Motiverande samtal i interventioner med manliga förövare av våld i nära relationer

Motivational interviews in interventions with male offenders of intimate partner violence

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Seven professionals who worked with men sentenced for intimate partner violence in a psychosocial intervention project in Valencia were interviewed about motivational interviews. Motivational interviews can increase these clients' assumption of responsibility and motivation. The purpose of this study was to seek knowledge about the function of motivational interviews in an intervention with offenders. The method for the study was qualitative using a semi-structured interview. An inductive thematic analysis was used to code and analyze data. The analysis resulted in four themes: 1. Assume responsibility, 2. Motivation - a reason to change and to set a goal, 3. Strategies to motivate and 4. A bond. The respondents described the motivational interviews of use to bond with clients, to resolve their resistance and to deal with difficult feelings towards the clients. As professionals they considered that motivated clients had found a personal reason to change and had formulated a relevant goal.

On a larger scale, intimate partner violence is sometimes referred to as something that has run out of control or an epidemic (World Health Organization, 2012). Statistics have revealed that chronic health issues and death among young women in Europe are usually caused by someone in the close family (the European council, 2002, in Lila, García & Lorenzo, 2010). Violence exists in many different forms. Some of these forms are sexual, emotional and physical abuse as well as social control (to deny access to social contacts, education, jobs and economic wealth) (WHO, 2012). Isdal (2001) presents a general definition of violence:

Violence is any act directed against another person, where this act either harms, hurts or offends in a way that makes the person do something against his/her will or stop doing something that he/she would like to do.

Violence is sometimes explained as the result of power dynamics in the relationships between men and women (Grabe, Grace, Grose & Dutt, 2014). Although there are both male and female perpetrators and victims of violence, there is an important distinction between the violence experienced by women and that experienced by men. Generally when women are abused they are in danger at home and/or in their closest relationships, whereas men are more likely attacked in the street by someone unknown (WHO, 2012).

While violence is a background of this thesis work, the study specifically is about how motivation is addressed in the intervention with offenders of intimate partner violence. First a theoretical background will be given which will begin with a description of
different risk factors of intimate partner violence. These risk factors will be divided and described on a cultural level, a community level, a relationship level and an individual level. Then there will be a section about psychological processes of change that are important when intervening with offenders. These psychological processes are readiness to change, resistance and motivation (extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, and personal values). Motivational interviews, a specific method that is used to resolve resistance when working with offenders and increase their motivation will then be introduced. Before the specific context of this study, the research and intervention program Contexto at the University of Valencia, will be described, there will be a general overview into the characteristics of intimate partner violence intervention programs globally and in Spain. After the context has been introduced, the aim and research question for the study will be presented.

Theoretical Background

Risk factors of violent behavior

Gender violence is complex and there are a variety of risk factors. Lila et al. (2010) write that because of this complexity, there is a need to consider violence as a social phenomenon that can only be understood in relationship to a larger context. Sometimes Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective is used to illustrate different levels that affect violent behaviors. In this theory macro social (society), social (community), interpersonal (relationship) and personal (individual) factors together give nuance to how violence emerges (Terry, 2014). For example Terry (2014) used Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model to explain that a person and his/her environment influence each other and that health interventions should happen at all these levels in order to reach a full effect. Heise (1998) elaborated an adapted model of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model to specifically show the many factors that influence the risk of violence against women. Heise's (1998) version of Bronfenbrenner (1979) is illustrated by Antai (2011) using this picture:

The model suggests that violence against women can be understood as influences of interactions between people and social environments (Antai, 2011).
The levels of risk factors sometimes overlap so that the societal level is also referred to as a cultural level. The society/cultural level is relevant when violence is used generally as a way to solve conflicts (Vargas, Marco, Lila & Gracia, 2014). Women often carry a responsibility for how the family is perceived through perceptions of honor and purity or are restricted to do all household work, which sometimes makes violence legitimate (Vargas et al., 2014). Acceptance of violence increases if there is neither protection of women's rights; nor right to divorce and a limited access to public life (Vargas et al., 2014).

Specific social circumstances and/or environments can be referred to as the community level. The risk of violence increases when there are social isolation (for example a lack of social status) and low economic resources (Vargas et al., 2014). To live in economic scarcity increases intimate partner violence both at a community level and at an individual level (Benson, Fox, DeMaris & Van Wyk, 2003). Babcock, Waltz, Jacobean and Gottman (1993) observed in a study in an American context that in marriages where the man's socio-economic status was lower than that of his partner the likelihood that he would try to claim power through the use of violence increased. The same violent behavior was also observed when moreover there was a difficulty to communicate or make decisions in the marriage.

Marriages and intimate relationships are examples of the relational level. This level can be affected by gender norms that can contribute to violent acts. Gondolf and Hanneken (1987) suggest that masculine norms influenced the violence that male offenders in their study had used against their partners. The offenders had felt inadequate in relationship to how a man "should be". The same masculine norm that had made them feel like that was also considered to be the same norm that had taught them to have a hostile attitude towards women. The offenders in the study had justified their abusive behavior with the argument that their wives could have made them feel. The offenders had escaped their psychological pain by using violence against their partners (Gondolf & Hanneken, 1987).

Apart from social influences, there also exist a number of individual risk factors for violent behavior. Examples of these individual factors are substance-abuse, unresolved childhood trauma or attachment issues (Vargas et al. 2014). A study by Boira (2008) in an intimate partner violence intervention in Spain sought the possibility to create a profile of offenders. The result showed no significant results regarding their socioeconomic status, profession, age, place of birth, relationship status or working conditions. Also Expósito and Ruiz (2010) made an attempt to categorize the characteristics of offenders. They suggest that offenders who had no severe illnesses (psychopathology or heavy substance abuse) fit a basic profile with the characteristics compulsiveness, dependency and social desirability. The profile explains the behaviors of these offenders such as to pretend to be indefensive before their partners to ensure the partner's emotional reassurance while also pushing their own world views and values onto their partners. Although acting both inferior and superior in the intimate sphere, in the social sphere the offenders were characterized by seeking a status as exceptionally moral and mature (Expósito & Ruiz, 2010).

Another categorization is that of "ordinary offenders" as presented in a study by Edin, Lalos, Högbärg and Dahlögren (2008). They had met professionals who worked with men who had used violence in their intimate relationships. Edin et al. (2008) divided "ordinary
offenders” into three groups:
1) men who had learned to suppress feelings of vulnerability and had eventually exploded when pressure had peaked,
2) men who had acted self-sacrificing by pleasing their partner and children and eventually had "lost their mind" because they had perceived a lack of validation or love in return for those actions, and
3) men who had learned to be in control, to act "manly" and to exert dominance over others.

Is motivation the key to change?
In this section we will look at some facets of motivation that will be helpful to later understand the process of intervention with offenders. The topics are intrinsic and extrinsic forms of motivation, and personal values.

One way that motivation is defined is as an internal movement that precedes any behavior (Drieschner, Lammers & van der Staak, 2004). When motivation is investigated in psychological research it is sometimes divided into subcategories such as expectations, goals, values, attributions and self-esteem (Mayor Martínez & Tortosa Gil, 1995). All of these can play a role for whether a behavior will be changed or not (Mayor Martínez & Tortosa Gil, 1995). Motivation is an important driving force to realize and maintain change (Daly & Pelowski, 2000). Wagner & Ingersoll (2008) point out that when motivation is seen as a positive force and not only as a way to reduce discomfort, it broadens horizons and makes visible new possibilities. When intervening with offenders, the intervention has typically been mandated by court and so there tends to be a low motivation to participate and a high resistance (Daly & Pelowski, 2000; Ferrer-Perez, Ferreiro-Basurto, Navarro-Guzmán & Bosch-Fiol, 2016; Kistenmacher & Weiss, 2008). Resistance is a way that a person avoids to deal with change in order to protect her/himself from experiencing a loss of competence or a lost sense of self (Watson, 2006). Motivation can be helpful in order to resolve resistance so that it becomes possible to go through a process of change (Wagner & Ingersoll, 2008).

According to some research it is central for individual well-being to realize values (Sagiv & Schwarz, 2000). Values fundamentally come from how an individual seeks to master the environment in order to fulfill basic needs (Sortheix & Lönnqvist, 2014). Values can also serve as a point of reference to define what is important to an individual, whether or not he/she chooses to behave according to those values (Sortheix & Lönnqvist, 2014). When values are not realized they produce a discomfort in the individual that is referred to as cognitive dissonance (Ortiz, 2014b). Both needs and values can be central to the rehabilitation of criminals. According to the good lives model (Ward, 2002), professionals that work with offenders of any kind need to make possible for clients to find ways to achieve a "good life" according to the needs and values that are most central to them in their lives. One way that criminal acts are understood is thus that when people are faced with an insufficient access to or a lack of knowledge about how to reach fulfillment of basic needs they sometimes seek destructive ways to ensure that those needs will be met (Ward, 2002).

