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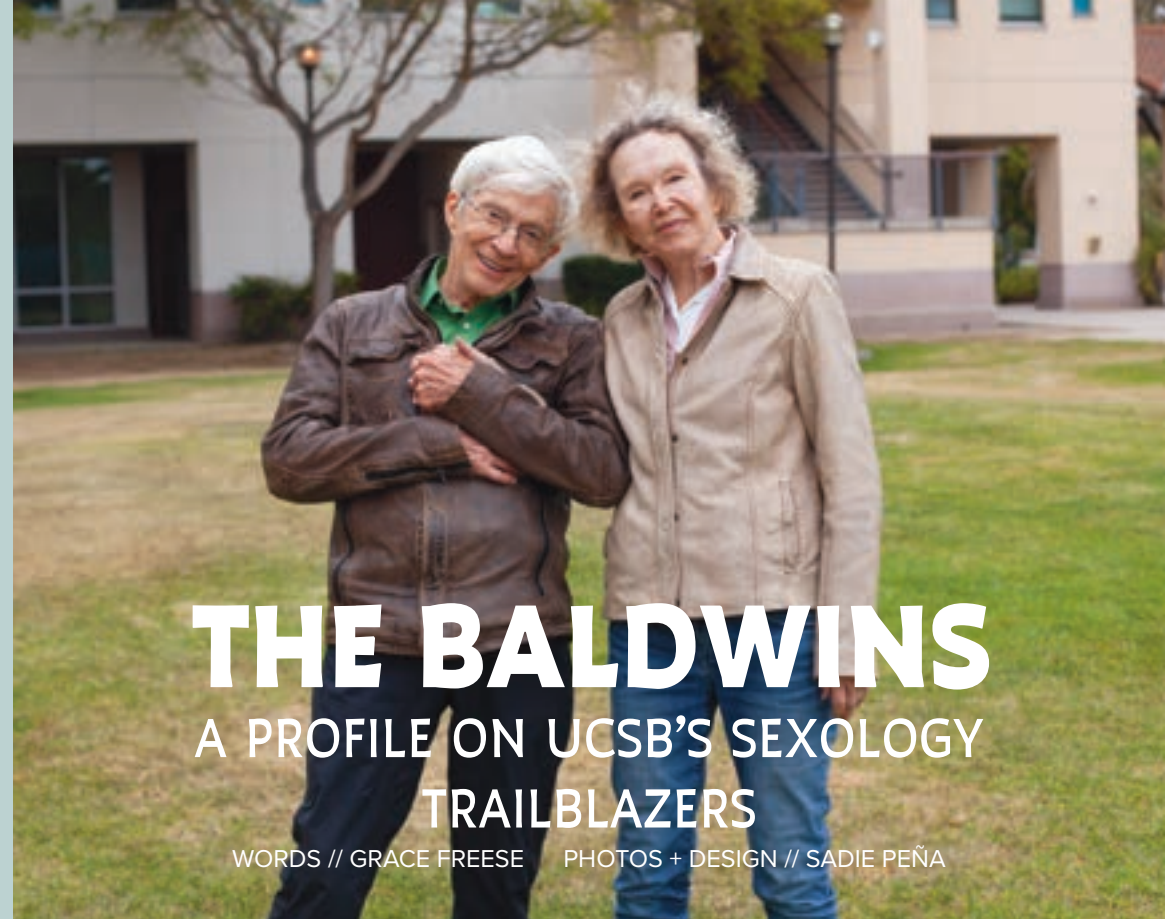
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THE BALDWINS

A PROFILE ON UCSB'S SEXOLOGY TRAILBLAZERS

WORDS // GRACE FREESE PHOTOS + DESIGN // SADIE PEÑA

IN UCSB'S CAMPBELL HALL, a clip of Meg Ryan faking an orgasm in "When Harry Met Sally" screens to a classroom of 500 students. Professor Janice Baldwin stands tall as the video plays. Across the room is her teaching partner and husband, Professor John Baldwin, who stands just as tall. Meg Ryan's character, Sally, moans and groans, faking a sexual climax.

The students laugh as the clip comes to an end. Sally has 'finished.' "The point is," John starts once the clip is off-screen, "find out what she likes, give her what she likes, for as long or as short as she likes. Because a fake orgasm is fine, but a real orgasm is much more fun."

