOR CHILDHOOD**

**SERIOUS SUICIDAL IDEATION**

**SUICIDE AMONG THE CLOSEST  
RELATIVES**



# DENMARK

## RISK FACTORS FOR ATTEMPTED SUICIDE (N=30)

- **Mission type/authorisation**
- **Job functions**
- **Straining incidents**
- **Atrocities against civilians**
- **Family at home**
- **Management/superiors**



# DENMARK

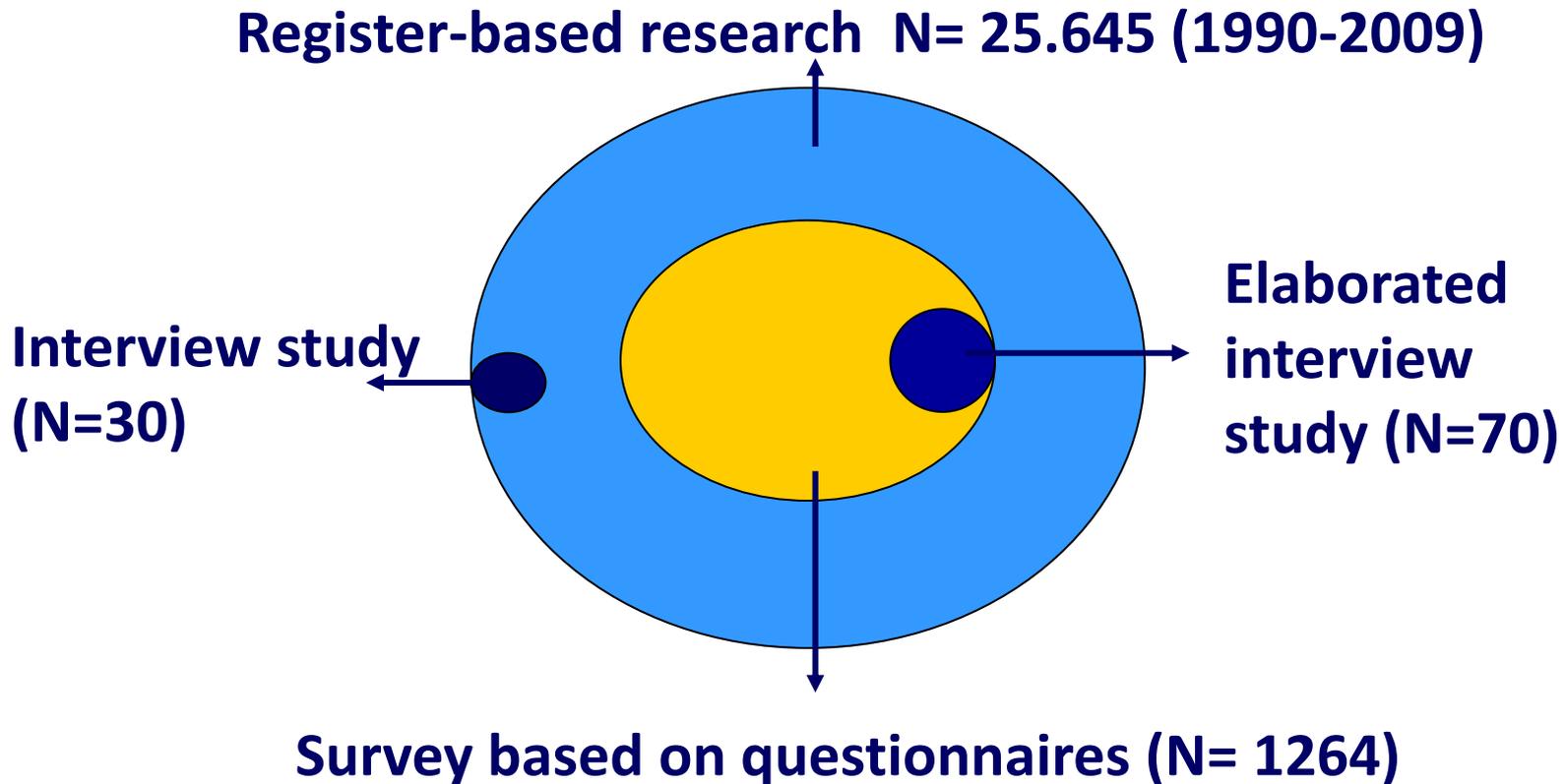
## PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR ATTEMPTED SUICIDE (N=30)

- Work
- Fear of dying
- Will to live



# DENMARK

## RESEARCH ON RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS (N=1264)



# DENMARK

## RISK FACTORS FOR SUICIDAL IDEATION (N=1264)

### Prior to first deployment:

- Drug abuse
- Poor financial circumstances
- A childhood with mentally ill parents
- A childhood with parents suffering from suicidal behaviour

### During deployment

- Being repatriated
- Enlisted private rather than officer
- Nervous breakdown
- Powerlessness in difficult situations
- Meaningless tasks
- See dead or wounded people/fellow soldiers
- Witnessing atrocities against civilians
- Being under fire or firing at others
- Thoughts of the risk of being killed
- Supporting family under strain
- Immense workload



# DENMARK

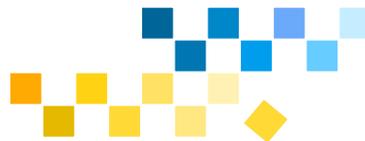
## PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR SUICIDAL IDEATION (N=1264)

During deployment: receiving positive support from

- partner
- closest relatives
- friends at home
- superiors

After deployment: receiving positive support

- in a good homecoming programme
- from partner
- from fellow soldiers (from the unit)
- through recognition from the population