Motivation can be an important element in order to achieve a good life. In self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008a) it was explained that intrinsic or inner motivation strongly relates to the fulfillment of fundamental psychological needs of relatedness, autonomy and competence. Inner/autonomous motivation is typically
considered to give energy, whereas extrinsic/controlled motivation may rather deplete energy (Deci & Ryan, 2008b). It is common to experience intrinsic motivation when learning, experiencing or growing through the achievement of goals (Faries, 2016). Behaviors that are extrinsically motivated largely rise from a wish to be related according to Ryan and Deci (1999). A sense of connectedness can be achieved by conforming to what others value. Outer motivation could thus come from fear of other people's judgments or the fear of losing a significant relationship as may be the case in an intervention with offenders (Carlsson, 2007). For the individual there can still be an equally activating effect of this motivation if there is an inner acceptance or added personal value to a goal that is externally motivated (Ryan & Deci, 1999). The motivation to change a behavior can also consist of both inner and external forces of motivation (Carlsson, 2007).

If motivation can be influenced by others, it can be understood as a process that takes place in interactions between people and their environment (Herman, Reinke, Frey & Shepard, 2014). Instead of considering motivation only as something that a person either has or does not have, motivation is then also possibly evoked by others (Herman et al., 2014). However, despite the possible influences of others, there are still some important individual internal factors that affect how receptive a person is to become motivated and to make change happen. These are described by Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross (2003) in the transtheoretical model of change that will be introduced in the next section.

Readiness to change
The transtheoretical model of change as presented by Prochaska et al. (2003) includes five stages of change: pre contemplation, contemplation, commitment, action and maintenance. Other research has clarified that these stages are in fact more circular than the model would make believe and that the reality is that the stages repeat and blend together as part of the change process (Prochaska, DiClemente & Norcross, 1992). Some criticism about the transtheoretical model as expressed by Gutierrez and Czerny (2018) points out that the model does not deal with how culture may influence readiness to change and motivation. The model has also received remarks because it does not account for other people and the circumstances that can influence behavior. For example the partner of an offender may also abuse so that a person participates in relationship dynamics both as a perpetrator and as a victim (Murphy & Maiuro, 2008).

In the pre-contemplation stage there is still resistance to work through with support from the professional in order to gain trust and confidence for the work ahead (Musser & Murphy, 2009). Clients who are in pre-contemplation may not have assumed responsibility for their own actions or see the need to make a change and instead blame the partner, the therapist or the court system for their actions (Terreros García, 2017). The professionals may therefore need to apply differentiated motivational strategies may to work with their attitudes (Carbajosa, Catalá-Miñana, Lila, Gracia & Boira, 2017)

When the problem has been assumed, the client can begin to reflect upon it, entering thus into the stage of contemplation (Musser & Murphy, 2009). If no reflection is added to the work with offenders so that the attempt to change comes to rely on active effort alone, chances are that clients' attempt will drop (Levesque, Gelles & Velicer, 2000). If there has not been a reflected commitment to change, clients may also soon come to reject the intervention thinking that the activities are relevant to others but not to themselves (Begun, Shelley, Strodthoff & Short, 2001). In order for this commitment to happen, it is
necessary that the client believes that change is possible and that he/she has an idea of how to get there (Lorenzo, 2012).

Change can only be sustainable if it is personally meaningful (Begun et al., 2001). If a professional tries too hard to arrive at a solution and/or acts from an attitude of charity or of morality towards the client, the changes that clients make will be more superficial and less grounded in the person (Levy, 2005). A study by Eckhardt, Holtzworth-Munroe, Norlander, Sibley and Cahill (2008) found that pleasing the professional is a common strategy that offenders use to show that they are following the treatment, but that does not have a real impact in their lives. Wallace and Nosko (2003) suggest that clients deal with feelings of shame and fear of social rejection by pleasing the professional through imitations of pro-feminist standpoints. After a commitment has been made the professional shifts the focus to the action stage that can be assisted by a plan to change where the professional is willing to deal with obstacles and celebrate clients' achievements (Wagner & Ingersoll, 2013). The last stage that follows after change has been made is maintenance where change is consolidated (Prochaska et al., 2003).

To assume responsibility is central to intervention with offenders of intimate partner violence because it increases the chances that a client completes an intervention and reduces the risk to continue the violent behaviors afterwards (Maruna & Mann, 2006). For an offender to complete an intervention, he/she needs to accept that other people will have to assist this change (Echeburúa, 2013). Professionals can confront clients as necessary and still show full acceptance of their feelings if clients are also held accountable for their aggressive behavior and admit that it is harmful (Rosenqvist, 2014). The turning point for a client is when violence is no longer considered a beneficial option (Crane & Eckhardt, 2013). The client more readily assumes that the cost to continue the abuse is bigger than the gains if the possibility to change is connected to an expectation that the client's well-being will improve as a result of ending the abuse (Echeburúa, 2013).

**Motivational interviews**

Motivational interviewing is a method for behavior change and can serve as a catalyst for personal responsibility and a positive engagement in an intervention (Eckhardt, Murphy, Black & Suhr, 2006). The method has been considered to have relevance as a complement to ordinary treatment because cognitive-behavioral therapy and interventions often assume that the client has a willingness to change their behavior (Eckhardt et al., 2008). The motivational interview can assist the intervention with offenders by making clients move through pre-contemplation and contemplation before they commit to action (Lorenzo, 2012).

The basics of motivational interviews are to create a bond between the client and the professional and that the professional reinforces (strengthens/encourages) any intention to change that the client expresses (Miller & Rose, 2009). The intention to change increases when the professional reinforces change talk and, as an effect, talk that maintains status quo is reduced (Miller & Rose, 2009). To maintain status quo is when clients stick to focus on the positive side of the way things are instead of looking towards how they could be (Ortiz, 2014a: p. 15). Change talk has been attempted to be understood by describing it either as a catalyst of new behavior, a commitment that is witnessed by others, or else as an expression of dissonance between how the client wishes that things were and how they really are (Glynn & Moyers, 2010).
Some approaches that the professionals use to support the clients are described by LaBrie, Pedersen, Earleywine and Olsen (2006 p.2) who explain that professionals intervene by “expressing empathy, developing discrepancy, rolling with resistance, and supporting efficacy”. To develop discrepancy is when the professional explores with the client where his/her behaviors and values are incongruent in order to understand why (Herman et al., 2014). If a client expresses a wish to be in a loving relationship, the professional can discuss with the client why violent acts are behaviors that are contrary to this desire (Alexander & Morris, 2008). Professionals intervene with clients in this way by pointing out incoherence and the client experiences anxiety as a result (Ortiz, 2014b). The professional then offers support by trying to awake an interest in how to change and how it may reduce the discomforts of dissonance and eventually lead to a new sense of well-being (Ortiz, 2014b). To roll with resistance means that the professional does not try to change the attitudes or the beliefs of the client but welcomes any expression with empathy in order to provide a safe space for the client to explore thoughts and feelings (Wagner & Ingersoll, 2008). To make change happen, an individual needs skills and willingness to adapt behavior, cognitive strategies and beliefs, goals/desires for the future and emotional resources (Ward & Brown, 2006). The therapist can reinforce a sense of confidence in the client by using past successes as a reference when planning the change process (Wagner & Ingersoll, 2008).

There has been some debate and criticism about the motivational interview. Miller (1994) writes that motivational interviewing may seem like a manipulation and then defend the method saying that the professional seeks to modify the client's feelings but not the behaviors. He clarifies that the professional works cognitively with perspectives and interpretations of situations without pushing the client to act differently. Withers (1995) adds to the debate that all therapeutic intervention can be manipulative if used in a harmful way and that what is sought through the motivational interview is to first create a bond with the client in order to negotiate.

The way that clients' motivation is described in the motivational interview has also been discussed. Clients are often described as motivated through their observable behaviors for example when they attend the sessions and/or reduce the offensive behaviors (McMurran, 2009). Miller & Rose (2009) add to this critique and emphasize that there are unknown individual processes of motivation and that it is important to keep in mind that there has to be an intention to change before a relevant change in behavior can be observed. Miller & Rose (2009) also say that language in and of itself is not enough to make someone change their behavior and that reinforcing talk about change may then not be what ultimately makes people take action. Some researchers also suggest that the principles of motivational interviews are not enough to intervene effectively and that they do not fully explain a successful intervention (Moyers, Manuel & Ernst, 2014). Moyers et al. (2014) describe that the interpersonal skills of the therapist may be more important than to master the tools of motivational interviews and that a remarkably skilled professional may increase the effect of the motivational interview by deliberately breaking the rules: to confront or persuade the client.

The purpose of applying motivational interviews in intimate partner violence intervention is to increase the adherence to treatment and to change an initially hostile attitude of the clients (Lorenzo, 2012). Vigurs, Schucan-Bird, Quy and Gough (2016) reviewed studies in which motivational intervention had been implemented before domestic violence treatment. They found that men in pre-contemplation may benefit from such an
intervention and added that men who already take action could revert back to previous stages of change as a result of motivational intervention (Vigurs et al., 2016). In the intimate partner violence intervention program Contexto (Valencia), a randomized controlled study was done by Lila, Gracia and Catalá-Miñana (2018) to examine the effectiveness of motivational interventions. They found that offenders who had received an individualized motivational plan during a court-mandated psychosocial intervention significantly reduced their violent behavior after the intervention compared to a control-group.

