



TAKING UP SPACE

**How Eating Well & Exercising Regularly
Changed My Life**

by
Pattie Thomas, Ph.D.
with **Carl Wilkerson, M.B.A.**
foreword by **Paul Campos,**
author of *The Obesity Myth*

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Ten Questions

Taking Up Space/Pattie Thomas, Ph.D., author

Taking Up Space is a sociological memoir about being fat and the physical, emotional and economic costs of trying to pass for thin in a culture that stigmatizes fat people. Making her own life a case study, medical sociologist Pattie Thomas, Ph.D., with the help of her co-author and husband Carl Wilkerson, M.B.A., outlines how stigma limit and shape the life chances of all people and are supported within culture. She is here today to talk about how a sociologically examined life can be a source for personal growth and how the “war on obesity” can be won, not by losing weight, but by simply giving up the battle with the bulge and working towards a healthy and happy life regardless of size.

1. Most people believe that being fat is inherently unhealthy. Aren't you afraid that you are simply providing an excuse for people who are too lazy or too emotionally fearful to lose weight? **Explain why you believe that someone can be healthy and fat.**
2. You are pretty straightforward in the book about your disabilities. **What do you say to people who believe that you are disabled because you are “overweight” and that if you lost weight you would be able to be more mobile and capable?**
3. You spend a great deal of time in your book addressing the question of beauty and you call for a “radical appreciation of the beauty of fatness.” **What do you mean by a “radical appreciation,” and what would you say to those people who would tell you that fat is ugly no matter how much you dress it up?**
4. You also talk about “passing for thin.” That seems like a rather extreme way to talk about dieting and losing weight. **Why do you believe that some people who lose weight and keep it off are “passing”? Do you really believe that this is on the same level as people of color “passing for white”?**
5. Kathleen LeBesco calls your book “a road map through the minefield of the war on obesity.” An entire section of your book is written about preparing for “a war” you “did not choose to fight.” **Why do you believe you are at war with your culture and your government? Why did you choose a sumo as a symbol of that war?**
6. Usually when a war is fought, there is a clear goal to be obtained—an ending that you are seeking. **How will you know if you have won the war?**
7. You spend a great deal of the book critiquing the diet-pharmaceutical industrial complex and a culture based upon advertising, yet you currently work as a business and career coach and own your own business. **How do you reconcile such sharp criticisms of the market, consumption and advertising with being an entrepreneur and encouraging others to build their businesses with marketing and sales?**
8. You seem just as critical of leftist politics, anti-consumption and anti-globalization politics and feminist politics as you are of right-wing politics and global corporations and big businesses. **How would you describe your political position, and where do “fat politics” fit into the current spectrum?**
9. You wrote the book with your husband, Carl Wilkerson. This is clearly your story, your memoir. **Why did you choose to work with him on the book?**
10. You call this book a “sociological memoir” and talk about a “sociologically examined life” as being a source of growth. Most people think of sociology as an examination of social forces such as poverty or crime. **Why do you believe that sociology can be so personal?**

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