

# #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou: Social Media Underscore the Realities of Intimate Partner Violence

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## Abstract

**Background:** Public intimate partner violence (IPV) discourse emphasizes physical violence. In May 2016, the Twitter hashtag #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou generated a public conversation about abuse beyond physical IPV. Because of the often-disconnect between IPV research and what survivors struggle to name as abuse in their daily lives, we sought to understand how IPV discourse was unfolding as a result of the #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou hashtag.

**Materials and Methods:** NCapture was used to collect publically available Twitter data containing the hashtag “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou” from May 10, 2016 to May 17, 2016. Using the Duluth Power and Control Wheel (a range of tactics used by abusers to control and harm their partners) and the Women’s Experience with Battering (WEB) framework (emotional and behavioral responses to being abused), we analyzed 1,229 original content tweets using qualitative content analysis.

**Results:** All dimensions of the Power and Control Wheel and five of six dimensions of the WEB framework were expressed *via* #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou; users did not express yearning for intimacy with their abusive partners. Users described one form of IPV not currently represented within the Power and Control Wheel—reproductive coercion (*e.g.*, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he refuses to use condoms and forces you not to use contraception so you try to do it behind his back”). Two additional themes emerged; users challenged the gender pronoun of the hashtag, highlighting that abuse may happen with partners of all genders, and users provided social support for others (*e.g.*, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou is real. Bruises and scars aren’t the only measure of abuse! If this is you, help is there...”).

**Conclusions:** Results from our study underscore the potential for social media platforms to be powerful agents for engaging public dialogue about the realities of IPV, as well as a space for seeking and providing social support about this critical women’s health issue.

**Keywords:** emotional abuse, intimate partner violence, social media

## Introduction

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV), including physical and sexual violence, is a significant issue for women’s health affecting more than one in three women in their lifetime, with young women ages 16–24 years at highest risk.<sup>1</sup> Findings from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, conducted by the CDC, indicate that psychological aggression (*i.e.*, emotional abuse) is even more prevalent than physical and sexual IPV, with as many as half of women experiencing this form of IPV in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Research has consistently

documented a wide range of adverse physical (*e.g.*, injury),<sup>2–4</sup> mental (*e.g.*, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder),<sup>2,3,5</sup> and sexual and reproductive (*e.g.*, sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancy)<sup>6</sup> health outcomes associated with IPV, along with elevated health service use<sup>7,8</sup> and healthcare costs linked to victimization.<sup>8</sup> Links between IPV and women’s health, in particular, are associated *via* mechanisms, including limited self-efficacy to negotiate sex with an abusive partner<sup>9</sup> and experiences of reproductive coercion (*i.e.*, abusive partners using threats or coercion to promote pregnancy),<sup>6,10,11</sup> among other factors.

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Despite robust research on IPV and its adverse impact on women's health, IPV and the long-lasting impacts of victimization tend to be minimized in larger societal discourse.<sup>12,13</sup> This minimization of IPV is largely shaped by legal definitions<sup>14</sup> and media depictions of abuse (both of perpetration and victimization)<sup>15–17</sup> that prioritize physical violence over sexual violence and emotional abuse. Such messages are internalized by IPV survivors, who rarely acknowledge nonphysical forms of abuse as IPV, hindering IPV disclosure to clinical providers and other forms of help-seeking.<sup>18</sup>

Emerging research suggests that social media platforms may be useful in raising awareness about public health issues, including mental health.<sup>19–22</sup> For example, studies have assessed tweets containing the hashtags “#depressed,” “#depression,” and #MyDepressionLooksLike, finding that some users tweeted about depression symptoms, while others provided support for those experiencing the mental illness.<sup>21,22</sup> A recent study using the hashtag #WhyWeTweetMH assessed why Twitter users tweet about mental health and found that sharing in this way provided users a sense of community, reduced their isolation, provided an outlet to combat stigma and raise awareness about mental health, and was an empowering coping mechanism.<sup>23</sup> Similar to its use with other public health issues (e.g., depression), Twitter is increasingly being used by the public to facilitate activism in response to critical issues such as racism,<sup>24,25</sup> IPV,<sup>26</sup> and sexual violence.<sup>27,28</sup> This discursive protest is called “hashtag activism,”<sup>29</sup> with feminist protest dubbed “hashtag feminism.”<sup>30</sup>