**Intervention with offenders of intimate partner violence**

The purpose of interventions with offenders is to protect victims and teach offenders a new way to treat women (Mills, Barocas & Ariel, 2013; Sharon & Beaulaurier, 2016). Intimate partner violence intervention programs began in the 70s and since then it has become increasingly common to combine psychosocial intervention (re-educate offenders from a feminist approach) with cognitive-behavioral therapy (Eckhardt, et al., 2013). Psychosocial intervention is normally done in groups (Semiatin, Murphy & Elliott, 2013). Group dynamics have been said to be one of the most powerful sources of positive change among offenders (Silvergleid & Mankowski, 2006). In a study by Silvergleid and Mankowski (2006) four group-level themes that were important in an intervention with offenders were identified. Clients saw alternative behaviors modelled in the group, received mentoring, listened to and shared stories, and they received a balanced proportion of support and confrontation.

Central themes in the treatment of offenders can be to increase relationship skills, to teach skills for emotional regulation and to modify distorted thinking (Eckhardt et al., 2013). Emotional regulation means to be in charge of and to successfully handle emotions as appropriate in intense situations (Vera Poseck, 2008). A non-judgmental approach from the professional may be especially helpful in order for the client to learn how to accept difficult feelings (Parvan, 2017). Buchbinder (2018) did a study with male offenders and found that language had played a crucial role for them to regulate their emotions. By using metaphors the offenders were able to contain feelings instead of expressing them physically and potentially harm other people. Metaphors had been useful both to change thoughts and reflect upon feelings so that the clients had learned to regulate inner states and decreased their tendency to externalize them (Buchbinder, 2018). Other successful results at the end of an intervention could be that the client gained a higher level of self-control and of expressing emotions, developed an empathy towards the victim and stayed throughout the whole program (Ferrer-Perez et al., 2016).

To work as a professional and offer intervention for clients who are offenders of intimate partner violence is a double task. The professionals are required by society to respond to and work with the risk factors that may lead to more violent acts (Boira, Carbajosa & Lila, 2014). On the other hand they should meet the therapeutic demand to satisfy the needs of the offenders in order to promote their well-being (Boira et al., 2014). Evaluation of intimate partner violence intervention programs have revealed that because interventions are standardized, they have often failed to adapt to individual needs (Expósito & Ruiz, 2010; Ferrer-Perez et al., 2016). One individual difference is to which degree the client is ready to change and how much or how little the professional has to address resistance in order to prepare him/her for the intervention (Alexander & Morris, 2008). The effectiveness of working with a change process has decreased when individual needs have not been met (Expósito & Ruiz, 2010; Ferrer-Perez et al., 2016).
The effectiveness of intimate partner violence intervention programs has been researched. Arias, Arce and Vilariño (2013) did a meta-analytical review of intimate partner violence intervention programs with a span from 1975 to 2013 and concluded that most intervention programs showed a positive effect without statistical significance. The authors suggested that motivation for change and treatment adherence should be studied separately to explore if these factors may have contributed to the results of the interventions. A study by Morrison et al. (2018) revealed six challenges to intervene with offenders: resistances in the forms of denial, blame and minimization, mental health issues, emotional issues, exposure to violence in childhood, hyper masculinity and social acceptance of partner violence. Social acceptance can increase the behavior of the perpetrator not only when violence is accepted in his/her context but also when the people who are socially related to the victim choose not to intervene (Gracia et al., 2018).

After this look into intervention with offenders of intimate partner violence at a general level, the next section will begin with some general characteristics of intervention with offenders of intimate partner violence in Spain. After that the intervention program Contexto that was the context for this study will be introduced.

The context for the study
Community-based programs for offenders of intimate partner violence have been rising in Spain since their beginning in the mid-to-late 90s (Expósito & Ruiz, 2010; Lila et al., 2010; Lila, Oliver, Galiana & Gracia, 2013). The purpose of these programs has been to change aggressive behaviors and protect victims who are still affected by the violence (Lila et al., 2013). Intimate partner violence intervention programs have combined the view that violence is a learned behavior that can be unlearned (for example by using cognitive-behavioral interventions) with a gender perspective that acknowledges that power dynamics between men and women can play out as violence (Ferrer-Perez et al., 2016). According to Boira et al. (2014) there are three different conditions for psychosocial intervention with offenders of intimate partner violence in Spain: 1) participation is voluntary, 2) a prison sentence is lifted or replaced by an intervention or 3) the offender is already in a penitentiary institution for the crimes committed. The authors stress that it is difficult to achieve voluntary engagement when the intervention is mandatory.

The psychosocial intervention and research program Contexto (Spanish for context) is located at the University of Valencia, specifically in the department of social psychology. In Contexto, research and intervention with offenders is carried out from a platform where psychological knowledge is combined with law and criminology (Lila et al., 2010). The main areas of the program are prevention of intimate partner violence, design of evidence-based treatments and specialized education for professionals (Terreros García, 2017). The Contexto program uses Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective to understand violence and stresses that intimate partner violence is a social issue and that individual and psychological perspectives are not enough to change this violence (Lila et al., 2010). The professionals of Contexto therefore work both with offenders and their networks and stress that the individual offender is a part of different environments that influence both the violent behavior and the possibility to change.

The interventions of Contexto are meant to protect women through the education of men sentenced for intimate partner violence in the way in which they relate to their partners
and their children (Lorenzo, 2012). In the interventions participants are guided to work through a series of steps in order to be accountable for their violent behavior, to gain insight into the causes of this behavior and to actively face the consequences (Lorenzo, 2012). Through the interventions participants develop skills and abilities that strengthen intimate relationships (Lorenzo, 2012)

Contexto also uses motivational interviews to complement the group interventions. The idea when this study was designed was to explore the topic of motivation in intimate partner violence intervention and to make use of the existing competence in Contexto regarding this topic. The men who attend the interventions of Contexto are referred to as participants, and thus from here the word client is replaced until the section of the discussion that describes the limitations and the strengths of this study.

**The aim and research questions for this study**

This study aimed to qualitatively explore the function of using motivational interviews as an individual intervention in a group intervention for male offenders in psychosocial intervention in Contexto (University of Valencia). Although unknown what the tipping point of motivation may be for each participant, when understood as an interactive process professionals can be considered as co-constructors. The professionals were interviewed about the how and why of their approach in the motivational interventions. Also they were encouraged to share any thoughts on how their own motivation and engagement to work with the participant may have been affected by the intervention.

The research questions were as follow:

1. What do professionals perceive to be the effects of doing motivational intervention with offenders (why, how and for whom)?
2. What kind of attitudes or behaviors do the participants display in the intervention when perceived by the professionals as being motivated or having motivation?

**Methodology**

**Procedure**

The first steps while designing the study were to do general observational activities. I watched a series of group sessions from a control room and saw some video recorded motivational interviews. Also I participated in about six hours of training about motivational interviewing that was offered by the program. After those preparations I prepared an interview guide and wrote an information letter about the purpose of the study. Then the respondents were recruited.

**Recruitment of respondents**

In order to be able to answer questions about the motivational interviews and give insight into how they may affect the group intervention the respondents needed both to be trained in motivational interviewing and participate as coordinators of a group of intervention. For the recruitment of the professionals to be interviewed, priority was given to the staff members who did the day-to-day work in the office of Contexto and who were the most involved in the interventions. I visited the office and directly asked staff members if they were interested in participating. Some of the professionals had already been informed about the interview study through the director of the program and others had heard about it from their colleagues. I introduced the purpose of the study and offered to give an information letter (see appendix 2) and encouraged them to take time to decide and to later answer if they wanted to participate.
Some of the professionals confirmed their participation immediately and gave a preliminary time for the interview. Others asked me to wait until they would give a definitive answer, either the next time we would meet in the office or when they had contacted me by mail or phone. Some respondents received the information letter before confirming their participation whereas others said that they preferred not to see the document until the day of the interview. Each respondent was given the opportunity just before the interview to think about his/her consent by reading the written information and by asking questions before signing the document. When the recording had begun the professionals repeated their consent by saying in the microphone that they had given their informed consent for the interview and for its recording.

Apart from the staff members of Contexto, there are also a number of professionals who are volunteers and thus external to the program. The volunteering professionals were recruited by the sub-director of Contexto who contacted them and gave them basic information about the interview (that a student was doing an investigation about the motivational interview for a thesis project). The phone numbers of these volunteering professionals were passed to me by cell phone and I contacted them to ask about their participation by calling and/or sending a text message. These respondents did not receive an information letter before participation. One of them specifically said no to see the letter beforehand and the other one had already confirmed to the sub-director to meet me in the office the following day. The written information was thus given to these respondents just before beginning the interview.

