Confused expressions. Perspiring hands. When women at California Baptist University were asked to name several players from their favorite sports team, awkwardness ensued. “Uh... umm... you see, I don’t watch them that much. You got me,” replied one student while others met the question with a blank stare or a series of stuttered remarks. It would appear that these women rarely, if ever, have been asked such a question.

A person’s gender typically associates them with a number of stereotypes. Men are often assumed to be gym-obsessed, mega-sports fans, while women are anticipated to be appearance-focused, fashionistas. However, these stereotypes tend to run under the surface, mostly unnoticed. Until recently, that is.

Over the course of several years, gender roles and equality issues have been brought to public attention as groups fight for equal rights. Many are taking part in this movement. Stephanie Meyer, author of the “Twilight” series, re-wrote “Twilight,” switching the genders of the main characters. Celebrities are releasing statements exclaiming they feel disrespected by the stereotypical questions they are asked during interviews.

We asked CBU students some of these gender-biased questions.

Although the experience was rather humorous, many students realized how differently the opposite gender is questioned. After being asked about his diet and how he is achieving his “beach body,” Derek Kouns, senior mechanical engineering major, reflected on the experience.

Are gender roles unhealthy?

Written by Katie Kostecka
“Most stereotypes are based on a small fragment of the truth, so that is how they get started and then society tends to blow them out of proportion,” he says. “Our society places so much emphasis on girls being skinny and healthy. A lot of girls have fallen into this trap so they tend to go on diets.”

Naomi Orantes, freshman health science major, on the flip side, was confident answering questions about sports and cars.

“Though these were questions stereotypical to males, I knew the answers,” Orantes says. “Does that make me a male? No.”

Jasmine Soto, junior exercise science major, added, “We can rock the cleats just as well as we can rock the heels!”

Some students were inspired by their interview to branch out and try new things.

“I believe that God had a very beautiful and specific plan for men and women and we both play pertinent roles. However, I want to be able to take care of myself and not need to rely on a man to take care of me,” Sydney LaChausse, freshman undeclared major, says. “So, after this interview, I need to learn how to change a tire!”

Why do women feel the need to perfect their appearance and men strive to achieve maximum masculinity? Dr. Virgo Handoff, professor of behavioral sciences at CBU, shed some light on the foundational causes of gender stereotypes.

“Men tend to look and praise appearance, beauty and youth because these are signs of fertility. While women… tend to look for (a man) that can nurture and protect their offspring. Unconsciously, they perceive masculinity, maturity and status as a sign of a responsible parental figure,” he said. “Therefore to attract the opposite sex, women tend to care more for their appearance while men are more concerned with their status and muscle.”

Changing personal aspects of one’s personality in order to fit into a mold formed by society is not healthy. Although most people hope to attract their special someone, it is vital to remain authentic to yourself. Whether that means women lifting weights at the gym or men getting a pedicure, we should aim to defy these stereotypes in the hopes that they will one day cease to exist. ◆