NATURE-NURTURE REVISITED: How evolutionary psychology and social constructionism continue the dualist tradition

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Christina Research Seminar
Tuesday 30 March 2010 at 4-6 pm
Topelia D112 (Unioninkatu 38)

There is widespread consensus among scholars and scientists that Cartesian dualism and the subsequent nature-nurture dichotomy need to be rejected in favour of interactionism, that is, the assumption that biological and socio-cultural factors interact in various ways in shaping and determining human behaviour. The paper examines two theories boasting an interactionist approach that are presently very influential in empirical gender research, i.e. evolutionary psychology and biosocial theory, a new variety of social constructionism. Though they contest each other’s claims, both theories provide explanations of behavioural gender differences which, to a varying degree, take biological factors into account. The theories are popular exactly because they seem to have overcome the deadlock of the nature-nurture debate. A critical examination, however, will show that both theories have a similar way of recycling the old wine of dualism in the new sacks of interactionism.

Christina research seminar is chaired by prof. Tuija Pulkkinen.
Seminar pays tribute to Gender Studies, and the history of Queen Christina’s name connected to this field of studies at the University of Helsinki. Seminar is open to everybody with an interest in research questions related to gender studies.