The sample
The respondents were six psychologists and one research employee (this respondent had previously done an internship in the Contexto program). Among the respondents there were six women and one man. This gender division is representative of the field of intimate partner violence intervention in Spain. Of the five staff members four were licensed psychologists. Also there were two volunteering psychologists external to the program who were interviewed. Together the respondents came from different backgrounds: research in topics related to gender violence both on graduate and undergraduate level, intervention with offenders of gender violence, legal psychology, intervention with juvenile offenders and individual and family therapy.

The interviews
The seven respondents were interviewed individually for one hour. The interviews were semi-structured and followed an interview guide where questions were sequenced from general descriptions of what it is to work with motivational interviews to more personal concerns such as own opinions, motivations or doubts while working (see appendix 1). The questions were reviewed by the host tutor before the interviews were done. The conversations were recorded on audio to make possible a transcription of the material.

Data analysis
After the semi-structured interviews had been done each sound file was transcribed following instructions for orthographic (spoken words and sounds) audio transcription (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Every transcribed interview was then translated from Spanish to English. The first round of complete coding was made from the English version of the texts by collecting any relevant data from each interview in a computer document. When the first round of coding was complete all the coded data was collected in a new document
with every row distinctly coded to the particular interview in order to trace data back to each interview. In the second round of coding different themes were tried by associating ideas and concepts for different data. This resulted in a new document with possible themes, thus adding a category to every data initially coded. In the new document the data was organized into these different themes, some data were coded into several categories whereas other did not deem relevant to answer the research questions. After these candidate themes had been identified, work with the result section started, and during this writing process the most salient themes were refined.

Ethics
The program granted access to participant materials for the preparation of the study by asking me to sign an agreement of confidentiality. The purpose of the agreement was to protect the integrity of participants while taking part of intervention activities (live and/or recorded) as observation and pre-data collection. The participants who attend the interventions of Contexto are informed that the sessions in which they participate, individual or in groups, can be filmed for educational purposes. For this study no additional informed consent from participants was gathered. The reason was that the study did not have a participant focus and did not interfere with the standards of confidentiality.

Informed consent for the interview was gathered by giving the professionals time to decide whether to participate and to confirm it back to me. Officially the consent consisted of signing the document about the purpose and the ethics of the interview and its recording and by giving oral consent that was recorded on tape. The recordings from the interviews were transcribed in the office in order to protect the materials. The tape recorder was kept in a drawer in a separate office of Contexto. The keys to the office were provided by the staff members of Contexto or by the faculty administration.

All elements of private data (names of either professionals or participants, cities or distinct details etcetera) that could have been traced back to a person or a single interview was excluded and did not appear neither in the transcription nor in the thesis work. The interview files were deleted from the recorder after the transcription of the interviews.

The respondents were reminded that their participation was voluntary and that they could be cancelled without question or else adapted to any preferences to not have to talk about certain topics. To interview professionals in their own working environment is a less vulnerable interview situation compared to that of interviewing participants. For the realization of this research neither the faculty of psychology of the University of Valencia nor the faculty of psychology of Stockholm University considered it necessary to apply for any additional permission from an ethical committee.

Results
In this section the word respondent refers to the professionals that were interviewed for this study. Participants are the men who attend the intervention. Professionals are the psychologists who work in the intervention as described by the respondents when they talk about themselves and/or their colleagues: either how they work in the intervention or refer to how professionals in intimate partner violence interventions apply the motivational interviews.

The thematic analysis resulted in four themes:
Theme 1: Assume responsibility
Theme 2: Motivation - a reason to change and to set a goal
Theme 3: Strategies to motivate
Theme 4: A bond

Themes one and two are time-bound because the participant's motivation to make a significant change to reduce violent behavior depended on his assumption of responsibility. The professionals therefore needed to have begun a process with the participant so that he would have a willingness to assume that he had been responsible for the violent crimes. ‘Strategies to motivate’ and ‘a bond’ are circular. The professionals used motivational strategies from the beginning of the interviews and adapted them throughout the intervention to the participant's needs in order to facilitate a goal of his and to make sure that they were working towards the aim of the intervention. The bond was a primary objective of the motivational interview and was therefore in focus already from the first interview. In this analysis ‘the bond’ emerged as the last theme because the respondents expressed that although the bond had been planted in the beginning it had emerged gradually over time.

The respondents said that their routine was to do three motivational interviews with participants before the group intervention started. In those interviews, the focus was to establish a bond, to work on the participant's willingness to assume responsibility and to set a goal. In the middle of the group intervention there was a fourth interview to see how the participant was doing in the intervention and to see if the goal needed to be changed. At the end of the intervention there was a fifth interview where the participant received a bit of feedback on his progress. In the last interview there was also the purpose to make the participant stay in touch with the program after the intervention in order to prevent relapse. Other relevant information about the intervention that emerged was that the participants could have a maximum two-year prison sentence for the violent crimes to participate in the intervention as a replacement for a prison sentence. Sometimes participants who only had one sentence were allowed in the intervention despite having a sentence longer than two years.

Theme 1: Assume responsibility
The respondents expressed that offenders of violence did not usually reflect upon their actions or see the negative consequences as a result of their actions. Therefore as professionals they stressed that in order to achieve this awareness with participants, they had used a general approach of the motivational interview: to focus on acts and their consequences without speaking about morality. Instead of pointing out to a participant that his behavior had been bad, the professionals instead asked the participant what he could have done differently. The professionals worked to increase the participants' willingness to take ownership over their actions by stressing responsibility over guilt. One respondent defined that responsibility implies a capacity to take action, whereas guilt often paralyzes people. In the words of this respondent it was about: "…to look for that for the person to say okay well yes, well this part I am the responsible for and since I am responsible I am the one who can change this." (Respondent 4)

The professionals tried to evoke motivation in the participant by inviting him to imagine new possibilities. The participant was asked to imagine that the crimes that had brought him to the intervention had never happened. To enter into a space where the possibility to change had appeared sparked a curiosity in the participant about how that change may
happen for real. This motivation by imagination or "miracle questions" as they were called, was linked to assumption of responsibility. When the participant imagined a scenario where he would not have been paying the consequences of having used violence (separation from partner, not seeing kids as often as before, participation in intervention), he also came to connect those consequences with his violent behaviors.

By connecting the possibility to be responsible with the chance of making positive changes in their lives, participants had the chance to connect assuming what they needed to change to make up for their crimes with the chance to arrive to a better quality of life. If a participant imagined a "miracle" where his criminal past had been wiped out, he also had to make the connection that the gap between where he was at and what he would have wished for was his responsibility. Many participants arrived to the intervention thinking that they had been the victims of an unfair legal system such as the law of gender violence.

"(..) They don't have a real motivation to change that is to say they...yes they have a positive attitude of collaboration but they don't take that step to be motivated to change then when really that step of positive attitude to motivation to change has to do with the.. assume responsibilities but also it has to do with setting goals with being able to set goals because there are times that that participants come that yes they are: they collaborate they assume things but they say "I've already achieved everything I'm doing perfectly already" then their attitude is positive of dialogue and more but they don't have a real motivation for it to be. Sometimes it comes through but it's not a real motivation that they see as necessary in their life." (Respondent 3)

**Theme 2: Motivation - a reason to change and to set a goal**

*A reason to change*

A sign of a sincere intention to change was that the participants began to question themselves on their choices, beliefs and actions and that they put themselves as individuals at the center of where change needed to happen. The respondents expressed that the professionals needed to redirect the focus back to the participant because he often blamed the partner or the feminist movement for his situation. Some participants grew to assume more responsibility when they listened to other participants' stories. It sometimes happened that when a participant heard others talk about the same things that he needed to change, he dropped his guard and said that that which the participant who was a step ahead of him had said was true for him as well. For this reason, professionals also tried to make use of those participants who were a bit ahead of the others in the intervention. They intended to boost the already motivated participants hoping that the more reluctant would "get on board". A participant could have chosen to participate because the alternative to just sit by the others bored him. Others had chosen to show up just to "warm the chair" which is not to speak or not to show an initiative to participate. The group atmosphere sometimes fostered a curiosity and a support among participants that the professionals tried to increase. One of the respondents described that in the group moods were contagious:

'Like in all groups there are people who are more leaders or who influence more, that is to say, every person in a group adds things and there are people who influence
more. Then when there is a person who is, or several people who are, motivated, they can generally motivate the other people the same way that the other way around, right. Perhaps you go one day to the sessions, right, that we are 13 or 12 or. Two people are feeling super bad, many times that is contagious so that now we are all feeling bad, right?" (Respondent 5)

The respondents explained that the participants had different levels of motivation when they began to attend the program. Some participants had not been ordered by court but were volunteers who had found the program by using google. These participants could already have had a personal motivation to change their behaviors, for example to improve close relationships. Some of the sentenced participants showed an initial resistance that did not allow to work with an intention to change until they had shown some belief that to come to the intervention would not be harmful in any way. In those moments where the participants showed especially high resistance, the professionals answered by giving a bit more of individual attention to them. For example they asked a participant to show up a bit before the session or to stay for a couple of minutes and tried to find out what the participant was going through. They also dealt with resistance by working to reinforce the participant's attendance by thanking him for coming, by pointing out that he was punctual or in any other way that would improve the possibility that he would give the program a try. The participants typically expressed a lack of trust by saying that "I don't want to stop being who I am" and "I don't want you to change me". The professional sometimes had to respond by showing enough trust that the intervention would be of use for the participant until he accepted to attend. With time, the participant would have the chance to discover positive results of having chosen to participate. The reply to the participant's hesitance could be as one respondent expressed:

