Chapter 2 provides an overview of literature, theories and concepts relevant to finding out how SlutWalk was represented in the media and experienced by organizers in eight nations (Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, the UK and the US) which hosted marches between 2011 and 2014. This includes a scholarly review of modern feminism, violence against women, the anti-rape movement and post and Third Wave feminism. It also includes scholarly work on representations of violence against women, and representations of feminist activism. The chapter will then move on to examine literature on social media and its use in modern social movements, and pays particular attention to concepts of discursive activism and networked counterpublics, which I found extremely useful in explaining the movement’s online activism and communities. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the how the study was conducted, using methods such as qualitative content analysis, critical discourse analysis, frame analysis, semi-structured interviews and close observation of online feminist communities.

Modern feminism

According to Puente (2011) ‘Feminism today is a diverse panorama constructed out of historic, individual, and collective efforts that seek to redefine the condition of women’ (pp. 334–5). This is particularly true when examining the histories and state of feminist activism in the eight nations included in this study: Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, the UK and the US. Although it is not possible to provide a detailed history of feminist activism in each nation, all have experienced feminist campaigns – with greater or lesser
visibility – around similar issues, such as equal citizenship and pay, law and moral reform, reproductive control and bodily rights (see Anderson 1991; Bouchier 1983; Coote & Campbell 1982; Gangoli 2007; Mitra 2013; Sawer 2013; van Acker 1999). Yet despite campaigning on similar issues, often in similar periods, the specific forms of women’s activism, and the shape of each women’s movement, are marked by national distinctiveness arising from their own histories, culture, and experience with various forms of oppression (Forestell & Moynagh 2014). As we will see in Chapter 3, these national and cultural distinctions were also reflected in the way SlutWalks developed across the world.

Although much of the ‘storying’ of feminism situates it as a Western phenomenon or something ‘imposed’ on Third World women (Carr 2013; Jayawardena 1986), scholars have contested such beliefs, and have instead noted the ways that various nations around the world have in fact developed their own feminisms, emerging out of specific historic circumstances and ideological and material changes in women’s lives (Jayawardena 1986). These include, but are not limited to imperialism, colonialism, racism and capitalism, and explain why feminist activism around the globe is not monolithic, although much activity intersects and connects in important ways (de Haan et al. 2013; Forestell & Moynagh 2014). Rather than documenting the histories of feminist activism in each of the eight nations included in this study, the section below will instead provide a background to activism which has specifically centred around sexual violence – a problem women all around the world experience, albeit in different ways.

**Violence against women and the anti-rape movement**

According to the UN (1992), violence against women is ‘Violence that is directed at a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately.’ It includes domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, (so-called) honour crimes, forced marriages, female genital mutilation and human trafficking (Järvinen et al. 2008). Around the globe, millions of women will experience violence each year, and most violence will be committed by someone the victim knows (Järvinen et al. 2008, p. 7). In the 1970s, feminists began to challenge the notion that sexual violence was a rare, individual problem, committed by a few ‘bad apples.’ Through consciousness-raising sessions, radical feminists were the first to politicize rape as a feminist issue, and to argue that (sexual) violence was a structural tool used to maintain men’s dominance over women (Bevacqua 2001). As such, feminists worked to re-conceptualize rape