Subadult or subaltern?
Children as serial categories

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For some time now, children have been a neglected category in archaeological analysis and our narratives of the past. Despite the fact that we know that there always has been children around, they are seldom included in our social models and fictions, and the children's overall impact on the archaeological record are often ignored. To speak with the terminology of Gyatri Spivak, we may say that children are a subaltern group of prehistory. They do not have a voice in the contemporary discourse (Fahlander 2003:22-4). The later decades have, however, displayed a growing interest in the archaeology of children and childhood. Nowadays, one can find a great variety of approaches of e.g., how to find and visualize children, what it can mean to be a child in different times, and how their presence and agencies may have formed the archaeological record (e.g. Gräslund 1973, Lillehammer 1986; Beaumont 1994; Sofaer-Derevenski 1997; 2000b, Moore & Scott 1997; Johnsen & Welinder 1995; Andersson 1999, Scott 1999, Alt & Kemkes-Grottenthaler 2002, Gustavsson & Lundin 2004, Baxter 2005). These and many other studies have substantially contributed to a richer understanding of past societies. Still, the research on children in archaeology is hampered by the fact that the object of study is very diffuse and fluid. It has proven difficult to establish a general threshold when a child is turning adult in a social sense. Even if that was feasible, would it be unfortunate to treat all individuals under a certain age, like, for instance, puberty, as one category: There are too great differences in e.g., corporeality and social abilities among pre-pubertal individuals. To make progress, we thus need to find ways of defining and differentiate the vague category of children into more relevant social dittos. In this paper I explore Jean-Paul Sartre’s concept of serial collectivity as a means to establish a range of series of differently empowered children based on their corporeal, mental and social abilities.

The remaining text of the article will be published in full after the final publication of the printed volume.