Despite the fact that eating has long been seen as a matter of sociological concern, there is little sociological work, which has sought to tease apart the concept of hunger. This very preliminary paper will attempt to do just this by looking at the experiences of patients who have undergone gastrectomy to manage their genetic risks of stomach cancer. In this paper I will reflect upon the impact of surgery on bodily integrity and look at people’s experiences of living without a stomach. The paper will focus upon eating post surgery, and discuss the ways in which surgery impacts upon identity. I will demonstrate that following surgery, hunger and satiety are constructed as disembodied experiences or desires that need to be re-embodied. Finally, I will argue that the process of re-embodying these supposed "physiological" states raises a number of issues about the nature of hunger and satiety. These will be interrogated using a Wittgensteinian (1952) analytic framework in which internal states are understood as grounded within public criteria.

Nina Hallowell is a medical sociologist who has worked in the field of cancer genetics for 20 years at the Universities of Cambridge and Edinburgh and the Institute of Cancer Research in London. In recent years she has worked as a consultant at a policy think tank - the PHG Foundation in Cambridge, UK - whose aim is to facilitate the responsible implementation of genomic technologies in clinical practice. She has just completed a project at Cambridge University, which looks at risk management for hereditary diffuse gastric cancer, and she will talk about the some of the data gathered during this research.

Building 11, Level 4, Room N402 CLAYTON
Thursday 20 March 2014
1:00 - 2:00 pm

RSVP Helen Forbes-Mewett: helen.forbesmewett@monash.edu