In May 2016, Dominican writer and activist, Zahira Kelly, employed hashtag feminism to resist the societal tendency to minimize nonphysical forms of male-perpetrated violence against women. Specifically, she used Twitter to prompt a larger dialogue around the realities of abuse, including expanding society's typical focus on physical IPV. Her tweets depicting IPV incorporated the hashtag #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou, initiating a dialogue that went viral on Twitter.<sup>31,32</sup> Given the purpose of the hashtag, the resulting salience of this online dialogue, and the often-disconnect between IPV research and what some survivors may perceive as violence and struggle to name in their daily lives, we sought to understand how IPV discourse was unfolding as a result of the #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou hashtag.

We used Bonomi et al.'s conceptualization linking the Duluth Power and Control Wheel (power and control strategies that abusers use in the relationship—such as name calling and humiliation)<sup>33</sup> and the Women's Experience with Battering (WEB) framework (impact of the abuser's use of power and control on the victim)<sup>34</sup> to guide our analysis.<sup>35,36</sup> The Duluth Power and Control Wheel<sup>33</sup> includes physical and sexual violence, along with numerous strategies abusers use to control victims, including emotional abuse (e.g., putting partners down, name-calling, and humiliation), coercion and threats (e.g., abusers' threats of physical violence and threats of self-harm), intimidation (e.g., destroying property and displaying weapons), isolation (e.g., isolating partners *via* controlling movement and social circles), using children (e.g., threatening to harm children or take them away), economic abuse (e.g., controlling access to financial resources), male privilege (e.g., defining rigid roles in the relationship among traditional gender lines), and minimizing, denying, and blaming (e.g., “you made me hurt you”). The WEB framework<sup>34</sup> describes the impact of these abuse strategies on women, in-

cluding perceived threat (i.e., emotional and cognitive perception of risk), altered identity (e.g., changing self-concept and loss of self), managing (e.g., coping behavior in response to perceived risk), entrapment (e.g., feeling trapped in an abusive relationship), yearning (e.g., efforts to establish intimacy with their abusive partners), and disempowerment (e.g., modification of thoughts and behaviors as the abuse continues/escalates). Used together, these frameworks helped to organize the user's descriptions of their IPV experiences.

Given the increasing salience of Twitter-facilitated conversation about important health<sup>19,21,22,26,27,37</sup> and social issues,<sup>24,29,30,38</sup> we sought to understand how IPV discourse was unfolding as a result of the #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou hashtag. Beyond simply documenting dimensions and impacts of IPV, the current study analyzes perceptions of non-physical abuse as identified by Twitter users, as well as related public dialogue about social norms related to IPV, with implications for incorporating social media into clinical and intervention programming for the prevention of this prevalent and serious women's health concern.

## Materials and Methods

We used NCapture, an NVivo software attachment, to collect publically available Twitter data from Twitter's public stream application programming interface. We collected tweets (i.e., brief messages) containing the hashtag “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou” once each day from May 10, 2016 to May 17, 2016, yielding 14,723 original content tweets. Tweets were collected for 1 week, as done in previous research, to account for weekday and weekend social media behavior.<sup>22</sup> Each observation included the following: username, full text of the tweet, hashtags used (including #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou and any additional hashtags), profile information (such as nicknames or quotes), and user-defined location (i.e., latitude and longitude). Study procedures were deemed exempt by the university's institutional review board, as data were restricted to publically available tweets (considered “public conversation”) and stripped of identifying information.<sup>22,26,28</sup>

We were not able to collect demographic information of Twitter users participating in the #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou dialogue. However, 2015 findings from the Pew Research Center indicate that almost one-quarter (24%) of online adults in the United States use Twitter, or 21% of all U.S. adults.<sup>39</sup> The proportion of Internet users on Twitter is higher among urban (30%) compared to suburban (21%) and rural (15%) users and highest among 18- to 29-year-old Internet users (36%).<sup>39</sup> We downloaded the data into an Excel database, removed non-English language tweets, and took a 10% random sample of the data, resulting in 1,229 tweets, which were imported into NVivo for analysis. We began with the 10% random sample with the goal of drawing additional random samples if thematic saturation (the point at which no additional themes emerge) was not achieved.<sup>40</sup> We, indeed, achieved content saturation with our sample of 1,229 tweets.