"We don't have an eraser here to delete anybody and to make a new identity, no, but if there are things that you don't like about yourself and you have made changes in your life in other moments like to quit smoking or to stop doing drugs: why will you not be able to change this thing about you that you don't like?" (Respondent 7)

The respondents had different ways to describe how participants became motivated. One of the respondents preferred not to think in terms of motivating the participants but instead talked about creating an atmosphere and a zone of comfort from which to begin to reflect. The focus was expressed as making the participant feel heard and understood and that motivation could surge as a by-effect of taking safe steps in a direction towards personal and relational improvement. Another respondent said that motivation was discussed with participants by laying out distinct questions: "do I want to change? Are there things to change? What can I change? Which situations or traits of mine would I want to manage differently?" Another possibility was that the professional chose an exploratory approach to get to know the participant and find out his plans or wishes for his life as well as his expectations for the intervention. One respondent expressed that the participants needed to hear from the professionals that their unwillingness was accepted and that their version of the violent situations had been understood. This respondent expressed that the way to go about receiving the participant was to express an agreement to anything that the participant may have expressed that could be considered acceptable: "I understand that you don't want to", "I understand that it must have been difficult", "what you are saying is interesting". Gradually the professional began to add questions and reflections to the participant's version in order to broaden his perspectives: "What were you feeling in that moment? Can you think of other ways to deal with the same situation? Other people may
The respondents expressed that intrinsic motivation was generally to prefer over extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation in the context where these professionals worked referred to that a participant had a personal motive to change and that the motive was expressed as a realistic and meaningful goal. Intrinsic motivation could also exist as a combination of inner and outer reasons to change. One respondent considered that an external motivation, such as the obligation to participate in the intervention, could sustain the participant until he had found his own personal motive to change. The same respondent further expressed that an external motivation could also protect a more fragile inner motivation, especially in challenging moments of the change process. The participants' motivation to change was said to usually include other people. Children and partners' well-being could be a source of motivation that was part inner and part social. One respondent brought up an example of a participant who wanted to be a better dad:

"(...) his principal motivation was his daughter he didn't, he didn't want like: he had a big regret for what had happened right, and he wanted to be a good father and he wanted to be a person who could be a role model, right. And he left alcohol altogether even to his friends he said "If you love me..." when they went out and they said "Have a beer, come on, one is no big deal" like the typical thing to say and he said "If you love me you will buy me a pine-apple juice", right? And I point this out because it is his, he already had a lot of motivation right. What we did was to increase it, to impulse it, and give him more strategies in that direction." (Respondent 1)

As one respondent expressed the psychologists had a lot of resources at hand to assist change if the participant had the slightest intention to go in that direction. One of the respondents compared the participant becoming motivated to a piece of wood that could catch fire if there would be someone around to add fuel to it and set it on fire. Another respondent expressed with a pinch of irony that not to have motivation maybe was a lesson that participants had to learn. She said that by coming to understand motivation as something that comes normally when a person wants to do something, participants were reminded to face the reality of the circumstances that had brought them to the intervention.

Motivated participants generally showed a more active attitude by asking other members of the group how they had done in order to change things in their life. There were also times when participants would question with curiosity why another member of the group had chosen to get back together with a partner who had reported him. A lack of motivation was generally reflected in moments where participants only spoke well of themselves as though assuming that there was nothing that could have been worked upon. That lack of motivation was explained by one respondent who compared the unmotivated participants with the motivated ones. The motivated participants were those who asked for help and were willing to show vulnerability. When the participants began to give examples from their own lives or to make use of the topics from the intervention in a personal way that was thought to reflect a willingness to change. On the other hand, participants without an intention to change had set unrealistic goals or goals that did not have to do with the purpose of the intervention (they had instead expressed an intention to do more sports etcetera).

Change in behavior was observed in the group intervention at times such as when
participants began to respect the turn of talking, to approach themselves and others in a calmer way and to assume an attitude that they could change. Up to that point some of the participants had interrupted sessions by questioning professionals on everything or had disturbed other participants who had wanted to work. A sign that a participant was changing was that he had begun to focus his attention on his own attendance and had shown more interest to give a sincere opinion. A resistant participant sat passively beside other participants and showed a polite but disinterested attitude.

Regarding influences on motivation, some of the respondents expressed that the motivational interview had directly affected their own motivation to work with participants so that the motivational interview had sparked a motivation to reach objectives with the participant and a curiosity to see how far they could go together. It was also revealed that the interviews sometimes rather than to motivate had given the professionals a relief from the tensions that working with resistant participants had produced so that energy had gone up again. To reach the most resistant participant was also something that could be motivating as a challenge and there were moments were professionals could feel an "itch" to keep working after the participant had assumed an action of his.

To set a goal
One step of the interview that was described by all the respondents was the importance of setting a goal. Before the group intervention had started participants had been supported to formulate a reason for which they would like to participate actively in the intervention. For some it had been to better handle their emotions such as anger when interacting with others. For others it had been to try to make use of the intervention despite not wanting to participate. Goals had to be expressed positively and as an intention to improve a habit, a behavior or a characteristic. It was not allowed to formulate a goal that only aimed to avoid bad consequences even though the initial motivation to participate had sometimes been explicitly not to have to go to prison. When the participant had chosen a goal the professional added questions to it such as: "how would you notice the feeling of rage?" in order for the participant to start looking for clues. In the group sessions the professionals especially stressed the examples that would serve the participant the most so that he would bring the content of the session to his own life and work towards his goal. To make his situation reflected in examples or to give clues about how to take upon a change were concrete ways that professionals fed the participant's motivation. Another way that the participant's goal was reinforced was that he was encouraged to make it visible. The participant was asked to put the goal on a fridge where he could see it every single day. He also had to tell the goal to a companion external to the program so that he would have someone to turn to when risk to relapse had grown strong. Eventually that external person would be asked to reflect back to the participant the visible changes that had been observed at the end of the intervention.

The professionals revised the goal during the intervention to make sure that it was consistent and that it was challenging enough without being overly ambitious. One possible pitfall of having a too ambitious goal could otherwise have been not to reach it and lose faith in the possibility to succeed. The professionals also reminded the participants that change happens in tiny steps and that it takes time. The participants' impatience to get over with the intervention could otherwise have impeded change that could have lasted past the intervention. One way that the professionals tried to make real change possible by making sure that the steps to reach a goal were done in a logical way.
They also prioritized to celebrate visible changes over sticking to an ambitious goal. The steps that the participants took were celebrated even when the results had not been as big as intended. One respondent added that there was also a tendency that the individual goal lost priority among other activities in the group intervention so that in the end it may not have been a focus.

**Theme 3: Strategies to motivate**

**Reinforcement**
The participants could have gone through the program with a more passive motivation in order to complete a sentence and later on be free to go on with life. One strategy that the professionals used for these participants was to reinforce them to stay on a legal path by asking the participants: "And how do you feel? How is your life different now that you are no longer committing crimes?". In that way participants could have arrived to the conclusion that they had been better off since they had begun to live by the law and that it would maybe prove convenient to stay on that path. One respondent also said that the participants had usually not recognized their own improvements and that a basic way to reinforce those changes was to make them aware of the positive steps they had taken. Another way that professionals reinforced participants was to point out to them their positive qualities such as capability to make good reflections. The more aware participants were of their abilities the better they tended to use them in order to find constructive solutions to solve problems. Any positive change that the participant had done previously in his life was also amplified. Professionals asked the participant to tell what and how he had done to change and chances were that the same strategies could be of use again. The participant was supported to gain trust in his ability to achieve by also talking about the feelings that had come up in the change process and by helping the participant to define what had been the turning point when he had succeeded to change.

**Empathy and awareness of feelings**
The respondents talked about basic empathy and mirroring of feelings taken from a motivational interview especially adapted to the context of offenders. One of the respondents expressed that commonly offenders are not aware of their own emotions or lack the habit to communicate them with others. A common therapeutic technique was to mirror feelings as they were expressed by the participants. An example was given that a professional supported participants in their exploration of feelings. When the participant expressed a feeling the professional increased the focus there. The professional communicated back to the participant that his feeling had been heard and that it had been perceived by others. The participant was also asked why he may have felt like that and the professional helped him to link it back to another moment when the feeling had been generated. In that way the participant began to learn that feelings did not just come out of nowhere but that they communicated what went on inside. The participants thus gradually learned that they could become aware of and handle their own feelings.

