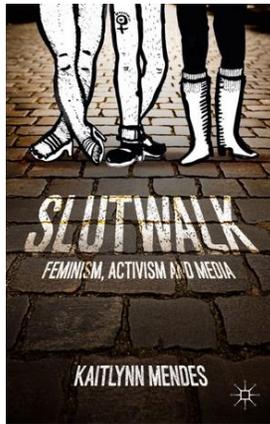


Kaitlynn Mendes, **SlutWalk: Feminism, Activism and Media**, Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 242 pp., \$28.00 (paperback).

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Kaitlynn Mendes' book **SlutWalk: Feminism, Activism and Media** examines the global antirape movement "SlutWalk" and its coverage in the feminist blogosphere and mainstream media. Charting the demonstration from its inception in Toronto in 2011 to its emergence as a global phenomenon in more than 200 cities and 40 nations by 2014, Mendes argues that SlutWalk's virality renders it an intriguing case for examining the perceptions of sexual assault and feminist activism. During the SlutWalks, survivors, sex workers, and antirape activists march to protest the patriarchal "don't get raped" ideology that perpetuates slut shaming and victim blaming. To underscore their propriety over their bodies and challenge the prevailing attitude that sexy clothing warrants male aggression, women of all ages march in revealing attire—hence the name SlutWalk.

Mendes uses a mixed-method approach for gathering data on media coverage of SlutWalks across eight nations (Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, the UK and the United States). Through snowball sampling of feminist and mainstream media, Mendes performs an analysis of the coverage of SlutWalk in the various locations. In order to provide a detailed rendering of SlutWalk, Mendes utilizes multiple methods including frame analysis, content analysis, interview data, and critical discourse analysis.

Mendes begins her monograph by introducing readers to the issues surrounding rape and sexual violence across various cultural and geopolitical contexts. Here, Mendes draws on modern feminism to situate antirape movements within larger discourses on rape that vary by cultural contexts. Aware that SlutWalk challenges a myriad of ideologies and gender norms—such as patriarchy, silencing, and sexual submissiveness—in various locations, Mendes includes a historical overview of feminist theory and contemporary data to contextualize the issue of rape culture worldwide. Mendes argues that SlutWalk is a phenomenon that emerges in contemporary "third-wave feminism," which posits the feminist struggles and need for social change as timely and real. Mendes offers a concise rendering of feminist theory that sets up her subject of study (as well as situates herself) within the third-wave project. In her application, she utilizes SlutWalk as a postfeminist example while drawing on third-wave feminism to study the phenomenon. Thus, Mendes enables readers to trace her epistemic and axiological interests throughout the book.

The second chapter offers insights into the methodology and mediums of study. Mendes' central argument is that SlutWalk helped to increase victim visibility and reintroduce sexual violence issues to the

public. The third chapter further situates SlutWalk and illustrates how the marches became newsworthy events in feminist and mainstream media. Although Mendes gets bogged down for 20 pages in what reads like a continuous justification of SlutWalk's salience, the context also gives way to an incisive and passionate analysis. Mendes brings together feminist and media theory to show SlutWalk's successes and failures in making rape activism visible. Mendes also underscores contributions of the feminist blogosphere that challenges dominant myths of victim responsibility and provides a critical voice to the oftentimes superficial news coverage in the mainstream media. Here Mendes develops a succinct argument and does not shy away from critiques of the movement, particularly those that challenged the ways SlutWalks enable the male gaze and thus risk trivializing the movement as a whole.

In chapter 6, Mendes discusses the qualitative findings of the interviews with local SlutWalk organizers. Mendes attributes social media as a key component to organizers' success in recruiting individuals to participate in the marches and thus raise awareness through numbers that are hard to ignore. Here, Mendes discusses the importance of the Internet, social networking, and online blogging to contemporary feminist activism. In this chapter, Mendes intelligently comments on SlutWalk's branding, promotion, and use of social media. Mendes concludes with SlutWalk's legacy as a global feminist antirape movement, arguing that SlutWalk provides a much-needed grassroots response to rape cultures. Here, Mendes lauds feminist media's role in making this issue visible.

Throughout her book, Mendes grapples with the topics of gender norms, activism, new media, and feminism's role in challenging patriarchy. One weakness of *SlutWalk* are the lengthy and dragging first chapters that usefully contextualize SlutWalk but leave readers waiting for the actual argument and findings. The latter part of the second chapter in particular would benefit from tighter editing. The sheer volume of information on the separate methodologies muddles Mendes' own approach. Additionally, Mendes' effort to analyze the effects of SlutWalk in eight nations may have been overly ambitious. While she offers news testimony from various geographic places, her thesis that SlutWalk helped increase visibility of sexual assault globally does not inherently warrant such a wide-ranging cross-cultural analysis. In fact, it makes it impossible to address the cultural nuances of sex, gender, and violence specific to those locations, thus rendering the effects of SlutWalk more homogenous than they may have been.

The book's strength lies in its recency and timeliness. The SlutWalk movement is a superb example of contemporary antirape activism, which enables readers to gauge the salience of sexual assault as a global problem. Through a very clear and engaging writing style, Mendes is able to capture the essence of the SlutWalk phenomenon and leave readers with useful statistical data on the movement, contemplations on digital activism, and insight into the continuous role of the feminist project. Mendes presents the consensus and controversies of SlutWalk and does not shy away from including voices critical of the movement. Her seventh chapter is particularly illustrative and details the ways in which cyberactivism aided in the visibility of sexual assault through evidence from social media and personal interviews with activists.

Mendes is a thorough writer, and as such all her explanations are carefully rendered. Hence, nonacademics or nonfeminist scholars could easily follow her argument, and in that vein Mendes accomplishes something that so many fail to make possible: She makes her writing accessible. This is a

skill not all of us possess. With only a handful of academic pieces on SlutWalk (see e.g., Carr, 2013; Chateauvert, 2014; Kapur, 2012; Miriam, 2012), Mendes provides the book-length critical introduction to the contemporary antirape marches.

Mendes' monograph has the potential to serve feminist activist groups and antirape activists around the globe by providing contextual and applicable information on a type of march that so many were probably involved in themselves. Additionally, the book shares important implications for contemporary activism. Particularly valuable are Mendes' lessons on social media use and the power of feminist blogs, both of which can be utilized to publicize social justice issues. As for its use by academics, the book would be ideal for undergraduate or graduate classes—for example, in courses on global media, feminist media studies, feminist theory, gender and society, social movement theory, or global feminism.

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