Our study team comprised five feminist violence prevention researchers, including two faculty trained in public health, one faculty trained as a developmental psychologist, a public health doctoral student, and a research assistant. All identified as white cisgender women, representing both queer and heterosexual identities. We chose qualitative content

analysis,<sup>23</sup> a systematic method for summarizing the content of communication; this is a commonly used analysis approach for Twitter hashtags.<sup>22,26</sup> To identify themes expressed by tweets containing #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou, we first began by having each research team member read the dataset, identifying general themes to inform the analysis framework.<sup>41</sup> Based on our early observations in the data, we identified the Duluth Power and Control Wheel<sup>33</sup> and the WEB framework together to describe Twitter users' experiences of IPV, introducing sensitizing concepts to the analysis.<sup>34</sup>

The lead author guided the coding team, which involved the researchers comparing codes and coding processes and resolving discrepancies *via* team consensus. This iterative process began with two research assistants coding 20% of the sample of 1,229 tweets to achieve consistency in their coding definitions. In addition to using structural codes representing dimensions of the Power and Control Wheel and the WEB framework, the team engaged in negative case analysis to identify themes that were not represented by the existing frameworks. Then, two team members, the lead author and research assistant, coded the full dataset with the established codebook. The team met again at this stage to review major themes and subthemes. While major themes were defined using the Duluth Power and Control Wheel and WEB framework, we further defined subthemes within each dimension and extracted exemplars (presented verbatim, hereunder) of major and subthemes identified in the data.

## Results

All eight dimensions of abuse in the Power and Control Wheel were expressed by Twitter users, along with five dimensions of the WEB framework. Users experienced one form of IPV that is not currently represented within the Power and Control Wheel, namely reproductive coercion. Two themes beyond existing frameworks emerged; specifically, users challenged the gender pronoun of the hashtag, highlighting that abuse may happen with partners of all genders, and users provided social support for others, calling for the need to raise awareness about nonphysical forms of IPV.

### *Power and control*

**Emotional abuse.** Emotional abuse was commonly tweeted about, including insults and manipulation and experiences pertaining to being undesirable and unworthy of love; for example: “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but reminds you on a regular basis how lucky you are to have him since no other man would...” Humiliation was also commonly described (*e.g.*, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he will sit with his friends and crack cruel jokes about you while you're in earshot”), as was the experience of being belittled (*e.g.*, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he made your opinions on anything completely invalid and useless”).

**Isolation.** Users identified the way their abusers controlled their social interactions. Examples include: “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but you can't even go out with your family without his permission,” “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he makes you choose between your friends and him. But he's not giving you a choice at all,” and “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he sabotages your relationships with male friends until you give up trying to be friends with them.”

Users described perpetrators displaying jealousy, including accusations of cheating (*e.g.*, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he accuses you of cheating because it took you 7 minutes longer to get home from work”), and enforced sexual exclusivity (*e.g.*, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he'll squeeze your hand in public so that boys know your together until he breaks your finger”).

**Intimidation.** Intimidation was commonly described, including perpetrators' tendency to destroy personal property. For example, users shared, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he breaks your possessions when he's mad” and “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he slashes your tires when you try to leave the house during a fight.” Among the most dangerous abuse tactics, users described abusers' use of weapons to threaten their partners, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou instead he just leaves that shotgun loaded sitting with the closet door open to remind you to 'behave'.” Users explained the threat of physical IPV even if it had not occurred: “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but you've watched him punch enough walls and destroy enough objects to wonder if you're next.”