# DENMARK

## RISK FACTORS FOR ATTEMPTED SUICIDE (N=1264)

### Prior to first deployment:

- Drug abuse

### During deployment

- Nervous breakdown
- Being injured
- Meaningless tasks
- Thoughts of the risk of being killed
- Injury or death of a fellow soldier/friend
- See dead people
- Witnessing atrocities against civilians
- Immense workload

### After deployment

- Participating in an inadequate homecoming programme
- A childhood with mentally ill parents
- A childhood with parents suffering from suicidal behaviour



# DENMARK

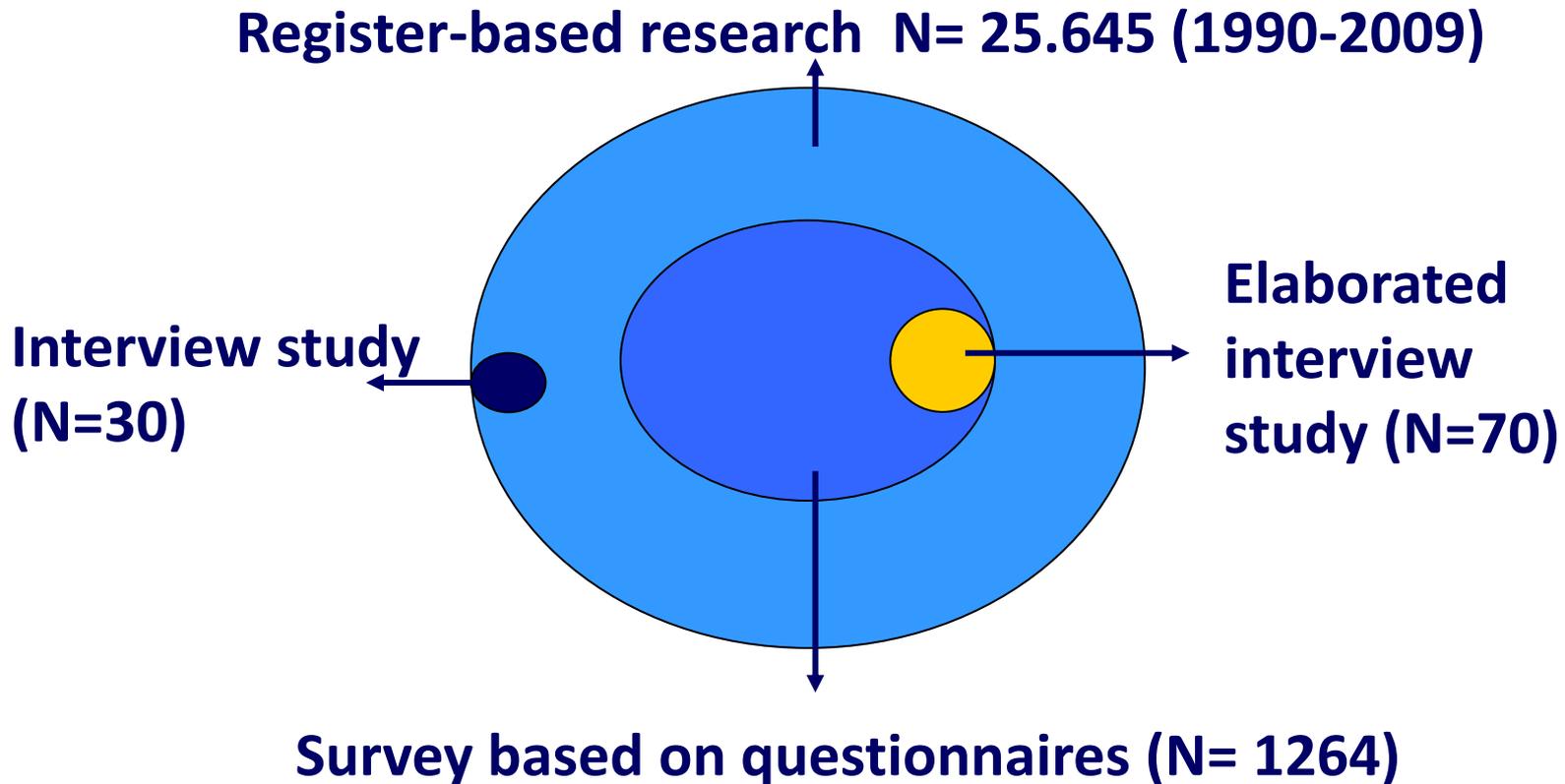
## PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR ATTEMPTED SUICIDE (N=1264)

- SUPPORT FROM PARTNER
- PARTICIPATING IN A GOOD HOMECOMING PROGRAMME



# DENMARK

## RESEARCH ON RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS (N=70)



# DENMARK

## CRITERIA OF SELECTION (N=70)



**has been under fire personally**  
**the camp has been under fire**  
**suicidal ideation**  
**attempted suicide**



# DENMARK

## PROTECTIVE FACTORS (N=70)

- RELATIONS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS
- VALUES
- ONE'S LIFE PHILOSOPHY



# DENMARK

## BEST PRACTICES

- **RECOGNITION FROM THE POPULATION**
- **HOMECOMING PROGRAMME**
- **SOCIAL SUPPORT (A VETERAN FOR EVER)**



# DENMARK



## THE RESEARCH INTO RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS WILL CONTINUE



Ph.D. Lilian Zoellner, Centre for Suicide Research, Denmark





# RELATIONS