**Reflection**
Several respondents pointed out reflection as an especially important tool to use with participants. Reflection supported the purpose to prevent violent behavior by making it possible to recognize patterns such as the tendency to stay in a relationship despite feeling unhappy. Another relevant issue that was said to be resolved with reflection was to go too fast in life and not stop to reflect upon personal choices and later end up in unexpected situations without understanding how things had happened. One example of how
reflection was used so that participants would become aware was the following:

"(...) When you manage to make them move to a more flexible position then I see him more motivated already like I see him like already a tiny step fur-further compared to for example what would be the typical user who arrives and who is very very rigid, very rigid, and in a discourse of 'I am here because my wife reported on me and but that is a lie, I've always had a brilliant intimate relationship. I don't know what happened'. And when you try and you invite him to make some reflection about that maybe his intimate relationship wasn't going as well as he thought they close and 'no that no no no that was an invention of hers, I don't know where she got that from' and that they are not able even to question themselves. Of course well when they begin to question themselves to ask about what happened I see them more motivated already then I see them like that's where we start, like from there you can enter." (Respondent 2)

**Theme 4: A bond**
Several of the respondents expressed that the groundwork of motivational interview had worked as a buffer during the intervention. According to some respondents, to have a bond allowed that any mistakes made by a professional could be repaired because the professional felt more confident to ask a participant directly if he had been offended by something that the professional had said. One respondent added that there were also times when the professionals were not able to reach through to a participant and that sometimes those miscommunications lead to participants choosing to leave the program before-hand.

A positive effect that the motivational interview had generated for the professionals in their work had otherwise been the reassurance that progress was happening. With some participants it had seemed like there was no way to assist them to take a step. One respondent expressed that there had sometimes been a bit of a surprise when participants had shown up with a home assignment that had been given in an interview because some of them had really worked to look into themselves. Those moments were thought to be an indicator that the work to motivate had produced results and allowed the professional to breathe out for a moment. Another respondent shared that she had almost lost faith in her work when a participant had convinced her to think that there was no way to make an old person change. Later she had found that they may have reached him after all because the participant completed the intervention and he had shown emotion by crying when he had said goodbye to the group.

The better the contact between the participants and the professionals, the more direct confrontation the participant was willing to accept from the professional. That was explained by the respondent with different phases of assuming responsibility. In the motivational interviews the professionals had rather expected that the participant would not assume anything and had therefore reinforced any intention of his to stay in the intervention. When the participant had agreed to participate he had later been asked to write his own version of the crimes as though he had been a judge and read it out loud to the group. One respondent explained that some participants who had been unwilling to admit to their responsibility had still wanted to participate in those assignments, perhaps only to give their own version of what had happened or to say that the sentence had been based on a lie. However, as the same respondent later explained, between the participant and the professional trust had normally grown to a point where the professional had been allowed to directly call the participant on his behavior. She gave an example and said that
with time she usually got to ask if the participant had in fact been the one who had made himself and everyone around him unhappy without him receiving that as an attack.

However, to let the working relationship account for achieving a motivation was also considered to be insufficient. One of the respondents expressed that if the participant had shown 100% resistance and no interest to change, there would have been no way to make him change. What the professional could however do was to plant a seed of doubt by presenting examples of consequences of violent behavior and by giving compelling alternatives to change. The participant needed to be ready to take the necessary steps to change and the therapist had to have patience in the process.

Spontaneous opinions that were expressed by the respondents were that the intervention may have turned into a war without the motivational interview and that to try to make a participant assume responsibility in front of others without having worked with him individually would have been a disaster. Some of the respondents had the experience of working in the interventions both with and without the motivational interview. They said that the changes that had happened in the intervention had been more potent when the work had been backed up by motivational intervention. Not to have worked with the motivational interview could have been compensated by applying more strategies in the group, however with an increased risk that the therapist would have been excluded from the group dynamic. One respondent expressed explicitly that the relationship that had been created in the motivational interview had later translated into results in the intervention. She gave an example saying that the participants who had received a motivational intervention later volunteered to participate in follow-ups after the completion of the program. Her experience was that without the bond that was generated in the motivational interviews participants would not answer a call from a professional.

One effect that was expressed as a result of having an individual bond was that the atmosphere in the group was easier because the participants' initial hostility towards the professionals had dropped. One respondent pointed out that given that there was a majority of female professionals doing group intervention with aggressive men it had been easier to bond individually with the participants before entering the group. This statement was illustrated with an example where the respondent explained that male participants together had challenged the professionals a lot more:

"Now I can't imagine myself without the motivational interview. I wouldn't know, I couldn't give up on the interview. Well, it would be, you would need to manage a lot a lot - many group strategies, right, to achieve that those interventions would go well and it would be hard, harder for me as a professional, more resistance, that is. It would suppose much more of a fight for me in the group because you have to create a bond and a climate like much more quickly in a group and a lot of people arrive and you have to set boundaries. Sometimes, especially in a in a population, the men now if it is a feminine figure who sets boundaries they confuse authority with authoritarianism, right? So then they put you in places where it is difficult to bond with him like at the same time you have to set that limit, right?" (Respondent 1)

There were also other ways that the respondents considered the motivational interview as a support for themselves as professionals. The respondents shared that listening to stories of violence had sometimes made them experience rejection, anger, fear, sadness and/or
frustration. Before doing a motivational interview there had sometimes been moments of nervousness or doubt and the professional had sometimes thought about different possible scenarios including the possibility of an argument. The respondents expressed that it had become a lot easier to face the challenges to work with offenders as soon as the motivational interview had provided them with many new tools to choose from. One of the respondents said that to do intervention with resistant participants had seemed almost contrary to what working as a psychologist is usually about. To have had to watch over participants in order for the session not to run out of control had seemed like to having had to behave more like an authoritarian than a psychologist. Another respondent expressed that to work in the group sessions had already seemed similar to being like a teacher in front of a class rather than a psychologist doing intervention. As one respondent pointed out, normally when people seek a psychologist they have already assumed that they have a problem, whereas offenders often refuse to see themselves in that position. To some respondents having the motivational interview as a clear structure for how to bond and to deal with resistance relaxed the tensions and made it easier to deal with any feeling that they had towards the participants. One respondent also expressed that the motivational interviews were an opportunity to bond with the client but said that the protocol-like structure of the interview sometimes seemed contrary to having an interactive and emotional conversation.

Generally the respondents expressed very positive experiences of their work with motivational interviews as a complement to the group intervention. They also admitted that the motivational interviews had been very exhausting emotionally and that the quality of the interviews may decrease by a time-pressure to interview a whole group of participants three times each before beginning a group intervention. Sometimes it had not been until further along in the intervention that they had enjoyed the results of the initial motivational interviews. The motivational interview had been helpful because it had provided clues about how to approach the participant in the group and was therefore considered a base for the work in the intervention:

"Many times when we had finished the group with (names a colleague) we talked about if 'but do you remember that in the interview there was this that he had said?' and I think that like that gave okay the next time we will try it like this like to from the interviews, of course there is motivation of ours to work with them, but there are also ideas that we can use to understand more what is most important for this man to later use those arguments. I think that of course it is like before doing a house to prepare well the floor, right?" (Respondent 6)

Discussion

The results

This study aimed to qualitatively explore the function of using motivational interviews as an individual intervention in a group intervention for male offenders of intimate partner violence in the psychosocial intervention program Contexto (University of Valencia). The research questions were what professionals perceive to be the effects of doing motivational intervention with offenders (why, how and for whom) and what kind of attitudes or behaviors participants display in the intervention when the professionals perceived them as being motivated or having motivation.

Regarding the first research question, the interviews revealed that the respondents found
the motivational interview helpful both to offer as a resource for the participants and as support for themselves in order to face the challenges of their work with the participants. The theme 'bond' explained that the structure of the interview had provided the professionals both with tools to bond with participants and to address the participants' resistance in an effective way. The same theme also touched upon why the interviews made a difference. The respondents expressed that when participants felt understood and accepted they also showed an increased willingness to receive the intervention. The professionals used the interviews as a reference for how to approach the participants as individuals in the group intervention.

Why the motivational interview is used and can be successful with offenders of intimate partner violence was made visible in the theme 'assume responsibility'. The respondents explained that because participants have a lack of reflection and a tendency to not take ownership over their actions they questioned the point of the intervention and the need for them to change. Because of the risk that participants would choose not to begin to attend the intervention, the professionals showed understanding when participants refused to admit to violent behaviors and their need to change. The explanation for these approaches was that resistance or judgement from the professionals would further have increased the participant's reluctance to participate. In the motivational interviews the professionals had instead offered the participant a safe space in which to talk openly about personal experiences, including what had happened the day of the report, and receive questions and feedback from the professionals without judgement.

The theme 'strategies to motivate' revealed how the motivational interviews made a difference for the participants. It was shown that the professionals considered that through using different strategies they could feed the participants' motivation and provide them with adequate tools to make lasting changes. The participants were made more aware of their positive qualities in order to find a belief that they had the necessary resources to change and that they could make use of previous successes. The professionals reassured the participants when they were going in a direction towards reaching their goal and monitored where participants were going back and forth between considering a change and taking constructive steps. Some of the strategies provided in the motivational interviews were used to empower participants to see themselves as the source of their own actions. Strategies such as reflection and awareness of feelings connected the choices that participants had made with the consequences those choices had had in their life.