**Minimizing, denying, and blaming.** Users commonly described being blamed for the abuse. For example, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he blames you for his disloyalty and anger issues.” Users also described the tendency for abusers to minimize the abuse and its impact (“#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he belittled your sadness/anger because his is more important”) and the experience of abusers turning a mental illness against them (“#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he tells you he loves you then invalidates your mental illness and makes you feel crazier”). For some, this extended to “gaslighting,” insinuating that mental illness was to blame: “Because he made me believe I was just paranoid and that all our problems were my fault #WhyIStayed #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou”).

**Male privilege.** Users identified male privilege as a manifestation of abuse in relationships. For example, users tweeted: “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he justifies his cheating because you've gained some weight and don't look like you used to” and “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but never calls you 'beautiful' 'gorgeous' or 'stunning' but instead calls you 'hot' 'sexy' and 'fuckable'.” They additionally described abusers controlling clothing and appearance, such as “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he doesn't 'allow' you to wear a dress that goes a little above your knee because it's 'too revealing',” and engaging in body shaming to control behavior (*e.g.*, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he tells you that he'll 'never have a fat wife' while you're married to him”). Users also described abusers coercing unwanted sex: “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but guilts you into sexual activity by complaining of his 'needs' and bringing up sexual activity with past girlfriends” and “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he only takes pleasure in your discomfort. The only sex he wants is what you don't want.”

**Coercion, threats, and using children.** Coercion was described in several ways. Users described abusers making threats to take children away (*e.g.*, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but threatens to take your children if you leave him”). Users also described reproductive coercion (*e.g.*, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he refuses to use condoms and forces you not to use contraception so you try to do it behind his

back” and “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but gets you pregnant so you can never leave him”), expanding beyond the original Power and Control Wheel. Users described abusers’ threats of self-harm to enforce control (e.g., “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he threatens to hurt himself when you don’t follow his rules”) and exert male privilege (e.g., “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he says he isn’t going to stop cheating and then tells you he’ll kill himself if you left him”).

**Economic abuse.** Finally, users identified economic abuse, including building debt in the survivor’s name, failing to pay utility bills (e.g., “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he made sure the power was disconnected and you didn’t have any food”), dictating how money is spent (e.g., “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou, but he takes your paycheck and decides how the money will be spent, even though he’s unemployed”), and making users feel guilty for not “letting him take care of [them].”

#### WEB framework

Twitter users described the impact IPV has on survivors, reflecting five (i.e., perceived threat, altered identity, disempowerment, entrapment, and managing risk) of the six domains of the WEB framework. Users did not describe experiences reflecting the “yearning (for intimacy)” domain of the framework.

**Perceived threat** (emotional and cognitive reactions to environments). Users explained that abusers made them feel like they were “walking on eggshells” (e.g., “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but you have to walk on eggshells hoping tonight will be a good night”). Users identified *fearing* physical violence as an aspect of abuse, for example, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou, but his hand is bigger than your lap, and while it hovers over your thighs, you wouldn’t dare cross him.” Some expressed fear of death (e.g., “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but you live in fear that today he will make good on his promises and you won’t make it till tomorrow”) or harm to family members (e.g., “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but makes you afraid for your life if you talk to friends/family to ask for help. Or worse, afraid for their lives.”).

**Altered identity** (changing self-concept) and **disempowerment** (routine loss of power resulting in modified thoughts and behaviors). Users commonly described both an altered identity and manifestations of disempowerment, WEB domains which often overlapped in users’ stories. In some cases, this was described as their identity being defined by or in relation to their abusive partners. For example, one user shared, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but you realize after you leave that you don’t know who you are without him.” Others described losing confidence (e.g., “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he strips you of your confidence with little derogatory whispers every single day removing what makes you YOU.”). These experiences tended to be described in terms of self-worth, for example, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he reminds you everyday of how worthless you are until you start to believe it yourself.” Another explained, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he broke down your self-worth so much, that you think he’s the only man who will ever love you. So you stay.”