Meg Ryan's fake-climax scene has just screened in Sociology 152A, a 10-week human sexuality course that the married

couple teaches to nearly 500 students at a time. On this particular day, John and Janice taught their students the importance of valuing pleasurable, real female orgasms. They also made their students laugh and screened a clip from a classic romcom—all in one fell swoop.

Outside of marriage—and being professor-comedians—John and Janice Baldwin define themselves as sexologists, or "a scientist who studies human sexual behavior." Throughout the duration of Sociology 152A, the Baldwins discuss topics like birth control, sex organ anatomy, and how to have pleasurable, respectable sex.

Before becoming the sexologists they are today, the Baldwins were young adults experiencing sexuality themselves. The

Baldwins first met on a deep-sea fishing boat after being set up with one another on a blind date. “We really weren’t very interested in deep-sea fishing, but we talked a lot and we just had a really good time,” Janice said. After a successful blind date (and a not-so-successful time catching fish), they got married. The impact their love has had on their lives and their careers is clear. “Life before Janice was really minimally important,” John said, “Oh, [but] life after Janice is absolutely spectacular.”

The partnership the Baldwins share extended beyond marriage and into academia during a research trip. “We were doing research on monkeys in South America. And it’s shocking to do research in South America because of the standard of living for everybody, but also because of the way women are treated,” she said. “It’s obviously not something that the Earth can tolerate—women having 17 babies. And so I became interested in family planning because of the experiences there.”

John and Janice conducted studies on monkeys for close to a year before returning to the States to study human sexual behaviors more closely. They seized an opportunity to take over the sexual education program at UCSB after learning that the two graduate candidates who were teaching the sex-ed courses would soon complete their PhDs and depart from the university. Despite the logistical nuances their teaching situation proposed, Janice confirmed that they received “no pushback” from the administration when they pitched the idea to teach sex education as a married couple. “I think everybody knows that a campus our size should have a class on

human sexuality,” John said. The Baldwins’ desire to continue the program after the graduate students left, coupled with an administrative understanding of the need for a human sexuality course at UCSB, allowed the Baldwins to implement what has become Sociology 152A.

The couple has been developing their course ever since they took it over from

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the graduate student-teachers. They quickly realized that they wanted to create an honors seminar—Sociology 152B—for what John called their “best students,” who may advance their sexuality studies beyond the curriculum taught in Sociology 152A. With the continued help of their advanced students, John and Janice make an active effort to modernize the course material whenever they can.

The Baldwins cite updating their textbook as a method for introducing new data and material to the course. “We’re co-authors of the [course] textbook. Every time a new edition comes out, we invite students to make contributions, corrections, and suggestions.

And we almost always take them literally. If they want to change, we change it,” John said.

This discussion of modernity led

us to discuss some of the controversy which surrounds the couple and their course, as some students feel there is a lack of representation of queer bodies and sexual experiences in Sociology 152A. Despite student concern, the Baldwins have actively responded to student feedback. “We try very hard to make our slide collection as inclusive as possible,” John said.

“Whenever there’s any scientific data, that usually applies to all of us, because we’re all human beings,” he said. The Baldwins mentioned that they have a transgender-identifying editor go over new editions

of the book as they’re being published, making changes that they think would be appropriate. “We literally gave the editor a photo copy of the book and said, ‘red pin. Any changes, you want to make?’ and we accepted every one,” John said. The Baldwins understand the world is evolving, and they are making strides toward meeting students’ needs to develop and teach inclusive material.

As John and Janice’s coursework has modernized and changed, so has their legacy grown and evolved. After taking over the program several years ago, they have expanded it past a basic biology course and have implemented psychological and sociological elements more firmly into the UCSB sex-ed

curriculum. More and more, gauchos are seeing sexuality courses at UCSB; a student may now enroll in courses like Asian American Gender and Sexuality (ASAM 8) or Queer North America (Hist 101QA) to discuss sex, sexuality, and the implications of sexuality on culture and society.

With new courses come new attitudes about sex, and Janice specifically noticed a shift in female confidence since her time at UCSB. “Women are much more open to talking about sex and are feeling more in control,” she said.

Several cultural developments related to sex and sexuality can be traced back to John and Janice and the paramount work they’ve done for sex education and Gauchos alike. Without both professors working for UCSB students as sexologist trailblazers, the university would likely be years behind in terms of developing modern sex and sexuality courses and having sexual health resources available for students.

“There is an ethos on every campus,” John said. “And we hope that the ethos of our campus will be respectful sex—being honest and being cooperative about building relationships, rather than having abusive sex.” ■

