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Ways of bleeding : teenage girls' experiences of the menstruating body and the washable pad

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores teenage girls' interpretations and experiences of menstruation. Using the work of Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) on the 'three bodies': the individual body, the social body and the body politic, this thesis looks into the different ways that teenage girls from the ages of 13 to 18 understand their menstruation and form meanings about themselves and their bodies through their menstrual experiences. In discussing menstruation, this thesis explores how gender norms, gender inequality, teenage sexuality and sexual behaviour are constructed as significant aspects of teenage girlhood. Finally, in using the washable pad as a way of exploring menstrual practices, the work in this thesis explores how teenage girls form their own understandings on what menstruation means to them, what it represents for their experience of girlhood and the different ways in which they come to understand the idea of being menstrual.