**Entrapment** (perceptions of being trapped in a relationship) and **managing risk** (assessment of danger and coping behavior). Users identified feelings of entrapment often as a result from attempts to manage risk for IPV. One user described feeling suffocated, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but he’ll suffocate you by not letting you meet/talk to your friends because they’re jealous of you and him.” Some users perceived that physical violence would be a more legitimate excuse to leave an abusive relationship than other forms of IPV (e.g., “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but there are times you wish he did because surely it would be easier to leave”), while others described physical abuse as potentially giving them courage to leave their abusive relationship (e.g., “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou, but sometimes you wish he did. Maybe that would give you the courage to leave him”).

#### Themes beyond existing IPV frameworks

IPV occurs in relationships with all genders. Twitter users discussed that IPV does not only happen in heterosexual relationships; they did this in several ways. Some users referenced IPV with same-gender partners (e.g., “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou but you’re both men and he tells you there is no such thing as #domesticviolence in a #gay relationship”), while other users changed the hashtag’s pronoun (e.g., “It’s not limited to one gender! #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou #MaybeSheDoesntHitYou #MaybeTheyDontHitYou”). Users emphasized the importance of the conversation, while drawing attention to the need to be inclusive of sexual and gender minority survivors (e.g., “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou is great convo, also important to remember tht women, trans, nonbinary, ALL people abuse, & anyone can be a victim. <3”). Others challenged the hashtag, for example, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou is a bit of a sexist hashtag. Women aren’t the only ones who suffer emotional abuse. I know what I’m talking about.”

**Abuse beyond physical violence and online social support.** The hashtag was also used to communicate, connect, and provide support. Twitter users described relating to the #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou discourse, sharing, “These #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou tweets have me in tears. Definitely hitting close to home.” Others specifically thanked Zahira Kelly for initiating the conversation (e.g., “Thank you for #MaybeHeDoesntHit you. You have no idea how much it means to some of us here.”). Users reiterated that abuse consisted of more than physical violence, while simultaneously providing supportive guidance (e.g., “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou is real. Bruises and scars aren’t the only measure of abuse! If this is you, help is there. Just reach out”). Users pointed to the potential for the dialogue to spark change in social norms about IPV, tweeting, “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou is an important tag that may not apply to you, but spreading awareness & reading these tweets is a big step to change.” Finally, users commended those who participated in the conversation for their courage to speak in this public forum about IPV, for example: “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou everyone who uses this hashtag, your courage is amazing. You are not alone.”

#### Discussion

We assessed Twitter discourse following Zahira Kelly’s viral Twitter hashtag, #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou, which underscored the realities of IPV as extending beyond physical

violence. Tweets aligned closely with the Power and Control Wheel, a framework that outlines the multidimensional nature of IPV, and with the WEB framework, a framework that outlines the ways that IPV alters survivors' emotions and behaviors in their relationships. However, tweets expanded these existing frameworks by describing experiences of reproductive coercion. In addition, the #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou discourse created a platform for Twitter users to seek and provide social support, highlighting the role that social media may play in facilitating critical public conversations about and creating community around women's health.

Emotional abuse was a common theme to emerge, aligning with the intended purpose of the hashtag.<sup>31</sup> Twitter users described perpetrators using insults and typically expressed that these abusive words were even more impactful than physical and sexual violence. Although research on the health impacts of emotional abuse is comparatively limited,<sup>1–3</sup> emotional abuse during childhood is associated with increased anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and risk for violence victimization in adulthood,<sup>28</sup> with evidence that the impact of emotional abuse may be as strong as that of sexual abuse for anxiety and depression outcomes.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, emotional abuse in adolescent and adult intimate relationships has been found to be associated with anxiety and depression, highlighting the need to assess and address exposure to emotional abuse among young women.<sup>30,31</sup> What is more, although researchers and practitioners have long acknowledged emotional abuse as a dimension of IPV, the #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou hashtag highlights that this research has not resulted in widespread social norms change, for example: “#MaybeHeDoesntHitYou is bringing to light a lot of things that get swept under the rug on a regular. These things are not normal or ok!” These findings underscore the need for greater emphasis on emotional abuse in clinical and community-based violence prevention efforts.