Regarding research question number two, the respondents considered that the signs of a more genuine motivation to change were an active attitude of "I can change" together with a willingness to show vulnerability. The participants who had seemed to be genuinely motivated according to the respondents had questioned themselves and asked for advice. Generally the respondent also considered that participants had found a personal motive to change when they were able to set a meaningful goal that reflected their intention. However, the steps that the participants took in the intervention had to be coherent with the goal, because there were some participants who had expressed an intention to change but who had chosen ways to reach their goal that had been contrary to its purpose. The respondents considered that the participants' motivation was both extrinsic and intrinsic.

Limitations and strengths of this study
One limitation of this study was that due to time aspects it was not possible to evaluate during the research process if the chosen methods were pointing in the direction toward...
answering the research questions. There may have been ways to complement and verify the data collection in other ways to collect all the relevant data. For example, questionnaires could have been sent out to an extended network of professionals with experience of the motivational interviews in order to draw data from a larger sample and target common themes emerging from questionnaires in interviews. It is possible that the open interview form did not touch upon themes that could counteract assumptions about motivational interviewing so as to add a dimension of evaluation of the method. The results may therefore say more about the workability of the motivational interviews as perceived by the respondents regarding to make work with clients easier than about the potential and the pitfalls of the method to actually produce different results in the intervention as a whole. Another important limitation of how the study was done is the reliability of the interviews, given that there was no revision by another person in order to verify the correct transcription of the interview data.

Some strengths of this study were that it gave an insight into and a description of important steps of the motivational process and examples of how it may be shaped by interactions between the participants and the professionals and also between participants as members of a group intervention.

**The results compared to previous research**

The examples provided in the interviews were largely consistent with the existing literature about motivational interventions with offenders. It had been established in the literature about intimate partner violence interventions that a general challenge when intervening with offenders is how to deal with their lack of motivation (Daly & Pelowski, 2000). Also it had been found that offenders need to go through a process of assuming responsibility and choose the intervention in parallel with finding a personally meaningful reason to change (Begun, et al., 2001; Maruna & Mann, 2006). In this study the respondents linked assumption of responsibility to motivation explaining that change and motivation to change can only be real if the client considers him/herself as the source of his/her own actions.

The motivational interview has proven successful to increase adherence to treatment (Lorenzo, 2012). The clients that were referred to by the respondents in this study had shown more commitment to the program when they had experienced positive effects in their life as a result of their participation. The respondents considered that in order for the clients to discover those benefits, the motivational interview had been necessary for these clients to have given the intervention a chance.

Although the professionals have tools to influence clients' motivation, there are factors such as group dynamics and clients' social context that influence if and how change happens (Lila et al., 2010; Silvergleid & Mankowski, 2006). The respondents gave some examples of that the offender's social network may have impeded the opportunity to change (such as peer pressure to behave in old ways. Group dynamics were said to influence clients' engagement in the intervention so that high or low participation was in part explained by peer pressure. Sometimes the dynamics were helpful for the purpose of the intervention, such as when clients had asked each other for advice or took steps together towards assuming their actions.

Particular of this study was that the respondents gave examples of a range of feelings that they felt had towards the clients. The work together had supposed for the professionals
states of curiosity and anticipation towards working with the clients, but there had also been moments of doubt and tiredness. Sometimes the professionals had felt negative feelings such as frustration, sadness, fear or anger towards the clients. The structure and the tools provided by the motivational interviews had helped the professionals to deal with these intense feelings. One surprising finding in the results was that the motivational interviews were referred to both as essential to the work in the intervention and also an admittedly tiring task that the professionals faced in the intervention process.

**Methodological discussion**

**Data collection**

Braun & Clarke (2013) present a division of research questions into several categories in order to make it possible to choose a suitable method for data collection and data analysis. The research questions of this study could fit into several categories: professionals' experience of working with motivational interviews, their understandings of whether relevant or not and practices (how the motivational interview is carried out). Interviews as a method for data collection were recommended for all these categories. According to Kvale (2009) interviews are conversations that collect knowledge through having a purpose and a distinct structure. During the elaboration of the interview guide that shaped the interview for this study and during the interviews, some feedback was given that suggested that the questions had seemed many or that maybe it would have been easier to answer the questions in written. The data collection was carried out using a single method and thus did not account for the possibility that some respondents may have preferred a written disclosure over an interview. To be interviewed could be an uncomfortable situation and there is also a risk for social desirability, so that a respondent may answer what could seem more interesting to the interviewer or to important stakeholders in the organization.

**Data analysis**

According to Braun & Clarke (2013) there is no such thing as having exact strategies when it comes to analysis of qualitative data and that what is important is to follow the steps outlined to each research method to increase the quality of the analysis. I followed the steps set out by Braun & Clarke (2013) for thematic analysis from coding of the data to analysis and writing up. During this process there was a discussion with the home tutor about dedicating enough time to each step and about the relevance of the themes as I began to write up the analysis.

Braun & Clarke (2008) write that what defines a thematic analysis is that in thematic analysis themes are searched for in the entire set of data to find general patterns and/or themes. Thematic analysis was chosen for this research because it is a method that is recommended as flexible and easy to learn. The thematic analysis also fit with the categories of Braun & Clarke (2013) (experiences, understandings and practices). When using an inductive thematic analysis, themes have to be named that are based on the data at hand (Braun & Clarke, 2008). Although this was the approach for this study, the chosen themes showed a close resemblance to some concepts that are central to the theory behind motivational interviews: motivation, assumption of responsibility, a bond and strategies to motivate. This could be interpreted in several ways. There was possibly more of a mix between an inductive and a deductive (research-driven) thematic-analysis, which Braun & Clarke (2008) suggest is normally the case. However, it could also be reflective of the structure of the interview. Beginning with the broader questions the respondents first
talked about the motivational interview as they had learned about it theoretically and then how it was used in their work. It was thus not until after the general questions had been covered that the respondents began to talk about their personal experiences. This may have led to an over-representation of answers that were similar to the already existing concepts of motivational interviews.

Validity
Because there are no objective measures to qualitative research, it is central to the research process to test own assumptions and be aware of biases (Kvale, 2009). To the reader it may be valuable to know how I came to write a thesis about intervention with offenders of intimate partner violence. During a period where I had contacted different teachers at my home university in Stockholm it had become clear that very few of the teachers were familiar with the term community psychology. One teacher in Stockholm said that a course in community psychology had just been launched as part of the master program in psychology under the name of society and societal analysis, where psychological health would be linked not only to intraindividual issues but to issues in society at large (access to welfare, political systems etcetera). Later I went on an exchange where I studied work and organizational psychology at the University of Valencia. At the faculty I saw posters about Contexto and learned that it was a community intervention program where male offenders receive intervention in order to end intimate partner violence.

During my time in the faculty I contacted with Professor Marisol Lila of the social psychology department who is the founder of the Contexto program. During my search for professors with knowledge about community psychology in Stockholm, Marisol's professional profile had appeared among professors with knowledge in the field. To write a thesis about intervention with offenders of intimate violence came out of a wish to learn about the Contexto program because it had still seemed unclear to me how community psychology was implemented in practice.

One may ask if my interest to know more about community intervention became a personal bias that motivated me to exclude clinical topics such as attachment history, inner conflicts and the ability to infer others' states of mind (mentalization) as reasons that people may use violence. Morrison et al. (2018) had found that mental health issues, emotional issues and childhood trauma are core challenges to intervene with offenders. The ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) adds a dimension of interactions between multiple levels to explain intimate partner violence. Terry (2014) expresses for example that health care interventions need to happen on all levels (from macro to micro) to have an effect. Thus to narrow down the theory on individual issues would possibly not create an understanding of how it is that intimate partner violence has the proportions of a public health issue on a global scale. However, to highlight the individual perspective can also enhance some important criticisms of intervention programs, such as the failure to adapt to individual needs. However, it was also made clear during the work with this thesis that the interventions in Contexto are not therapeutic but interventions that are part of a sentence. At one point I asked if a participant could really be helped if there was an underlying issue of attachment. One of the psychologists in the program then answered that it had been a struggle to get support to carry out any intervention at all regardless of the background of a participant and that became the end of a discussion about issues of adapting to individual needs.

Another bias to declare is that I am a feminist. In order to keep this position separate
from the research work I intended to let previous research guide my way into a knowledge about the field of intervention with offenders. In this process I tried to become aware of any strong personal reactions and separate them from the task. Apart from questioning my assumptions in the learning process I took chances to discuss my subjective impressions with others to have another opinion and reduce the risk that personal opinions could become intertwined with the literature review or the interviews and the analysis.