Users described social isolation as a critical component of IPV and responded by trying to create community around this women's health issue. Research on the (in-person) social networks of IPV survivors have found that networks of abused women tend to be smaller, especially with respect to the number of friends in their networks, and provide less support than nonabused women.<sup>32,33</sup> Discourse generated by the #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou hashtag included the provision of social support, with users sharing statements such as “you are not alone.”<sup>19</sup> This suggests that Twitter may be used to facilitate community, a finding which is bolstered by research suggesting that Twitter may be a medium through which users gratify a need for connection.<sup>34</sup> Importantly, we were not able to discern whether users were reflecting on their own experiences of abuse or those of loved ones. In addition, given seeking support for IPV, including leaving an abusive relationship, can be a particularly dangerous time for survivors<sup>42</sup>; there are profound limitations to using social media to support survivors in relationships with escalating violence.

However, even if users did not interact with each other, it is possible that the sheer volume of tweets in this online conversation served to validate experiences, potentially reducing feelings of isolation and empowering service seeking. Empirical and theoretical evidence have suggested that narrative communication, similar to the discourse generated by #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou, has the potential to change health be-

havior.<sup>43</sup> Researchers emphasize the impact that stories can have, whether they are factual or fictional, *via* helping others identify with user experiences and building empathy. These findings are relevant for movements on social media, where users are anonymous. Narratives are also powerful as they collectively have the power to shape normative beliefs, which influence our intention to engage in behavior.<sup>43</sup> With this in mind, we hypothesize that incorporating trending hashtags about IPV like #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou into prevention programming with young people may be an engaging prevention strategy compared to brochures or more traditional forms of relationship education. Future research may assess whether and how support provided *via* these online environments translates to improvements in awareness about IPV, mental health among survivors, or connection to IPV services.

Our results suggest that the Power and Control Wheel could be expanded to include reproductive coercion, a form of IPV where abusive partners manipulate condoms and sabotage contraception to exert control of women *via* their reproductive health.<sup>6,10</sup> In addition, the #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou Twitter discourse illustrated not only power and control in abusive intimate relationships but also the ways that power and control manifest in users' lives. As both perpetrator behavior and the impact this behavior had on survivors were often captured within a single tweet, it became clear that the Power and Control framework<sup>33</sup> could not be used in isolation without also analyzing users' experiences of abuse using the WEB framework.<sup>34</sup> This simultaneous use of these two frameworks, as first conceptualized by Bonomi et al.,<sup>35,36</sup> may be a useful strategy moving forward for researchers to elucidate how IPV impacts women's health and most importantly, given limited public awareness about emotional abuse and other forms of IPV, translate these findings for lay audiences.

Finally, a related critique users expressed of the hashtag was its focus on male-perpetrated violence against women, with users changing the gender pronoun in the hashtag to #MaybeTheyDontHitYou or #MaybeSheDoesntHitYou. These tweets highlighted a long-standing gap in the field—the exclusion of sexual and gender minorities from IPV research and public discourse. These tweets raise attention to this public health issue at a critical time, as there is mounting epidemiological evidence that sexual and gender minorities are more likely to experience IPV compared to their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts.<sup>44,45</sup>

Our findings should be considered in light of several limitations. First, we collected data when the hashtag #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou was trending (*i.e.*, popular), representing users' perceptions at a single point in time. We did not collect data on contextual elements that users may have been exposed to on the day they joined the #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou conversation, or what might have followed in retweeting conversations. We were unable to collect demographic information about users, thereby limiting our interpretations. Finally, because we excluded non-English language tweets, our analyses could not represent experiences shared by users tweeting in languages other than English. Notably, Ms. Kelly and a Mexican activist for women's rights launched the Spanish language version of the hashtag—#QuizaNóTePegue—in November 2016. Future research is warranted to compare experiences shared *via* #QuizaNóTePegue, compared to the original #MaybeHeDoesntHitYou dialogue. Despite these limitations, the results from our study underscore the

potential for social media platforms to be powerful agents for expanding public discourse about IPV to reflect the range of emotional abuse and coercive control typically experienced in abusive relationships, and the impact the abuse has on individual lives.

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### Author Disclosure Statement

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