Because the interviews were carried out in Spanish, there was a possibility of a language barrier. I have some experience in translation and mediation between Spanish and Swedish from academic courses and as an intern doing translation where I also had practiced some interviewing in Spanish. In order to accurately capture the meanings of the interviews in this study, I took the time to clarify any doubts about the meaning of certain expressions in the conversations or about the assumptions inherent to the method. For example, a respondent referred to participants being "en sus trece", literally, "in his thirteen" and I asked her to clarify what that meant. She said that the meaning of the expression was to have a very firm idea of how something is and to defend one's position. The respondent used the expression to say that she had been surprised by some participants when they had suddenly shown an initiative to change. When necessary I asked for more examples of the same topic and/or asked the professionals to verify if I had interpreted what had been said correctly.

Some occasions to test assumptions were given when the respondents questioned the relevance of some questions. For example one respondent made a comment about the question that sought to answer if the motivational interview could affect the professional's motivation to work with the client. The respondent clarified that she could not have worked as a professional in this field if her motivation had been determined by a certain method of work or a certain attitude of the client's. There may have been an implicit assumption in the question that a working relationship would have as an effect that the feelings of the clients and those of the professionals would influence each other. This respondent challenged that assumption by saying that it may not always be that important to be on good terms with the client in order to be able to work together. She had also expressed that since she had begun to work in the intervention she had become gradually more in favor of a therapeutic alliance when it had become clear to her that the participants had been afraid of being judged. There was also a moment in which she expressed that she had felt an "itch" to keep working with a participant whenever he had admitted to an action of his.

My position as a female student from another country was maybe an advantage in part of the interview process. To answer some questions about a method of work may not have seemed such a sensitive subject in an office where part of the work is to offer courses to students. A disadvantage on the other hand could have been to assume a report based on perceived similarity in terms of sharing field of interest (psychology student interviewing a psychologist of a similar age) and to therefore fall into stereotypical ways to communicate. For example the respondents sometimes asked about the amount of detail with which to describe their work, if they were giving too few examples, talked too much etcetera. There may have been an intention of mine not to push an agenda onto the respondents with the unexpected consequence that some of them were not completely sure if the purpose was for them to express themselves personally or to give 'correct answers' that could be used as a reference. A previous report with the majority of the
respondents through activities in the program made it possible to find a couple of common points of reference to talk about the interventions.

The transferability of the results from one study to other contexts largely depends on the extent to which the researcher is open about the sample and the context under study (Braun & Clarke, 2013). One issue in this study was the number of respondents. According to Kvale (2009) interview studies do not necessarily need many respondents because a person's experience cannot and does not need to be quantified. However, if the purpose of the interviews is also to talk about how respondents as representatives of a collective (professionals, clients) perceive of things (procedures, concepts), this may call for at least a medium sample in order for the results to gain relevance (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This could be especially problematic if the results of this study would be interpreted as a qualification of the motivational interviews through the accounts of a small number of respondents who were all aware of each other’s participation. For this particular study there may have been a bias to talk about the work in a positive way. Another issue could be that the supervisor of this thesis is also the manager of the majority of the respondents. For this reason it may have posed less of a threat to the possibility of an effect of social desirability to recruit respondents that were not currently working in the program but still connected through social networks if their experiences of the motivational interviews would have proven up to date with the work of Contexto as of today.

In terms of transferability at a national level, it was indicated in an interview that in Spain the trainings in motivational interviews for professionals working in the field of intimate partner violence intervention had received the same training. This was also confirmed by the director Marisol Lila who explained that in the years 2015 and 2016 two professionals from the program had trained the rest of the professionals in intervention programs connected to penitentiary institutions (Marisol Lila, personal communication, February 17th, 2019). How the motivational interventions are implemented in other programs is beyond the limits of this study. One distinctive fact about Contexto is that it is one of the few intervention programs in Europe that are given inside a university and thus the program has a close relationship to the research community.

Even though the sample of this study was small it reflected a couple of dimensions: one respondent had a decade of experience in the program and had trained others in motivational interviews, whereas another had just begun to conduct interviews. Several of the respondents had some years of experience in the same working place and had seen a couple of circles of intervention both before and after the motivational interview had been implemented. The division staff member/volunteering professional may also have added new perspectives.

Regarding the context for this study it could be said that the Contexto program provided me with materials and trainings about the motivational interview as it is done in their version. The research process probably covered how and why the motivational interviews are important for the professionals of Contexto because I interviewed the current staff group, took part in a course and video-materials about the motivational interviews. The results were also revised by the director of the program. However, important threats to the external validity were that the respondents were not included as part of the process of validating transcriptions nor to give an opinion about the results or categories for the analysis.
Future research
Future research could further look into the behaviors that the respondents perceived of as characteristic of motivated clients (to show vulnerability, to question themselves). Examples of superficial engagement or to please the professional had been covered in previous research and it was also something that emerged in this study. One of the approaches of the motivational interview is that the professional cannot have an agenda to change a client's behavior if the motivational intervention is meant to be useful (Miller, 1994; Ortiz, 2014b). At the same time the intervening professional answers to society at large with the expectation that the intervention ultimately proves successful (Boira et al., 2014). It could be of use for the effectiveness of the interventions to find out if a parallel to clients' compliance could be that professionals due to external pressures may grow to have expectations for how the clients receive the intervention.

The motivational interview has been criticized for its focus on external behavior to account for motivation (McMurran, 2009). Research about the usefulness of the motivational interviews could make use of other conceptualizations of motivation focusing for example on internal states. This could be achieved by making use of qualitative studies were previous offenders have told their subjective version of their change process.

Conclusion
The main findings of this study were that the interviewed professionals found the motivational interview helpful for their work with clients and also for themselves to stay motivated and trust the intervention. They found many tools to work with clients and the bond that was facilitated through the motivational interviews made it easier and also personally rewarding to work with the clients. To see clients become motivated and/or to see them change was motivating for the respondents. The more active the clients became and the more vulnerable they were willing to be in order to fully accept and receive the intervention, the better the professionals perceived the clients' motivation. The fact that some of the professionals found that their own motivation to work with clients increased thanks to the intervention could have implications for how professionals in this field deal with burnout and how the institutions that they work for may respond to their need for support in order for their work to be sustainable.
References:


Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research - a practical guide for beginners*. SAGE


Murphy, C. M., & Maiuro, R. D. (2008). Understanding and facilitating the change process in perpetrators


Appendix 1

Questions for interviews with professionals about motivational interviewing:

• Could you tell me a bit about what a motivational interview is? Would you like to share your experience?
• How long have you used this method? What kind of training did you receive?
• How do you get to know your client?
• What are the words you use to begin a conversation about motivation?
• In these sessions, do you also talk about the offenses?
• How may the motivational interview be of help for the client?
• How may it serve the professional?
• Do you see any disadvantage in using motivational interviews?
• Could you give an example of a technique from the interviews?
• How would your work be different if you did not use motivational interviews?
• Do clients' attitudes affect the motivation of others in the group?
• Can you tell when a client is motivated?
• Can you tell when he is not?
• What kind of motivations can a client express?
• Where could that motivation come from?
• What can a professional do to facilitate a client's motivation?
• Does working with motivational interviews affect your motivation to work with the client?
• How do you feel in relationship with the client during the interview?
• Are there moments of doubt or insecurity when you discuss motivation? Can they be resolved? How?
• Can a professional notice where a client feels there has been a mistake on his/her behalf? Can it be repaired? How?
• Is there anything else you would like to share?
• Is there anything you would like to ask me?
Appendix 2

Informed consent audio-recorded interview

Valencia November 2018

My name is Anna Wetterqvist and I am collecting data to complete my master of psychology from Stockholm University.

The aim for the thesis project is to explore how motivation works in intervention with offenders and how professionals go about this topic. Part of the research is aimed at doing interviews with professionals who have experience in working with Motivational Interviews to better understand how the professionals perceive this method and what their experiences are concerning this method's potential to serve the purpose to increase motivation among clients.

For these interviews, I need at least 5 respondents, and I sincerely hope that you are one of them! I am looking to meet with five professionals for an interview that will last about one hour and which will be recorded for the purpose of a detailed transcription of the conversation. Recorded materials will be stored in the Contexto office in according to routine standard, and after transcription the files will be destroyed.

If you would be interested to participate it is important to know that:

• your participation in the study is voluntary.
• you can at any point cancel your participation without further explanation.
• with your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate a transcription.
• in the thesis your participation will be anonymous - all personal identifiers will be anonymized, so that it is not possible to link the information given to any person (any record of names, streets, locations, clients will be excluded from transcription and thesis report).

The supervisor of the thesis at university of Valencia is Marisol Lila of the Contexto program who has reviewed the interview guide for this data collection. From Stockholm University the master thesis project is guided by Claudia Bernhard Oettel from the Department of Psychology, to ensure that the thesis meets ethical standards and quality criteria for a master student project. Ultimately, the institution at Stockholm University ensures that the procedure of the research is legitimate by authorizing a contract to proceed with the data collection.

If you are interested in taking part of my interview study, please contact me by e-mail: annawetterqvist@gmail.com or phone: 688270708.

Sincerely, Anna Wetterqvist
I hereby give my informed consent to participate in an audio-recorded interview

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Name: